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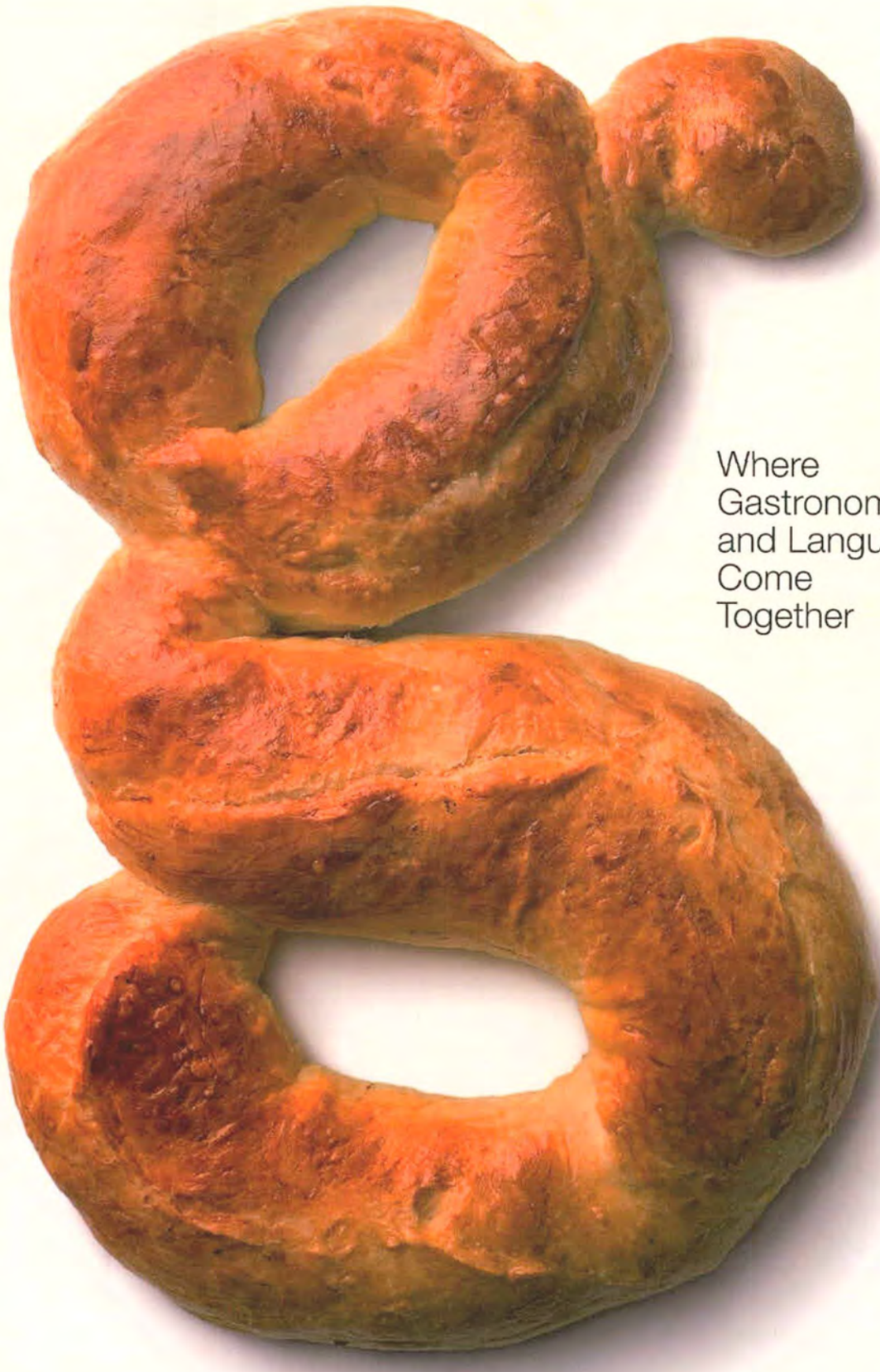

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In the year 1050, the Castilian language, better known to most of us as Spanish, first appeared in written form. We track down the earliest known texts in the language that 425 million people speak today, and in the process encounter evidence of a rich gastronomic tradition stretching back into the past.

Five centuries later, Spanish caravels returned from their voyages of discovery bearing hitherto unknown species from the New World. Among them were mangoes and papayas, two exotic fruits that are currently starring in an export success story.

Like all the Mediterranean countries, Spain has produced and exported honey throughout its history. The diversity of our geography, climate and flora is reflected in many different types, each a quintessential extract of its area of provenance.

In today's Spain, tradition rubs elbows with the avant-garde—a juxtaposition well exemplified by the generation of chefs that has earned a place for our cuisine on the international cutting edge. In this issue, we bring you up to date on developments in the sector and focus particularly on the role of scientific research (yes, really!) in contemporary cooking.

Meanwhile, a brief tour down south brings its own surprises: top quality red wines from Andalusia, anyone?

All of us here at *Spain Gourmetour* wish you very happy holidays. We find that plenty of Cava helps!

Cathy Boirac
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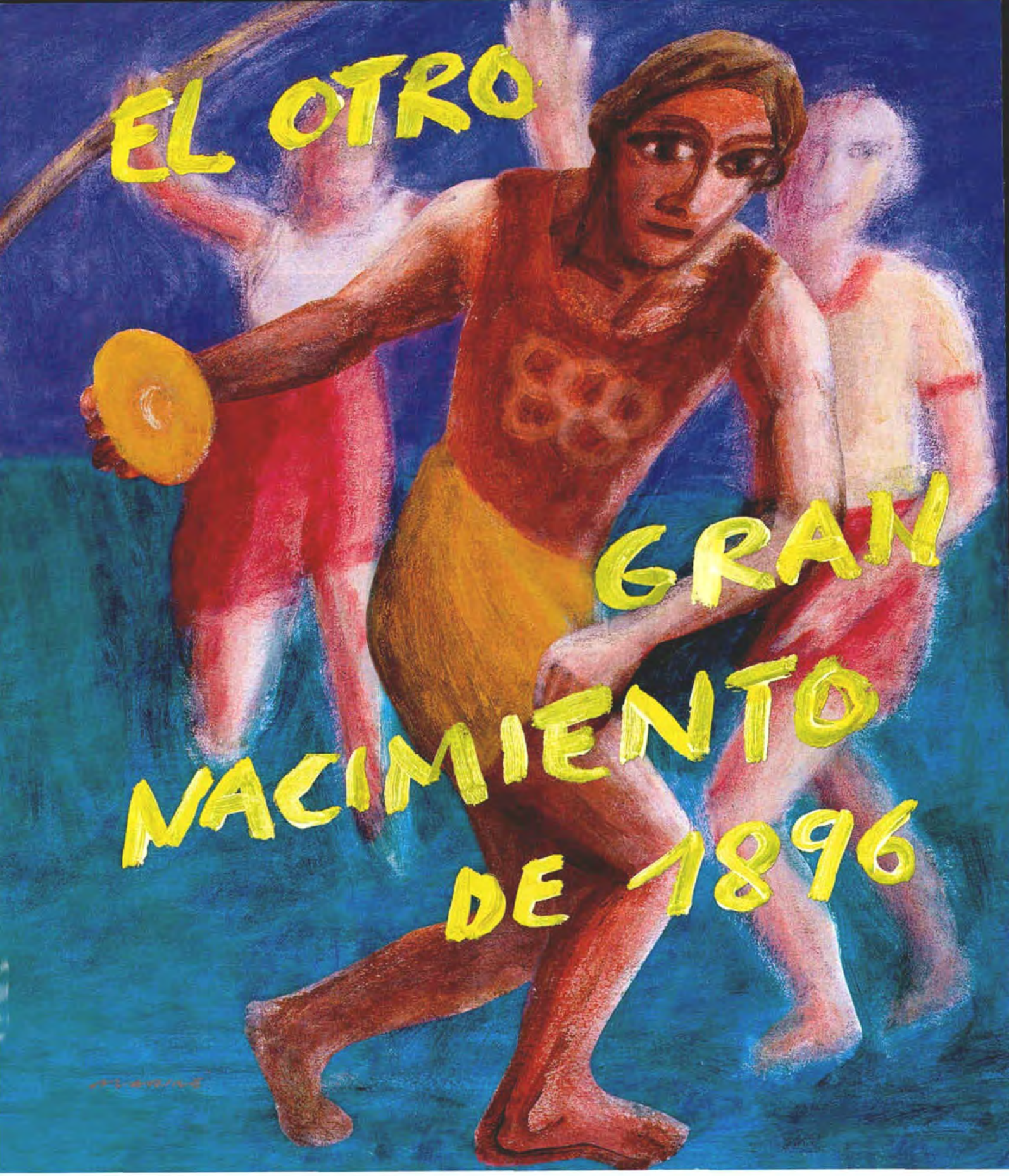

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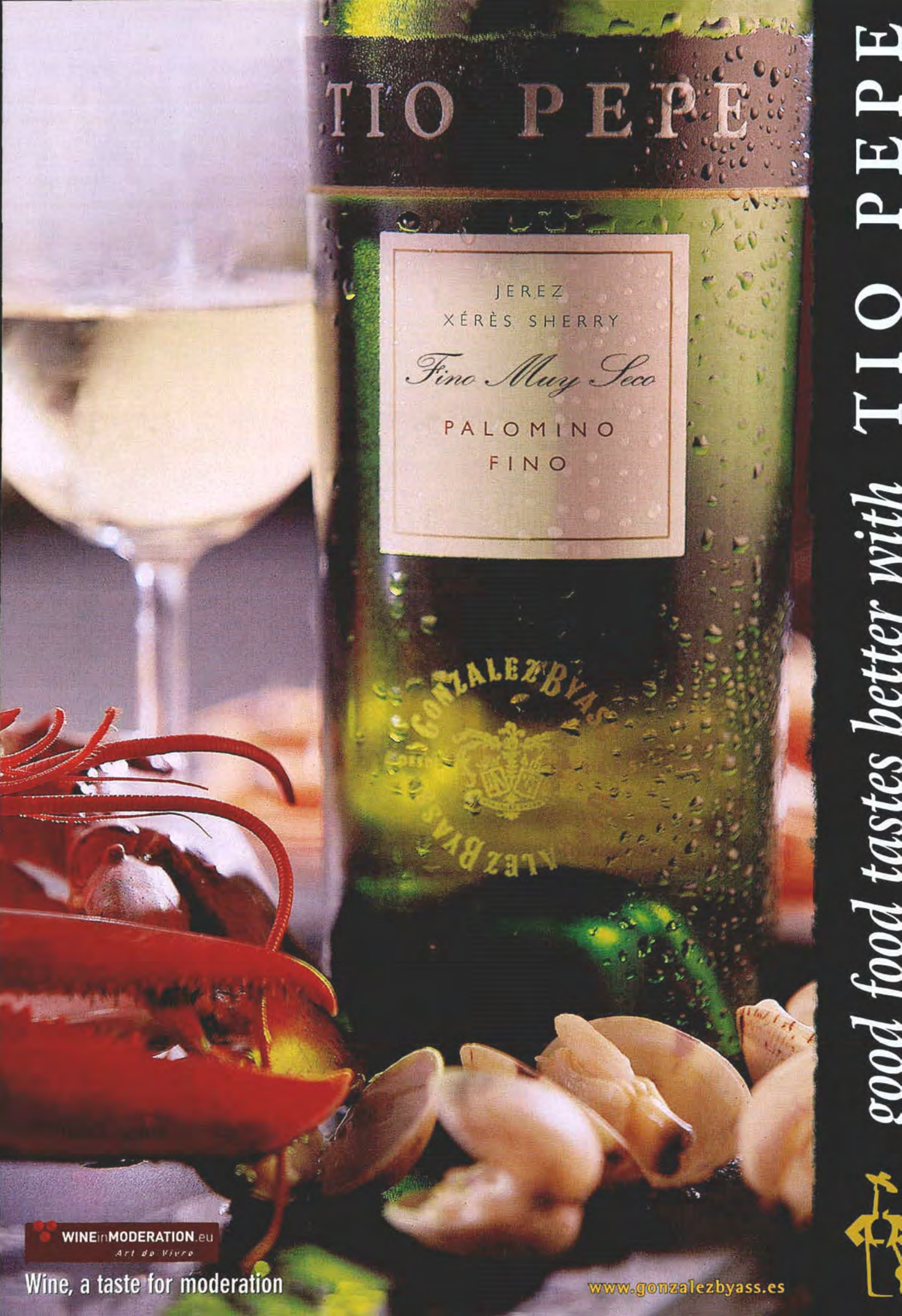

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Of Spain's various *rutas*–wines, cheese, ham, olives–the Spanish language route may seem a priori to offer mainly food for thought. But look again: from the earliest written Spanish in La Rioja, to the birthplace of El Cid in Burgos, and on to Cervantes country in Valladolid and Alcalá de Henares, gastronomy handily keeps pace with literature.

Where Gastronomy and

LANGUAGE

Come Together

TEXT
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PHOTOS
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The complete *Ruta de la Lengua Castellana* (Route of the Spanish Language, as established by Turespaña, a state-owned organization responsible for the promotion of foreign tourism in Spain) begins where Spanish began at San Millán de la Cogolla in La Rioja, continues through early Castilian epic poetry and *El Cantar de Mio Cid* in Burgos, and proceeds through Cervantes country in Valladolid. Mystic poets Santa Teresa de Ávila and San Juan de la Cruz are identified with the city of Ávila (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 76). Salamanca was the setting for *La Celestina* (by Fernando de Rojas, 1470-1541) and the picaresque *Lazarillo de Tormes* (an anonymous work dating from 1554), two of the most important works in early Spanish literature, while Alcalá de Henares (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 75) was the birthplace of Miguel de Cervantes and the original home of the University of Madrid. The present article covers only the first two stops on this literary itinerary: San Millán de la Cogolla, birthplace of the Spanish language, and Burgos, home of El Cid.

It was in La Rioja at the Monastery of Suso above the small town of San Millán de la Cogolla where, in 1910, a 10th-century Latin manuscript on St. Augustine was discovered containing the first recorded writings in the Latin vernacular known as *román paladino*, or "plain Romance language". The notes were written around the year 1050 in the margin of the text by a monk (or various monks) to explain difficult Latin words in the language

spoken in their villages. Notes appear in both Spanish and *Euskara* (Basque), not surprisingly, as many villages in the western Rioja highlands were *Euskaldun*, or Basque-speaking. These notes became known as the *Glosas Emilianenses* (notes from the monastery of San Millán). Later, in 1997, two professors, Claudio and Javier García Turza, found an encyclopedia with more annotations dating from the year 964, pre-dating the *Glosas Emilianenses* by nearly a century.

The Monasteries of Suso (which means above, from the Latin *Sursum*) and Yuso (below) developed from the cave hermitage of a charismatic recluse named Millán (or Emiliano) who was born in Berceo in the year 473. By the time of his death in 574 at the age of 101, San Millán had developed a small following that carried on at the Suso Monastery. Over the years the community grew and Millán's primitive altar was eventually joined by Visigothic, Mozarabic, and—after the Moors torched it in the year 1002—Romanesque additions. The Yuso Monastery was built in the 11th century and reconstructed in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries with Renaissance and Baroque elements. Between the two, the monasteries are a complete anthology of early Spanish architecture.

The literary importance of the monasteries at San Millán de la Cogolla resides not only in the *Glosas Emilianenses* but also in the number and quality of the manuscripts in the libraries and in the work of the first poet in the Spanish language, Gonzalo de Berceo (1195-1260), who wrote and recited his poems in the Monastery of Suso. Berceo's 25 poems under the title *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (Miracles of Our Lady) are considered his best work, especially the delicate descriptions of landscapes considered among the finest in Spanish medieval poetry. Berceo's verses, often presented in troubadour form with an opening call to attention (*"si vos me escuchássedes"*—if you would listen to me) and ending with suggested payment (*"un vaso de bon vino"*—a glass of good wine) were original in their popular language, humorous, and realistic, with exact descriptions of the places, such San Millán and Silos, where his stories take place.

Culinary crossroads

It is probably no coincidence that both literary and wine cultures flourished in the same place. For the same reasons that the Mediterranean

Yuso Monastery

FROM EPIC POETRY TO THE NOBEL

The *roman paladino*, or vernacular usage, scribbled into the margins of a Latin text in San Millán de la Cogolla in the 10th century blossomed into the 12th-century *El Cantar de Mio Cid*, the earliest major work written in Castilian Spanish. The 13th-century reign of King Fernando III consolidated the use of Spanish, while the 1492 publication of Antonio de Nebrija's *Arte de la lengua castellana* took the Spanish language around the world with Spain's sprawling 16th century empire. *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, by Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616), became the first worldwide bestseller in the early 17th century. Spanish colonization brought the language to the Americas, where it is spoken today, as well as to several island groups in the Pacific, including the Philippines, where it is no longer spoken by any large number of people. Spanish is spoken by Latin American immigrants in the United States and is now considered the country's second language. The United Nations designated Spanish as one of its five official languages upon its 1945 founding, along with Chinese, English, French and Russian. Arabic was added in 1973. The list of Nobel laureates who wrote in Spanish includes José Echegaray (1832-1916), Jacinto Benavente (1866-1954), Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957), Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881-1958), Miguel Angel Asturias (1899-1974), Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), Vicente Aleixandre (1898-1984), Gabriel García Márquez (1927), Camilo José Cela (1916-2002) and Octavio Paz (1914-1998). Today the Spanish language spoken by 425 million people around the globe is one of the world's most spoken languages, along with Chinese, English and Hindi.

climate and agriculture easily reached up the Ebro into La Rioja, where grapevines, olives, almonds, artichokes, asparagus, peppers, peas and chard flourish, Roman civilization cruised up the river on shallow-draft barges past the Rioja Baja city of Calahorra, birthplace of Roman orator and rhetorician Quintilian (circa 39-circa 98), as far as the port at Varea just 3 km (1.8 mi) below Logroño at the confluence of the Iregua and Ebro Rivers.
As well as a linguistic crossroads where Roman, Visigothic, Moorish, Basque, Navarran, and Castilian cultures mingled with northern influences arriving along the Camino de Santiago (the European pilgrimage to the tomb of St. James at Santiago de Compostela, *Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 53 and 54), La Rioja was a culinary melting pot where northern European cuisine based on animal fats collided and coexisted with the Mediterranean olive oil tradition. In addition, La Rioja has been well supplied with beef from its upland

meadows, sheep from the south side of the Sierra de la Demanda mountains, fish from its many rivers and from the Atlantic coast barely over a 100 km (62 mi) away, and, of course, the great Christian staple, the pig, provider of ham and a thousand and one varieties of sausage (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 77).

The Ebro valley floor, including Logroño's Calle del Laurel (Laurel Street); Haro's horseshoe-shaped restaurant and tapas circuit, La Herradura; Elciego's Frank Gehry-designed Marqués de Riscal wine spa; and Laguardia's taverns and restaurants, offers many dining opportunities to explore, but this itinerary heads south up the Najerilla valley and over the Sierra de la Demanda, following the beginnings of Spain's first medieval epic poetry into Castile, through Santo Domingo de Silos to Burgos and the birthplace of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, better known as El Cid (El Cantar de Mio Cid, page 17).

From the Suso Monastery, the most poetic way to the mountain town of Ezcaray, the way San Millán or Gonzalo de Berceo would have gone, is the five-hour walk along the GR-93 trail through the lost mountain villages of Pazuengos and Turza. For motorists, a 14-km (8.7-mi) drive south from Santo Domingo de la Calzada up the Río Oja (for which La Rioja is named) quickly reaches Ezcaray, tucked under the Sierra de la Demanda's highest peak, the 2,284-m (7,494-ft) Pico de San Lorenzo. The town is filled with stately mansions, with the Conde de Torremúzquiz Palace and its mammoth coat of arms being the architectural highlight. Facing the fortified 12th- to 16th-century Gothic Santa María la Mayor church is Hotel Echaurren, home of Marisa Sánchez and her son, internationally-acclaimed chef Francis Paniego (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 54). Marisa is a widely-respected master of traditional Riojan cuisine, while Francis is a contemporary innovator trained in the best kitchens of Spain and France, and chef and founder of El Portal (one Michelin star), his own restaurant in Hotel Echaurren, as well as consulting advisor of the Hotel Marqués de Riscal restaurant in Elciego. *Patatas a la riojana* (potatoes stewed in chorizo and paprika) by Marisa, followed by a Francis creation such as his *Merluza a la romana confitada a 45 grados sobre pimientos asados y sopa de arroz* (Hake in batter cooked at 45 degrees over roast peppers and rice soup) combine the best of both worlds.

After descending the valley of the Oja, just 10 minutes east of Nájera, Daroca de Rioja is the home of La Venta de Moncalvillo, where brothers Echapresto, Carlos (sommelier) and Ignacio (chef) have put together an important gastronomical detour along this literary itinerary. The seasonal menu here runs from spring vegetables to summer salads to small game (partridge, quail, woodcock) and wild mushrooms such as chanterelles, morels and porcini in fall to big game (wild boar and venison) and stews in winter. The

menu features both playful contemporary creations such as *pencas* (chard stalks) stuffed with spinach, shards of Ibérico ham, and cream of asparagus, and more classical fare such as *Lomo de cordero confitado con hongos, miel y romero* (Confit of lamb with wild mushrooms, honey and rosemary).

No new seeds

Starting up the LR-113 road up the Najerilla valley, the town of Nájera sits astride the limestone Najerilla river. The town, one-time seat of the Kindgom of Navarre and home to the Santa María la Real Monastery, Rioja's best Gothic cloister, is a pilgrim stop on the Camino de Santiago. Nearby Tricio is now a suburb of Nájera, but the Roman Tritium Magallum was once the major town in the area and included Nájera as one its neighborhoods. The 5th-century Santa María de los Arcos Basilica is the oldest religious monument in La Rioja and was constructed with recycled Corinthian columns and other materials from the Roman city of Tritium Magallum. Known as *caracoleros* for their snails and snail recipes, Tricio's late-August San Bartolomé festival includes a snail race and snail recipe competitions. To find Jesús Martínez Nalde and his Conservas Marnal, standard directions are to drive into Tricio and turn 180 degrees at "the tree", which, as it turns out, is a giant century-plus old Alamo tree some 4.5 m (15 ft)

Burgos Cathedral

around at the base standing in front of Bar La Fuente. Jesús, known as Chuchi, is the driving force behind the *pimiento najerano* (Nájera pepper), a sweet and meaty red and sometimes *entreverado* (red and green) pepper officially registered under the PGI Pimiento Riojano (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 76). The Asociación Profesional de Productores de Pimiento Najerano y de Santo Domingo, of which Chuchi is president, includes a total of seven cultivators with some 20 ha (49 acres) of plantations and 566,889 kg (1,249,798 lb) of annual production. The pimiento najerano is large (often up to 7.8 in / 20 cm in length and circumference), with a pulpy skin, high levels of vitamin C, and low acidity, making it ideal for use in strips in salads or to accompany meat or poultry. Chuchi, 38, plants 200,000 seeds by hand every May, using the same seeds that his grandmother passed along well before he started working in the

business with his father 16 years ago. Roasting each pepper in a wood oven using increasingly hard-to-find beech wood, Conservas Marnal puts up an annual 50,000 kg (110,231 lb) of peppers and sells another 50,000 kg fresh. *"Aquí no entra semilla nueva"* (no new seeds get in here) affirms the emphatic and dynamic Chuchi, at the same time vowing never to expand his operation.

Another 10 km (6.2 mi) up the Najerilla, Baños de Río Tobía is the main curing and processing center for Rioja's ham, chorizo and charcuterie. Carmelo and Fermín Loza are two of 11 brothers and cousins working in the family meat-curing business, Embutidos Loza, founded in 1920 by their grandfather, Amando Loza Alonso. Baños, at 600 m (1,968 ft) above sea level, provided a combination of dry mountain air and cool temperatures with good transport accessibility to become a leader in the curing and processing of ham, chorizo, pork loin and sausages from producers all over Spain and southern France. Carmelo explains the process as he shows us through salting and drying rooms over the five-floor building, ham hanging in the top floors in screened-in open-air drying rooms. "With modern technology," Carmelo explains, "you could do this anywhere, but the bouquet, the aroma, and the taste of the product are quite different when they are cured in real mountain air."

EL CANTAR DE MIO CID

Thought to have been written around the year 1140, a mere 40 years after the death of its protagonist, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar (also known as El Cid), *El Cantar de Mio Cid* is the first existing example of Spanish medieval epic literature. Because of the chronological proximity of the *Cantar* (song) to the events it describes, it is considered to be historically accurate. The Cantar is composed of three sections: *El Cantar del Destierro*, which describes Rodrigo's exile by King Alfonso VI after being unjustly accused of stealing tribute; *El Cantar de las Bodas de las hijas del Cid*, which describes the conquest of Valencia from the Moors; and *El Cantar de la Afrenta de Corpes*, in which El Cid avenges the mistreatment of his daughters and returns triumphant to royal favor. The robust realism of the Cantar is considered its main literary strength. Heroic deeds are described without sacrificing credibility and the characterization of El Cid is human and complex. Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar is portrayed as a sympathetic figure who sheds tears when forced to abandon his wife and children, smiles victoriously in triumph, respects his superiors, minds his manners, and battles courageously. In all, the epic figure embodies the finest qualities of the Germanic Castilian hero, accepting injustice while remaining loyal to his king, fighting the infidel, and seeking personal and family honor, a balanced blend of practical realism and noble idealism that will reappear again and again throughout Spanish literature. You can consult the original text at the Instituto Cervantes's digital library (www.cervantes.es).

Royal Monastery of Las Huelgas

Poetic kidney beans

Continuing up into the Sierra de la Demanda, 7 km (4.3) south of Baños is the village of Anguiano, famed for its three bridges, its summer festival starring dancers on beech wood stilts plunging down the steep slope from the San Andrés church, and, above all, for its *caparrones*, tiny red kidney beans that are like no other. Grown in rocky soil at altitude, like the stressed grapes used in the so-called high expression wines, these pea-sized maroon-colored beans have exceptional taste, gossamer skins that melt on the palate, and a supremely delicate texture. Stewed with the usual chorizo and fatback, caparrones have long been a beloved Riojan favorite. Javier Llaría, 35, is the Chairman of a not-yet-formalized Caparrón Association, a group of younger caparrón enthusiasts working to create structures to protect their product from other kidney bean producers who falsely pass off any small red legume as a *caparrón de Anguiano*. "Growing caparrones on these steep hillsides has traditionally been more of a hobby than an industry," explains Javier, "and we are trying to establish methods and technologies to help us produce more and better caparrones. Our parents and grandparents tease us that we don't want to work, but we do; we just don't want to work the way they did. Sorting these beans one by one is an endless process, completely unsustainable except for private use. We need the kind of machinery they use for, say, selecting coffee beans." Caparrones de Anguiano are grown exclusively on 3-m (10-ft) high vertical bean trellises or stakes, planted by hand, led up the poles, stacked in haystack-like pyramids to dry, and then spread out on canvases to open by driving tractors over the pods. Then comes the cleaning and selection process, ultimately

producing some 8,000 kg (1,763 lb) on a good year. Javier's mother, Eusebia Bezares, 67, who runs Casa Rural Llaría, soaks her caparrones the night before, cooks them on low heat for 5 or 6 hours, adds chorizo and fatback, and, just at the end, cooks up oil, garlic and peppers for the finishing touch. "The quality of the water is also key," adds Javier, as he produces two more small bags containing miniature garbanzo beans and tiny white beans called *alubias arroceras*, for which he also harbors ambitions. "Young people have to leave Anguiano to find a way to make a living, so if we can find a way to make our legumes into a reasonably sustainable business, all the better." Angiano's late-October to mid-November Caparrón Festival, the exact dates of which depend on the climate and the progress of the harvest, is a perfect chance to try different caparrón recipes around town.

Another dozen miles of twisting mountain road rises up past the Puente de Hiedra (Ivy Bridge) and the road up to the Valvanera Monastery, home to La Virgen de Valvanera, patron saint of La Rioja.

Ten minutes farther up is the town of Viniegra de Abajo, where La Venta de Goyo, a hunting and fishing enclave, is one of Rioja's top highland dining destinations. Originally a stagecoach relay station and inn on the post road from Pamplona to Aranda de Duero to Madrid, Venta de Goyo is known for chef Juan Carlos Esteban's seasonal game dishes: partridge and woodcock roasted with as little interference with their natural taste as possible, venison with apple and chestnut compotes, and wild boar stewed with wild mushrooms. It's also one of the best places for caparrones de Anguiano, stewed to perfection in pure spring water.

Above Viniegra de Abajo on the LR-113 road is the new town of Mansilla de la Sierra, rebuilt after 1959 when the waters of the Mansilla reservoir

closed over the old town, which is now clearly visible from the road with the reservoir nearly empty. Visible below the 12th-century Ermita de Santa Catalina temple, the only surviving structure from the old town, are three of the site's original seven bridges and the massive walls of the palace of Fernán González (circa 910-970), first Count of Castile and subject of the 13th-century epic *Poema de Fernán González*. Probably written by a monk from the San Pedro de Arlanza Monastery (founded, according to tradition, by the Count of Castile), the poem is typical of Castilian epic literature, a bellicose and patriotic paean to the Reconquista and Castile. Passed down orally through ballads performed by troubadours, the poem tells the story of the age-old rivalries between Castile and its two neighboring realms of Leon and Navarre. Fernán González, initially Count of Burgos, is the hero, fighting successfully for the independence of Castile. Despite the poem's scant literary merit, Alfonso X el Sabio (1221-1284), Spain's great warrior-composer-poet-scholar-king, included a prose version of it in his *Crónica General*.

Past the Mansilla reservoir, with the rolling Sierra de Urbión mountain rising dramatically to the east, the handsome town of Canales de la Sierra is the border of Burgos and the region of Castile-Leon, where the road becomes the BU-825, headed south down to Salas de los Infantes.

Epic Castile

Salas de los Infantes is famous for the pre-Chanson de Roland *Poema de los Infantes de Lara*, a precursor to *El Cantar de Mio Cid* (El Cantar de Mio

Cid, page 17), the earliest (1140) recorded Spanish medieval epic literature. Based, as demonstrated in the scholarship of Spain's illustrious literary historian Ramón Menéndez Pidal (1869-1968), on the Germanic codes of private vengeance inherited from the Visigoths (as opposed to the Roman system of judicial law), Castile, the only 11th-century Christian kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula, simply perpetuated in Romance language the heroic Nordic tradition. The *Poema de los Infantes de Lara* tells a hair-raising story of blood and vengeance: to avenge an affront to his wife, Doña Lambra, Ruy Velázquez tricks his nephews, the seven *infantes* (princes) of Lara into a Moorish ambush in which they are killed and beheaded. The heads are sent as trophies to Cordoba, where their father, Gonzalo Gustioz, having been sold into slavery by the same Ruy Velázquez, is a captive of Almanzor, the Moorish Caliph. Almanzor turns the heads over to the stricken father, who swears revenge. Eventually, Gustioz's bastard son Mudarra, fruit of his relations with a Moorish slave girl provided by Almanzor, avenges his half brothers by killing Ruy Velázquez and burning Doña Lambra alive.

