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EDIT

Spain has been a source of agricultural produce for the rest of Europe ever since Roman times. It comes as no surprise to learn, then, that it has emerged as one of the leading exporters of organic products, despite the fact that its own domestic market for them is still little more than tentative. Spain's canned and bottled fruit sector is, of course, another well-known source of natural goodness and provides many of us with a welcome dose of "sunshine in a bottle". A more sinister aspect of nature was seen in the Phylloxera epidemic that decimated the vineyards of much of Europe in the late 19th-early 20th century. The fact that the Canary Islands escaped that disaster unscathed endows the interesting wines they produce there today with additional cachet.

Sherry brandy—Brandy de Jerez—has a long history, though its name dates back only as far as the 17th century, a period when the Netherlands imported it in vast quantities.

They referred to it in Dutch as *brandewijn* (meaning "burnt wine"), the anglicized version of which became "brandy".

Another neologism, very much of the 21st century, is the term "gastrobar", coined to describe a whole new take on that most Spanish and traditional of eateries, the tapas bar.

Read all about it, but not before joining me in wishing González Byass—175 this year—many happy returns!

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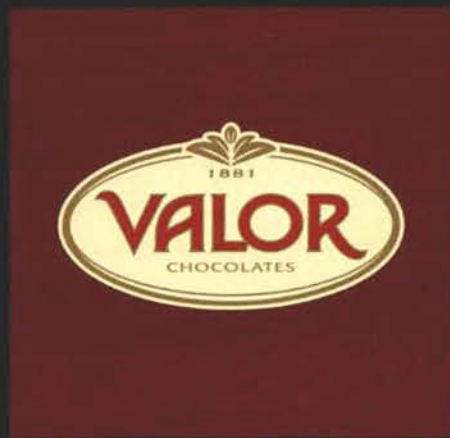
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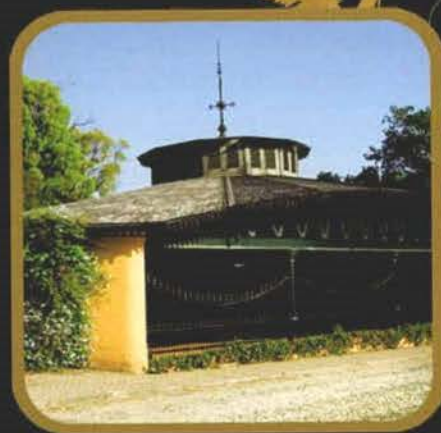
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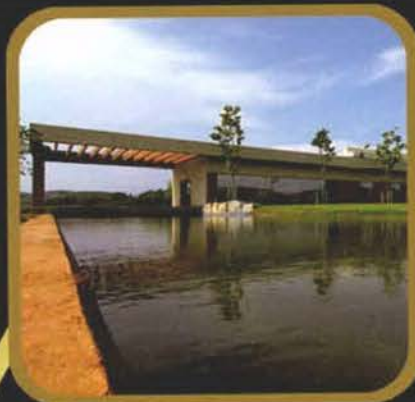
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ORGANIC

Agriculture

Organic agriculture in Spain has gone from strength to strength, conquering overseas markets with impressive ease. But one great challenge still awaits the segment, says Paul Richardson: the unexploited but strangely reluctant market in its own back yard.



TEXT

PAUL RICHARDSON/©ICEX

PHOTOS

JUAN MANUEL SANZ/©ICEX



How quickly the word has become familiar to us. In the early 1970s it was barely spoken except by a small group of individuals on the fringes of society, considered to be eccentrics, romantics, or “cranks”. Fast-forward 40 years, and it’s a crucial term in the discourse of modern living. We all think we know what it means, but in fact a strict definition is not as easy as you’d think. Here’s one I came up with earlier: the word organic (*biologique* in French, *ecológico* in Spanish, *ökologisch* or *biologisch* in German) refers essentially to a form of agriculture which avoids the use of chemical pesticides, weed killers and fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, antibiotics and growth hormones. It seeks to return to a more traditional kind of farming in which the farmer worked with nature rather than against it, maintaining the fertility of the soil, promoting biodiversity, and working for the welfare of rural communities. Its goal is to produce healthy foods with all their natural properties intact, replete with natural aroma, flavor and texture, and by

sustainable means. It is practiced in all the countries of the developed world, including, ever more widely and with ever greater commercial success, in Spain. Organic farming may posit a return to simplicity, but the bureaucratic structure of the organic sector, like the connotations of the word, is rather complex. This is mainly because, unlike the products of conventional agriculture, organic products need to be certified as such. In the case of Spain, the importance of supervision and control has given rise to a number of certifying bodies known as councils or committees of organic agriculture, one or more in each Autonomous Community. These councils or committees are public entities which report to the regional government, with the exception of Andalusia and Castille-La Mancha, where they are private companies, and Aragón, where private and public certification bodies co-exist. Products destined for export must carry the seal of the regional council or committee, plus the EU seal of quality for organic produce (Brussels