Today Salas de los Infantes is a good stop for a *lechazo* (roast suckling lamb) or *sopa castellana* (garlic soup) at Mesón Ricardo and a walk around town. The tourist office at the Museo de los Dinosaurios in Plaza Mayor provides audio-guides explaining the town's most interesting points and the schedule for visits to the 15th-century Church of Santa María, where the remains of the heads of the princes of Lara are supposedly kept in a sarcophagus to the left of the main altar. The curiously twisted conical brick chimneys and ancient houses, many of them abandoned, are the town's best sights, while Jamones El Pelayo is the place to go for local products ranging from smoked and dried goat meat to cow tongue and sheeps' cheese.

Santo Domingo de Silos, 20 minutes west, is another key way station on the Spanish language route. Silos was, like the Suso Monastery, an important library and *scriptorium*, or copying workshop, and the *Glosas de Silos*, 513 annotations in the margin of a Latin text, rank alongside the *Glosas Emilianenses* as one of the first examples of writing in the Spanish vernacular. Gonzalo de Berceo's *The Life of Santo Domingo* was one of his most important works, and El Cid spent his first night in Silos after being exiled from Castile by King Alfonso VI in late 1080 or early 1081. Modern literary references have been inspired by the towering cypress tree in the monastic cloister immortalized in a 1924 sonnet by Spanish poet Gerardo Diego (1896-1987), as well as in verses by Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936), Rafael Alberti (1902-1999), and Manuel Machado (1874-1947), among others.

Turning to gastronomy, Tres Coronas de Silos hotel serves creditable local fare, while the antiques and foodstuffs store around the corner stocks *morcilla de Burgos* (blood sausage), cured Vadorrey sheeps' cheese, and Rocas de Silos macaroons made of hazelnuts, egg whites, chocolate and vanilla. The Benedictine monks sing Gregorian chant at the seven o'clock vespers service, leaving time to drive into Burgos along the Ruta del Cid, passing Covarrubias and San Pedro de Cardeña amid the sweeping plains and fields of Castile, both stepping stones on El Cid's march into exile. Covarrubias offers an excellent dining opportunity at the rustic Restaurante de Galo, while a stop at San Pedro de Cardeña is a chance to try the Valdevegón Reserva wine made by

the monks of the San Pedro Monastery.

El Cid, a man for all seasons

Burgos, celebrating the city's first annual Fin de Semana Cidiano—a weekend devoted to the protagonist of *El Cantar*, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, El Cid Campeador (circa 1045-1099)—is abuzz with spectators coming in from the jousting tournament just completed in the Paseo del Espolón (Espolón Road) that runs along the Arlanzón River that splits the city in two. The stalls in the medieval market set up around the cathedral in Plaza del Rey San Fernando (Rey San Fernando Square) display nearly every food product available from Burgos and beyond: morcilla from Sotopalacios and Briviesca, flat *torta de aceite* bread from Tardajos, morcilla with cumin seed from Gumiel de Izán, the local fresh queso de Burgos cheese (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 75), cured sheeps' cheese from Sotillo de la Ribera, Flor de Esgueva sheeps' cheese from Peñafiel in Valladolid, and Torta del Casar cheese from Extremadura (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 75).

Mesón del Cid in Plaza Santa María (Santa María Square) next to the cathedral is a classic 15th-century Castilian setting with ancient tiles, hand hewn beams and eccentric nooks and crannies, ideal for intimate dining in a lively maelstrom of movement. The typical Burgos menu of *sopa Doña Jimena* (garlic soup named for El Cid's wife), morcilla from Burgos with red peppers, and roast suckling lamb, followed by the *postre del abuelo* (grandfather's dessert) of fresh queso de Burgos cheese, hazelnuts, and honey, all accompanied by a generous flow of a DO Ribera de Duero red, is a reminder that Burgos, just 80 km (49 mi) from the Duero river, is in a new wine DO.

Casa Ojeda, near Plaza del Cid (Cid Plaza) on Vitoria Street roasts the finest lechazo in Burgos in its traditional wood oven—lambs so succulent, tender, and full of flavor that veteran Casa Ojeda staffer Antonio Sanllorente (66 years old and one of the original team that opened the restaurant in 1965) claims that: "To be good, they have to have heard the bells of the cathedral."

A visit to Burgos would not be complete without a stroll from Plaza del Cid past the exquisitely-carved wooden side door on the west side of the Teatro Principal (Principal Theater), and under the dark tunnel of plane trees through the Paseo del Espolón to the Arco de Santa María (Santa María Arch), the main medieval entrance to city. A loop back through the cathedral and along Calle de la Paloma (La Paloma Street) passes excellent produce stores such as Casa Quintanilla and Pecaditos de Burgos, leading back to Plaza Mayor.

A visit to the Royal Monastery of Las Huelgas and the Cartuja de Miraflores Monastery for a look at the Capilla Mayor sculptures are two more not-to-be-missed sites.

Just northwest of Burgos in Vivar del Cid, birthplace of the Campeador, the Mesón Molino del Cid, at the start (*Legua 0*) of the Camino del Cid, is the place for Castilian specialties, from *cocidos* (stews) to *cochinillos* (suckling pigs) or lechazos. Even more important is the El Cid history, explained eloquently by owner Javier Alonso, who freely recites chapter and verse from *El Cantar de Mio Cid*. The original mill dates back to medieval times and may well have belonged to Diego Laínez de Vivar (1020-1058), father of El Cid, who was *Hidalgo de Ubierna* and *Infanzón de Vivar*, noble titles that would have given him an interest in the region's mills. The present mill machinery dates back to the mid-19th century, while the glass window in the floor of the back dining room shows the water flowing under the building. The walls are covered with El Cid references, from paintings depicting his farewell to Doña Jimena and his children as he departed into exile, to photos of leading *El Cantar de Mio Cid* scholar Ramón Menéndez Pidal visiting the mill in 1963. As Javier Alonso will explain, the copy of the *Carta de arras* (the wedding contract) of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar and Doña Jimena (the original parchment is in the Burgos cathedral) shows Rodrigo de Vivar's own handwriting in the sentence

"*Ego Ruderico simul cum coniuge mea afirmo oc quod superius scriptum est.*" (I, Rodrigo, with my wife, affirm what is written above). The significance of this handwritten sentence is, first, that Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar knew how to write, giving an idea of his elevated social status as the educated son of an Hidalgo, and that, second, he recognized his wife Jimena as his partner at a time when the value of women in society was less than that of a horse.
Vivar del Cid is filled with Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar memorabilia, from the inscribed monument in the middle of town to the Clarist Convent, Santa Clara de Vivar, next to the mill where the manuscript of *El Cantar* was kept until 1778. The Clarisas make exquisite cookies called *tizonas*, named for La Tizona, el Cid Campeador's sword, a perfect ending to a lunch and a gastro-literary tour through the beginnings of the Spanish language.

***George Semler**, who is based in Barcelona, has written about travel, food and wine for numerous publications including* Saveur, Sky, Forbes Life, Travel & Leisure, *as well as for Condé Nast's epicurious.com for the last 20 years.*

WHERE TO SLEEP AND EAT

- **Echaurren**
  Padre José García, 19
  26280 Ezcaray - La Rioja
  Tel.: (+34) 941 35 40 47
  www.echaurren.com
- **Venta Moncalvillo**
  Ctra. de Medrano, 6
  26373 Daroca de Rioja - La Rioja
  Tel.: (+34) 941 44 48 32
  www.ventamoncalvillo.com
- **Parador de Santo Domingo de la Calzada**
  Plaza del Santo, 3
  26250 Santo Domingo de la Calzada - La Rioja
  Tel.: (+34) 941 34 03 00
  www.parador.es
- **Hostería del Monasterio de San Millán**
  San Agustín, 2
  26226 San Millán de la Cogolla - La Rioja
  Tel.: (+34) 941 37 32 77
  www.sanmillan.com
- **La Herradura**
  Ctra. de Lerma, km 14
  26322 Anguiano - La Rioja
  Tel.: (+34) 941 37 71 51
  www.sanmillan.com
- **Hospedería Abadía de Valvanera**
  Salida Ctra. LR-113 (km 5)
  26322 Anguiano - La Rioja
  Tel.: (+34) 941 37 70 44
  www.abadiavalvanera.com
- **Venta de Goyo**
  Ctra. LR-113, km 24.6
  26325 Viniegra de Abajo - La Rioja
  Tel.: (+34) 941 37 80 07
  www.ventadegoyo.com
- **Mesón Ricardo**
  Ctra. de Burgos, 10
  09600 Salas de los Infantes - Burgos
  Tel.: (+34) 947 30 01 31
- **Tres Coronas de Silos**
  Plaza Mayor, 6
  09610 Santo Domingo de Silos - Burgos
  Tel.: (+34) 947 39 00 47
  www.hoteltrescoronasdesilos.com
- **De Galo**
  Monseñor Vargas, 10
  09346 Covarrubias - Burgos
  Tel.: (+34) 947 40 63 93
  www.degalo.com
- **Mesón del Cid**
  Plaza Santa María, 8
  09003 Burgos
  Tel.: (+34) 947 20 87 15
  www.mesondelcid.es
- **Casa Ojeda**
  Vitoria, 5
  09005 Burgos
  Tel.: (+34) 947 20 90 52
  www.grupojeda.es
- **Mesón Molino del Cid**
  Ctra. Burgos-Santander, km 9
  09140 Vivar del Cid - Burgos
  Tel.: (+34) 947 29 20 16

ANDALUSIA

Steps Out in Red

The Quest for Andalusian Reds

Andalusia, where continents start and end, where seas converge, a melting pot, the home of rich cultures with a wine-growing tradition that dates back thousands of years. Its multiple landscapes include fertile plains with gently-flowing rivers, Europe's largest desert and the highest slopes of the Iberian Peninsula. Famed the world over are its great fortified wines, born from white varieties. But is there light beyond fortified wines? Andalusia's winemakers today are determined to prove that the answer is yes, and that the region is shining bright. With Andalusia's wealth of microclimates, it is not hard to trace top-quality reds.

TEXT
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PHOTOS
FERNANDO MADARIAGA/©ICEX

TRANSLATION
JENNY MCDONALD/©ICEX

Back in 1807, Simón de Roxas Clemente (1777-1827), Spain's most illustrious wine historian, described 116 grape varieties in Andalusia alone—a rich heritage of red and white, aromatic and native grapes. Back when the dreaded phylloxera arrived (in 1878 in Málaga, from where it spread to the other Andalusian provinces), the Andalusian wines that were in demand the world over were the different types of fortified wine, made from white grapes. Obviously, growers did everything they could to save these precious vines. This meant the red ones were often neglected or, at most, were only grown in small pockets for local consumption. Two hundred years after that historical compilation, each of the eight Andalusian provinces is seeing a proliferation of red wines, many of them of excellent quality. The good thing about the disaster was that it left growers free to choose the variety that best suited their land, their microclimate and, above all, their tastes.

The quest for new red wines in Andalusia began about 30 years ago. Today, every possible red variety is grown here, from all sorts of origins: Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Franc, Malbec, Petit Verdot from Bordeaux together with Pinot Noir and the favorite Syrah from Bourgogne, alongside Portuguese, German, Austrian, Italian and, of course, Spanish varieties. And some winemakers have been making admirable efforts to recover almost-forgotten native varieties: Tintilla de Rota, Jaén Tinta and Romé Tinta.

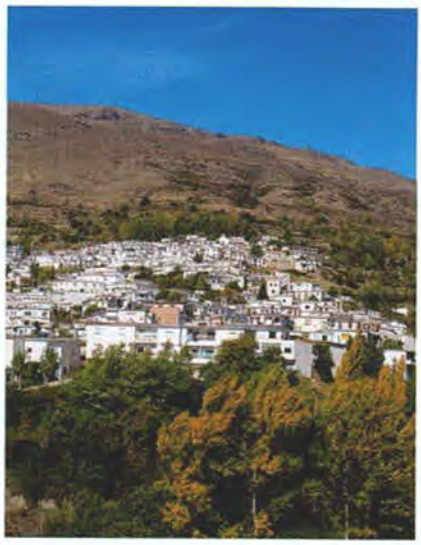
High-flying vines

The key to making red wines in Andalusia, where it is not unusual for summer temperatures to reach 40°C (104°F) in the shade, is to protect the vines from the ravages of the heat. As a result, growers have sought out high lands where there are cooling breezes and the soils are acid and balanced. But this has led them to rugged terrain and steep slopes in areas such as the Alpujarras (Granada/Almería), the mountainous parts to the north of Seville and the Ronda mountains (Málaga), which are gradually being planted again with vines. And most of these vines are red varieties.

Manuel Valenzuela was the first to establish vineyards at such heights, in a district called Costa-Albondón. Growers had previously been reluctant to go so high, resigning themselves to making rough, cloudy wines. He tells us his small vineyard called Cerro de las Monjas is at an altitude of almost 1,400 m (4,593 ft), one of the highest in Continental Europe. His home and winery, Cortijo Barranco Oscuro, is in Cádiar, Sierra de la Contraviesa, in the midst of the Alpujarras. He set out as a winemaker, some would say at great risk, using organic methods. He tried out varieties that were reminiscent of times past, such as the rare white Vijariego, which only exists in Granada and the Canary Islands. But he also tried his hand at some of the French and Italian stocks that are famous on the international wine-growing scene. His most representative wine is named after its altitude: Barranco Oscuro 1368. It is made from Garnacha, Cabernet (both Sauvignon and Franc), Merlot and Tempranillo. He also makes a Pinot Noir called Borgoñón. At this altitude, the grapes develop a surprising elegance and great personality. But a new viticultural adventure is about to take center stage. Óscar Lescure, an oenologist who advises a number of vineyards in Andalusia and Ribera de Duero, is now managing Ladera de Castañar, a project which calls for the production

Manuel and Lorenzo Valenzuela, Barranco Oscuro, Cádiar, Granada.

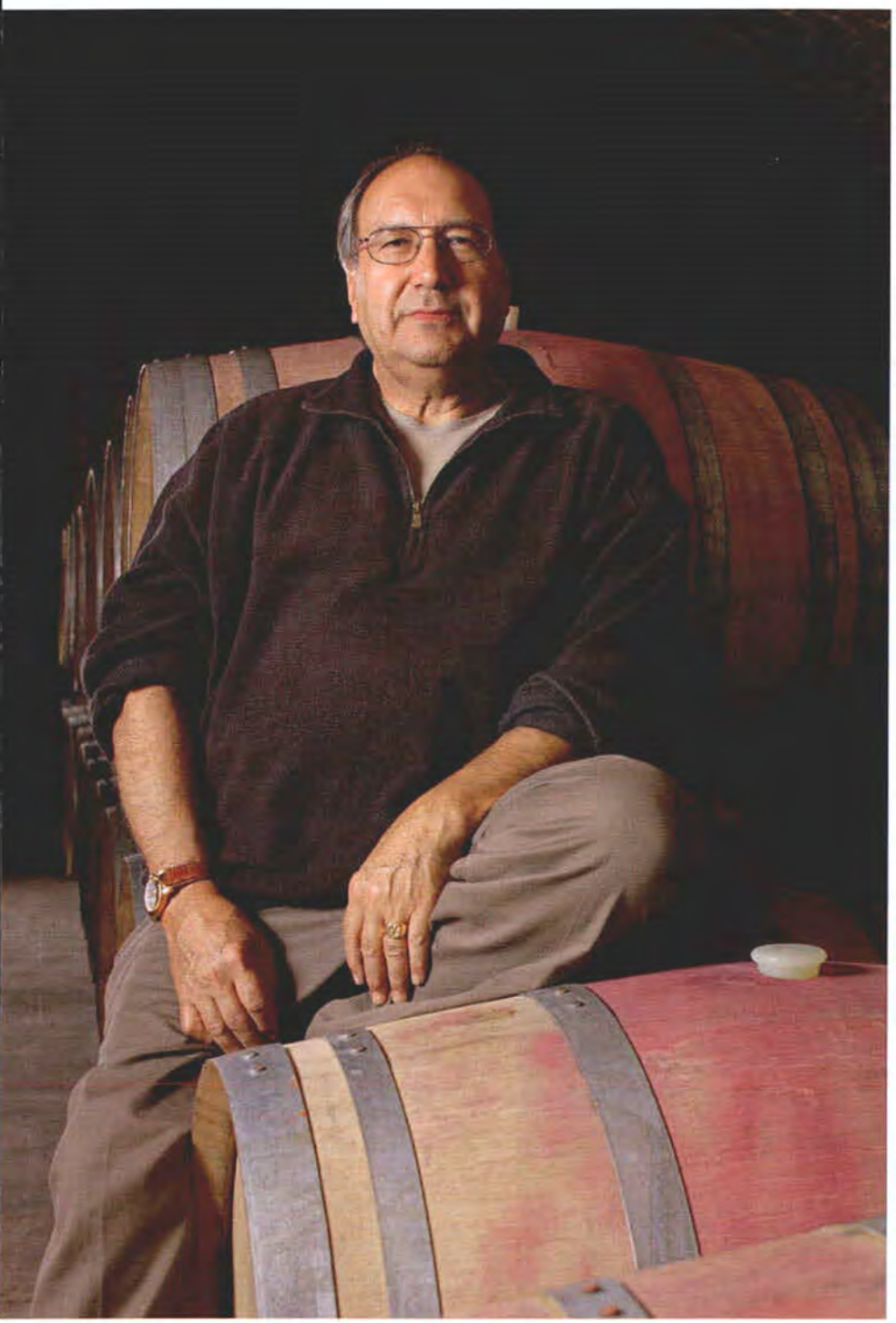
of about 20,000 bottles. This winery, with a vineyard at about 1,500 m (4,921 ft) facing east and growing Chardonnay, Viognier and Merlot, will soon be bringing out its first wines. Nearby, in the village of Ugíjar, is the Dominio Buenavista winery, owned by Juan Palomar, a famous, locally-born surgeon who now works in the US. Its products range from white to red and include a sparkling wine made from the local, white Vijariego variety under the name of Señorío de Buenavista, and another series called Veleta. They are all covered by the designation Vino de la Tierra Cumbres del Guadalfeo, an idyllic spot with views over the Sierra Nevada and the Sierra de Gádor mountains. The most widely-grown varieties are Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Tempranillo and Syrah, as well as some that were growing there prior to the recent surge in reds, such as Garnacha Tinta and Monastrell.
This peaceful spot offers breathtaking views as far as the African coast, which appears on the horizon on clear afternoons, and in the evening light the distant Mediterranean shimmers as a strip of gold. In the other direction is the majestic Mulhacén, the tallest peak in the Sierra Nevada, like a warrior guarding over the essence of Andalusia. The soils are poor, of schist, and the microclimate is unusual in that it combines high altitude with



closeness to the sea.
A number of others have followed in the wake of this enterprising winemaker. One of them is Antonio García, the enthusiastic owner of the "garage-sized" Los García de Verdevique winery, with very limited production of Tempranillo wines. Others are Los Barrancos and Cuatro Vientos.
Granada has plenty to offer in the red wine line. The town of Cortes y Graena in the district of Guadix (part of Vino de la Tierra Altiplano de Sierra Nevada), with its lumpy, stony clay, described by the locals as "turrón-like" and easy to hollow out to form cave-dwellings, is home to small vine growers with tiny wineries. Ramón Saavedra grows his vines along the Cauzón River, a tributary of the Alhama, and produces no more than 8,000 bottles. Antonio Vilchez draws our attention with his very personal wines. His reds are surprising, made from Pinot Noir, a variety that sometimes struggles in soils that are not those of its native Champagne or Bourgogne. But, in this Alhama Valley, the Sierra Nevada works its magic with icy winds that keep temperatures down, saving the vinestocks from the summer heat.

The promised land

Perched on the edge of a staggering ravine, the town of Ronda cuts a striking figure. If we look back in history, we find that vines were grown on these high lands even before Roman times. The coins minted in the neighboring Roman town of Acinipo (4 BC-AD 4) bore a bunch of grapes on their reverse side. But the phylloxera showed no consideration for history and the last traces of vines disappeared in the 1950s. Then, in the 1980s, pioneers coming from very different directions decided to restore winemaking in this very beautiful part of Spain. Friedrich Schatz (locally known as Federico), a gardener by profession, was globetrotting when he turned up in Ronda on his travels and decided to stay on. He planted a selection of foreign varieties on the property around his modest country house, including some German and Austrian ones such as Blaufränkisch and Lemberger, which give a touch of distinction to his much-appreciated organic wines. Another German, Prince Hohenlohe, developer of Marbella and creator of its jetsetting nightlife, took on the consultancy services of Alexis Lichine (a well-known viticulturist and wine writer from Bordeaux) for his wine-growing activities. And grower and producer Carlos Falcó (Marquis of Griñón) planted several Bordeaux varieties—



Juan Palomar, Dominio Buenavista, Ugíjar, Granada.

Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Franc, and Petit Verdot—on his beautiful property, Las Monjas. One of the best decisions taken on this exciting adventure was precisely the choice of Petit Verdot, previously unknown in Spain, which gives outstanding personality to wines produced in Ronda. (Today these vineyards and the winery belong to the powerful Arco Group, owner of wineries in the DOCa Rioja, DO Penedès, DO Cava, DO Arribes del Duero, and Argentina).

After a gradual start, Ronda became the most representative location for red wines in Andalusia. Today there are as many as 20 wineries, and newcomers to the noble craft of winemaking continue to arrive. Almost 30 years later, the local reds are being awarded high points in the specialist press both in Spain and elsewhere. In this monumental town, a magnet for tourists, the wines have taken off thanks to their success with visitors (Ronda is one of Andalusia's most-visited cities).

After Prince Hohenlohe had started planting vines on the advice of his friend Lichine, the task was completed by Juan Manuel Vetas, a Spanish emigrant brought up in Bordeaux who then stayed on, taking charge of the winery and planting a small vineyard in his own garden. He soon found that the vinestock that worked best in the local conditions was Petit Verdot. Today he is considered to have one of the best Spanish red wines made from this variety: Vetas Petit Verdot.

This part of Spain exerts the pull of a promised land for certain converts to

Bibi García, Cortijo de los Aguijares, Málaga, Ronda.

the profession of winemaker. Jose Antonio Itarte, from the Basque country and formerly in the steel industry, now owns a surprising estate called Cortijo Los Aguilares: 800 ha (1,976 acres) of land with various crops, but only 18 under vine—Tempranillo, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Petit Verdot and Pinot Noir. The 2008 vintage of the latter had the audacity to win the prestigious Mondial du Pinot Noir in Sierre (Switzerland), eclipsing some of the stars in this variety's universe. The work being done by Bibi García, an excellent oenologist trained in Madrid, Chile, La Rioja and Priorat, is also beginning to bear fruit.

The local wine scene also receives visits (and inspiration) from "flying oenologists", such as Ignacio de Miguel and Josep Lluís Pérez. The former provides consulting services for the Pasos Largos wine made by José Manuel López, owner of one of Andalusia's best restaurants, Tragabuches (in Ronda), named after a notorious inhabitant of Ronda, an early 19th-century bullfighter, bandit and smuggler. Josep Lluís is working on the ambitious La Melonera project with the invaluable aid of young oenologist Ana de Castro, although the wine has not yet appeared on the market. The peacefulness of this magic setting attracts people who are keen to get away from it all. Teo Conrad from Switzerland fell in love with Ronda. When, while doing business in China, he mentioned his viticultural plans, his Chinese hosts were horrified to learn that he was not applying the ancient oriental philosophy of Feng Shui in his

future winery. They convinced him of its usefulness and he now applies it wherever he lives. A fantastic convent, privatized in the mid-19th century, serves as a miraculous retreat for the almost 200 barrels produced at the Descalzos Viejos winery.

The last vinestocks to survive from times of former glory finally disappeared from a place called Chinchilla. Almost 50 years later, the vigorous vines of the Doña Felisa winery, with pine and kermes oak surroundings, once again dress this rugged terrain in green. Their wines, named Chinchilla after their birthplace, are flavorsome and aromatic. Behind the hill that hides the half-buried Roman town of Acinipo is the El Chantre winery, owned by Ramos Paúl, with a spectacular aging chamber that tunnels into the mountain and a large vineyard at its feet. Together, all these projects and realities raise the Serranía de Ronda sub-zone to the upper ranks of the varied Andalusian panorama. The fact that so many professionals and wine-lovers choose Ronda for their viticultural initiatives should come as no surprise. It is an ideal growing environment for grapevines. The altitude is about 800 m (2,625 ft), in some cases as high as 1,000 m (3,280 ft), an essential condition for red vines growing in such a hot, sun-soaked spot. The soils are admirably varied and rainfall is about 900 l (35.4 in) a year. The difference between night and day temperatures in the run-up to harvest allows the grapes to ripen gradually, achieving an excellent balance between acidity and polyphenol content.

News is still coming out of Málaga on the subject of red wine. Axarquía, a fascinating district perfumed by a thousand and one wild Mediterranean aromas, with steep slopes of slate and immaculate white villages creeping up them, is where the best Muscatel wines in the world come from. Traditionally, these grapes were considered so good that the raisins that were left behind on the drying racks were used to make the famous Málaga sweet wines. Today, the great Muscatels are made only from the best grapes, and are much loved in Spain and elsewhere, especially in the US. But red wine, too, has reached this "eastern part" of the province, which is the meaning of the Arabic word Axarquía. In Sayalonga, a narrow, whitewashed village, Clara Verheij and André Both (from Utrecht in Holland), wine lovers turned professional, produce one of Spain's best Muscatel wines, Bentomiz, from the rare Romé Tinta variety that they have rescued from oblivion. This grape is reminiscent of Pinot Noir, especially in its elegance. But it is difficult to get away from sweet wine in Andalusia. This is perhaps why this Andalusian-Dutch couple has interpreted the first natural sweet Merlot wine. The result is pure delight. Close by (if such a term can be used for such devilishly

DESIGNATIONS OF ORIGIN AND VINOS DE LA TIERRA

Vineyards occupy 40,000 ha (98,842 acres) in Andalusia, and over 60% of them belong to areas with a designation of origin. Most of the remainder are labeled "Vinos de la Tierra". Grapevines are grown in all the provinces. Cádiz is in the lead with almost 11,000 ha (27,181 acres), followed by Córdoba, with 9,000 ha (22,239 acres). Next come Huelva with 6,500 ha (16,061 acres), Granada with just over 5,000 ha (12,355 acres), Málaga with almost 3,000 ha (7,413 acres) and Almería with 823 ha (2,033 acres).

- **Designation of Origin Málaga y Sierras de Málaga**
  www.vinomalaga.com

  Subzones:

  Axarquía
  The easternmost part of the province, with shallow, slatey soils. Romé is the native variety.

  Montes
  This is the mountainous area around the city of Málaga.

  Zona Norte
  Whitish soils on hills sloping towards the Mediterranean.

  Costa Occidental
  Mainly the plain of Antequera, with deep, limey, brown soils.

  Serranía
  Average altitude of 750 m (2,461 ft). Clay, silty soils with very limey subsoil.
  The favorite varieties are Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Franc, Syrah, Merlot, Tempranillo and Romé. Also suitable are Pinot Noir, Colombard, Garnacha and Petit Verdot.

- **Designation of Origin Condado de Huelva**
  www.condadodehuelva.es
  Varieties: Syrah, Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot.

COVERING RED WINES IN ANDALUSIA

- **Vino de la Tierra de Bailén**
  Varieties: Garnacha, Cabernet Sauvignon, Molinera and Tempranillo.
- **Vino de la Tierra de Cádiz**
  Varieties: Tempranillo, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Garnacha Tinta, Monastrell, Merlot, Tintilla de Rota, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc.
- **Vino de la Tierra Cumbres del Guadalfeo**
  Varieties: Garnacha, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Tempranillo and Syrah.
- **Vino de la Tierra de Córdoba**
  Varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Tempranillo, Pinot Noir and Tintilla de Rota.
- **Vino de la Tierra del Desierto de Almería**
  Varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Garnacha, Merlot, Monastrell, Syrah and Tempranillo.
- **Vino de la Tierra Laderas del Genil**
  Varieties: Garnacha, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Perruna, Pinot Noir, Syrah and Tempranillo.
- **Vino de la Tierra de Laujar-Alpujarra**
  Varieties: Garnacha, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Monastrell, Syrah and Tempranillo.
- **Vino de la Tierra Altiplano de Sierra Nevada**
  Varieties: Tempranillo, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Garnacha, Merlot, Monastrell, Pinot Noir and Syrah.
- **Vino de la Tierra Ribera del Andarax**
  Varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Garnacha, Merlot, Monastrell, Pinot Noir, Syrah and Tempranillo.
- **Vino de la Tierra de la Sierra Norte de Sevilla**
  Varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Garnacha, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Pinot Noir, Syrah and Tempranillo.
- **Vino de la Tierra de la Sierra Sur de Jaén**
  Varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Garnacha, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Syrah and Tempranillo.
- **Vino de la Tierra de Torreperogil**
  Varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Garnacha, Syrah and Tempranillo.

winding roads), in Moclinejo, is the winery where Antonio Muñoz gives free rein to his inspiration. His company, Bodega Antonio Muñoz Cabrera, holds a string of awards. It makes about 90,000 bottles of Muscatel and some surprisingly fruity reds, especially its prize-winning Lagar de Cabrera, made from Syrah (Grand Médaille d'Or, at the wine world championship in Brussels in 2009). Axarquía is a privileged district. It is close enough to the sea and civilization for inhabitants to feel its touch, but sufficiently far to give the tranquility that we all need at times. This means that, unless wine really makes its presence felt (whether it is Muscatel, red or white), vines are going to find it difficult to compete with urban spread. Let's hope the vines win. In its search to constantly offer something new to its customers, Málaga Virgen (formerly López Hermanos), the province's strongest and most dynamic wine business, has established an attractive Syrah vineyard on its Vistahermosa estate, close to the spectacular Fuente de Piedra Lagoon. This is an essential wetland area and a nature reserve, a magnet for migratory birds, many of which stop off to feed and nest here. The bodega's wine, named Pernales (after the famous Andalusian bandit shot in 1907), has all the virtues of a fruity Syrah.

Spellbinding Arcos

Arcos de la Frontera offers a fantastic view over half of Andalusia (or at least that's the impression you get). It includes Bornos reservoir, surrounded by wheat fields, golf courses, and the Taberner vineyards, and stretches as far as the high peaks of the Sierra de Grazalema, a dark wavy line along the horizon. This is where the Paez Morilla winery planted the first Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Riesling and other varieties considered "exotic" in Andalusian lands. That must have been back in the 1970s and it marked the start of a new era, although their wines today might well be considered a touch traditional. A modern style has been adopted by the Huerta de Albalá winery, owned by Vicente Taberner, a partner in one of the grandest of the Jerez establishments, Rey Fernando de Castilla. The winery is encircled by its vineyards in the style of a Bordeaux château. In it, the wines are cared for by the best technology, in costly barrels in impeccable cellars, and watched over by guardian angel and oenologist Milagros Viñegra. She is also responsible for 80 ha (197 acres) of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah and Tintilla de Rota (the latter staking a claim for Spanish varieties). These are fleshy, aromatic wines, with a very up-to-date finish, that are frequently awarded top marks by wine writers. As might be expected, the wineries in the nearby domain of Jerez are also trying their hand with red wines. Close to Arcos, in the village of Gibalbín, the famous Barbadillo wineries of Sanlúcar are producing a modern Syrah red called Gibalbín at a very competitive price. One of the most active of the Jerez companies, González Byass, is showing great interest in this area. On one of the limiest parts of Arcos it has planted 45 ha (111 acres) under vine, with the ever-present varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and, especially, Syrah. The wine has been baptized with the name of the winery, Finca Moncloa, and is showing great promise.

The search for red in Condado de Huelva

August 2009 was very hot in Condado de Huelva. Half way through the month, practically all the red wine vineyards had already been harvested.

In some cases, primary fermentation was complete, and malolactic fermentation was about to start. The determination to make red wine in a district that for centuries had only been producing white is remarkable, especially considering the difficulties of the climate and altitude at 30-100 m (98-328 ft) above sea level. But in just a few years, the area growing red varieties has risen from zero to about 150 ha (370 acres). The model followed is the standard one for a budding wine-producing district, with all the most famed varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Tempranillo and, above all, Syrah, in which great hopes are being placed by southern Spain's winemakers. This year, for the first time, the red wines produced within the DO Condado de Huelva will no longer have to bear the ambiguous label "Vino de la Tierra" or the uninspiring and rather disconcerting "Vino de Mesa". They now receive explicit recognition in the regulations and are thus entitled to bear the back label of the Condado de Huelva Regulatory Council. The wineries that are most enthusiastic about what they call "wines with color" are the cooperative Nuestra Señora del Socorro in Rociana, and Vinícola del Condado in Rociana and Bollullos Par del Condado, the location of the DO Condado de Huelva Regulatory Council, and formerly a stop-off on the road between Huelva and Seville.

Almería, the great unknown

Tourists driving fast through Almería on the A-7 on their way to one of its famous beaches may be overwhelmed by the desolation of the landscape. But those who take their time are often fascinated by the wide open spaces, with their hallucinatory strangeness, and the surprises that appear at every bend. The sun's changing positions work wonders on the colors of the earth, and the diversity of the landscapes leads us to feel we are treading some unknown planet. But that is just half the story. Inland, driving towards the impressive peaks of Sierra Nevada, a wide range of emotions awaits—colors, aromas and flavors—not to mention oenological surprises.

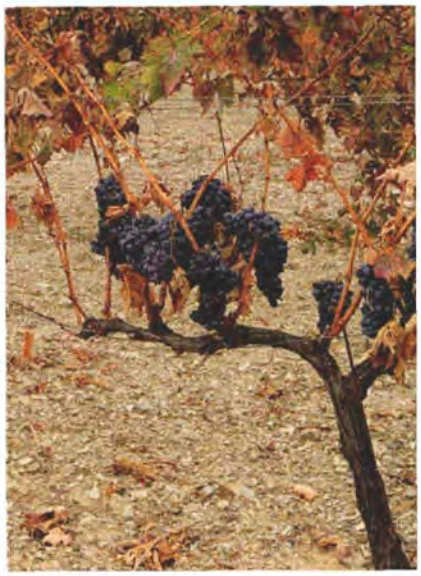
Láujar de Andarax perhaps has more wineries than any other town in the province. A few years ago, Ricardo Cantera, who defines himself as an Italo-Riojano, set up a winery called Taller de Baco (Bacchus' workshop) with José Ramón Martínez, an electronics engineer and wine lover. They use such original microvinification methods, in particular the Ganimede method (a modern tank with a complicated fermentation system), that it takes a highly-experienced taster to know they come from vineyards in the southeast of Spain. Three ranges of different quality are produced, but top-of-the-class is Diluvio (Spanish for flood, a contradictory choice for a province that has more than 3,000 hours of

sunshine a year and the fewest cloudy days in Spain). Another winery in the same area is Selección de Vinos de Fondón (an interesting project including a rural hotel and a restaurant), which surprises with its modern-style reds. The suggestive label on one of them, Las Tetas de la Sacristana (the Sacristan's Tits), was taken from a couple of even-sized hills in a nearby vineyard.

In Almería, too, reds are spreading fast. In Alcolea, Isabel López and Agustín Peinado inherited and have updated a winery, its vineyards and, of course, its wines. They produce as much as 120,000 bottles of very fruity reds (including a delicious carbonic maceration wine) under the brand name Iniza (the name of the estate, located in the designation Vinos de la Tierra de Laujar-Alpujarra).

The Sierra Morena red

As we trace the route of the new reds, we reach Seville, though it produces less than 1% of the Andalusian reds. Obviously the most appropriate terrains are the heights of the Sierra Norte, the extension of the Sierra Morena. The name Cazalla de la Sierra is known all over Spain for the local, aniseed-flavored eau-de-vie, but the town has actually been producing wine since the 15th century. Not surprisingly, its climate is ideal, with poor, limey or slatey soil, an altitude of 700 m (2,297 ft) and rainfall between 600 and 1,000 l per sq m (23.6 and 39.3 in). Its most representative winery today is Colonias de Galeón, and the dream of its owners, Elena Viguera and Julián Navarro, is to make their red wines well known. The



grapes they use for the purpose are Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Syrah, Pinot Noir and Tempranillo. They have had a number of triumphs in recent years, but the connoisseur remembers the special pleasure given by their very regular, carbonic maceration red and their star product, Silente, a wine with an excellent structure. In nearby Constantina, wine enthusiast Óscar Zapke and his Riojan wife Mónica have about 7 ha (17 acres) under red varieties, especially Tempranillo, with Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Córdoba has not followed the red flame like the other Andalusian provinces,

though it has been trying out different varieties for many years now. The Robles winery (an institution in the world of fortified wines) has brought out a red called Piedra Luenga, with the added value of an organic label. In the Sierra de Montilla, José Miguel Márquez of Bodegas Marenas, makes a few thousand bottles meeting the strictest of organic requirements. It is no surprise that so many winemakers here choose organic methods considering Cordoba's great potential.

Andalusia is a generous land, as are its wines. Its wines have brought tears of pleasure to the eyes of both real people and fictitious characters. Its varied landscapes undoubtedly have room for red wines, the aim being to place them on a par with the famed Andalusian fortified wines.

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Ricardo Cantera, Taller de Baco, Laujar de Andarax, Almería.

Sparkling wine has for years been associated with popping corks, wild celebrations and the high life, but in the Catalan wine-producing region of Penedès (northeast Spain), the preferred daily beverage at mealtimes or as a simple aperitif to accompany tapas is always the local produce. With the area now producing sparkling wines of higher caliber than ever before, and with export sales of around 120 million bottles a year, Cava is not just the wine of choice for the inhabitants of Catalonia, it is also a delight to be enjoyed by those looking to bring a little everyday effervescence to their table, all the world over.

Text
Ian Cowley/©ICEX

Photos
Toya Legido/©ICEX

Cava and Gastronomy

SPARKLING

Inspiration

The history of Cava is firmly rooted in the distinctly Mediterranean Penedès region: an area of rolling hills and sharp escarpments interspersed with vineyards, pine copses and dotted with *masias*, the Catalan word which encompasses anything from ramshackle farmhouses to splendid country mansions looking out over vast wine estates. Although other regions such as Aragón, Castile-Leon, Extremadura, La Rioja, the Basque Country, Navarre and Valencia produce Cava, a whopping 95% of production comes out of some 1,500 sq km (371 acres) of these prime Catalan vineyards.

This pleasant land, situated south of Barcelona, is also home to wonderful fresh produce and great traditional Catalan cuisine. Delicacies such as *pato mudo del Penedès* (a deliciously lean duck meat), *xató* (a frizzy endive, salted cod and anchovy salad which is accompanied by a ground almond and hazelnut dressing) and *cocas de Vilafranca* (a type of sweet dough baked and dusted with sugar) are all dishes which beautifully complement the area's local vintage. The region's typical "snack" foods also deserve a special mention, specifically, dried fruit and nuts such as figs, prunes, roasted almonds and pine nuts, and cured pork sausage known as *fuet* (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 77) by the locals.

A bit of history

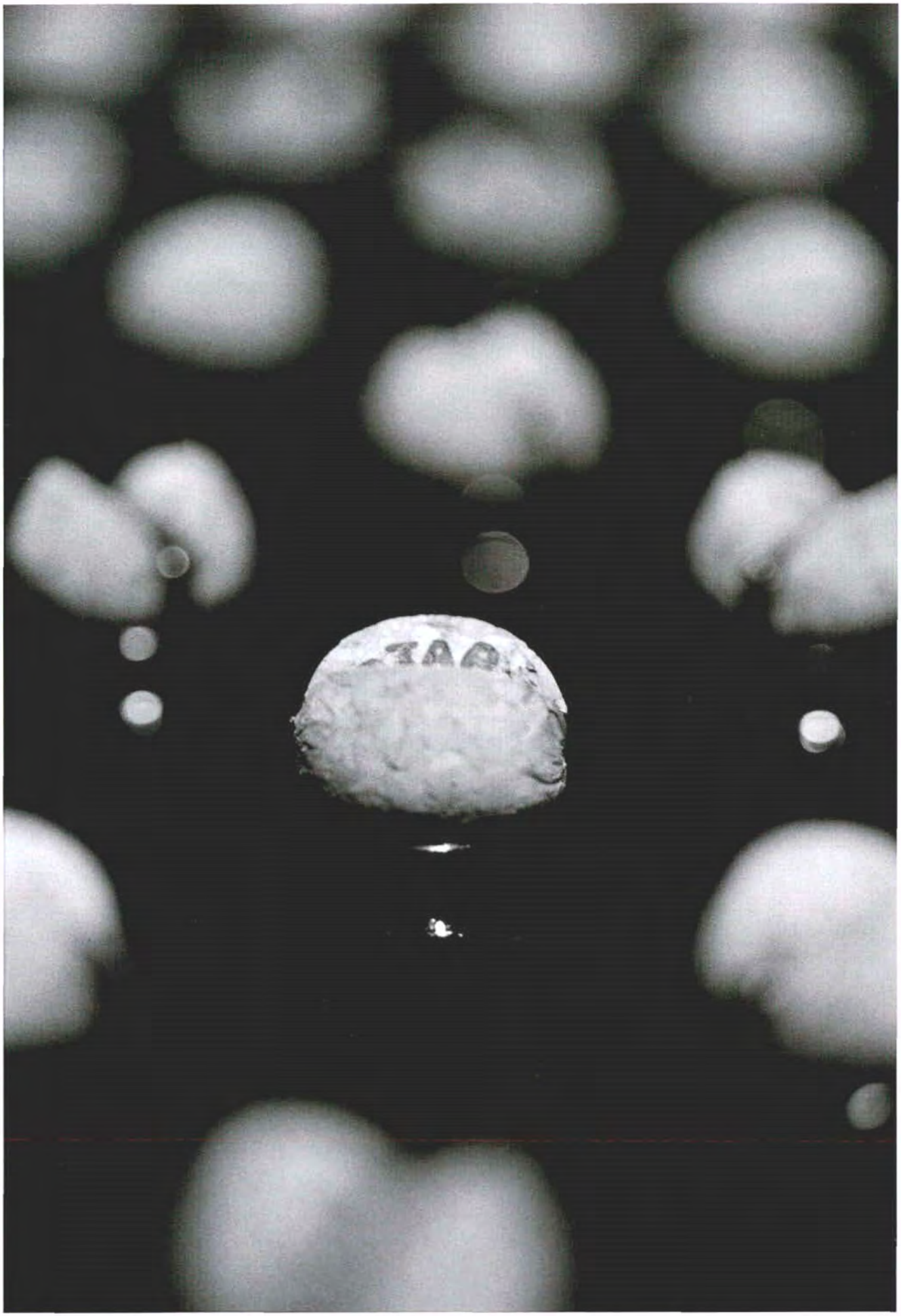
But before investigating Cava's culinary combinations in more detail, first we must look at the reasons why this region has become so prominent in the

production of Cava. Historically, one man—Josep Raventós (1825-1885) of the Codorníu winery (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 70)—is responsible for the wine's geographical concentration. Having studied Champagne production in France, he decided to try the same thing at home, using local varieties of grape. By means of the *champenoise*, or the "traditional method", which involves a second fermentation in the bottle, Josep elaborated his first wines in 1872, which became known locally as *champaña*, or *xampany* in Catalan.

A further push towards production of Cava in the area came when the region's vineyards were devastated by the phylloxera plague (1888-1890). This led to the predominantly red vines being largely replaced by vines producing white grapes. Most notably three autochthonous varieties were used in the production of these first Cavas: Macabeo, Parellada and Xarel·lo, and they remain highly important to this day despite newer varieties such as Chardonnay now being introduced.

The fizzy beverage soon became popular at court with Spanish royalty, and during the Swinging Twenties, the larger *bodegas*, already consolidated within Spain, began to export their product abroad. Sales and production of the sparkling wine really took off in the '60s though, and in the decades that followed Cava arrived big time on an international scale.

It wasn't until the end of the 20th century that the name Cava became synonymous with the wine, however. Caves and cellars were used in the early days of production for the preservation or aging of wine, and this is where the word "Cava" comes from. In 1972, the Consejo Regulador de Vinos Espumosos (Regulatory Council of Sparkling Wines) officially launched the brand name "Cava", at the same time as France took measures to protect its Champagne brand. Following the entry of Spain into the then EEC in 1986, the Protected Geographic Indication (PGI) or Designation of Origin (DO) status was granted, with Cava's DO being unique in Spain in the sense that eight specified regions are authorized for production. But of these aforementioned regions it is Penedès that dominates the market, and an astonishing 75% of total Cava production comes out of the small town of Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, population 12,000 and home to Cava giants Freixenet (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 73) and Codorníu.



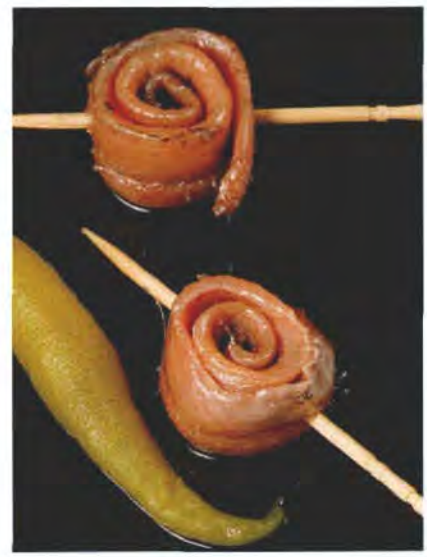
Cava in Catalonia has always been a family affair, and two great lineages—the Raventós at Codorníu and the Ferrer i Salas at Freixenet—have reigned over production for years. Freixenet is famous for its marketing campaigns, which include the iconic success of a Cava sold in a completely black frosted bottle (Cordón Negro) and, famously, a mass media coup which turned their Christmas advertising campaigns into the most watched TV ads in Spain. This has involved hiring top Hollywood actors to appear in the commercials and filmmakers like Martin Scorsese to direct them. Now amongst the top ten wineries in the world, Freixenet makes 120 million bottles a year, has registered sales in 146 countries and is said to be responsible for 75% of all Cava production, turning over 250 million euros a year in exports alone. Their range of wines is incredible: from the Gran Cordón Negro, which they recommend trying with a salted cod omelet, to their Segura Viudas (one of several other wineries they own) Brut Reserva, which is excellent with spicy foods like curry. They produce over 20 Cavas under the Freixenet name alone, and many more through the multiple bodegas they have acquired over the years.

While Codorníu's production does not reach that of its great rival Freixenet, the bodega that invented Cava has enormous worldwide sales amounting to 30 million bottles, and sells excellent quality Cavas such as the well-priced Pinot Noir Brut Rosé—a tipple well-received by critics and consumers around the globe—and whose fresh zingy flavors make it an ideal partner to fruit-based puddings, creamy rice or cheese sauces.

Despite these two winemakers' dominance over the market, they are not the only producers in the region. Smaller up-and-coming bodegas such as Torelló, Gramona, Juvé y Camps, Alta Alella and the organic winery Albet i Noya (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 77) are making Cavas of exceedingly high quality which sell not only within Spain but are also making inroads into the export market. It's with some of the wide range of delights these smaller wineries have to offer that we'll see just how well Cava adapts to the food on your table.

Matches made in heaven

Nearly all the *bodegueros* I spoke to for the purpose of this article told me the same thing: Cava is a wine just like any other, and as such it should be drunk with all kinds of food. And although this holds true, it is also clear that there are certain things that go down particularly well with a crisp, cool Cava. Wine runs in the blood of the Torelló family, which has been making the stuff since the Middle Ages, but it wasn't until 1951 that Francisco Torelló, father of current CEO Ernestina Torelló, decided to branch out into Cava. Using the traditional Macabeo, Parellada and Xarel·lo hand-



harvested grapes grown in their own vineyards, the company makes top-of-the-range Cavas. And Ernestina's family isn't the only branch of the Torelló clan making top-quality Cava. The produce of Agustí Torelló Mata, her cousin, has been making waves in the wine world in recent years too.
Ernestina notes that Cava's acidity and fizziness make it the perfect accompaniment to any meal, but also points out that the versatility of Cava is that each type has what she calls its own "culinary moment", suggesting the Torelló Brut Nature's fresh and dry finish goes well with light first courses such as seafood or smoked salmon, whereas Gran Torelló (which spends a minimum of three and a half years maturing) is better suited to main courses, particularly those with rich sauces or spicy food.
With the endorsement of the father of new Spanish cuisine and holder of three Michelin stars, Juan Mari Arzak, Torelló's Brut Nature is served at the chef's San Sebastian (northern Spain) restaurant. The Basque maestro accompanies the Cava with an assortment of goodies, including a range of aperitifs such as crunchy rice with *hongos* (wild mushrooms), "frozen smoke" with fruit juice, mackerel "fossil", *pollopera* (poussin), and lotus root with an *arraitxiki* (fish-based) mousse.
But moving away from the haute cuisine of Arzak, how else can Cava be complemented in the kitchen? In order to match food to the wine, an understanding of the types of Cava available on the market is necessary. These are classified by the amount of residual sugars they contain. The types available are brut nature: (no added sugar) up to 3 g (0.10 oz) of sugar per l; extra brut: up to 6 g (0.21 oz) per l; brut: up to 15 g (0.53 oz) per l; extra seco: between 12 and 20 g (0.42 and 0.71 oz) per l; seco: between 17 and 35 g (0.60 and 1.23 oz) per l; semi-seco: between 33 and 50 g (1.16 oz and 1.76 oz) per l; and dulce: more than 50 g (1.76 oz) per l.
In general, the warmer climate in Spain means grapes ripen easily and is said to give many Cavas a softer, fruitier taste than other sparkling wines. This fruitier flavor contrasts with the more traditional, yeastier taste of Champagne and with Cava's minerality keeping bread-like aromas to a minimum, its crisp, light, fresh and clean flavor make it a perfect match for fish, seafood, poultry and creamy sauces such as mayonnaise.
For years, sparkling wine has been drunk as an aperitif, refreshingly washing down canapés and nibbles. It is true that as an accompaniment to foie, pâté and cured Ibérico ham, for example, nothing beats Cava. But it also combines brilliantly with the healthy characteristics of the Mediterranean diet: nuts, dried fruit and seasoned olives go well with dry Cavas such as brut nature and extra brut; oil-rich fish such as sardines and anchovies are associated with the more acidic Cavas, while preserved meat and sausages such as Ibérico ham or

salchichón (a type of sausage; *Spain Gourmetour* No. 77) as well as foie or Manchego cheese (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 74) have their flavors enhanced with the wine. Warm salads and sushi are also great to eat with Cava, although, as with any wine, one should be careful with the vinegar. Cava also works well with heavier meals such as red meat or game, where the bubbles act as an agent to "clean up" or neutralize the fats present in the meat, leaving one's mouth refreshed.
And as for desserts, in Spain, particularly during the festive season, it is habitually drunk as a pudding wine, the sweeter semi-secos washing down *turrón* (a type of nougat made with almonds and honey) and marzipan delicacies.
It is worth noting here that many sommeliers advise against drinking semi-secos at the end of meals to accompany sweets, noting that these sweeter wines work better as aperitifs. It is now considered worthwhile trying a brut or a brut nature with a final course such as sorbet, rice pudding or baked apple for example.

Catalan cuisine

But back to Catalonia, where we have yet to fully discover some of the delightful matches available. The Alta Alella winery in the village of Tiana produces a high level terroir Cava under the Privat label. Set up in the '90s by the Pujol-Busquets family, the bodega started producing its first wines in 2001, and they export around 40,000 bottles (15% of total production) across the globe. Their winemaking process is organic and the family has introduced international grape varieties such as Chardonnay into production, as well as re-introducing the Mataró red grape, which nearly died out because of phylloxera.
They recommend trying their product with a range of traditional dishes as well as adventuring into more innovative fare. Their Privat Opus, a Brut Nature Gran Reserva elaborated using Chardonnay grapes and aged for a minimum of 30 months, would go well with the typical Pyrenees dish *trinxat de la Cerdanya*, a hearty mash of boiled potatoes and cabbage, re-fried in a heavy pan and garnished with lard.
And what could be more quintessentially Catalan than *pa amb tomàquet*? A simple snack of bread (optionally toasted) with tomato and garlic rubbed over it and seasoned with olive oil and salt. Try accompanying it with Ibérico ham or *escalivada* (a typical Catalan mix of roast vegetables similar to ratatouille) and you have the perfect match for the persistent and intense aromas of Alta Alella's Chardonnay Brut Nature Reserva.
Cava is also always on the menu at the *calçotada* (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 55), a popular gastronomical event at the start of spring, where locals get together to eat *calçots* (a type of spring onion) en masse. The calçots are grilled on open fires similar to barbeques and then dipped in romesco sauce (typically made from ground almonds or hazelnuts, garlic, olive oil and small, dried red peppers). The feast just wouldn't be complete without washing the whole thing



down with some local Cava.
At Gramona in Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, a bodega that has stood out over many years for making Cavas with some of the longest aging on the market, they recommend trying their wines with a wide range of cuisine, drawing from Catalonia and the Mediterranean as a whole. A producer of fine wines for more than 125 years, the company came about due to the union of José Gramona, whose family grew grapes and ran a carpentry workshop, and Esperanza Batlle, heiress to the Celler Batlle winery. It remains very much a family firm and is committedly traditional in its approach to Cavas: for example, they still use a cork stopper during aging, while all others have gone over to the crown cap system. Gramona Imperial is an elegant Cava aged between three to four years, which offers a transparent perfume of apple, biscuits, spices, flowers and a suggestive sea breeze. It can accompany dried fruit and nuts, fresh fruit, or light dishes such as monkfish or a delicate langoustine and crayfish salad.

Meanwhile, the toasted tones of their magnificent award-winning Gramona III Lustros—which is sold in advance and is one of the longest-aged nature on the market—is suited to richer food. Venison in a roast chestnut sauce, poached eggs with potato foam or *butifarra blanca* (a type of Catalan sausage, *Spain Gourmetour* No. 77) and black truffle shavings make perfect accompaniments. Lamb chops or *poularde* (hen) stuffed with mushrooms and truffles are further ideas to accompany Gramona's jewel in the crown, which has recently been chosen as one of Spain's top 10 wines by the prestigious American *Wine Enthusiast* magazine (September 2009 issue).

National and international fare

In addition to local produce, it is well worth looking outside the region to find some great Cava matches in the rest of Spanish cuisine too. In La Rioja, a region famous for red wine, Jorge Muga Palacín at Bodegas Muga tells me that in certain moments in history, the area was producing more white grapes than red ones. Cava production is currently limited to the higher land in the region, where the grapes mature less easily, making still wines more difficult to produce. Muga makes a delightful brut nature in the years when cold spells prevent the grape from maturing to its full extent.
Jorge recommends accompanying his Cava with the delicious fruit and vegetables of the Ribera del Ebro, the land situated alongside the banks of the Ebro River covering parts of Navarre, La Rioja and Aragón also know as *la huerta de España* (the garden of Spain). "Daring" combinations such as the much-prized local white asparagus or a ripe tomato salad go beautifully with Cava. He also tells me his Cava goes well with poached pears in wine or with other typically Spanish sweet treats such as *torrijas* (sweet milk-soaked bread fritters), *pastel ruso* (almond-based cake) and *hojaldres* (puff pastries). Moving outside some of the more

established wine-producing areas in Spain, Valencia (eastern coast) is not usually an area associated with Cava, but over the past few years it has come to the fore with the recent establishment of Dominio de la Vega winery (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 77). It produces two delightful brut nature with a hint of Chardonnay; the seductive clean, natural and aromatic tones of the bodega's award-winning brut reserva have seen it take home the prize for Spain's best Cava at the annual Enoforum wine fair in Madrid on more than one occasion.

And what better to accompany the winery's produce than the local speciality *par excellence*—the much-famed paella? The flavorsome rice beautifully complements Cava's freshness on the palate and the wonderful versatility of paella lends itself to an array of ingredients. For a delicious and simple accompaniment to Cava try sautéing some shrimp, chicken, onions, tomatoes and garlic in olive oil in a large pan, ideally a *paellera* (the special shallow polished steel pan used for cooking paella which is traditionally round with two handles and which gives its name to the dish). Then add two fingers depth of *arroz bomba* (short-grain rice) or a similar type of rice and, of course, a pinch of saffron, and let the whole thing bubble away in stock until the rice is cooked.

Cava of course lends itself not only to Spanish cuisine, but also to international fare. With producers looking to the expanding Asian market, what better than the sparkling wine to accompany fragrant Eastern cuisine. Nelson Chow, president of the Hong Kong Association of Sommeliers, suggests quaffing down Cava with the ubiquitous *dim sum*, a delicious assortment of steamed or fried dumplings containing seafood, meat or vegetables—an Asian equivalent to Spanish tapas.

Juvé y Camps, the third biggest Cava producer after Codorníu and Freixenet, also suggests trying its produce with more exotic fare. The

SERVING CAVA

Before accompanying meals or snacks with Cava, it's worth noting the optimum conditions for drinking it. It should be served at somewhere between 5 and 7°C (44 and 46°F), not freezing cold yet not too warm either. Ideally, bottles should be kept in the fridge for around 4 hours before being consumed. Failing that, submersion in an ice bucket for around 15 to 30 minutes should do the trick.

Once uncorked, Cava should be served in flute glasses with long stems for two reasons. Firstly, so that the wine doesn't become warm from the hand, ensuring a constant temperature in the glass, and secondly, to make sure there are also plenty of bubbles due to the flute's smaller surface area. The sign of a great Cava is one where the bubbles are small and form a constant line rising from the bottom of the glass upwards. A note of warning for the ladies though: it is unadvisable to wear lipstick when drinking Cava, as the anti-foaming agents present in some brands can kill off the bubbles.

company notes that the fruity tones of its pinot noir brut rosé go ideally with Japanese cuisine such as sushi or sashimi. The winery, which started producing Cavas in the 1920s, is yet another family business which has been passed down through generations. With a solid reputation in Spain, sales really began to take off in the 1980s as the company expanded, looking particularly towards the UK, US, German and Japanese markets, which remain its product's biggest consumers.

Perhaps one of its best known Cavas is the Reserva de la Familia Brut Nature. Made up of 40% Macabeo, 20% Xarel·lo and 40% Parellada, the winery strongly recommends trying this delightful pale golden Cava with dishes of a stronger texture: hearty stews, casseroles and roast meat, for example. It is also excellent with spicy food and cheeses, particularly with blue cheese or cured sheeps' and goats' cheese.

Seny and rauxa

To a great extent, the story of Cava encompasses those two much-talked-about co-existing Catalan character traits: *seny* and *rauxa*. In English, seny translates as something like "common sense", whereas rauxa is the complete opposite, meaning "outburst or explosion". In the art world, for example, no one better encompasses this trait than the modernist architect Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926). A reserved and highly conservative man in his private life, he was capable of designing the most breathtakingly out-of-this-world buildings which still to this day constitute some of Barcelona's most emblematic monuments.

The establishment of Cava as a global player has been achieved through hard work, good business acumen and family tradition (seny) as we have seen with all the bodegas mentioned in this article. But along the way, innovation and spontaneous acts (rauxa) have helped consolidate Cava's position as the second-most consumed sparkling wine in the world. These acts, such as Freixenet's multi-million dollar ad campaigns, or the wineries' insistence in always looking for ways of modernizing and enhancing techniques and equipment, have led to a huge improvement in the quality and reputation of Cava. The bodegas have learned to move with the times, introducing different grape varieties such as Chardonnay into production. This type of grape, which has only been used in production since the '80s, has brought elegance, structure and aromatic complexity to the wine.

The organic winery Albet i Noya is another example of innovation. When it was set up in 1977, it was the first of its kind in Spain. Now it produces over a million bottles of organic wine, 20% of which are exported. And the recent development of futuristic delicacies such as "solid" Cava—created for the Agustí Torelló Mata bodega by the Roca brothers (Celler de Can Roca, Girona)—further cement the idea of rauxa playing its part in Cava's evolution.