launches a new, clearer logo in July 2010); in addition, they may also carry the label of a certification scheme in the country where they are to be sold. Organics in Spain began life relatively late: the first national legislation was made in 1989, though a small amount of organic farming was already going on, and the forward-thinking Vida Sana Association, now major movers and shakers in the Spanish organic scene, had been operating their own informal certification scheme since 1981. A more comprehensive and rigorous Europe-wide regulation (EEC) 2092/91 was followed by the 2007 Euro law on production and labeling of organic goods, which came into effect on January 1st 2009. Spain’s enormous variety of climates, soil types and ecosystems give it a major advantage over most other European countries in terms of what is possible to grow and when. But there is another factor: the dynamism and flexibility of Spain’s farming culture. Before Spain developed a powerful tourist economy, the country was essentially



rural and its economic base essentially agricultural. It is no exaggeration to say that Spanish history is predicated on the energy and expertise of its farming industry. To this extent, it comes as no surprise that the Spanish organic sector has come so far in such a short time. Plotted on a graph, the growth in organic cultivation from the early 1990s until today is illustrated by a steep upward curve, beginning with 4,235 ha (10,464 acres) in 1991 and culminating in 1,602,868 ha (3,960,773 acres) in 2009. It's a matter for justifiable pride that Spain is now the EU member country with the largest surface area devoted to organic agriculture, ahead of Italy, France, and the United Kingdom, according to Eurostat. However you look at the organic scene in Spain, the story is one of gradual but continuous development. The number of organic producers (as opposed to manufacturers or importers) in Spain rose steadily from 17,509 in 2005 to 20,171 in 2007 and to 25,921 in

2009. Organic crops now represent just over 5% of all Spanish agriculture. The contribution of individual Autonomous Communities to the organic fresh produce market is in large measure a reflection of their dependence on agriculture in general. The leader in total surface area devoted to organic agriculture is Andalusia (southern Spain) with 784,067 ha (1,397,471 acres), though its predominance is partly explained by the region's vast expanses of olive grove, dehesa (wooded pastureland), animal pasture and other extensive systems. This is followed at some distance by Castile-La Mancha (central Spain) with 119,668 ha (295,706 acres), then by Extremadura, in western Spain (85,806 ha / 212,031 acres) and Aragón, in northeast Spain (70,494 ha / 174,194 acres). When it comes to manufacture, Catalonia (northeast Spain) is far and away the major player in Spain, but as a producer it accounts for only 4.48% of the total national surface area.

Think locally, act globally

Murcia, a Mediterranean region in southeast Spain, is a point of interest in the general panorama of organic production. Though one of the country's smallest Autonomous Communities, the *Región de Murcia* has a rich horticultural tradition and a superb local gastronomy based on a deep appreciation of vegetables and fruit. Murcia also has a long tradition of organic farming and was a pioneer in the introduction of organic fruit, vegetables, rice, nuts and cereals; according to José Pedro Pérez of the Consejo de Agricultura Ecológica de Murcia (Council of Organic Agriculture of Murcia, CAERM), the first crop in Spain to be certified as organic was Calasparra rice, as long ago as 1986. In the league of producing regions Murcia comes in sixth, with a total of 59,339 ha (146,6239 acres) given over to organics. Proportionally, however, Murcia is far stronger in vegetables and (especially) fruit than



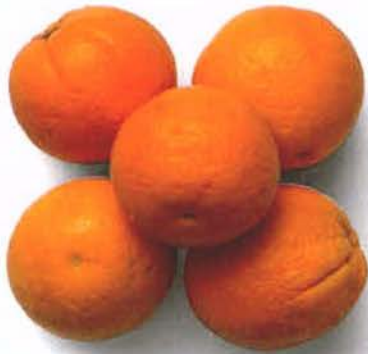
any other Autonomous Community, since it has very little of the wide-ranging pastures, forests and extensive olive plantations that make up the majority of organically-managed land in Andalusia, Castile-La Mancha and Extremadura. Organic plantations represent as much as a tenth of the region's available agricultural land. The region has experienced a boom of its own in recent years: the number of organic growers in Murcia increased from 1,683 to 2,193 in 2008. Anyone who thought organic agriculture was all about head-in-the-clouds idealism, small scale and idyllic surroundings—hippies going back to the land—would be amazed by the organic scene in Murcia. Organic fruit and veg is big business here: a full 90% of local production is exported, overwhelmingly to Germany, bringing in 55 million euros annually to the local economy. On a sunny spring morning I visited Hortamira, one of 174 producers on the books at the CEAM. A co-operative in the coastal flatlands