While for years the sweeter Cavas sold by the truckload, it is only recently that the brut and brut nature have come to be more appreciated. In the case of companies such as Gramona and Torelló, both of which make Cavas

SNAPSHOT

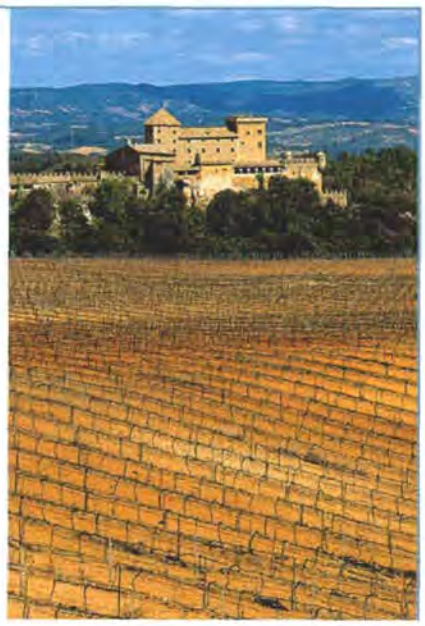
Cava producing wineries: 272

Area of vineyard dedicated to Cava: 33,706 ha (83,289 acres)

Production (2008): 228,050,000 bottles, 60% of which are exported

Export by type (2008): brut nature and extra brut 1%, brut 40%, seco 16% and semi-seco 36%

Source: Cava Regulatory Council



with long aging, this is certainly the case. It is perhaps with some of these wonderful wines that we can fully understand the winemakers' insistence upon drinking their produce with any type of food. Just as in Penedès, Cava should be treated like any other great wine and drunk to accompany a whole range of culinary treats.

Looking to the future

Long considered a low-cost alternative to other sparkling wines, Cava is steadily shedding its image to be considered a top-quality tipple in its own right. Production of the wine is now at an all-time high, with around 100 million bottles consumed every year within Spain and even more exported abroad (Snapshot, page 48). Despite the current economic climate, UK retailers are still seeing sales of Cava rising, with supermarket chain Sainsbury reporting increased sales in January 2009. In 2008, Codorníu reported a 135% increase in sales of its wines in the US, while Germany consolidated its position as the world's top Cava consumer with over 50 million bottles sold in the same year, a 25% improvement on 2007.

So the future looks sparkling. And perhaps this is in part due to the versatility of a wine which enhances the flavors of sweet and savory dishes alike. It is a beverage that can be enjoyed not only as an aperitif or to make a toast, but also as an everyday table wine to be quaffed in the company of family and friends. So despite Cava's undeniable appeal as an ideal way to get the party started, it's also worth remembering the people of Penedès when looking for that perfect wine match.

Ian Cowley *is a Madrid-based British journalist. He contributes pieces on Spain to a variety of publications and broadcasters including BBC radio and television and the lifestyle sections of* HELLO! *and* ¡HOLA! *magazines.*

Where SCIENCE Meets Cuisine

Though today's avant-garde chefs are sometimes accused of turning their kitchens into scientific laboratories, there's no doubt that when a piece of meat is heated, the reaction that takes place is a chemical one. It's as simple as that. Science and cooking are processes that go hand-in-hand, now more than ever before.

TEXT
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TRANSLATION
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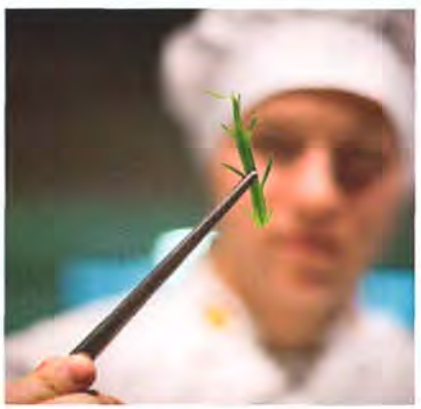
The link between science and cuisine is nothing new. Scientific disciplines such as chemistry, physics, biology and botany have always been closely related to cooking, but never before had this link been so seriously studied. Debates about the existence of science-based cuisine—such as the one held at the last edition of the madridfusión food conference—or the worldwide controversy over the terms "molecular gastronomy" and "molecular cuisine" have made the subject a topical one. To analyze it, we need to consider the approach adopted by certain chefs and other experts who are not prepared to just accept that things happen. They want to know why they happen. This determination to go further, to understand the processes taking place when food is cooked is what has marked the turning point in the debate.

"I'm not interested in knowing what goes on inside an egg when I cook it. I only want it to taste good." This statement made by Santi Santamaría (Restaurant Can Fabes, three Michelin stars), in the presence of hundreds of colleagues, today sounds more like the sort of thing a gourmet would say, rather than a chef. Most of today's professionals are extremely interested in what goes on inside the ingredients they use. They want to get the best out of them and use their skills to adapt them to their needs. Chefs today are inquisitive because they feel knowledge can help them develop. Yet



there are many questions that have no easy answer. How do foods change when we cook them? How can we make lighter preparations? Is it possible to extract flavor? Can we alter food textures?

And it is here that they resort to science: chemistry, biology, physics. And today's R&D+c (research and development applied to cooking) is one of the main contributions made to culinary history by the latest generation of chefs.

From Appert to today

Up to the 19th century, it was scientists who had shown interest in the culinary world by making technological innovations for food preservation, a real hurdle that man had forever been seeking to overcome. In the early 19th century, master confectioner Nicolas Appert introduced "appertization", a technique for preserving food by heating it, after first bringing out his book *L'Art de conserver, pendant plusieurs années, toutes les substances animales et végétales* (Paris, 1810, The Art of Preserving all Kinds of Animal and Vegetable Substances for Several Years). In it, he described the research that won him an award from the French government for a system for preserving food for troops on the march. Half way through the same century, French engineer Ferdinand Carré brought out the first absorption refrigerator, substantially changing trade in food and triggering the start of the food industry.

In the 20th century, it was cooks that took the initiative and started to ask for assistance from technicians and scientists. In 1974, at the instigation of Jean and Pierre Troisgros, Georges Pralus showed how vacuum cooking could prevent foie gras from shrinking during cooking. Since then,

collaboration between chefs and scientists has never stopped.
It was in the 1980s that it really blossomed. The parents of molecular gastronomy, French physical chemist Hervé This, a professor at the Sorbonne, and Hungarian-born UK resident Nicholas Kurti (who, back in 1969, had given a lecture at London's Royal Society entitled "The Physicist in the Kitchen") announced that they intended to place science at the service of culinary creativity in the search for new flavors, textures and gastronomic experiences. They thus laid the foundations for part of contemporary cooking.
Almost at the same time, in 1984, professor Harold McGee published *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen*, the bible for many a chef, which has now been translated into numerous languages, including Spanish.
And it was during this same decade that Ferran Adrià and his team started to open up new paths in collaboration with scientists at lightning speed. His work was imitated by several Spanish chefs, and together they formed a movement that set trends all over the world.
Many subsequent events backed their initiatives. In 2005 in Italy, physicist Davide Cassi and chef Ettore Bocchia published "Manifesto della Cucina Molecolare Italiana", helping coin the term "molecular cuisine".
And, in spite of much confusion and controversy, the movement that relates science to cuisine has adopted this name internationally. All its participants, whether they accept the label or not, maintain that once you understand the changes that take place in food, the only limits to cooking are set by the palate and the eye, and that the interaction between science and cuisine can be very beneficial for both.
In this context, the huge creativity of Spanish chefs propelled them into the lead of this international movement. But they are not alone there. Other chefs such as Heston Blumenthal, Pierre Gagnaire, Grant Achatz and Massimo Bottura are all working along similar lines.
Although molecular cuisine first sparked the interest of Ferran Adrià back in the 1980s, his research made a lasting mark on the international scene, where he is still today considered the leader, and in Spain, because he was followed by chefs such as Joan Roca (El Celler de Can Roca, three Michelin stars), who, in the early '90s, started to experiment with low temperature cooking and eventually created the Roner thermostat (*Spain Gourmetour*, No. 73).
In the 21st century the movement spread, with landmarks being set by Andoni Aduriz (Mugaritz, three Michelin stars) in collaboration with Granada University professor of pathological anatomy Raimundo García del Moral for their work on foie gras, and by Dani García (Calima, one Michelin star) also with García del Moral, for the culinary use of liquid nitrogen.
To reflect what was going on in kitchens and laboratories in Spain and the world in general, in 2004 the first interdisciplinary meeting on molecular cuisine was held in Spain. "What can science teach cooking?" was the

question asked by chemists, chefs, physicists, sommeliers, food scientists and other specialists at the Universidad del Mar in Murcia (southeast Spain). Many of the famous names were there: Adrià, Aduriz, García, Roca, This, Cassi, Castells (the chemist in charge of gastronomic and scientific research for the Alícia Foundation). Since then, many other similar and equally successful meetings have been held.

The elBulli method

Chefs have always created new dishes; it forms part of their job. But they have been doing it in their restaurants, without moving away from the production process and often being creative for practical reasons (to replace certain ingredients, to use products that would otherwise be wasted, to save time, etc.).
But in late 1998, Oriol Castro and Albert Adrià, the research team at elBulli, separated creativity from production, creating the first culinary research workshop.

"We had always created dishes," explains Ferran Adrià, "but we did it in the kitchen. But then things reached bursting point. We were bringing out so many new recipes that we had to separate the innovative part from the everyday cooking for the restaurant."
At the start, Oriol and Albert continued to work on the same premises as the rest of the team, but then they moved to Talaia (the restaurant managed by the elBulli team in Barcelona) until 2000. It was then that the elBulli laboratory was opened, with a team of six or seven people working exclusively on product research and creative development.
"From then on, everything became even more complicated and the team became multidisciplinary. Eventually, the scientific workshop under Pere Castells had to go its own way because of the costs involved, and because there was not much point in its working for a single restaurant. That was when we set up the Alícia Foundation (*Alimentación y Ciencia*, Food and Science; Leading organizations, page 62), which is open to any chefs who want to come along."
Alícia is an atypical research center. Pere Castells, who is in charge of its gastronomic and scientific research department, explains what makes it different. "Here, science is at the service of cooking, not the other way round as, for example, in the case of Hervé This. In Spain, it's the chefs that decide and the scientists are here to find the tools, the solutions the chefs need."
Today the members of the elBulli creative team under Ferran Adrià are Oriol Castro (at elBulli since 1996), Eduard Xatruch (since 1998), Mateu Casañas and Eugeni de Diego, four chefs who work as required with designers, chemists, biologists, etc. From the start they have always followed a scientific working method: everything is weighed, measured, tested, noted down.
"To tell the truth," says Adrià, "it doesn't surprise me that there are so few restaurants in the world with their own workshops, separate from the restaurant. It's tremendously expensive. The annual cost is no less

than 250,000 euros, so the best way of doing things is in collaboration with universities and research centers. Basically, what you really need in cooking are ideas, creativity. Science and techniques are just there as a back-up, allowing chefs to convert their dreams into reality. A means, never an end in themselves."
Although Spain continues in the lead in so-called "scientific cooking" (a term Adrià rejects) and the techniques developed by Spanish chefs (foams, airs, spherification, veils, distillates, smoke) are now used by hundreds of their colleagues all over the world, from Denmark to Australia, in 2007 elBulli changed its strategy. The focus on creativity turned back to products. "From 2003 to 2006 we were working on hydrocolloids, magical substances that allowed us to achieve fantastic changes in food textures," explains Adrià. "It was a great experience, but then we analyzed what we had done and found we could go no further. We had hoped for more, but we came to a dead end and had to focus once more on products. In this field Xatruch is amazing. He knows everything: he knows the producers, the varieties, what you can do with every type of product. Since 2008, we've been working with products from Japan, following the same method that we've always used. We take a product and experiment with it as far as we can go. It's another way of researching, creating. It's very basic, but very exciting."

Eco-chefs and environmental research

Now that the mystique of technology seems to have faded, chefs all over the world have turned their attention to products from near and far to discover everything they have to reveal. Eco-cuisine is now the talk of the town. Its followers include Rene Redzepi (Noma, in Copenhagen), Dan Barber (Blue Hill, in New York) and Peter Gilmore (Quay, in Sydney).
This path was taken a while ago by some chefs, such as Josean Martínez Alija (Restaurante Guggenheim, in Bilbao). Instead of wearing a chemist-chef hat, he is more of a biologist-chef. His research aims above all to study the culinary results of local produce, especially vegetables: leek, tomato, onion, cardoon, celery, teardrop peas, etc. He works with nearby growers, selecting varieties, watching over the plants and choosing sizes, producing vegetables à la carte. "A chef is not a researcher and a kitchen is not a laboratory. What I want is light, healthy cooking, with the emphasis on flavor and aroma", says Martínez Alija. "I search for the best possible produce for my dishes." This is a new approach to luxury, one that rejects elitist products, preferring simple ingredients treated in just the right way to bring out maximum flavor and texture. The Guggenheim restaurant's creative team includes chefs, biologists and food scientists, five of them in total, all working on tracking down and comparing the best products.
Rodrigo de la Calle (De la Calle, in Aranjuez, close to Madrid) is another of the young eco-chefs and is committed to sustainable cuisine and environmental research. He works

alongside Santiago Orts, a biologist and the owner of Viveros Huerto del Cura (a nursery mostly growing palm trees located in Elche, in eastern Spain). Together they have carried out some interesting work, what they call "datology", the use of dates in cuisine, and "gastrobotany", the culinary use of "desert vegetables", those that grow in extremely dry conditions and take on unexpected qualities once cooked. "I don't have a workshop, nor could I afford it. What I do is field work. I started out with Orts in Elche, but now I've started some projects in the Aranjuez valley where my restaurant is located. The idea is to recover and relaunch some of Madrid's best traditional crops: strawberries, asparagus," says De la Calle.
Along these same lines is the research carried out by other chefs, such as Paco Roncero, who has studied olive oil (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 72); María José San Román and her analysis of how saffron behaves in different conditions (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 74); Koldo Rodero with red cardoon and other vegetables from the Navarran market gardens; and Angel León and his studies into marine plankton.

Research and abstraction

Products were also the starting point for Quique Dacosta (El Poblet, three Michelin stars, in Denia). He did some magnificent work on rice and laid it out in a book called just that, *Rice*; he also studied aloe vera, *Stevia rebaudiana* and microgreens and sprouts. Sometimes research goes so far as to inspire new icons. The final objective of such creative digressions is aesthetic beauty, the pure pleasure of seeing and tasting. That is when products take on a different purpose, being transformed and becoming minerals, landscapes, paintings, all the while retaining every bit of their flavor, aroma and texture. This complexity is neither frequent nor common, but it occasionally appears. It is this search for magic that inspires the creative work done by Dacosta and his team. "What we have is more of a creative studio than a scientific or research workshop," he explains. "Chefs are chefs, not scientists. Science is one of the tools we can use, but we try not to be dogmatic about it." The studio has existed physically at El Poblet since 2006, when it moved out of the restaurant. Heading it is Juanfran Valiente, who has worked with

Dacosta for ten years. The last few years have seen many advances, especially in new lines for culinary expression based on artistic movements such as essentialism, mimicry and expressionism applied to cuisine. He admits: "There are very few cooks in the world who really do research. It's too expensive and completely new paths are difficult to find. But you never know what working with scientists and researchers might lead to. It's really fascinating!" This opinion is shared by Juan Mari Arzak (Arzak, three Michelin stars, in San Sebastian), who continues to create dishes together with his daughter and Xabier Gutierrez (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 73). "A lifetime of cooking goes a long way, but it's important to never lose curiosity and interest in what you are doing. That's what pushes you to cross new boundaries and pay attention to people coming along with new ideas," says this master of chefs.

Intellectual commitment

Andoni L. Aduriz has always been in favor of linking gastronomy with other disciplines—art, mathematics, psychology—perhaps with the intuition that this might give added dignity to cooking. This non-conformist approach was made plain at the Dialogues on Cuisine congress that he established. Held in early 2009 in San Sebastian under the auspices of Euro-Toques (the European community of chefs), prestigious speakers (both chefs and intellectuals) discussed the current state of research and development and the future of cuisine intertwined with other disciplines.

By way of written proof of the important role Spain has been playing in haute cuisine in recent years, Aduriz has embarked on an exciting project for a gastronomic and scientific journal to be produced in collaboration with the prestigious publishing house Elsevier, and AZTI-Tecnalia (Technological Center for the Sea and Food, located in the Basque Country, in northern Spain) and Alícia. If all goes as planned, the first issue should come out in the first quarter of 2010. The idea is to offer gastronomic information and culture to an international readership of not just chefs but also scientists. Since 2006, Aduriz has been working with AZTI-Tecnalia on the publication of a bulletin on science and gastronomy, available at www.cienciaygastronomia.com.

"It is both surprising and encouraging to see how cuisine is finding a place in scientific circles," explains Aduriz. "A few months ago I had the opportunity to talk to some scientists who had won Spain's Prince of Asturias Award. They told me they were fascinated by the links between the brain and food and felt it was a very promising area of research for the future."

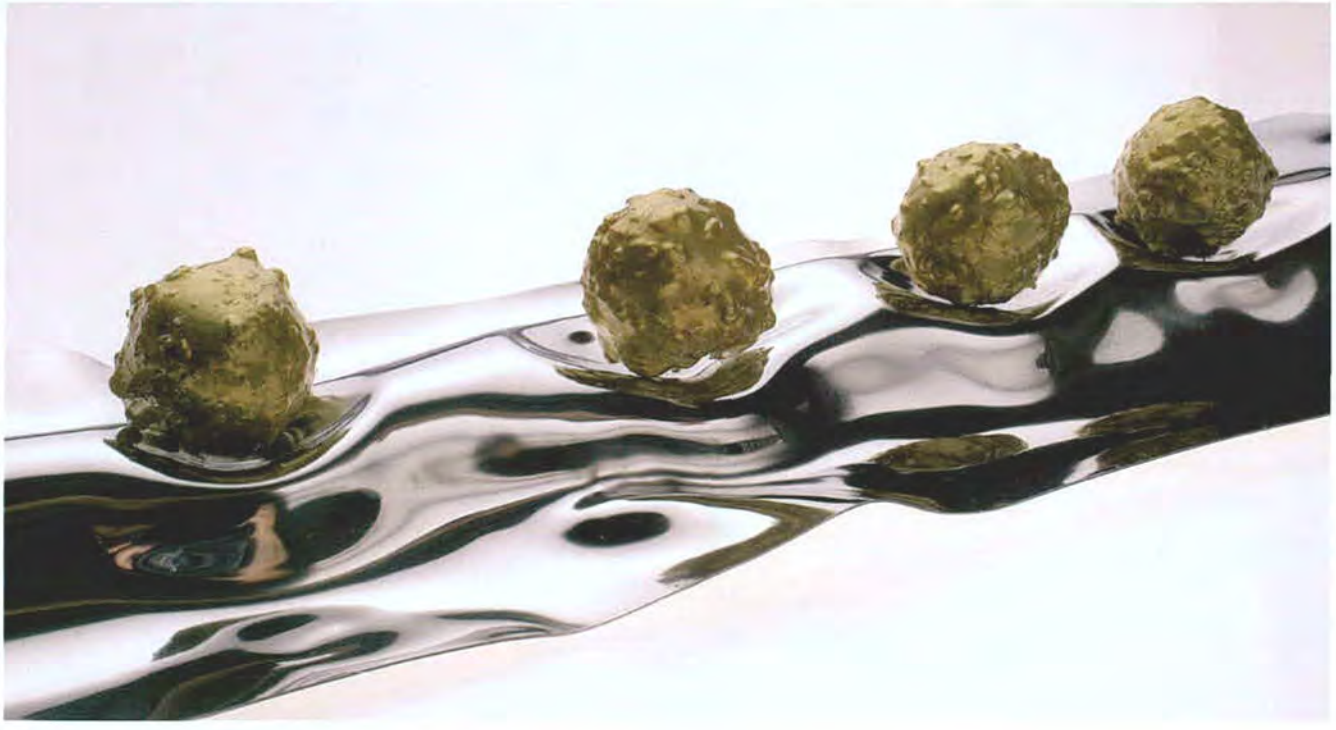
At Mugaritz, research and development are key driving forces. Aduriz has created a following in Spain and elsewhere. "The more you do, the more difficult things get. I'm very slow. I can take up to four years to finalize a dish, and this gives rise to problems

galore, including that of being copied. Many people might think it's ridiculous to talk about culinary espionage, but it is frankly disheartening to find that a colleague somewhere, maybe thousands of miles away, has taken over a development that you've been working on for years. This has happened to us several times. About a hundred chefs work in our kitchen every year. So, to avoid it, and since you can't patent a dish or a technique, anyone coming to work at Mugaritz is asked to sign a confidentiality agreement, just as if they were employed by a technology company."

This year, in collaboration with Porto-Muiños (a company producing all sorts of marine crops, but mainly seaweed, *Spain Gourmetour* No. 72), the Mugaritz team is exploring the potential of halophytes that grow along the coast, such as sea asparagus, sea purslane and others.

The lab at Mugaritz functions independently from the restaurant, led by Dani Lasa, Aduriz's right-hand man. Chef Javier Vergara and chemist Gema Serrano work in collaboration with other specialists (pharmacists, botanists) as required. "We know this is going to grow. The workshop has to maintain itself and not depend on the restaurant."

For the last five years, the team has been collaborating with AZTI on lines of work that link cuisine, science and industry, building solutions for the



food sector and for other business areas. The interaction is beneficial to both sides. Their impression is that food and nutrition are set to become a new field of interest now that gastronomy is finding a niche in university circles.

Inventiveness

In cuisine, research does not only mean discovering new products or creating new dishes, it also leads to the invention of new devices, mechanisms and methods that help resolve the problems chefs face on a daily basis. Key inventors are the Roca brothers. They transformed a laboratory

LEADING ORGANIZATIONS

Alícia (*Alimentación y Ciencia*, Food and Science)
Alícia is a foundation set up by the government of Catalonia and the Caixa Manresa savings bank. Its Advisory Board, chaired by Ferran Adrià, receives advice from Spanish cardiologist Valentín Fuster, one of the world's most respected doctors in his field and a former President of the World Heart Federation. This research center aims to carry out technological innovation in cuisine and to disseminate food and gastronomy know-how. It is open to the public and offers workshops on a wide variety of topics and for all ages. By helping chefs use science, it hopes to encourage healthier eating habits.
It is working on a series of projects with different chefs, including one on diabetes in collaboration with Barcelona's Hospital Clinic, another on the diet of women with breast cancer, and various on other specific subjects (frying, controlled-temperature cuisine, patisserie, etc.).
www.alicia.cat (Catalan, English, Spanish)

Alcotec (*Alta Cocina y Tecnología*, Haute Cuisine and Technology)
This organization was created six years ago as a collaborative project between the government of Aragon (through its departments of Science, Technology and University, and Industry, Trade and Tourism) and the University of Zaragoza. Its aim is to introduce scientific working methods to chefs to facilitate innovation and development.
www.gastronomia-aragonesa.com/gastronomia/alcotec.php (Spanish)

Instituto Culinario Vasco (Basque Culinary Center)
This is a newly-created body, part of the University of Mondragón, which boasts the support of all the great Basque chefs. Its mission is to train the chefs of the 21st century, whose qualifications will have university status.
www.bculinary.com (Spanish)

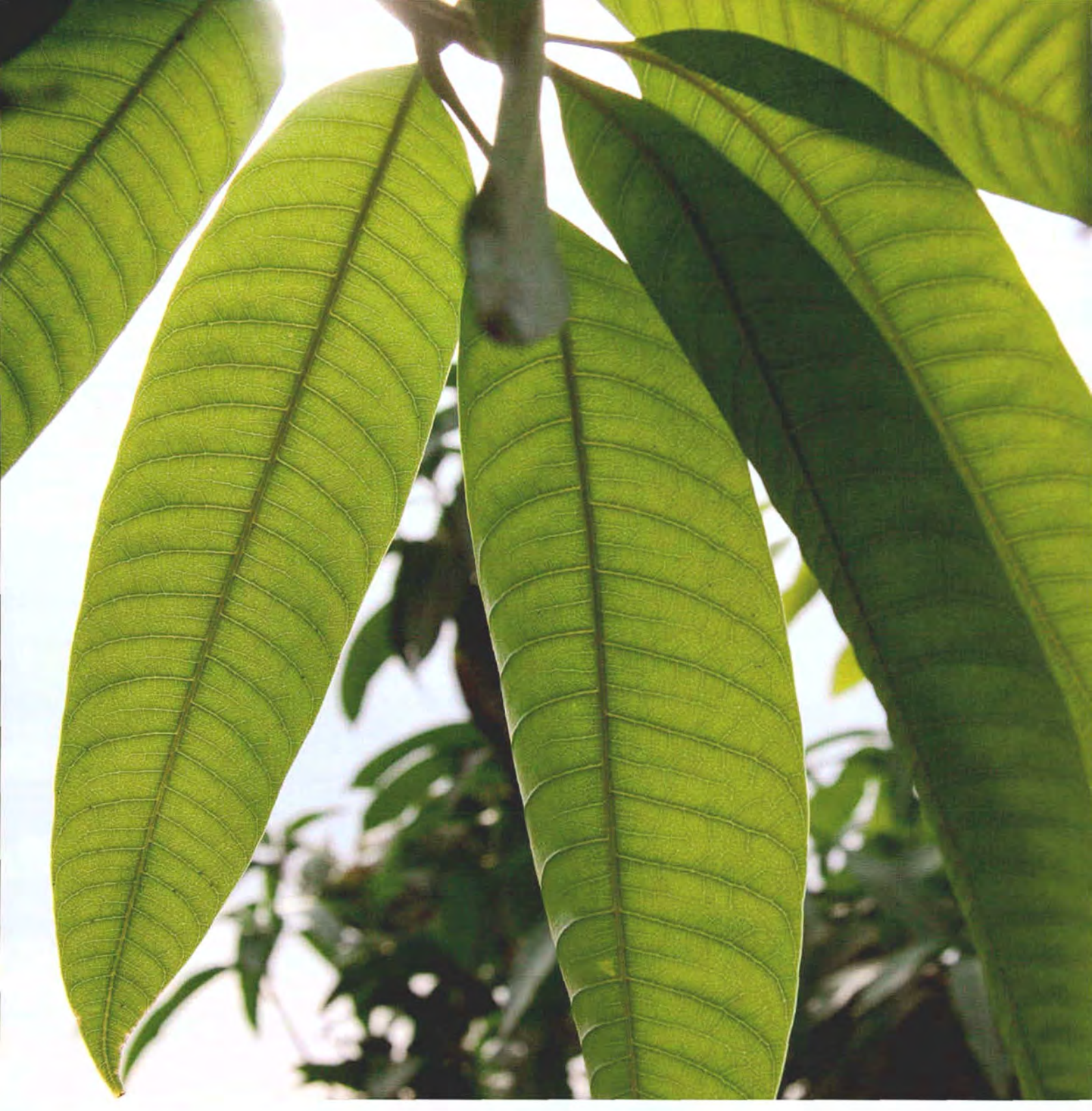
Ferran Adrià Chair
Part of Camilo José Cela University in Madrid, the Chair is open to university students in any discipline and aims to promote gastronomic culture, encouraging students to take an interest in food-related topics. Classes can be followed via the university's internet classroom.
www.ucjc.edu/index.php?section=estudios/titulaciones/catedras/catedra-ferran-adria (Spanish)

apparatus into an essential tool for contemporary cuisine, the Roner thermostat, making it possible to control the temperature of cooking water with total precision. Also, with the help of the Alicia Foundation and the company ICC (International Cooking Concepts, *Spain Gourmetour* No. 73), they converted a rotary evaporator into the Rotaval, for producing distillates. Another essential advance that makes life much easier for today's chefs is the sous-vide method. All these achievements form part of the history of modern cooking. "We've always been free spirits," explains Joan Roca. "Our method is simply to follow our intuition and work by trial and error. One of us has an idea, then the three of us get thinking. Ever since we started working with the Alicia Foundation and Pere Castells, things have been going much more smoothly."

Their workshop is located in what was their restaurant, which has now moved to more luxurious premises. The youngest of the three, Jordi, head of research, works with a couple of chefs on the ideas suggested by his brothers Joan and sommelier Josep. Once they start following up an idea, they like to do things thoroughly, which explains why they are still working on lines of research they started up many years ago: perfume-themed desserts, cooking with wine, smoke as a vehicle for aromas, sous-vide cooking, etc. And they have also opened up a new field of study for the extraction of essential oils.

This brief history of cuisine and research would be incomplete without mentioning, in addition to his exploration of the use of liquid nitrogen, other work done by Dani García in collaboration with Raimundo García del Moral in connection with frying (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 72) and Ibérico pork fat. Other important names include: Eneko Atxa (Restaurante Azurmendi, one Michelin star, in Bilbao, and Villa Magna in Madrid), who is working on impregnating aromas together with Juan Manuel Madariaga, professor of analytical chemistry at the University of Bilbao; and Pedro Subijana (Akelarre, three Michelin stars, in San Sebastian). The Universities of Valencia, Navarre, Zaragoza and A Coruña are also collaborating with local chefs. Finally, mention must be made of research in the field of patisserie, headed by Paco Torreblanca, Oriol Balaguer, Jordi Butrón, Christian Escribà, Miguel Sierra, Enric Rovira, and Ramon Morató, among others.

***Julia Pérez**, a journalist and food writer, has been editing the food sections of a number of women's publications* (Mía Cocina, Vogue, Gala, Biba, Elle) *for more than 15 years. She writes regularly for the newspaper* El Mundo *and the magazines* Esquire, Spanorama *and* Vino+Gastronomía, *as well as other Spanish and foreign publications. She has written a number of books and restaurant guides. In 2005 she was awarded the National Gastronomy Award for the best journalistic piece.*



Waking up to Fruit

TROPICAL

Mango and Papaya

For centuries, mango and papaya plants have been an exotic, ornamental presence in the gardens of the well-to-do in the Canary Islands (the Spanish archipelago that sits in the Atlantic, opposite the northwest coast of Africa) and Málaga (southern Spain), their headily fragrant fruits with their rich orange flesh providing the householder with the occasional delicious treat. In the 1980s, however, trailblazing farmers with a good eye for developing markets recognized their potential and started growing them as a commercial crop.

TEXT
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JUAN MANUEL SANZ/©ICEX

TRANSLATION
HAWYS PRITCHARD/©ICEX

One wakes up in the Canary Islands to sea air with its iodine tang; a backdrop of bitter green banana palms and rustling, pine-clad hillsides; and papaya juice and mango fruit salad for breakfast. Equivalent impressions of the Málaga coast are of an intensely blue sky above a vivid green expanse of mango plantations carpeting the gentle lower slopes of the Sierras de Málaga mountains.

Papayas and mangoes arrived in coastal Spain from the distant tropics in the 18th century, a period when Spain's possessions still extended over four continents, an empire on which the sun never set. The first mangoes were brought in on galleons from the Philippines (though the species originated in India), and papayas on merchant ships from the Americas. For 200 years, papayas (which grow from the trunk of attractive, elegant trees) and mangoes (which hang, earring-like, from goblet-shaped bushes), led a sheltered life in gardens and orchards, acquiring particular characteristics from Atlantic influences in the case of the Canaries, and Mediterranean ones in the case of coastal Málaga.

From garden to marketplace

In the almost tropical climate that both areas enjoy, the papaya and mango trees that once graced local gardens have successfully transmuted into cultivars grown in protected greenhouses in the Canaries and open-air plantations in Málaga.

According to Antonio Sarmiento, one of the farmers who pioneered mango

production in Málaga, he and his co-growers made the major moves that this entailed for one simple reason: "It was love!" Antonio remembers tasting mango for the first time, over 25 years ago, and thinking to himself "This is just delicious!" From that day on, he has eaten a mango every morning without fail, a fact to which he attributes his excellent health at 77 years of age. He is still fully involved in the daily running of his farm, located in Benamocarra, on one of the south-facing slopes of the Tejera and Almijara mountain ranges. Sarmiento explains that the varieties most commonly grown around here are Osteen, Kent and Keitt, known for their melt-in-the-mouth flesh, citrus aromas and outstanding sweetness. These mangoes' reddish-purple skins gleam in the sun from first thing in the morning during the harvest months (September and October), embellishing the Vélez-Málaga to Benamargosa stretch of the road through Axarquía (a district in easternmost Málaga province).

Antonio observes that, for the most part, mangoes were something of a hobby for farmers whose main crop was something quite different but who were convinced that that these exotic fruits had a promising future. His son David, who has a degree in agricultural engineering, points out that this proved to be a beneficial arrangement in that the special attention lavished on the more picturesque sideline has produced a mango that is very distinctive, and recognizably Spanish. David Sarmiento believes that Spanish mangoes are discernibly different in flavor and aroma because they are harvested almost as soon as they ripen on the plant: as a result, they contain a higher percentage of sugar than any others in the European marketplace. Spanish mangoes can reach 20 degrees Brix, compared with the 12 or 14 degrees found in fruits coming into Europe from other sources and harvested before they are ripe. Furthermore, Spanish mangoes are the only ones in the world that reach the marketplace clad in their own waxen coat (a natural protective layer secreted by the fruit itself), and therefore not washed or treated with edible varnishes or fungicides. "It's completely natural," comments David as he takes us through the elaborate process that enables these punctilious producers to present their product just as nature intended.

Mangoes are picked from the tree one by one; their stalks are cut off then and there, and the fruit is meticulously positioned upside down on the ground to release the latex or sap that would otherwise stain their velvety skin. After an hour and a half, they are put into crates and transported to the packing

CULINARY FARE

MANGO AND PAPAYA

plant in Vélez-Málaga. The plant belongs to the Sociedad Agraria de Transformación, the agricultural processing company better known as TROPS. Representing 1,100 farmers, TROPS is Spain's biggest mango producer: it accounts for 80% of the 10 million kg (22,046,226 lb) of mangoes harvested in Spain each year. Much of the mango harvest is dispatched from TROPS to the main markets in France, the UK and Germany, the fruit tucked into little boxes amid blue cellophane paper which shows off the deep purple of their skins, perfect beneath their coating of natural wax.
TROPS's manager, Enrique Colilles, is of the opinion that, within four to five years, Spain's mango production will have doubled to keep pace with the ever-increasing demand for this seductive fruit, desirable not only for its delicious flavor but also for its health-giving properties and emerging culinary potential.

Tropical forest in the Atlantic

Meanwhile, mangoes are doing just as well in the Atlantic setting of the Canary Islands as they are in Mediterranean Andalusia, with the added bonus that papayas (another tropical fruit whose career path in the wake of the mango's is proving just as successful) are also grown commercially in the Canaries.
On Tenerife (one of the seven islands that constitute the Canary archipelago), the greenhouses within which most of the papaya production takes place are just a stone's throw away from tourist beaches and holiday hotels. With its hot, moist climate and mean temperature of 20°C (68°F), this coastal area of the Canaries is the only part of Spain where papayas are grown.
One can just make out the slender shapes of the papaya plants through

the greenhouses' white stretchy fabric walls. The papaya is a prolific plant: its teardrop-shaped fruit grow out of the main trunk all year round. Stepping inside, one enters a sort of idealized tropical forest, richly aromatic and vividly green and decorative: no wonder papayas are still such a feature of local gardens and banana plantation perimeters.
Ase Guren, manager of Aguadulce (an agricultural processing company set up 30 years ago, based in the south of Tenerife Island) has been completely won over by papayas. For many years, the company's greenhouses were used for growing aromatic herbs and ornamental plants, but they have now been given over entirely to veritable forests of papayas. The current production figure stands at around 100,000 kg (220,462 lb) a year, all of which is absorbed by the local market at present. Ase's ambition is to get papayas to a wider public, and she believes that the best way of achieving this is through cooperation among the farmers. With that end in view, she belongs to a group of producers who are promoting the creation of a quality brand that will identify their fruit as *Papaya de Canarias*.

LYCHEES AND MORE

Spurred on by the propitious climatic conditions in the Canary Islands and southern Spain, new tropical and subtropical fruit are being tried out as crops. Experiments with lychees and carambolas (star fruit) from the Far East, mamees from the Caribbean, pitaya (strawberry pear) from the Antilles and passion fruit from South America are already under way in the Spanish countryside.
Lychees, or Chinese gooseberries, are recognizable by their deep pink skin, opalescent white flesh and sweet, delicate floral aroma. Generally eaten either fresh or preserved in syrup, they are also served with meat and fish. As their name suggests, star fruit are star-shaped and deep yellow in color. They have a citrus flavor and are eaten either fresh or as an ingredient in vinaigrettes. Mamees have hard, rough, brown skin yet their flesh is creamy and delicious: they are a marvelous smoothie ingredient and are also very successful in jams and sorbets. Pitayas are the fruit of a cactus native to the Americas. On the outside, they are an attractive pink color, while the inside is white and dotted with little black seeds. Passion fruit have a crumpled outer skin within which is a mass of hard seeds draped in a gelatinous pulp whose powerful, slightly acidic floral flavor is what gives this fruit its appeal.
All these fruits are being grown to satisfy the quirks of a market that is increasingly eager for new taste sensations, which the "European tropics" are starting to satisfy abundantly.

Other like-minded farmers include Félix Molina of Cuplamol. For some years now he has been growing varieties other than Maradol, the most common variety in the Canaries. He has been working with Silouet and Intenzza, which, as he reports, come out higher on the Brix scale. The new varieties' fruit are quite distinctive in taste and smell: clean and fresh in the mouth with hints of mint in the case of Intenzza and jasmine in the case of Silouet. Félix's pride in his results is patent as he shows us examples of the fruit; he is confident that the international market is ready and waiting for papayas of this kind. For the moment, however, sales beyond the Canary Islands are little more than token.

Tenerife-born brothers Pipo and Adán are promoting the planting of new varieties from within their company, Semillas del Caribe. In their view, in addition to the fruit's organoleptic characteristics and shiny orange skins, their plus points include an inbuilt resilience to minor bumps and the wear and tear that transport inevitably involves, making them a suitable crop for export. The brothers represent a new wave in a movement begun by pioneers like Miguel González, one of the earliest nursery growers in the Canary Islands to breed rootstocks of papaya and mango nearly 30 years ago. He is a keen botanist, as is his son Zebenzui; consequently, they have built up a wide-ranging collection of these fruit trees, extending their sphere of interest to include new tropical trees such as mamees, lychees, carambolas (star fruit) and passion fruit. A stroll around the greenhouses at their company HQ, La Cosma, in the little Tenerife town of Bajamar (in the northeast of the island) is like a visit to an exotic botanic garden, sheltered by mountains yet benefiting from the moisture that reaches it from the nearby sea. Miguel believes that more and more hotels in these tourist-orientated islands are starting to enjoy and capitalize on the distinction of not only stunningly beautiful surroundings, but also dishes and fruit that only these islands can offer and that leave an enduring impression on visitors.

Indeed, hotel complexes are among the main customers of Savasa, a Tenerife company that produces bananas and other tropical fruit such as mango, papaya and pineapple. Their greenhouses, located right at the sea's edge in Buenavista (in the north of the island), produce 16,000 kg (35,273 lb) of mangoes and 60,000 kg (132,277 lb) of pineapples a year. The town slopes gently down towards the Atlantic from the Macizo de Teno mountains and possesses a microclimate that its inhabitants swear gives its fruit a special flavor. The mean temperature around here is 20°C (68°F) all year round, which allows the fruit to ripen slowly, the rhythm set by the beating of the waves whose foam drifts up as far as the fabric of the greenhouses. As he darts about the estate, Savasa's technical expert, Juan Carlos Hernández, seems to embody the company's motivating principle, which is: "To lead the field and anticipate market trends".

Bombe surprise

The heady scent of mango and the sensual sweetness of papaya leave few people unmoved. Devotees include Spain's most famous chef, Ferran Adrià. He has given creative expression to his appreciation of mangoes in many dishes, often using innovative techniques such as spherification to do so. Spherification is a process that creates a thin gelatinous layer around liquids (by mixing calcium chloride and alginate) so that they seem to explode in the mouth. It is one of the most revolutionary techniques used by the chef at three-Michelin-star elBulli in Roses (Girona, Catalonia), and can be used to make mock caviar, gnocchi and ravioli. In fact, one of the first dishes in which Adrià (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 66) used the technique was mango juice ravioli. Adrià is not alone: other Spanish chefs have also been using mango in their dishes for years. One notable example is José Carlos García (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 54), chef at Málaga's Café de Paris (one Michelin star). His parents (the restaurant's founders) are originally from Rincon de la Victoria, a town in the Axarquía area of Málaga that is the hub of Spain's mango production. Encarna and Pepe used to serve mangoes simply as seasonal fresh fruit or made into a refreshing sorbet, but José Carlos García takes a more adventurous approach and uses them in savory dishes in summer "...because they're so close at hand". This young chef likes to cook according to what is in the market at the moment, and give his own inspiration free rein; he loves the fresh taste of mango, its nicely balanced acidity and the way it responds to griddle cooking. One of

his latest inventions is a marvelous match of foie gras and griddled mango. The same thinking is discernible behind his mixed grill of fruit and vegetables with scallops (mango goes as beautifully with seafood and fish as it does with meat, enhancing its flavor). One of his dishes features mango as a sauce to accompany Spain's classic roast sucking pig; in another, it daringly fulfils the fundamental role of the rice in a risotto. He remembers how successful this latter dish was among his regular customers, and their astonishment at the texture of mango cut a la brunoise to resemble rice.
Certain dishes from Málaga's traditional repertoire lend themselves particularly readily to fusion with tropical flavor. *Ajoblanco* is one example. This cold soup, made with bread, crushed almonds, garlic, water, extra virgin olive oil, salt and sometimes vinegar, is usually served with grapes or little pieces of melon. At Dani García's restaurant, Calima (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 70) in Málaga's tourist mecca of Marbella, this centuries-old recipe appears under the updated guise of *Ajoblanco de almendra tierna con higos y toques de mango* (Ajoblanco of young almonds with figs and touches of mango). Dani García is a chef for whom dishes are made up of countless details and nuances, sometimes barely perceptible, with which he cleverly achieves perfect harmony.
Mango has also been used to great success in a version of Spain's other famous cold soup, *gazpacho* (traditionally tomato-based), as created by Basque chef José Rojano, at the La Terraza restaurant in the Santa Catalina Hotel in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria. His mango gazpacho manages to balance the sweetness of mango with the acidic zing of apple, the saltiness of trout roe

and the chill of red pepper ice cream. Rojano, who has lived in this Canary Island for the last 15 years, is captivated by the intensity of flavor of Canary-grown mangoes, and this dish exhibits it well. During their season, which lasts from early summer to late fall in the islands, mangoes feature regularly in several dishes on his restaurant's menu. One of his more humorous creations is a dessert made to look like egg and french fries, in which yogurt ice cream provides the egg white, spherified mango the yolk, and freshly cut mango wedges the fries.
Rojano finds the flavor of papaya more complex, but likes the way that its enzyme content enables it to hold its own alongside meat, and the fact that, while still green and underripe, it is a very versatile ingredient. His *Panceta de cerdo negro canario a baja temperatura con papaya a la plancha y*

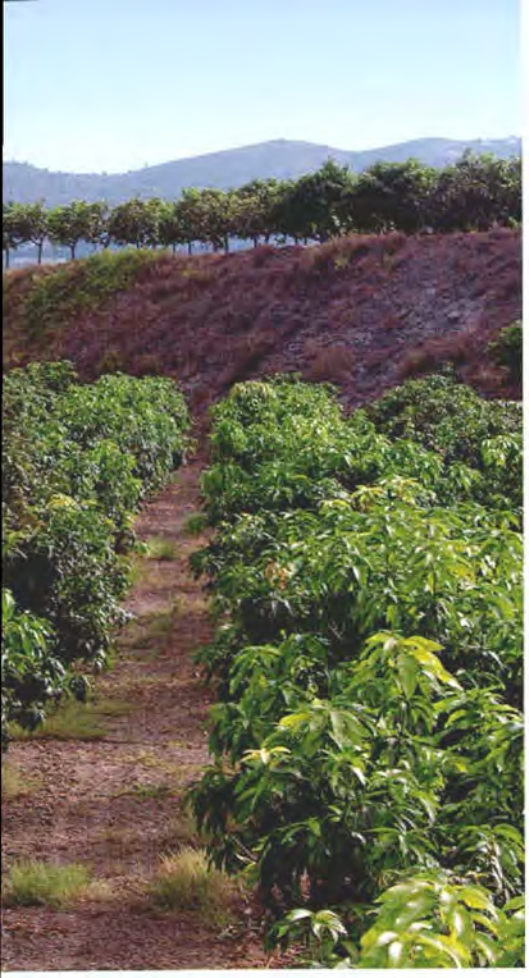
SWEET AND SEXY

The papaya and the mango are used as symbols for opposite, yet complementary, concepts: the mango represents masculinity in Asian culture, and the papaya femininity in American lore (their shapes are used on lavatory doors to indicate male and female). The very look of these fruits is voluptuous, as so many writers and painters have recorded. Paul Gauguin immortalized mango fruit in his painting "Vahine no te vi" (Woman with a Mango), painted in Tahiti in 1892. Mango trees, flowers and fruit appear in other paintings of his, such as "Two Tahitian women with mango blossoms". In his oeuvre as a whole, the mango becomes the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, a symbol of sexual temptation and sensuality.
Both fruits also appear frequently in tales from the oral tradition and legends. In Chile's Elqui Valley, the legend still persists that the teardrop-shaped papaya sprang from the ground upon which a woman had wept at the loss of her lover. In India, the mango tree is venerated as the tree beneath whose shade Buddha preferred to meditate. The fact that mango flowers are symbolic of life and its fruit of fertility explains why they are such an important feature at wedding ceremonies.

aire de naranja (Chilled Canary Island black pig pancetta with griddled papaya and orange air) capitalizes on these attributes, while channeling the local custom of combining papaya and orange in smoothies and salads.
Armando Saldanha, proprietor of the restaurant Amaranto in El Sauzal (Tenerife) is originally from Mexico but has now settled in the Canary Islands. He uses papaya and mango as adjuncts to both fish and meat, a role in which both perform well. One of his dishes combines slices of ripe mango (picked from the tree in the restaurant's garden) with *cherne* (wreckfish, or stone bass), a locally caught, strongly flavored, deep water fish.
The potential of papaya and mango in desserts is virtually inexhaustible: they are most commonly eaten in the form of fresh fruit, smoothies, preserves and natural juices, which are readily available all over the islands, even in the beach bars.

Aphrodisiac powers

The properties of papayas and mangoes have been thoroughly researched all over the world. Mangoes are rich in minerals and oligoelements: they contain potassium, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, vitamins C and E and a lot of carotene, which is good for sight and skin. Papayas are a potent source of vitamin C; they are also rich in vitamins B, B_5 and calcium. They contain an enzyme known as papain, which has anti-inflammatory properties and is, for that reason, often used in alternative medicine as a treatment for stomach trouble.
In folk mythology, both mangoes and papayas are considered natural aphrodisiacs (indeed, their voluptuous shapes and flavors seem to suggest as much) and elixirs of youth, an attribution backed up by their proven antioxidant properties. Research into this latter aspect has been ongoing for some years at the Canary Islands Institute of Agrarian Research (ICIA). One project is aimed at obtaining extracts with high antioxidant and antimicrobial activity from banana and mango skins and seeds for possible use as additives or fortifying ingredients in the agri-food industry.
The ICIA, whose fructicultural department is located in the Isamar Estate in Valle de Guerra (in La Laguna, a district in the northeast of Tenerife Island) is also trying out new varieties of mango, papaya and other tropical fruits, and looking into farming methods and treatments for some of the diseases to which they are susceptible.
Tenerife-born researcher Víctor Galán, author of *El cultivo del mango* (Mango Growing), acknowledges that bananas and tomatoes are the superstars of Canary Island agriculture at the moment. However, he believes that mangoes, and papayas in particular, represent new options which hold greater appeal for the Spanish and international markets, not to mention the farmers themselves.
Meanwhile, another research team, from the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC, an autonomous body of the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation), based in La Mayora Experimental Station in Málaga, is working on improving mango production and adapting other tropical fruits.
La Mayora estate is situated in Algarrobo-Costa, 40 km (24.8 mi) from Málaga in the coastal part of the Axarquía district. Emilio Guirado has



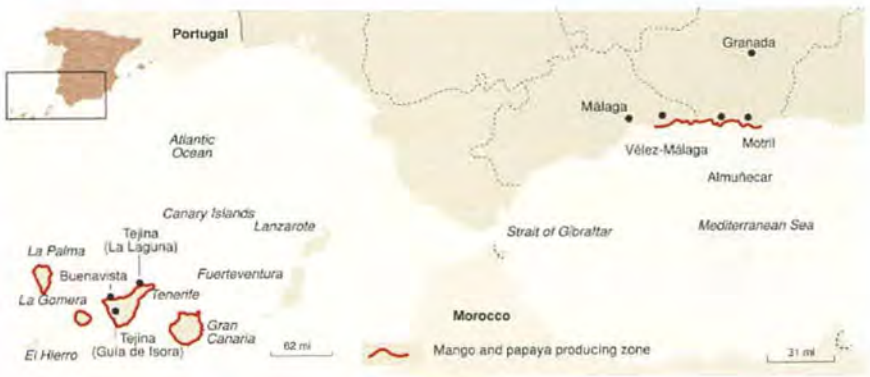
been researching mango growing for 12 years. At present, 40 varieties are grown at La Mayora, all of which are being studied from the point of view of their adaptation to the Málaga climate, agronomic aspects and organoleptic properties. Varieties that stand out from the rest include Ataulfo, which has yellow skin and flavor-packed flesh, and Maya, a very sweet variety with a flavor suggestive of mandarin orange.

Emilio explains that all the varieties are fine-textured, with none of the fibers that can be such a nuisance in this fruit. In Spanish popular usage, the masculine term *mangos* is applied to the more fibrous fruits and the feminine version *mangas* to the fiber-free ones. Emilio makes it clear, however, that both terms refer to the same fruit and that fiber is a factor of variety. Having to deal with fibers in the mouth does get in the way of full enjoyment of a mango; producers are therefore opting for those varieties with the smoothest, most homogenous flesh.

Emilio has witnessed the development of mango production in the Axarquía area, where plantations now account for nearly 3,000 ha (7,413 acres)—95% of the total area given over to his crop in Spain as a whole, the rest being in the Canary Islands (400 ha / 988 acres) and Granada (200 ha / 494 acres).

In the bright midday sunshine, Guirado points out how rapidly other crops, such as avocadoes and cherimoya, took off in Spain, and seems quite confident that an equally rosy future lies ahead for mangoes. Indeed, production is expected to double within four years in Málaga alone. Meanwhile, the Canaries seem to be leaning ever more heavily towards papayas, plantations of which already total 250 ha (617 acres) and yield around 9,000 kg (19,841 lb). While these figures are by no means exceptional in the context of the thousands of tons grown worldwide, the quality factor has won a strong market position for the Spanish product. Consequently, Spain's papaya production continues to expand in response to a growing demand for fruit that encapsulate sunny memories of southern Spain and the exotic Canary Islands in their Atlantic setting.

Yanet Acosta *is a journalist whose work has appeared in various Spanish newspapers, including* El Mundo *and* Público. *She worked as an editor at the EFE news agency for nine years, and is currently coordinating the first edition of a specialist food-writing course at Madrid's Complutense University.*



WEBSITES

www.trops.es
The website of TROPS, the Agricultural Processing Company in Vélez-Málaga, provides corporate information as well as news and recipes relating to mangoes and their other products: avocadoes, cherimoyas, lychees, carambolas and kumquats. (English, French, German, Spanish)

www.aguadulce.com.es
The Aguadulce agricultural processing company's website includes descriptions of the crops grown. (Spanish)

www.icia.es
This is the website of the Canary Islands Institute of Agrarian Research (ICIA), under whose auspices several research projects associated with growing tropical fruits in Spain are being conducted. (English, Spanish)

www.eelm.csic.es
This is the website of La Mayora Experimental Station, where research is being carried out into the plants and growing techniques used in southeastern Spain for subtropical fruit trees such as mango, lychee and carambola. (English, Spanish)

Sweet by Nature

Spain is the biggest producer of honey in the European Union and has more hives than any other member country. Impressive though they are, these facts represent only the dry, quantitative aspects of an altogether more complex and palatable story. The diversity of Spain's flora is reflected in a wealth of different types of honey, many of which are still something of a national secret. This article visits three different parts of the country that produce honey of guaranteed provenance and quality, backed by an EU seal of approval. They're just a sample–we think they'll give you a taste for more.

HONEY

TEXT
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PHOTOS
JUAN MANUEL SANZ/©ICEX

TRANSLATION
HAWYS PRITCHARD/©ICEX

All good quality honey encapsulates a direct link with its area of provenance, transmitted through the medium of the flora whose essence is imbibed by the bees that make it. The range of honeys that Spain produces could therefore be seen as a gastronomic reflection of the country's diverse botany, topography and climate. The central plateau, the eastern coastal region of Levante, and the south of the Iberian Peninsula all produce pale, aromatic honeys, whereas honeys from the mountainous areas of the north are dark and rich; orange blossom honey smacks of the Mediterranean, while there is a suitably woody flavor to honey from the holm oak forests of Extremadura (where two producing areas, Villuercas and Ibores, are in the process of acquiring DO status); delicious curiosities include Tenerife's tajinaste honey, derived from a plant endemic to the Canary Islands and declared by Spanish food expert José Carlos Capel to be "one of the best honeys in the world".

Given this wealth of raw material, unstintingly cooperative bees (a qualified and dedicated workforce), and thousands of years of experience in bee husbandry, it is reasonable to expect standards to be high. Yet, the beekeeper's primary brief, namely, not to spoil the honey, is disarmingly simple. Good honey is free from extraneous smells and physical impurities; remains fresh (aging is always detrimental to honey, unlike wine and cheese); does not ferment (which is why it is important that moisture levels be kept low); and crystallizes in a particular way. As a sugar-saturated solution, honey crystallizes very readily, though this is not true of many industrially-produced honeys which are liquefied by pasteurization, losing many of their aromas and original attributes in the process.

Laboratories such as the Centro Agrario in Marchamalo (serving PDO Miel de La Alcarria) and its equivalent in Apinevada (serving PDO Miel de Granada) conduct physicochemical tests before certifying that honey bearing their stamp meets the required standards in the aspects outlined above. They also analyze for pollen content, a service particularly relevant to current consumer preferences. There is an ever-increasing market demand for monofloral honeys (i.e. honeys made from nectar derived from one specific type of flower), and the laboratory analyses make it possible for the concentration of pollen from specified plants present in the honey to be expressed as a percentage. Established minimum levels of these parameters must be met for a honey to be categorized within a specific variety (Essence of place, page 82).

"Classification of honey by provenance and plant origin helps us produce a genuine and distinctive product," declares José Orantes, president of the Regulatory Council of PDO Miel de Granada, "and it gives consumers a wider choice. They can choose from a range of varieties, all of which have particular characteristics that are determined by the base nectar, and there's an official stamp that guarantees that they are getting the genuine article."

Honey hoarders

"La Alcarria is a beautiful part of the country that people can't be bothered to go to [...] It is particularly varied and, with the exception of honey, which is bought up by hoarders, it has just about everything." This quotation from Spain's Nobel Prize for literature winner Camilo José Cela (1926-2002) is taken from his travel book *Viaje a La Alcarria* (Journey to Alcarria), published in 1948, which he dedicates to the area itself. Years later (in 1991), this same part of La Mancha (central Spain) became the first area in Spain to obtain PDO status for its honey. The barbed comment about the non-availability of Alcarria's star product (which the book's protagonist, Don Camilo, tries but fails to sample throughout his journey) is still applicable today to some extent. Although present-day visitors to La Alcarria will find honey in ready supply, "hoarders" in the form of the domestic market and, particularly, the city of Madrid (which is just 50 km / 31 mi away from this area's western edge) are primarily responsible for the fact that a product with such a well-earned reputation throughout Spain is virtually unknown elsewhere. Any Spaniard will tell you that La Alcarria honey is the best there is, yet you would have trouble finding any on the international market, not because of lack of foreign demand, but because production is absorbed entirely by Spain's domestic market, which is given priority over a wider clientele. When I asked the local beekeepers about this, the response was, in essence: "It sells as fast as we can get it into jars." Some have made attempts to

break out of the vicious circle, but the fact that production is both limited and fragmented makes it impossibly difficult.

La Alcarria and its honey are delimited by three natural barriers: the Henares and Tagus rivers to north and south, and the mountains of the Iberian System to the east. The area within these boundaries, just over 4,000 sq km (1,544 sq mi), has no woodlands or significant mountains, but is crisscrossed by many streams and rivers which rill between its low hills and bluffs in springtime. In conjunction with a dry climate and an altitude of over 700 m (2,296 mi), these create an environment in which a wealth of wild flora thrives. "There are more than 700 different aromatic species hereabouts; that may be why the honey is so good," a country doctor observes to Camilo (who has already commented on the hawthorn, thyme, furze, cistus, rosemary and lavender flowers encountered on his route, constituting "...the sort of vegetation you hardly ever see, but that makes your head spin when you breathe in its scent."

As Cela's protagonist explains, the abundance of plants of the labiatae (*Lamiaceae*) family makes the local honey highly aromatic, the characteristic for which PDO Miel de la Alcarria is renowned. Gregorio Martínez, who markets his Guadalhor honey under the PDO label, can quote physicochemical data to prove the point: "Our honey, particularly the lavender variety, has a unique aftertaste, primarily nasal, that results directly from the conditions in this area: moisture levels are very low and the concentration of pollen high, and this produces honey that is very pure and intensely aromatic." Historically, the hint of lavender was an identifying characteristic of La Alcarria's multifloral honey. "In days gone by, when honey was produced in smaller quantity, it all used to be collected together in one harvest in September, which is when lavender is in bloom. It would therefore have been detectable in the honey and provided a telltale clue by which our honey could be identified," explains Alberto Sacristán, technical director of the regulatory council. These days, despite the fact that beekeeping and honey production are conducted on a predominantly family-run, artisan scale, thanks to transhumance there can be several harvests in the course of the year. It also simplifies the production of monofloral (lavender and rosemary) varieties, as Gregorio Martínez explains: "Within very short distances we can move our hives from the river banks where we install them in spring, when the rosemary is in bloom, to higher, drier terrain where we harvest lavender honey come summer."

Evocative landscape

The extraordinarily varied landscape and vegetation of its area of provenance endow Spain's other PDO honey, Miel de Granada, with special qualities. "What gives our honey its considerable appeal is the abundance and diversity of the pollen available to the bees in the

Each regulatory council has its own certified multifloral honey as well as the various monofloral varieties listed below:

PDO MIEL DE GRANADA

· **Avocado** *(Persea spp)*

Minimum pollen %: Persea spp >25%

Characteristics: Very dark, almost black, amber color; floral aroma with clear fruity notes and no malty ones; sweet taste with a hint of salt.

Try this: Oven-baked loin cuts of sturgeon with caramelized onion jam and a dash of avocado honey.

· **Orange blossom** *(Citrus spp)*

Minimum pollen %: Citrus Aurantius >20%, Citrus Aurantius >5% if methyl anthranilate content is over 1.5 ppm

Characteristics: Pale color, floral aroma with a pronounced, persistent orange blossom component; sweet taste with noticeable acidic zing and increased retro-nasal olfactory sensations.

Try this: Toasted bread with olive oil, ham and orange blossom honey.

· **French lavender** *(Lavandula stoechas)*

Minimum pollen %: *Lavandula stoechas* >12%

Characteristics: Color varies, ranging from white to very pale amber; faint and rather short-lived floral aroma, sometimes with the slightest hint of camphor, increasing retro-nasally. Sweet taste with slight acidic notes.

Try this: Macedoine of fresh fruit with French lavender honey.

· **Chestnut** *(Castanea sativa)*

Minimum pollen %: *Castanea sativa* >75%

Characteristics: Color varies, ranging from amber to deep amber, with brownish-green tones in the area where the honey makes contact with the glass of the jar; floral aroma with an obvious woody component; sweet taste with salty notes, plus faint acidic tang if bramble is involved.

Try this: Braised pork spare ribs served with chestnut honey and white wine sauce.

· **Miel de la Sierra** *(multifloral de montaña con castaño)*

Minimum pollen %: *Castanea sativa* >20%

Characteristics: Color varies, ranging from amber to deep amber, with brownish-green tones in the area where the honey makes contact with the glass of the jar; floral aroma with an obvious woody component; sweet taste with salty notes, plus other, bitter notes if it contains heather, or acidic notes if it contains bramble.

Try this: Fried eggplant with sierra honey.

· **Rosemary** *(Rosmarinus officinalis)*

Minimum pollen %: *Rosmarinus officinalis* >12%

Characteristics: Very pale color; mild floral aroma with hints of camphor; sweet taste with acidic edge and nasal aromas with fruity notes if it contains almond and starchy ones if legumes.

Try this: Roast lamb with rosemary honey.

· **Thyme** *(Thymus spp)*

Minimum pollen %: *Thymus spp* >12%

Characteristics: Color varies, ranging from pale amber to amber, generally with a slightly reddish tone; floral aroma with a very strong, persistent phenolic component; sweet taste with a hint of acidity which can have malty, salty, aromatic retro-nasal notes if it contains honeydew.

Try this: Baby goat roasted with honey.

PDO MIEL DE LA ALCARRIA

· **Lavender** *(Lavandula spp)*

Minimum pollen %: *Lavandula vera*, *L. latifolia*, hybrids thereof >12%

Characteristics: Color varies, ranging from white to amber, sometimes rather dark if it contains honeydew (also known as forest honey, i.e. the honey obtained from secretions from the living parts of plants or aphids, woodlice and other sap-sucking insects); floral aroma with a very pronounced and persistent lavender component and phenolic notes; persistent sweet taste with a hint of acidity and aromas that are accentuated retro-nasally with a highly-characteristic fruity intensity; if the honey contains honeydew, slight hints of salt will be discernible.

Try this: Lavender honey sorbet.

· **Rosemary** *(Rosmarinus officinalis)*

Minimum pollen %: *Rosmarinus officinalis* >12%

Characteristics: Color can vary from faint straw to pale creamy lemon yellow; relatively mild aroma, primarily floral with hints of aniseed, resin and suggestions of newly-cut grass, mushroom and butter. Sweet flavored with a short-lived zing of acidity.

Try this: *Torrijas* (festive Spanish version of French toast) bathed in a rosemary honey sauce.

PGI MIEL DE GALICIA

· **Heather** *(Erica spp)*

Minimum pollen %: *Erica spp* >45%

Characteristics: Color varies, ranging from pale to amber, generally with reddish tones; strong and very persistent aroma of fallen autumn leaves, humus, mushrooms; sweet taste with a distinct touch of bitterness and salty notes, bigger and maltier retro-nasally if it contains honeydew.

Try this: PGI Ternera de Galicia tenderloin steak cooked with honey and wild mushrooms.

· **Chestnut** *(Castanea sativa)*

Minimum pollen %: *Castanea sativa* >75%

Characteristics: Dark, sometimes reddish, amber color; floral aroma with an obvious woody element; sweet taste, sometimes slightly piquant, with salty notes plus additional bitter ones if it contains heather, or acidic ones if it contains bramble.

Try this: PDO Cebreiro fresh cheese with walnuts and chestnut honey.

· **Eucalyptus** *(Eucaliptus spp)*

Minimum pollen %: *Eucaliptus spp* >70%

Characteristics: Pale amber color, a little darker when it contains broom or heather; strong and extremely persistent aroma of wet wood; sweet taste with slightly acidic notes, and if it contains broom or heather, salty, with the olfactory sensation increasing retro-nasally.

Try this: Salad composed of lettuce, cheese, walnuts and pine nuts dressed with balsamic vinegar and eucalyptus honey.

· **Bramble** *(Rubus spp)*

Minimum pollen %: *Rubus spp* >45%

Characteristics: Color varies, ranging from pale amber to amber, darker when it contains honeydew; floral aroma, with a strong fruity component of medium duration, plus notes of humus if it contains heather, and malt if it contains honeydew; sweet taste with a distinct acidic edge and an increase in the fruity component at the retro-nasal stage, plus salty notes if it contains heather or honeydew.

Try this: Seasonal fruit cocktail.

*Minimum pollen % and sensory characteristics taken from *Fichas técnicas de las Mieles monoflorales de la Península Ibérica* (Technical Characteristics of Monofloral Honeys from the Iberian Peninsula) by Francisco José Orantes Bermejo and Antonio Gómez Pajuelo, and Spain Gourmetour

exceptional geographical and climatological conditions in this province: in just over 50 km (31 mi), one can go from the only subtropical area in Europe, along the coast between Granada and Málaga (southern Spain), to the highest peak on the Iberian Peninsula—Mulhacén, in the Sierra Nevada mountain range," boasts Fidel Bermúdez, managing director of Al-Andalus Delicatessen, on my arrival in Lanjarón, a town located halfway between these two phenomena. Known as "the west gate to the Alpujarra", Lanjarón leads into the comarca on the southern face of the Sierra Nevada where British writer Gerald Brenan lived and worked for many years. In *South from Granada*, Brenan describes Lanjarón as "a big, whitewashed municipality, almost a town, stretched out like a balustrade along a steep hillside." The simile still holds today, as I discovered on my arrival: I was reminded of the hill villages of northern Morocco—evidence of the enduring influence of Arab culture on Andalusia and, indeed, of the fact that North Africa is not far a way. The latter part of my journey from Madrid had brought me through scenery reminiscent of very different (this time filmic) cultural connections: whereas in the 1960s and 1970s, the desert landscape of Almeria (the area of southeastern Spain that lies to the other side of the Sierra) provided the suitably arid setting for many a spaghetti western, the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, with their ochre soil and undulating terrain clad in plausible vegetation, stood in for the Mexican border territories where gunfights between goodies and baddies were often staged. (Back in Madrid, I was able to confirm that, with judicious cutting, parts of Granada province such as Guadix stood in for the one-horse towns along the Rio Bravo that were the backdrop to crucial scenes in such classic westerns as "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" and "For a Few Dollars More"). That area is where most of the province's registered 296,000 ha (731,431 acres) of scrubland are concentrated. It is perfect territory for producing highly-concentrated honey containing very little moisture, derived from aromatic plants such as thyme, French lavender and rosemary. Slightly lower down is the Lecrín Valley, home to the orange trees whose flowers provide the essence from which native orange blossom honey is made. It was up on higher ground, closer to the peaks of the Sierra Nevada, that British film director David Lean used the Urals in an early scene (the one when little Yuri attends his mother's funeral) in "Doctor Zhivago", plantations of chestnut providing the makings of a *miel de sierra* (mountain honey). The

WHY IS HONEY GOOD FOR US?

In his dual role as nutritional expert and director of La Casa de la Miel, the center for apicultural promotion and information on Tenerife (one of the Canary Islands, situated in the Atlantic), Antonio Bentabol is always being asked why honey is considered a health food. He has his answer ready: "It provides us with polyphenols, which function as antioxidants; water; proteins, which are present in the pollen; and even small amounts of vitamins B and C, unlike cane and beet sugar, which have no vitamin content; it is also a source of energy-giving, high-quality carbohydrates, which have been pre-digested by the bees into simple sugars which our bodies can access immediately. All these attributes make it healthier than conventional sugar; comparatively, it has 25% fewer calories and more sweetness per unit of weight." In a market that increasingly attaches importance to the functional aspects of foods, which are often enhanced by additives, honey's natural attributes are all plus points: it is a source of energy and antioxidants and is also soothing and antiseptic (it has been used as a natural remedy for aches, pains and specific illnesses throughout its history).

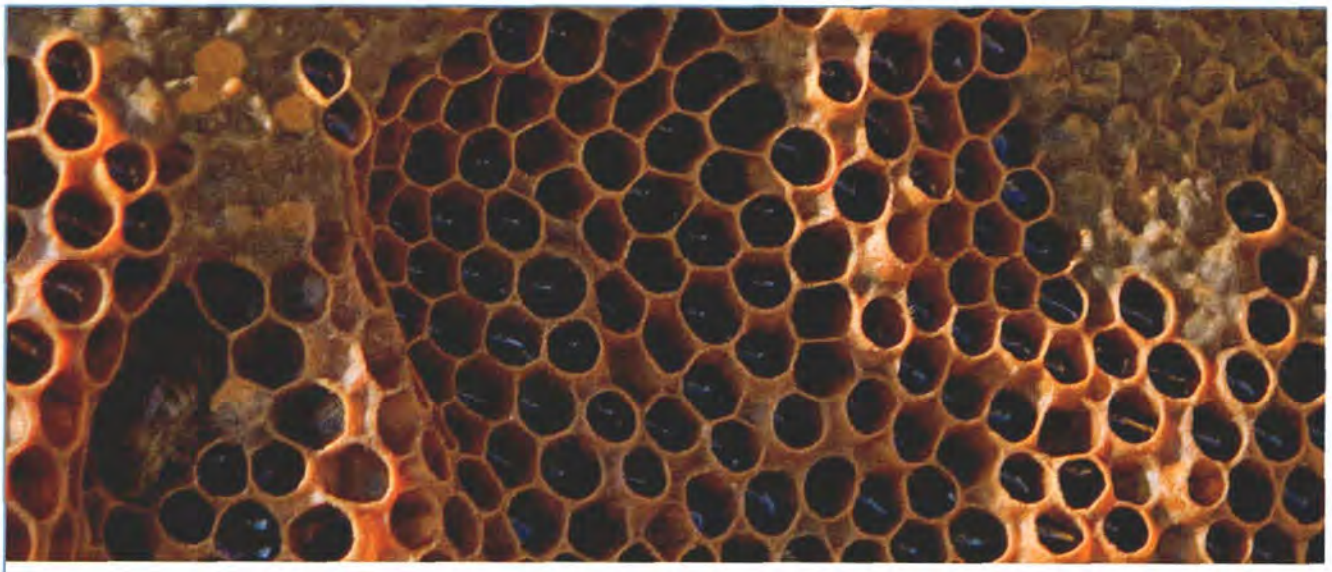
fact that the woody flavor of this local specialty lacks the usual hint of bitterness is explained by the fact that there is no heather in these mountains. Granada's beekeepers typically practice vertical transhumance. We learn from Gerald Brenan that, back in the 1920s, the beekeeper in Yegen, the Granada village where he lived, had to "...convey his hives on the back of a mule, up and down the mountain." Nowadays, the hives are taken to areas nearer the sea: Granada's tropical coast provides the ideal habitat for growing tropical species, and is the fount of the only avocado honey with an EU-backed agri-food guarantee: PDO Miel de Granada. This exotic honey has a slightly salty, nutty tang, and is one of the most intriguing examples of the biodiversity contained within this province. Ninety-two different kinds of pollen have been identified within its 12,000 sq km (4,633 sq mi) area.

A taste of the north

The corner of the Iberian Peninsula diagonally opposite Granada is occupied by the autonomous region of Galicia, production zone of honeys covered by PGI Miel de Galicia. There is a long history of beekeeping in these northwestern mountains, evidence of which survives in the form of remains of circular stone structures known as *albarizas*, or *cortines*, which for centuries protected the hives placed inside them from such hazards as bears, thieves, wind and fire. They stand as monuments to the historical importance of honey in the local diet, both for its nutritional value and as a natural sweetening agent. It was not supplanted until beet sugar went into general production, cane sugar having remained beyond the reach of these rural communities.

Now, as then, most of Galicia's registered hives are concentrated in this mountainous area. The honey made here is different from the types considered so far: "Miel de Galicia honey is distinctive because of the local climate, which is rainier than in other parts of Spain and subject to the effects of winds off the Atlantic. In consequence, the granitic soil is more acidic and humus-rich, and a different kind of vegetation grows in it," explains Ester Ordoñez, president of the PGI's Regulatory Council. There is no trace of plants of the Mediterranean type in these woodlands, but, rather, an abundance of honey-producing flora in the form of oak and chestnut trees, bramble and heather. "My swarm's sphere of activity is always somewhere between 600 and 1,200 m (1,968 and 3,937 ft)," explains David Corral of Mieles Anta, a company that exports to several foreign markets, including France and Germany. "They produce a mountain honey—dark colored, rich in diastase and minerals,

ORGANIC APICULTURE AND THE ROMANCE OF BEEKEEPING



Apiculture is considered "organic" when apiaries are located in areas of wild vegetation or amid organically-grown crops. Generous exclusion zones are established to ensure that bees gather nectar from the desired flora. The fact of being organic does not have significant implications for the end product, but it does offer a guarantee that it complies with standards that many countries now insist upon. "Why do I make ecological honey? Because that's what my customers want!" laughs beekeeper Christoph Saupp, originally from Austria and now settled in Spain. He exports his Miel de Torronteras, labeled with the organic stamp issued by Spanish certification agency Sohiscert, to Switzerland, Germany, Austria and Japan.

Enrique Fernández, whose entire production of honey is covered by PDO Miel de Granada, some of it in the organic category, confirms that the two qualifications overlap to a large degree: "An organic honey and a honey bearing an EU quality stamp are virtually indistinguishable: both have been subjected to very rigorous monitoring. There is an enormous difference in organoleptic terms, however, between both these categories of honey and the industrially-produced ones sold in supermarkets." He markets his honey under the Biolanjar brand, backed by the Andalusian Ecological Farming Committee, having started producing organic honey "...because we hardly needed to make any changes to what we were producing already". David Corral had much the same experience: after making and marketing Mieles Anta for over 25 years, he needed to make only minor changes to qualify for certification by the Regulatory Council of Galician Ecological Agriculture. Interestingly, his reason for doing so was that a French customer had enquired about his organic credentials.

Both men are representative of an apicultural approach based on a profound respect for the environment which is, after all, the milieu in which their bees do their work (bees account for 70-90% of the pollination carried out by insects). Whether organic honey producers or not, nearly everyone interviewed for this report had some sort of emotional (often family) link with the apicultural world. Beekeeping seems to be more than just a commercial activity: some apiarists combine it with other jobs in quite varied walks of life—working in a museum, in the field of law, music-making (Pepe Loeches, beekeeper and producer of Cruz Real honey, has won four Latin Grammy Awards, interspersing periods spent in the Alcarria countryside with others in recording studios in Mexico and Miami)—and they love doing it. This attitude to the business has a knock-on effect on the quality of their honey, according to Gregorio Martinez. As we visited his hives in La Alcarria, he declared: "Apiculture takes an enormous amount of time and effort, and I do it because I believe in beekeeping and I love it. That's why, when I'm choosing a base location for my bees, the first thing I look for is a place that I like myself; I know that they'll be happiest in an idyllic natural setting like this one, with this marvelous landscape and vegetation, and I'm quite convinced that it shows in the honey—there's something special about it."

and with a slightly bitter aftertaste." By contrast, the eucalyptus honey produced near the Galician coast is paler and sweeter than those described by David Corral. For apiculturalist José María Seijo, its strong, idiosyncratic aroma and other properties are typical of Galician honey, which he attributes to "everything else in its pollen spectrum apart from eucalyptus. In our honey, this means traces of wild plants, fruit trees and legumes, nuances of which temper the balsamic qualities of eucalyptus."

From honeycomb to palate

With its different origins and varieties, honey has always been present in Spanish gastronomy and its various regional culinary traditions. Granada, for example, is an excellent place to find evidence of the importance of honey in the popular cuisine of Andalusia, an obvious legacy from Arab pastrymaking, in whose ingredients honey was fundamental, for both technical reasons (for its preserving properties) and culinary ones (its sweetness and flavor). It was used in Spain's eastern coastal region, Levante, from the late Middle Ages on in conjunction with almonds (another raw material produced in abundance in that part of the country) for making two types of turrón—Alicante and Jijona—that are among Spain's most typical sweets.

Nowadays, in both domestic and restaurant kitchens, honey is still used in its natural state as a delicious, healthy foodstuff, as well as providing the point of departure for more complicated creations. Héctor López (of Restaurante España, in Lugo, northwestern Spain) substitutes honey for sugar to reduce the acidity in high pH foods such as game meats, and also capitalizes on its creamy texture to add an element of interest to certain dishes: his *Vieira con emulsión de patata y cebolla caramelizada* (Scallop with potato emulsion and caramelized onion) is one example. Dishes of this sort call for honey to be handled with care and manipulated as little as possible so that its qualities are kept intact: "It's important not to overheat honey; that's why, when we make our honey jelly, we heat only a small proportion of the total amount we're going to use, and when we've obtained the texture we want we mix it in with the rest, which still retains all its finer points," says Héctor.

As a committed exponent of healthy eating, Adolfo Muñoz (of Adolfo Restaurante in Toledo, central Spain)

presses the point, and warns that "at temperatures above 28°C (82°F), honey loses its antiseptic properties, and above 60 (140) it loses its aromas" (or, to put it in terms more relevant to domestic cooking, we should liquefy honey by heating it in a bain-marie, and never let it boil).

The aromatic essences present in La Alcarria honey are what Adolfo likes most about a product that he describes as being "full of sunshine". To get the best out of it, this La Mancha-based chef recommends "using the honey subtly, so that it contributes its natural aromas and gentle sweetness without overwhelming other flavors." To that end, he tries "...to use it with extreme delicacy as a counterbalance to savory flavors. For example, with roast lamb, I use it diffusely in two different parts of the dish (painted on with a little brush and then browned, and as an integral element of the wine sauce) so that it is not too attention-grabbing." In his restaurant, he also plays with the textures of honey, liquefying it to form part of a brine solution in which he marinates oily fish such as salmon. As he explains, "the mixture gives a delicately delicious edge to the flavor without being cloyingly honey-flavored." Adolfo rounds off our conversation with one final piece of advice, which I now pass on to you: "When using honey in cooking, treat it with the same delicacy that you want it to give you in the flavor of the finished dish."

Santiago Sánchez Segura *has worked as a trainee journalist for regional radio and television in Asturias and in the Economic and Commercial Office of the Spanish Embassy in Miami. He is currently an intern at* Spain Gourmetour.

WEBSITES

www.mieldelaalcarria.org
PDO Miel de La Alcarria (Spanish)

www.mieldegranada.com
PDO Miel de Granada (Spanish)

www.mieldegalicia.org
PGI Miel de Galicia (Galician, Spanish)

www.domielvilluercasibores.com
DO Villuercas-Ibores, constitution pending (English, Spanish)

www.guiarepsol.com/es_en/gastronomia/reportajes/rutas_denominacion_origen/Miel_Alcarria.aspx
Tourist route for exploring La Alcarria (English)

www.casadelamiel.org/
Apicultural information and promotion center located on the Canary Island of Tenerife (Spanish)

Quite a PLATEFUL

Competitive Cooking

There's excitement, nervousness and a will to win in the air. Everyone's sights are set on the final prize, and all are determined to show just how good they are. No—we're not in a sports arena or at a job interview for high-fliers. This competition is all about smells, flavors, and the very best in Spanish food: it's the final competition in the second (2008-2009) edition of the program created by ICEX to train young professional chefs in top-level Spanish cuisine.

TEXT
RODRIGO GARCÍA FERNÁNDEZ/©ICEX

PHOTOS
JOSÉ ANTONIO CRESCENTE

TRANSLATION
HAWYS PRITCHARD/©ICEX

It's first thing in the morning. Participants are already arriving at the Simone Ortega School of Catering in Móstoles (Madrid), and they know what they have to do: the challenge is to create a unique dish, one with character all its own, that reflects the chef's individual approach and mastery of various cooking techniques, both traditional and ultra-modern, and familiarity with ingredients chosen from among Spain's finest food products.

It won't be easy. The panel of judges (made up of respected figures from the Spanish food world) will be scrutinizing each dish submitted, assessing it from fundamental concept through to fine-tuning, for evidence of the training its creator has absorbed over the last 12 months spent in Spain under the wings of such luminaries as Ferran Adrià, Juan Mari Arzak, Quique Dacosta, Pedro Subijana and master chocolatier Oriol Balaguer.

For 14 young chefs from Germany, China, Denmark, the US, Japan and Switzerland, this competition is an opportunity to end their stay in Spain with a final flourish before heading back to their countries of origin and starting a new phase in their professional lives. The training program they have just completed, an ICEX initiative, was first launched in September 2007 and focuses primarily on contemporary Spanish cuisine. The program consists of three distinct parts (*Spain Gourmetour,* Nos. 72, 73 and 74): a three-week introductory course about Spanish gastronomy and culture, which incorporates trips, wine tastings, talks and roundtable discussions, cultural itineraries, visits to big name wineries and olive oil mills, cooking demonstrations and food sampling in some of the best restaurants in Spain, both traditional and cutting-edge. The next stage consists of practical experience placements lasting several months in at least two internationally-known Spanish restaurants. The program ends with the cooking competition that completes participants' stay in Spain, and the start of the course for the next intake of young chefs from abroad.

Winning ways

Back now to September 2009 and the second intake's final competition. The participants go into the central kitchen one by one in 10-minute intervals. They have three hours in which to produce a creation that will make the jury sit up and take notice, using at least three ingredients from the following list, compiled by the jury members: extra virgin olive oil; Las Pedroñeras purple garlic; La Vera *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain); La Mancha saffron; Pedro Ximénez; Cava; anchovies in olive oil or canned albacore tuna; Tetilla, La Peral or Idiazabal cheese; Ibérico cured ham; and Tudela artichokes.

After a morning of intense concentration, given an added zing of

nervous tension by having to work against the clock, the big moment arrives: the jury announce their verdict. The winner is Simon Moser, a young Swiss chef with firsthand experience in the kitchens of Restaurante Labur (in Oviedo, Asturias) and Mugaritz (near San Sebastian, in the Basque Country) under his belt. "I was confident that the judges would like my dish, but I didn't think for a moment that I might win," the young chef declares. The secret of his success is revealed to have been his *Mozarella de Idiazábal curada sobre caldo de jamón ibérico y majado de alcachofas, con ensalada* (Cured Idiazabal mozzarella over Ibérico ham broth and artichoke mash, served with salad). Jury member Lourdes Plana (director of the Madrid Fusión food conference) explains one of the key elements taken into consideration by the judges in reaching their verdict: "All those taking part have shown enthusiasm and have cooked to a very high standard, but some have cleverly selected and combined ingredients from the cuisines of northern, central and southern Spain, thereby demonstrating that they have assimilated the different regional cuisines that are encapsulated within Spanish gastronomy as a whole, and recognizing what an attribute they are."

Simon Moser heads for home with a wealth of memories of his time spent in Spain. "Having completed this training program, I can say categorically that working at Mugaritz with Andoni Luis Aduriz has been my best professional experience so far." Mugaritz occupies a hilltop location not far from Errentería (10 km / 6 mi from San Sebastian), and Simon was very taken by the "natural" cuisine and its connection with the local landscape and environment that Aduriz and his team practice there.

And now...

As it happens, Simon Moser may well be returning early in 2010 to the part of the Basque Country that was so influential during his period of training in Spain. The prize for the internship program's final competition is a gastronomic weekend in the Basque Country, one of the hubs of avant-garde Spanish cuisine and a region with one of the oldest and richest repertoires of traditional dishes in Spain.

The best person to advise him on making the most of his prize might be Lars Lundo, the Danish chef from among the 2007-2008 intake that launched the training program and who won the first edition's final competition with his *Rodaballo con ajoblanco caliente* (Turbot with hot almond and garlic sauce). Lars, who spent a year working with the Roca brothers (Joan, Josep and Jordi) at the two-Michelin-star El Celler de Can Roca in Catalonia, remembers the days leading up to the competition as "a time of very mixed feelings. I was longing to get back and see the others and compare notes on the months that we'd all spent in different restaurants, not to mention meet the people who'd

be taking our place the following year." The downside, however, was that: "...our amazing experience in Spain was nearly over; it was the end of an important phase in our lives." As for the competition itself, Lars declares: "We all enjoyed vying with each other and I think it was a really good way of rounding off a year that none of us will ever forget."

The inevitable uncertainty in the wake of the competition—What next? Where do we all go from here?—did not last long in Lars's case: "I took a month off and traveled all over northern Spain with a group of friends, from Catalonia to Asturias through Aragón, Navarre, the Basque Country and Cantabria." New work opportunities were about to present themselves: "After that trip, I went to the United States to work with chef Daniel Patterson in San Francisco. I'd met him some months earlier at the Madrid Fusión food conference, which ICEX had arranged for us to attend." Next stop was his native Denmark, where he has been working ever since as sous chef at Copenhagen's prestigious Geranium restaurant. Lars reveals that "ever since discovering the excellence of Spanish products such as extra virgin olive oils, vinegars, anchovies, cheese, fruit and veg (especially oranges and tomatoes). I have continued using them in my cooking." A year after leaving the country he is still in close contact with Spain. "I keep in touch with the Roca brothers; in fact I had the pleasure of seeing them again in September when they came to Copenhagen for Gastronomy Week." Lars also works with the Spanish Economic and Commercial Office in Copenhagen on promotional events for Spanish food products. All in all, he could justifiably describe himself as ambassador for Spanish gastronomy to Denmark.

***Rodrigo García Fernández** is a journalist and a member of the editorial team of www.spaingourmetour.com.*

IN PICTURES

www.icex.tv
ICEX's television website features a report on its gastronomy internships entitled *Becas de Gastronomía 2009: con sabor a creatividad*. To view the video, click first on ICEX OFRECE and then Becas (Spanish).

Restaurante La Gañanía

Introduction
Almudena Muyo/©ICEX

Translation
Jenny McDonald/©ICEX

Photos, introduction
Tomás Zarza/©ICEX

Photos, recipes
Toya Legido/©ICEX

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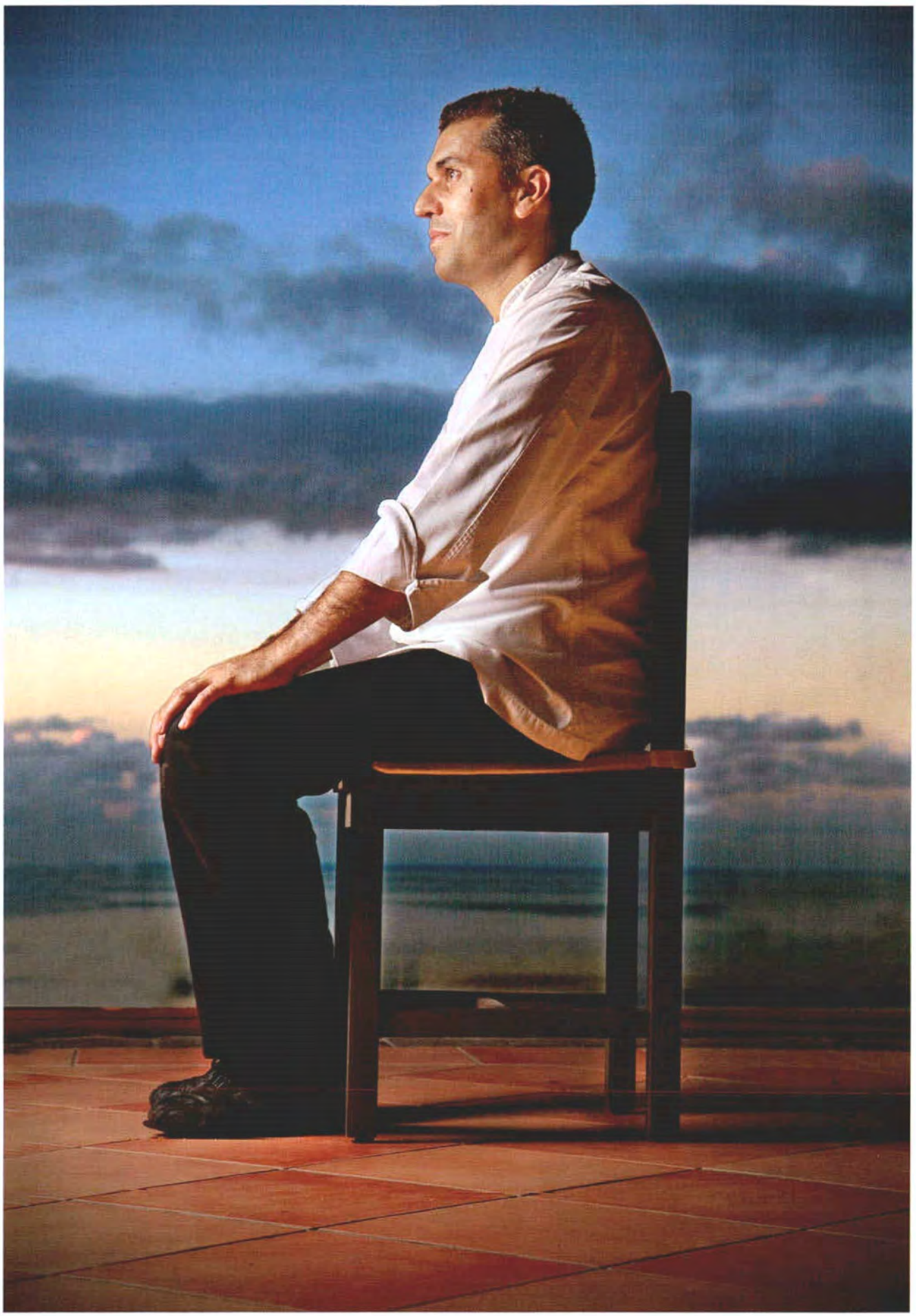
www.laganania.com

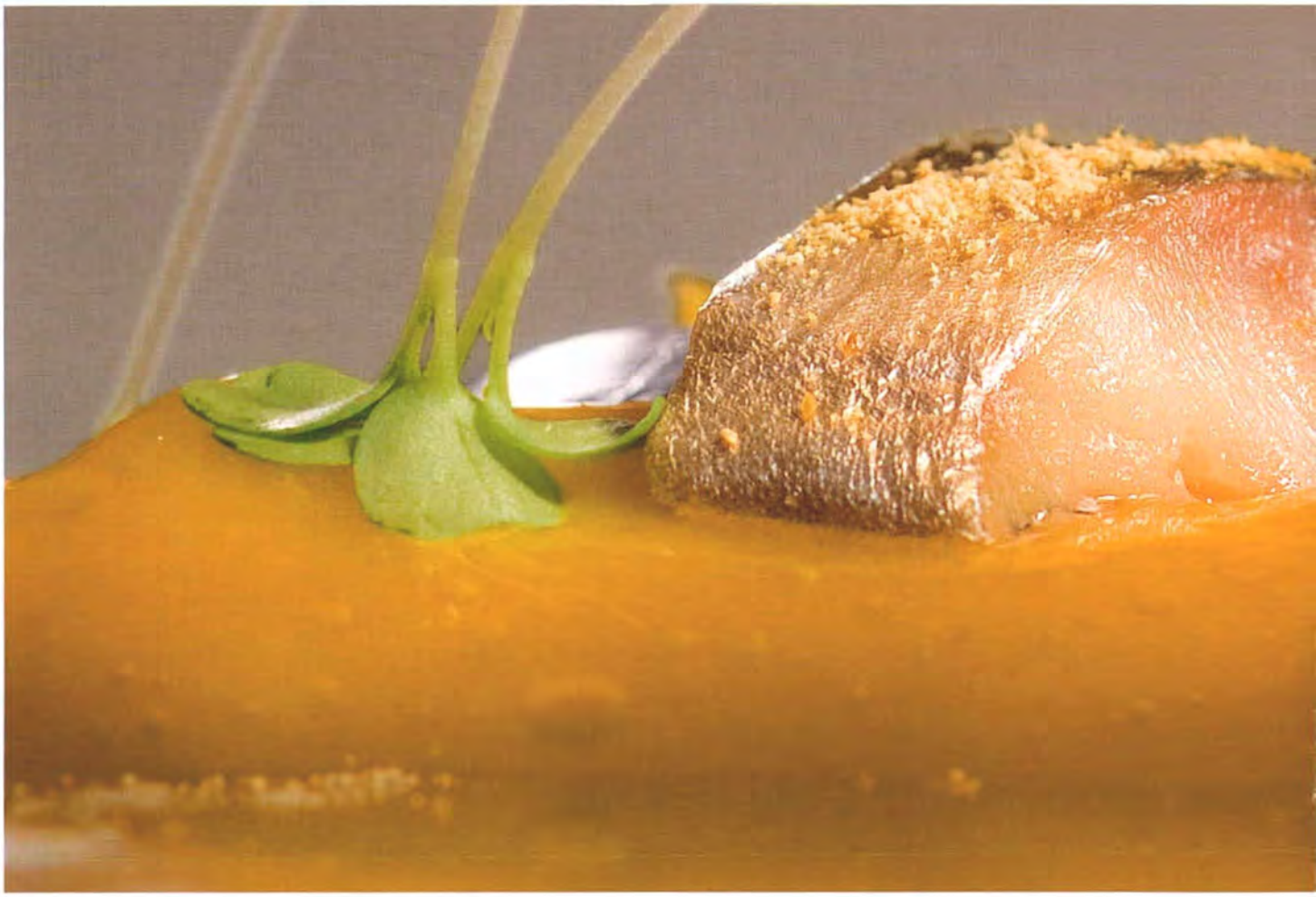
RECIPES

The cuisine offered by Pedro Rodríguez Dios is one of simple flavors and subtle sophistication, based on the sound foundations of tradition and Canary Island produce. Named best chef de cuisine in the Canary Islands in 2007, Rodríguez Dios is known for his mastery of culinary techniques and his versatility, displayed not only at his restaurant La Gañanía, but also in his writing. He is co-author of *Cocina de Canarias. La evolución* (Canary Island Cuisine. Evolution), in which he shares his passion for updating patisserie in the Canaries. In *Maridajes Canarios, armonía entre platos y vinos* (Canary Island Matching, Harmony Between Food and Wine) he makes original suggestions for marrying foods with some of the great Canary wines, and in *Cocina de Canarias. La tradición* (Canary Island Cuisine. Tradition), he focuses on traditional Canary cuisine, "treating it with the respect it deserves". Pedro works in his restaurant with a young team, all skilled in the essential techniques. Here, the restaurant's sommelier, Yurima Torres Martín, recommends wines to partner our selection of recipes.



Cold mango soup with smoked mackerel and ginger

(Sopa fría de mango con caballa ahumada y jengibre)



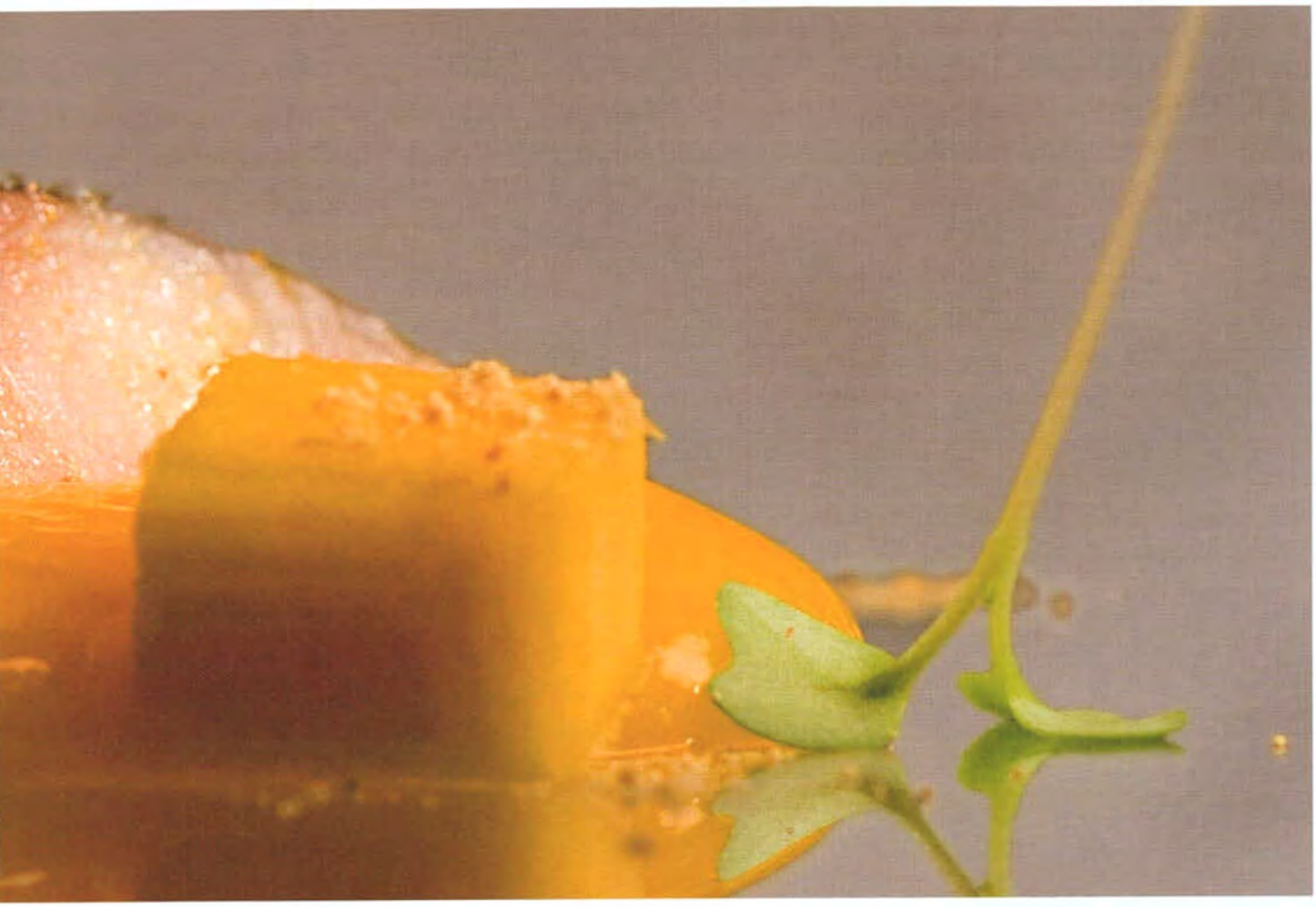
In the Canaries, fish and fruit come at the same time of year—summer—escorted by the cooling trade winds. Microgreens and ginger give a pleasant freshness to this combination, which features on our menu for a number of weeks. And our starters always include fruit, such as pineapple, fig, watermelon, papaya and banana.

SERVES 4

For the cold mango soup: 800 g / 1 3/4 lb mango, peeled and stoned; 25 g / 1 oz ginger; 50 ml / 2 oz extra virgin olive oil; 10 ml / 2 tsp apple vinegar; salt; white pepper.

Others: 200 g / 7 oz smoked mackerel, with no skin or bones; 200 g / 7 oz mango; microgreens; powdered ginger.

Start by making the cold mango soup. Blend the mango with the ginger, vinegar, salt and pepper. Beat in the extra virgin olive oil until thick and smooth, adding more salt if necessary.
Fillet the mackerel, serving 50 g / 2 oz per person.
Peel 200 g / 7 oz of mango and cut into 1/2 cm / 1/4 in thick dice, three per person.



To serve

Pour the soup into 4 dishes. Top with the mackerel and diced mango. Sprinkle with powdered ginger and finish with the microgreens.

Preparation time

25 minutes

Recommended wine

El Borujo 2008 (DO Valle de Güímar), by Juan Francisco Fariña Pérez. This wine is made from Listan Blanco (grown at an altitude of 1,400 m / 4,600 ft), Gual and Muscatel grapes and stored in new oak barrels that pass on aromas of coconut and vanilla. These form an explosive combination with the mango, and especially with the smoked mackerel.

Mango sorbet and goats' milk yogurt with Palma island almond flakes and multicolored pepper

(Sorbete de mango con yogur de cabra, virutas de almendra palmera y pimientas del mundo)

We feel this dish represents the essence of the Canaries, with its fusion of peppery, balsamic, sweet and dairy flavors. The Canary Island of La Palma produces excellent almonds, here enhanced by fleur de sel from the island's Fuencaliente saltworks (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 76). The Canaries are Spain's largest producer of goats' milk, making it an excellent representative of the islands' gastronomy and the perfect co-star of this dish.

SERVES 4

For the mango sorbet: 500 g / 1 lb 2 oz ripe mangoes, peeled; 60 g / 2 oz inverted sugar; 20 ml / 4 tsp lemon juice.

For the goats' milk yogurt foam: 500 g / 1 lb 2 oz goats' milk yogurt; 100 ml / 1/2 cup cream; 75 g / 1/3 cup sugar.

For the Palma island almond flakes: 8 Palma Island almonds, coarsely grated.

For the multicolored pepper oil: 30 g / 2 tbsp ground Sichuan, Jamaica, pink, white and black pepper; 100 ml / 1/2 cup sunflower oil.

Others: 4 shoots lemon balm; fleur de sel from the Fuencaliente saltworks.

Mango sorbet
Blend the mango with the inverted sugar and lemon juice. Pour into a sorbet maker and freeze.

Goats' milk yogurt foam
Mix the goats' milk yogurt with the cream and sugar and transfer to a siphon. Attach the cartridge and chill.

Multicolored pepper oil
Add all the different types of ground pepper to the sunflower oil, stir and set aside.

To serve

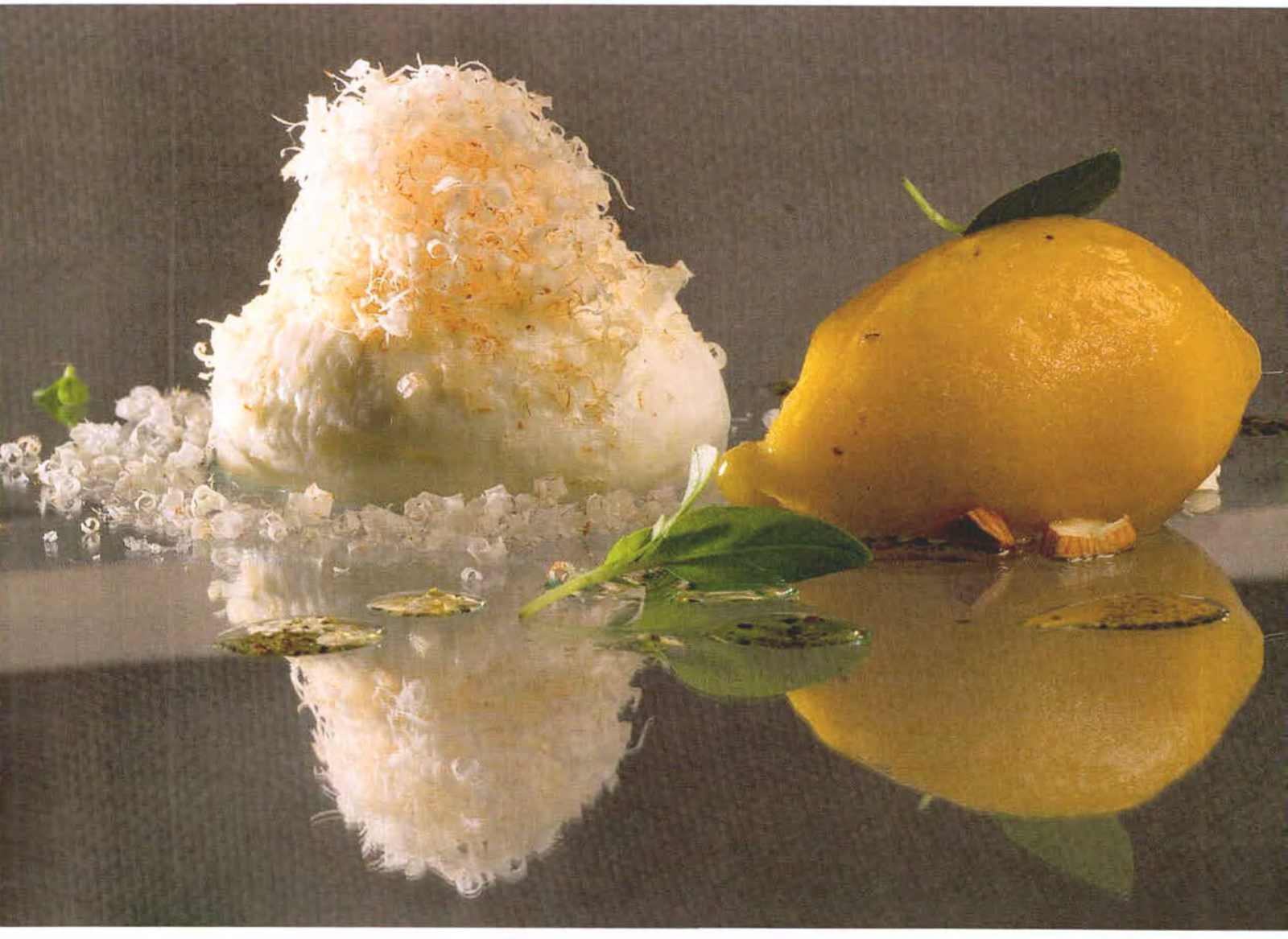
On one side of a rectangular dish place some yogurt foam and top with the Palma Island almond flakes and a little fleur de sel. On the other side of the dish place the mango sorbet with the lemon balm shoots and a little multicolored pepper oil.

Preparation time

50 minutes

Recommended wine

Testamento Esencia 2006 (DO Abona), by Sociedad Cooperativa Cumbres de Abona. This 100% Malvasía wine has a very pleasant golden color, aromas of cooked fruit and very good structure, making it an excellent partner for stone fruits, such as mango, enhanced here by the milky, toasty notes of the almonds. The ideal serving temperature is 9-11°C (48-51°F).



Mango, papaya, citrus fruits and orange blossom honey

(Mango, papaya, cítricos y miel de azahar)

A 100% fruit dessert suggesting the aromas of some of the wines made in the volcanic parts of the Canary Islands, especially on Lanzarote, possibly one of the world's most beautiful vine-growing landscapes.

SERVES 4

For the papaya soup: 400 g / 14 oz papaya, peeled; 150 ml / 2/3 cups orange juice.

For the orange blossom honey jelly: 100 g / 3 1/2 oz orange blossom honey (PDO Miel de Granada); 100 g / 3 1/2 oz water; 2 g / 1/9 oz agar agar.

For the mandarin granita: 800 g / 1 3/4 lb mandarins.

Others: 8 slices mango; orange zest; kumquat; passion fruit seeds; flowers: nasturtiums, pansies, marigolds, dianthus chinensis.

Papaya soup

Blend the papaya with the orange juice until smooth.

Orange blossom honey jelly

Add the honey to the water and bring to a boil. Add the agar agar. Transfer to a 1/2 cm / 1/4 in high mold and leave to set.

Mandarin granita

Grate the mandarin peel, then squeeze the mandarins and collect the juice. Place both peel and juice in a Pacojet container and freeze for about twelve hours.

Mango slices

Peel as many mangoes as needed and slice finely in the electric slicer. Serve 2 slices per person.

To serve

Pour the papaya soup into the serving bowls. Top with the mango slices and top those with the mandarin granita. Finish with the flowers, passion fruit seeds, orange zest, kumquat and orange blossom honey jelly.

Preparation time

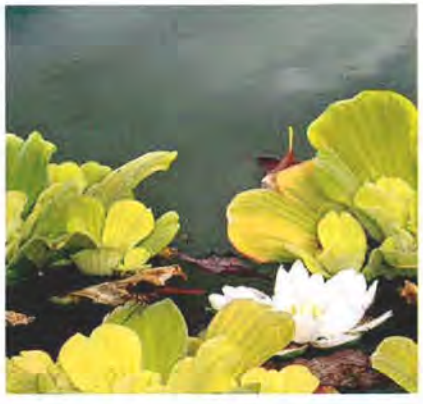
30 minutes

Recommended wine

Monje Moscatel 2004 (DO Tacoronte-Acentejo), by Bodegas Monje. This is a 100% Muscatel wine, straw-yellow in color. Its powerful, elegant nose and very fresh citrus notes in the mouth give a touch of sharpness in combination with a pleasant but not excessive sweetness. All these characteristics set off the varied citrus flavors in the dish. The ideal serving temperature is 9-11°C (48-51°F).

Crémeux of Flor de Guía cheese with a rosemary honey veil and micro-basil

(Cremoso de queso de flor de Guía, con velo de miel de romero y micro albahacas)



Flor de Guía cheese (from Grand Canary Island, *Spain Gourmetour* No. 74) is undoubtedly one of the most prestigious of Canary cheeses. Made from raw sheeps', cows' and goats' milk, and using plant rennet, its slight bitterness contrasts well with the rosemary honey, spice and apple. This crémeux is a very versatile dish that can be served as a dessert, a pre-dessert or even a starter.

SERVES 4

For the Flor de Guía cheese crémeux: 200 g / 7 oz Flor de Guía cheese; 50 ml / 4 tbsp cream; 1 sheet gelatin.

For the rosemary honey veil: 300 g / 10 1/2 oz rosemary honey (PDO Miel de La Alcarria); water; gelatin sheets.

Others: leaves of lemon, anise, cinnamon and purple micro-basil; diced cooking apple; Fuencaliente fleur de sel, spice bread.

Flor de Guía cheese crémeux
Heat the cream with the Flor de Guía cheese in a Thermomix until they are completely blended. Add the gelatin after first soaking it in cold water. Refrigerate the mixture for about 12 hours, then beat as if beating cream.

Rosemary honey veil
Reduce the rosemary honey over medium heat until it begins to foam. Remove and add water to reach 650 g / 1 lb 7 oz. Add the gelatin after first soaking it in cold water. Pour onto shallow flat molds to form strong, thin veils (one per person).

To serve
Serve the cheese crémeux onto 4 dishes and top with the rosemary honey veil. Decorate with the micro-basil leaves, diced apple, fleur de sel and spice bread.

Preparation time
12 hours 30 minutes

Cooking time
15 minutes

Recommended wine
Contiempo Baboso Negro Tinto de postre 2008 (DO Valle del Güímar), by Bodegas Arca de Vitis. This purplish-red wine is persistent in the mouth, fruity and balanced, so it marries very well with cheese, especially with aged and semi-aged cheese, and with a wide range of spices.

Black Canary pork cheek lacquered with chestnut honey

(Carrillera de cerdo negro canario lacada con miel de castaño)

The black Canary pig is now being bred once again. Its meat is of top gastronomic quality and is especially appropriate for cooking in stews, especially with legumes. In this dish the chestnut honey, possibly the bitterest of honeys and certainly a strong-flavored one, makes the ideal partner.

SERVES 4

For the black Canary pork cheeks:
8 cheeks of black Canary pork; 50 ml / 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil; salt; ground black pepper; 1 vacuum pack; 50 ml / 4 tbsp chestnut honey (PGI Miel de Galicia); 40 ml / 3 tbsp red wine.

For the green beans: 200 g / 7 oz green beans; water; salt.

Others: fleur de sel; 8 fresh chestnuts.

Black Canary pork cheeks

Season the pork cheeks with salt and pepper and place in a vacuum pack with the extra virgin olive oil. Cook in a bain-marie at 65°C / 149°F for about 12 hours. Open the bag and pour the contents into a pot with the chestnut honey and wine. Cook over medium heat until the sauce is thick.

Green beans

Boil in salted water until al dente.

To serve

Serve two cheeks per person, pour over the sauce and finish with the green beans. Add two fresh chestnuts per person and sprinkle with fleur de sel.

Preparation time

12 hours 30 minutes

Cooking time

12 hours

Recommended wine

Tajinaste 4 meses barrica 2008 (DO Valle de la Orotava), by Bodegas Tajinaste. This Listan Negro monovarietal has a clean and shiny deep garnet color. The nose is very complex, with toast and vanilla from the oak, balanced out by red berries and touches of spice. It is a wine with body and sweet tannins, making it an excellent match for this rich pork dish.

On the Move

Sergi Arola improves his Portuguese...

Catalan chef Sergi Arola has followed up the 2008 launch of his restaurant Arola at the Penha Longa Hotel & Golf Resort in Sintra (Portugal) with another foreign venture, this time in Sao Paulo, Brazil. His new, 120-seater restaurant, Arola 23, occupies the 23rd floor of the 5-star, grand luxe Hotel Tivoli, just a couple of hundred feet away from the city's iconic Paulista Avenue.

Arola 23's manager and chef de cuisine are Fabiana Benaderet and Fabio Andrade, respectively; both are Sergi Arola team veterans, having worked with him at Arola at Hotel Arts and at the Penha Longa Hotel & Golf Resort. In fact, the entire staff has been hand-picked by Sergi, who personally oversees the cooking and is responsible for menu content. The menu is currently composed of two sections: *Clásicos de Arola*, a collection of customer favorites from his other restaurants, and *Do Mercado Municipal* (From the City Market), a range of dishes based on top-quality produce from Sao Paulo's *Mercado de Abastos* and given the inimitable Arola touch. To sustain this degree of personal involvement, Arola (who acts as advisor to the Tivoli Hotel Group) has declared his intention of traveling to Brazil once a month during the restaurant's first year in business.

As for future plans for further foreign ventures, Sergi Arola intends to continue developing the "Arola" concept: "In this part of the world (the *Cono Sur*, i.e. the southernmost parts of South America), we're negotiating possible openings in Santiago (Chile), Montevideo or Punta del Este (Uruguay), and Buenos Aires (Argentina). Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, we're engaged in talks with a Lebanese group and an American hotel company to open something in Central Europe and a Mediterranean Basin country."

Date of foundation (Arola 23): 2009
Workforce: 35 employees
Sergi Arola restaurants: In Madrid: Sergi Arola-Gastro, Vi Cool and Aro-La Barra, plus exclusive catering for La Quinta Marqués de la Concordia (Haciendas de España); in Barcelona: Arola at Hotel Arts and Vi Cool; in Roses (Girona): Vi Cool; in Castile-Leon (Valladolid and Salamanca): two Durius River Cafés for Haciendas de España; in Sintra (Portugal): Arola at Penha Longa Hotel & Golf Resort; in Sao Paulo (Brazil): Arola 23.
www.sergiarola.es

...while Martín Berasategui learns Chinese

The official launch of Restaurant Martín late last year was the end result of a project set in train three years earlier by a regular customer at Restaurante Martín Berasategui (the three-Michelin-star restaurant in Lasarte, in the Basque Country, where the Basque celebrity chef has been cooking since 1993) by the name of Mr. Gao, who suggested transporting the Berasategui experience to Shanghai. The suggestion found favor, and Berasategui and Gao plus two other partners (one Spanish and one Chinese) have invested money and effort in translating the idea into reality. As Berasategui explains, their approach in the Shanghai venture is: "to adapt our dishes to local taste while retaining the character of Spanish cuisine in a way that reveals and explains our gastronomy to a famously receptive nation that is eager for new taste sensations."

Working on the basis of the Lasarte restaurant menu, many dishes have been subtly nuanced to appeal to local taste. Among the results of this process are inventions such as oyster with watercress, rocket and apple chlorophyll, and fresh peach with marine jelly and scallop tartare. Asked how he managed to find the ingredients needed for this first overseas venture, Berasategui declared: "The ever-increasing presence of Spanish products, producers and suppliers in China means that one can easily obtain the ingredients intrinsic to our cuisine, such as extra virgin olive oil,

TEXT
SANTIAGO SÁNCHEZ SEGURA/©ICEX

ILLUSTRATION
AVI

TRANSLATION
HAWYS PRITCHARD/©ICEX

sherry vinegar and La Vera *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain)." When it comes to local products, he is full of admiration for the quality of the meat (such as Chinese sucking pig), fish and select vegetables, and foodstuffs brought in from elsewhere, such as Japanese oysters and Australian lamb.
Restaurant Martin's setting is an attraction in itself: it occupies the three floors and terrace of La Villa Rouge, a colonial-style building dating from 1921, now refurbished by Berasategui and his partners. Diners are served in seven "salons", four on the third floor and three on the second, which can be reserved for exclusive use. The ground floor is given over to a bar that stays open until 2 am, with live shows every night. The terrace, which is right in Xujiahui Park, is used for open-air lunches and dinners and is also a good place to enjoy a late-night cocktail from the indoor bar.

Date of foundation (Restaurant Martin): 2009
Workforce: 40 employees
Martín Berasategui's restaurants: Restaurante Martín Berasategui in Lasarte; Restaurant Martin in Shanghai. He is also involved in an advisory capacity with the Martín Berasategui restaurant in the Abama Golf & Spa Resort hotel complex in Tenerife, and with the Loidi and Lasarte restaurants in Hotel Condes in Barcelona.
www.restaurantmartin.com.cn

Cascajares takes US market by storm

"Our factory in Dueñas (a little town of around 3,000 inhabitants in Palencia province, in the northern half of Spain) supplies the eurozone countries and Asia. Our next objective is to reach the North American market through our new factory in Quebec." Chairman of Cascajares, Alfonso Jiménez, is explaining the rationale behind the latest move in his company's internationalization strategy. His company has won the Quebec Businessmen Association's prize for the best business plan in the Montérégie region, an annual award for the most outstanding business project in that province of Canada.
Cascajares's plans are ambitious, involving an investment of 1.5 million euros in Canada, which it is hoped will help it achieve its export target of 50% of turnover. The new factory met its first orders in 2009, its customer focus being in the middle-to-top levels of the hospitality industry in Quebec; the next phase, starting in 2011, is to tackle the equivalent sector on the east coast of the United States, before moving on to introduce its products throughout the American continent via various distributors. Jiménez gives a four-point explanation of why Quebec was chosen as a launch pad for America: "We believe that this is the richest region in the whole area in gastronomic terms; also its geographical location, close to the east coast, is advantageous on various counts. What's more, the local government provides significant support for new ventures, and the fact that the Canadian dollar is cheaper than the US dollar means cheaper production there."
Gastronomically, the idea is to preserve the essentially Spanish nature of their dishes for this new market while using local raw materials and adjusting the preparation method slightly. The company considers it vitally important to bring in staff trained in their Dueñas factory for the Quebec venture. The business model is, in fact, "mixed": the Canadian factory's head of production is a Spaniard, while the admin and marketing departments are headed by locally-recruited staff.

Date of foundation: 1992
Activity: Design and production of cooked meat dishes, ready-made chilled and frozen dishes, and production of poultry, game, beef, lamb and pork joints.
Workforce: 35 employees
Turnover in 2008: 6 million euros
Export quota: 12%
www.cascajares.com

COVAP Ibérico products for New Zealand

When New Zealand's Health and Safety authorities gave the green light to imports of hams and charcuterie obtained from White and Ibérico pigs in January 2007, COVAP (the Los Pedroches Valley Livestock Farmers' Cooperative Company of Andalusia) immediately set about negotiating a place for itself in this new territory, attracted by "a market with lots of potential that no other manufacturer of Ibérico hams had yet reached," to quote the Co-op's

international affairs director, Abel Rodríguez. Those early approaches paid off: the Co-op has signed a contract with import company Baroni Foods and sent its first consignment (consisting of 200 Ibérico cured hams worth 60,000 euros) to New Zealand last summer.
Rodríguez explains that the company's objective in New Zealand is "to concentrate initially on top-flight restaurants and delicatessen shops and later, when COVAP Ibérico ham has had time to make a name for itself in the marketplace, to place it in supermarkets that have a gourmet section." Spanish restaurateur Pedro Carazo, who has lived in New Zealand for the last 30 years, is cooperating in this scheme. Rodríguez describes him as "the best ambassador for Spanish products you could wish for." His restaurant in Christchurch, Pedro's, provided COVAP with a highly-effective showcase during its early days in New Zealand, hosting all the presentations and tastings of its Ibérico products.
New Zealand brings the total of countries in which COVAP now has a presence up to 25, and the list is expected grow further with the addition of Brazil,

Australia, India, China and the US, the target clientele being the hospitality industry and gourmet shops in all cases. After over 5 years' work, the Co-op finally succeeded in obtaining the certification required to export its products into the United States late in 2009. Meanwhile, preparations for seeking a niche in the Chinese market are on hold until China's health and safety authorities make a return visit to inspect the premises (as they did in 2008) and issue the necessary permit so that COVAP can get on with the business of exporting to this vast Asian market as soon as possible.

Date of foundation: 1959
Activity: Agri-livestock and foodstuffs
Workforce: 700 employees
Turnover for 2008: 307 million euros
Export quota: 9%
www.covap.es

Bodegas Baigorri brings a new Rioja to California

Negotiations initiated at Vinexpo 2008, and sustained for several months, resulted last year in an agreement between Bodegas Baigorri and California's DVF Wines, giving DVF exclusive distribution rights over the Riojan winery's wines throughout the United States. The bodega's director, Simón Arina, is patently pleased with this new commercial alliance, paying tribute to the admirably businesslike approach of the new partner company, with whose help he hopes to achieve "...consistent annual growth of around 20% as our winery becomes known in the various west coast states".
To stimulate initial interest among US consumers, Arina is highlighting the fact that this is "a modern wine, intense and full-bodied, which comes with the quality guarantee of DOCa Rioja. We are confident that the brand image this represents gives us an edge while we establish ourselves in the local marketplace." It was with all this in mind that Baigorri began the process of going international in 2008; markets such as Holland and Switzerland are already showing highly promising results, and the company confidently expects to raise its export quota to around 35% in 2010.
The winery premises constitute an important aspect of Baigorri's appeal, albeit one appreciable only to those in a position to visit the Spanish headquarters. Situated in Samaniego, in Rioja Alavesa (northern Spain), the building is fascinating from both oenological and architectural points of view: it is all below ground level except for the top floor, which is a zinc-roofed glass cube with panoramic views over the surrounding vineyards. The lower floors house the vinification and aging bays with capacity for 665,000 bottles and are eminently functional in design.
Arina explains one intriguing aspect of this: "The winery capitalizes on the force of gravity at every stage of the production process; all the grapes are selected using vibrating tables, and all eight levels are designed so that they can be visited without impinging on production."

Date of foundation: 2002
Activity: Vinifying, aging and bottling fine wines
Workforce: 17 employees
Turnover in 2008: 2.5 million euros
Export quota: 25%
www.bodegasbaigorri.com

More news
www.spaingourmetour.com

Conservas Rosara

Natural Selection

Text
Paul Richardson/©ICEX

Photos
Conservas Rosara

In today's crowded marketplace, it sometimes pays to do things differently. Conservas Rosara is a family business specializing in the traditional products of its native Navarre. But, as Paul Richardson discovers, the family's interest in variety, high quality, and the export market is taking this small company in some radical new directions.

CONSERVAS ROSARA

In the midst of a dusty plain, as close to true desert as anything comes in Spain, the valley of the river Ebro (northeast Spain) is as lush and green as the landscape around it is alarmingly barren. If ever there were a paradise for vegetables, it's the 200 km (656 mi) stretch of Spain's second longest river (after the Tagus) lying between the regional capitals of Logroño (La Rioja) and Zaragoza (Aragón). The fertility of the Ribera del Ebro—and its abundance of fresh water for irrigation—is prodigious and legendary. Almost everything worth growing is successfully cultivated here, but the local asparagus, artichoke, and peppers (especially the famous *pimiento de piquillo de Lodosa*, little triangular slightly hot red peppers, *Spain Gourmetour* No. 76) are particularly esteemed.

Agriculture in this part of the world is closely linked with another industry whose fame has spread far and wide. The Ebro's canning companies, which specialize in bottling and canning vegetables for use throughout the year, developed out of the local tradition of preserving food products at home. Sometimes there is only a fine line between domestic custom and commercial production, as Evaristo Jimenez knows better than anyone. Twenty-three years ago Evaristo was bottling tomatoes and peppers in the garage of his home in Andosilla, Navarre (northern Spain). Now he and his family run one of the most innovative and successful of the region's many canning companies, if not one of the largest, and those tomatoes and peppers (to mention just two of a vast product range) are sold as far afield as the US and Japan.

The small town of Andosilla is situated just 3 km (9.8 mi) from the river, at the heart of the Ebro's horticultural universe. The community itself has little to recommend beside a pretty church, a couple of restaurants serving home-cooked vegetable dishes such as *menestra navarra* (boiled and sautéed vegetables) and *bacalao al ajoarriero* (salt cod cooked with garlic, extra virgin olive oil and egg), and the warm and hospitable, almost Mediterranean character of its inhabitants. Its one genuine claim to fame is the quality of the local vegetables and, in consequence, the excellence of its preserves. In 1950 there were no less than 14 canning companies in Andosilla alone, and if this number is now reduced to five, vegetable preserving still represents a sizeable activity for a country town with a population of just 2,700 souls.

From the beginning, Conservas Rosara was destined to be different from other companies. Where the majority, hitherto, were content to stick with traditional products—tinned asparagus, bottled artichoke hearts, and so on—and a traditional client base, Evaristo planned on another way of doing things. "From the start it was clear in his mind that he would do something different," says Evaristo's son Saúl, who, along with his father and sister Sara, make up the management team at Conservas Rosara. "He saw that we had an opportunity to come up with a product based on careful selection of raw materials, but gradually orientating the business towards a gourmet market."

Saúl is a dark-complexioned young man of solid country build, dressed in black and wearing thin-framed designer glasses. After studying marketing in Madrid he returned to Andosilla, where he still lives, preferring the pace and peace of rural life over the frenzy of the city. His sister Sara studied financial management at the University of Deusto in Bilbao, then came back to work in the family business.

It is a busy morning in late September: pepper season is underway and the factory has just received a delivery of piquillo peppers. Saúl shows me the wooden crates overflowing with the small, conical, scarlet-skinned peppers. These were grown by his uncle, one of Rosara's 400 suppliers, who has been their main piquillo supplier since day one. In due course they will be roasted in the factory's splendid old oven, fired with beech wood from the forests of northern Navarre. Emerging from the oven they are transferred to a machine of the family's own invention whereby the pepper is destalked, then peeled and cleaned, all without coming into

contact with water. Just like the company's products, the factory combines tradition and modernity in equal measure: Saúl points out the tanks where legumes are first soaked overnight, then cooked (just like in anyone's kitchen at home), before showing me the laboratory (Conservas Rosara complies with the ISO 9001 quality standard) and the all-stainless steel kitchens where new recipes are tried and tested.

Home on the range

One of the salient facts about Rosara is brought home to the visitor as soon as he walks in the door of the office, in an industrial park on the outskirts of Andosilla. A glass-fronted cupboard in the entrance shows off the family's dazzlingly varied product range, which includes as many as 185 distinct lines, all attractively packaged in the brand's traditional but uncluttered style, with paper ruffles on the jar tops, the flat

tins wrapped in paper. The eye ranges greedily over this cornucopia, picking up first the traditional Navarrese canned vegetables (*de toda la vida*—since forever—as the Spanish say), the asparagus and artichoke, the tomato and piquillo pepper, simply preserved in their own juices, and then alights on the less familiar things: the mousses, the cream soups, the sauces, the jams and pickles, the stuffed vegetables, the bottled legumes, the fruit in syrup... I counted ten products based on asparagus, almost 20 different

treatments of the artichoke, and an amazing 25 variations on the theme of piquillo pepper. I notice that some of the ingredients bear European quality seals, such as the Protected Geographic Indication (PGI) Espárrago de Navarra (asparagus) and DO (Designation of Origin) Pimiento de Piquillo de Lodosa (pepper).

An important part of his father's initial vision for the company, explains Saúl, was that quality would go hand-in-hand with variety. "We have always produced the classics of the region. Apart from those, we have developed recipes based on the dishes of our cuisine, such as bacalao al ajoarriero and menestra. We've also brought in innovations, products that had never been made for preserving cans. For example, we were the first to make stuffed pimientos del piquillo in tins, back in 1987." (Their catalogue now lists piquillo peppers stuffed with any of the following combinations: salt cod, meat, cep mushrooms and apple sauce, mixed shellfish, sea urchin roe, hake, monkfish, sole, lobster and scallops.) "We were also pioneers in mousses, and we were the first to bring out stuffed artichokes. Stuffed asparagus, too." (In case you're doubting whether asparagus can be stuffed, Rosara's catalogue offers them filled with lobster and with foie gras.)

The family aims to produce at least six new products every year. You might think such a hugely-varied range might blur the edges of the company's stated drive towards quality. A case of having too many eggs in one basket? Saúl smiles

wryly—it certainly makes things a little more complicated, he admits. The good part is never having to waste time: while other canning companies might be busy for a few months of the year (the Ribera's traditional peak periods are September/October and April/May), the factory at Rosara and its 35 employees are never idle for long. Among their newest novelties are Navarre artichoke hearts and dried tomato, both presented in olive oil, and the cherry pepper stuffed with goats' cheese, inspired by the Italian *peperoncino*, but with a crunch of freshness in the pepper that adds to the original version, making for a delicious aperitif.

Such creativity is impressive, but Saúl is ready to concede that certain ingredients don't translate well into preserves: anything with potatoes, for instance, is always going to be tricky, ruling out such dishes as *marmitako* (albacore tuna and potato stew) and *porrusalda* (soup made with leek, potato and salt cod). Artichokes with clams was one invention that never quite took off. It's also important to be sensitive, adds Saúl, to the market's changing tastes. There have been products launched before their time, like the piquillo peppers stuffed with *hueva de erizo* (sea urchin roe). "When we brought it out, in 1990, people seemed unsure of what exactly sea urchin roe was. Soon afterwards we stopped manufacturing the product, but now we've brought it out again. Although it still has limited appeal, at least nowadays people have a clearer idea of what it's about."

Think locally, act globally

In the early days, the company's marketing efforts were entirely directed towards the local (i.e. Spanish) market. As time has gone by, and under the influence of the younger generation, the export market has gained in importance, and it now represents around 10% of sales. (The brand is present in France; Austria; the US, including Puerto Rico; Mexico; Japan; and Belgium.) It was never going to be a breeze for products like these, so typically and robustly Spanish, to gain a foothold in foreign markets where they were mostly unfamiliar. Like many other manufacturers of fine preserves, Rosara has encountered the prejudice against canned products in Anglo-Saxon markets, where tinned or canned food has traditionally suffered from a poor reputation. Lack of familiarity with the complex world of Spanish gastronomy is also, still, a major issue when it

comes to selling abroad. As Saúl neatly puts it: "They know something about Spanish food, but not a great deal. If you ask a person who has been in Spain, they might say ham, tortilla, wine, and tapas. But piquillo pepper and asparagus, that might be a little more difficult."

Foreign markets in general tend to be more *au fait* with Italian products than Spanish, which is not surprising given the Italians' 40-year advantage. In any case, this is changing fast, as the excellence of Spanish ham, cheese, wine, and so on, continues to make waves across the globe. The Italian preserving tradition has served as an inspiration for a number of Rosara's newer lines. Saúl admires the way the Italians have positioned themselves favorably in the global food marketplace. When it comes to selling their canned products, they are still unrivalled. But the Spanish, he believes, are coming up fast. "If the Italian product is beautifully presented and commercially perfect, the product itself isn't everything it could be. They tend to revolve around the same things: the tapenades, the products in oil, the peperoncinos. They're a little bit stuck in the past. I'm not sure whether it's the influence of Ferran Adrià and the whole new Spanish cuisine movement, but here we're a lot more on the ball."

So saying, Saúl gets up from the table and disappears into the office, returning with the company's not-so-secret weapon, an original idea with which they hope to conquer foreign markets once and for all. The Conservas Rosara Tapas Kit, designed with the help of ICE Comunicación consultancy group in Logroño, was developed with a younger, more sophisticated customer in mind. The box, which has a bright, modern look, contains ingredients for a small but exquisite tapas meal, including two jars of preserves (in various permutations of piquillo pepper mousse, roasted mixed vegetables, legume and vegetable salad with tuna, etc.), plus a bagful of black and white spoons for presentation and a recipe leaflet with serving suggestions in Spanish, French and English. ("The Rosara Tapas Kit is specially designed for the consumer to express his own creativity.") The Tapas Kit was launched two years ago and is available in delicatessen-style food shops in France and Germany, though it has not yet reached the shores of the always-difficult UK. The kit forms part of Rosara's marketing strategy for the export market, if those terms don't sound too grand for a small family-run company with limited resources. "It's not something you can do in a day, nor in two. One has to find the right products, and then the right agents. But we think this is the path to follow: products specifically designed for export. And it's an ongoing process," says Saúl.

Gastronomic values, emphasis on quality. Diversity as a pillar of the business. One foot in the Navarrese tradition, another in the world of post-modern gastronomy. It all makes for an unusual mixture at a small rural company, but the formula seems to get results. "We're a little bit atypical," says Saúl with a shrug and a smile.

Paul Richardson *lives on a farm in northern Extremadura. A freelance travel and food writer, he is the author of* A Late Dinner: Discovering the Food of Spain *(Bloomsbury, UK and Scribner, USA).*

CONSERVAS ROSARA

Year of foundation: 1986
Workforce: 35 employees
Turnover for 2008: 3.5 million euros
Export quota: 10%
Main export markets: Austria, France, Mexico, Netherlands, United States
www.rosara.com

Patricia Langton from LONDON

New year, new magazine! *Spain Gourmetour* receives countless press releases about Spanish-themed venues that are popping up all the world over. In this section we are teaming up with collaborators spread out over every corner of the globe to give readers a glimpse of what's so special about enjoying Spain thousands of miles from the Iberian Peninsula. In this edition, Patricia Langton, wine journalist and contributor to leading publications such as *Decanter* and *The Drinks Business*, among others, takes us to Ibérica Food & Culture in her home city of London.

Text
Patricia Langton/©ICEX

Photos
Ibérica Food & Culture
Patricia Langton/©ICEX

I've been enjoying a number of new higher quality Spanish restaurants in London over the last year or so. They include Ibérica Food & Culture, which, as its name implies, is more than just a restaurant. Located on the fringes of London's bustling West End on Great Portland Street, this two-tiered restaurant, delicatessen and cultural center is part of a recently-formed Spanish triangle in this part of town—the Meliá White House Hotel and Banco Santander's UK head office are both within walking distance. So there's every chance that you'll hear Spanish conversations from the people alongside you at the bar or at the next table, indeed, around a third of Ibérica's customers are Spanish, all sorts of Spanish people...

The team behind this venture adopted a 1930s building and, thanks to its high ceilings and huge glass windows, they have created a bright, contemporary restaurant. It caters for casual, informal dining on the ground floor, while the Caleya Ibérica restaurant located above is more intimate and sophisticated. The central feature on the ground floor is the 15-m (49-ft) "gastrobar". This is the best bit for me and an ideal place to wind down at the end of the day with colleagues or friends. You can perch on a bar stool and select from a choice of cold and hot dishes—generous pinchos or tapas that ideally should be shared. I'm usually tempted by the line-up of fine Ibérico ham—one of the first things that you see on arrival—and I must recommend the Ibérica croquettes and black rice with seafood.

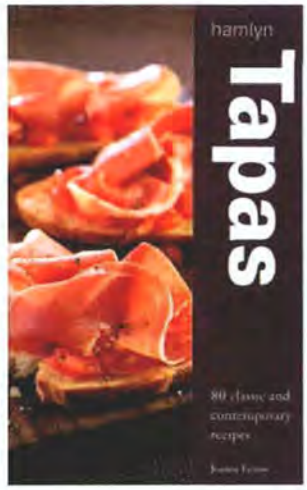
However, the enthusiasm for more contemporary dishes from all of their customers has encouraged chefs Santiago Guerrero and Nacho Manzano to show their gastronomic flare. Some of the more intriguing dishes that caught my eye on my last visit were the *pitxin* (pan-fried monkfish parcels) and chorizo lollipops with pear *alioli* (garlic mayonnaise) as they whizzed past on waiters' trays. They were as good as they looked, and these are certainly tapas with a twist.

Ibérica's wine list covers some of the lesser known DOs and styles which are quickly gaining recognition, such as the minerally whites of DO Valdeorras, a great match for the pitxin, or a fresh red from DO Méntrida, as well as ever-popular DOCa Rioja wines. There is also a selection of sherries and a few more would be welcome.

Ibérica opened in October 2008 as the world economy was brought to its knees. Encouragingly, this original Spanish project is a success story, having gained considerable respect for its cuisine and relaxed atmosphere from both Spanish nationals and Londoners alike. When the time is right and the formula has been perfected, Ibérica's partners plan to open similar ventures in other European cities. Watch this space...

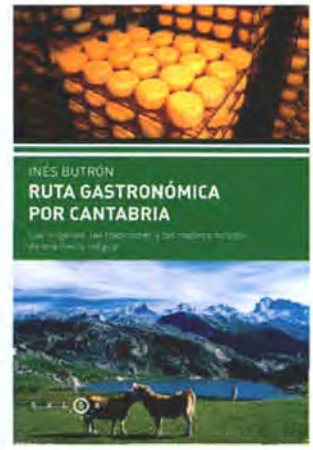
Ibérica Food & Culture
195 Great Portland Street, London
W1W 5PS
www.ibericalondon.co.uk

LASTING IMPRESSIONS



Tapas. 80 Classic and Contemporary Recipes by Joanna Farrow. English. Does anyone else's mouth water just at the mention of *tapas*? This book covers 80 of the best tapas recipes, where everything from light fare, seafood and poultry to veggie and meat dishes play starring roles. Farrow includes info on basic techniques, from peeling prawns to skinning tomatoes; on typical ingredients such as almonds, bread, cured meat and saffron; and even tips on how to serve them as appetizers or as an entire meal. Try classics like marinated anchovies or *patatas bravas*, or contemporary options such as goats' cheese in tarragon dressing or griddled quail with almond sauce. New and old school tapas in perfect harmony. *(Octopus Publishing Group Ltd., www.octopus.co.uk)*

Cocktails & Drinks Book by Javier de las Muelas. Spanish. One of the world's leading bartenders, and owner of DryMartini in Barcelona (among the world's best 10 bars), presents a top book on the topic. Here the king of cocktails serves up his never-ending knowledge on the history of and stories about bartending and mixed drinks; tips, tricks and secrets to becoming an outstanding bartender; and anecdotes from his many years behind the bar. He also includes recipes so that you can make the perfect negroni/gimlet/bellini/Singapore sling/wasabi frappé/etc. in your own home, complete with photos and details on glass types and musical recommendations. You're sure to down a wealth of information, not to mention an extraordinary beverage. *(Editorial Planeta, S.A., www.planeta.es)*



Ruta Gastronómica por Cantabria, Ruta Gastronómica por Andalucía, Ruta Gastronómica por Galicia (Gastronomic Journey Through Cantabria/Andalusia/Galicia) by Inés Butron. Spanish. Butron is the hostess, not to mention a renowned gastronomic journalist, who takes readers on a journey through the traditional culture and food of each of Spain's regions. These are just three books in an extensive series which covers each areas' diverse regional gastronomy, unique customs, culture, political beliefs, landscapes, history, triumphs and defeats, and, of course, recipes (Santander-style clams or Galician-style octopus anyone? Or maybe some Andalusian gazpacho?). Learn all you need to know about DOs, popular festivals, gastronomic events and typical products. There's nothing like an in-depth look at Spain's many edible treasures. *(Salsa books, Grup Editorial 62, S.L.U., correu@grup62.com, www.grup62.com)*

Text
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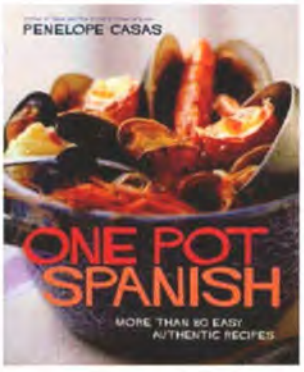


La Manzanilla. El vino de Sanlúcar (Manzanilla, Wine from Sanlúcar) by Christopher Fielden and Javier Hidalgo. Spanish. Light, dry, slightly acidic. That's Manzanilla, the star product of Sanlúcar, in Andalusia. The last two decades have seen this wine make a place for itself on the national scene and conquer markets abroad. This book gives an inside look at its origins and history, gastronomic qualities and current situation. Chapters provide fascinating and detailed data on Manzanilla and Sherry, wine production, Sanlúcar wines and the village's wine business, winery construction, specific producers, enotourism, Sanlúcar village and the future of Manzanilla. By the end of the book you'll be a true expert on the subject. *¡Salud!* (*Editorial Almuzara, www.editorialalmuzara.com, pedidos@editorialalmuzara.com, info@editorialalmuzara.com*)

One Pot Spanish. More than 80 Easy Authentic Recipes by Penelope Casas. English. Its proximity to the sea, Mediterranean roots and rich agriculture make Spain a culinary paradise, and in this book Casas delivers some of its best recipes. Following a nationwide gastronomic journey, the author deliciously re-creates the dishes from her trip, bringing the taste of her travels to your table. Spanish cooking is a celebration of flavors and underlines the use of fresh foods and diverse ingredients; both tenets are visible in her selection of soups, salads, rices and pasta, fish, legumes, meat dishes and desserts. Try the white asparagus salad with piquillo peppers, egg and anchovy; chorizo, tomato and pasta stew; or the Asturian-style rice pudding. You just can't go wrong. (*Sellers Publishing, Inc., www.sellerpublishing.com, rsp@rsvp.com*)

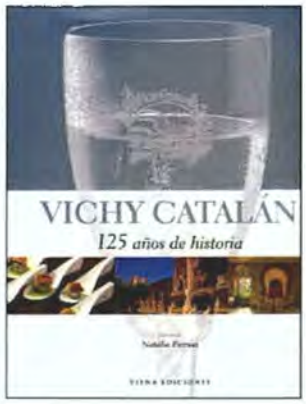
The Barcelona Cookbook by Sasa Mahr-Batuz, Andy Pforzheimer and Mary Goodbody. English. Spanish cuisine lovers in the US are in luck: all they have to do is head to the nearest Barcelona Wine Bar and Restaurant and their cravings will be satisfied. This chain has been putting smiles on customers' faces since 1996 and today it is the biggest Spanish restaurant group in the States. Authentic flavors are recreated using spices, olive oil, vinegar, cured meat and olives (among other items) imported from Spain, combined with fresh foods from local markets. The result: ecstasy. This book offers info on their wine and mixed drinks menu, ideas for tapas parties, techniques, ingredients and entertaining stories about the restaurant and its owners. One of the reviews sums it up best: "The book is practically edible." (*Andrews McMeel Publishing, LLC, www.andrewsmcmeel.com*)

Chupa Chups. 1958-2008. English. This great text celebrates the 50th anniversary of what is arguably the world's sweetest treat: Chupa Chups. Presented in a gold box, the book combines fun information, anecdotes, photos and drawings that tell the tale of this lollipop, which has been bringing happiness to people of all ages for the last five decades. Read about the anatomy of the lollipop; measures, weight and sucking time; wrappers; flavors and assortment; production; the anatomy of the consumer; sucking and smoking; brand milestones; going global; the collector series; the people behind the brand, and more. Pay homage to "high quality confectionary" and be a part of a really fun book for a really fun product. (*Chupa Chups, S.A.U., lollipop@es.pmvgrp.com, www.chupachups.com; ACV Ediciones, info@acvglobal.com, www.acvglobal.com*)

La cocina del cántabrico. Cenador de Amós. (Cantabrian Cuisine. Cenador de Amós) by Jesús Sánchez. Spanish. This book celebrates Sánchez, recognized as one of Spain's leading chefs; his restaurant, Cenador de Amós, in Villaverde de Pontones; and northern cuisine. Cooking today requires the right combination of science, skill, intellect, talent, originality and respect for tradition, and Sánchez hits the nail on the head in every department. The text includes information on his childhood, culinary philosophy and agriculture in northern Spain, as well as the ideas behind the concept of the restaurant. Recipes include creative concoctions such as cream of garbanzos with cod and leek brandade, salt-encrusted sardines with cheese and watermelon, and fresh duck liver with coffee marmalade and grape soup. (*Editorial Everest, www.everest.es*)

Matarromera, grandes vinos del Duero. (Matorromera, Great Duero Wines). English, Spanish. This book is comprised of a compilation of texts from some of the world's greatest specialized journalists and food critics, including Teresa Pacheco, José Peñin, André Dominé and Fernando Lázaro, who discuss Matarromera group's wineries, located in Spain's Duero region. The group, which owns six wineries and a distillery spanning four DOs and surrounded by the Duero River, is also involved in countless projects, including enotourism, olive oil production and wine-based cosmetics. It is known internationally for its excellent wines, its more than 400 vineyards and its commitment to innovation and research. Contributions are accompanied by fantastic photographs, bringing readers closer to this leading wine group and giving them a taste of its success. (*Grupo Matarromera, comunicación@emina.es, www.grupomatarromera.com*)

La acuicultura en la gastronomía del siglo XXI (Aquaculture in Gastronomy in the 21st Century). English, Spanish. Spain has seen rising demand for fish products over the last few years, and since extractive fishing alone can't meet that demand, aquaculture has expanded. This book discusses aquaculture as an essential segment of Spain's gastronomy and provides detailed data on its history, cultivated species and cultivation techniques, socio-economic importance, the gastronomic value of farmed fish, wine matching, the global aquaculture market, innovation, farmed fish's nutritional value and, of course, a selection of recipes. They include such brilliant suggestions as roasted turbot with eggplant and tomato cannelloni, and sea bass with squid noodles, fennel and sun-dried tomatoes. (*Editorial MIC, www.editorialmic.com*)



Vichy Catalán. 125 años de historia (Vichy Catalán. 125 Years of History) by Natalia Piernas. Catalan, English, Spanish. Spain's most famous brand of mineral water, Vichy Catalán, recently celebrated a milestone: 125 years in the business. This almost 500-page book provides a closer look at the company's story and all of the challenges it has faced during its journey to the top. It describes in great detail the history of the brand, its commitment to health and research, and its role in gastronomy, and includes a selection of medical and scientific articles linking Vichy Catalán and good health. It also features a selection of recipes from superstars like Mey Hoffman, Ferran Adrià, and Carme Ruscalleda, whose delicious suggestions all include Vichy Catalán in their preparation. (*Viena Edicions, www.viendaeditorial.com*)

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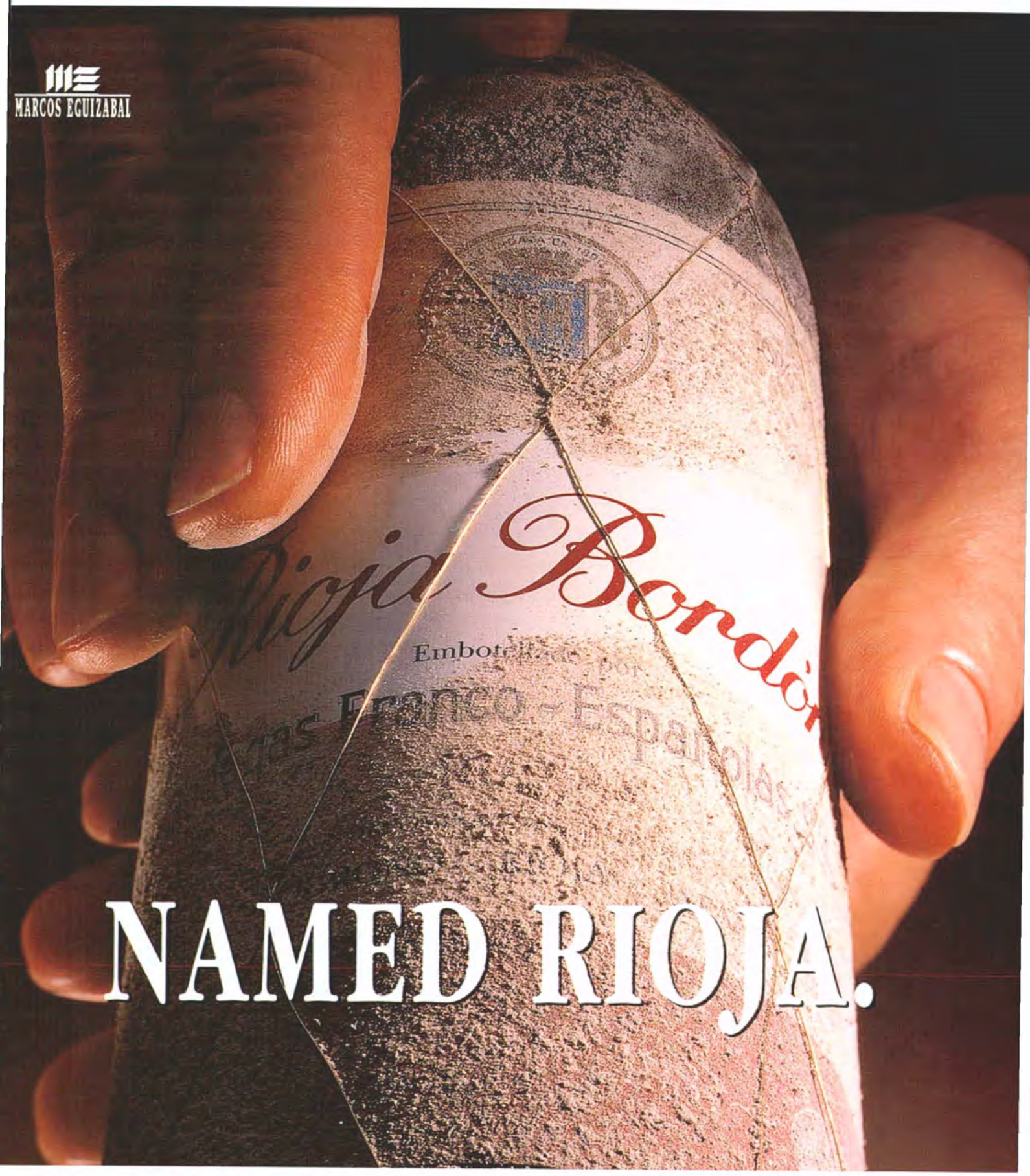

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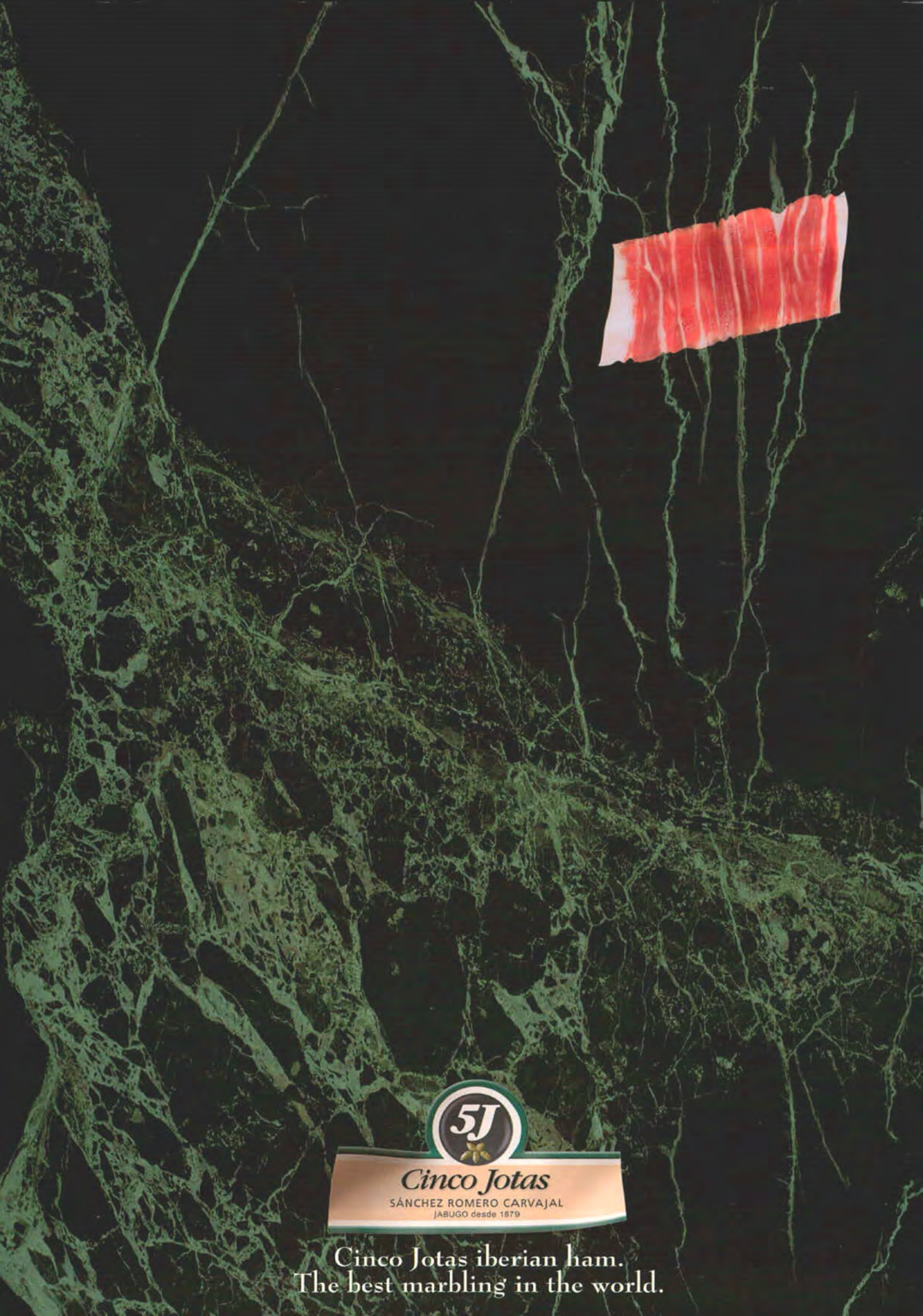
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