outside Cartagena, Hortamira has 320 producing members and around a fifth of its production is organic, though much of the rest is produced under the Integrated Production System, using a minimum of chemical pesticides and herbicides. The co-op's organic Pinver brand accounts for an annual turnover of 30 million euros. The warm, dry climate of southeastern Spain makes the region of Murcia ideal for winter cultivation of broccoli, celery, cabbage, cucumber, lettuce, peas, and citrus fruits like lemon and orange. At the time of my visit, however, the co-op was busy dealing with a massive crop of peppers. Over the course of the annual pepper "campaign", so my white-coated guide informed me, up to 3,000 tons (6,000,000 lb) of peppers can pass through Hortamira's factory in San Javier. Today the packing plant was working at top speed; the air in the factory was full of the sweet/sour smell of peppers. Color-coded lines (green for organic, red for

conventional) were calibrating the items for size and weight, packing them in threes in a transparent flow-pack. Where were they headed? For Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, and the UK. (The red/yellow/red combination, imitating the Spanish flag, is particularly popular abroad.) Outside in the fields, dirt tracks wound between sprawling greenhouses of which this pepper plantation was just one of many. Nothing about this structure and its contents would say "organic" to the casual observer—until he or she looked a little more closely at the weeds around the edge of the plastic sheetings (no herbicide allowed) and

Websites

- www.agroecologia.net
Spanish Society of Organic Agriculture (SEAE). (Spanish)
- www.vidasana.org
Vida Sana Association. (Spanish)



the pepper plants with the sachets hanging from their stems. Organic farmers around here use biological control to eliminate pests (i.e. bugs that eat other bugs) and plant extracts as fertilizers. The phosphate used derives from seaweed, the potassium sulfate from a naturally occurring mineral. The seeds used are organic. Rainwater is collected from the plastic rooftop and channeled into an artificial lake, then administered by a drip system. Ideologically the farm ticks all the boxes: what is extraordinary is its enormous scale. Farmers around these parts can have as many as 16 ha (39 acres) under intensive organic cultivation. The organic portion of the Hortamira plantations accounts for a total of 59 ha (145 acres), including as many as 40 ha (98 acres) of organic peppers. Next door to the greenhouse lies a citrus farm. My guide waves a hand in the direction of the trees, which are organically cultivated, but look identical to the conventional sort. "Those are lemons," he says. "Round here we don't give a thought to the

lemon. We don't appreciate it, we just take it for granted. Not like in Germany. Over there, they fight over a nice lemon, and even more so if it's organic." This casual remark says a great deal about the nature of the organic sector in Spain, which has turned its back on the local market to concentrate on territories where the desire to eat and live organically springs from a committed lifestyle choice. Around 80% of Spanish organic produce is exported, mainly to Germany, the UK, France, Italy and Holland (in order of importance), according to the Sociedad Española de Agricultura Ecológica (Spanish Society of Organic Agriculture, SEAE), a non-profit organization whose remit is mainly promotion and development of organic agriculture. The great majority of these products are fresh, non-processed foods, namely fruit, vegetables and nuts which cannot be grown in northern climates, organically or otherwise. As a traditionally agricultural economy, as opposed to "industrial" nations like France or Germany,

Spain is still known abroad principally for its production of fresh fruit and vegetables. As in the conventional sector, Spanish products are associated with ripeness, flavor, vibrant color, and—especially in "southern European" vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, as well as pitted fruit, melons, oranges and so on—with a quality impossible to reproduce in more northerly latitudes. This explains the high esteem in which Spanish organic produce is held in a market like Germany—by some way the most sophisticated in Europe. Here, awareness of the organic concept reaches 98% of the population, and Germany is the EU's major importer of organic produce, some way ahead of both the UK and France. Dr. Klaus-Jürgen Holstein, editor of the German magazine *Ein Herz für Bio*, suggests that German consumers actively seek out Spanish organics, and this tendency is especially clear at the younger end of the market. But the appeal of Spanish organic products abroad goes further than a



general sense of sun-warmed flavor. Antonio Córdoba, who recently founded a fine food export company called Organic Spanish Market, emphasizes the importance of trustworthiness and professionalism. Foreign customers truly believe, according to Córdoba, that Spanish organics are what they say they are, which cannot always be said of other producing countries; the efficiency of Spanish supply networks is also highly valued.

Spanish organics: national prophets?

It's one of the ironies of the organic scene in Spain that, despite being a hugely important exporter of organic foods in their raw state, the country has few organic manufacturers; the result is that, of all the processed organic foods consumed in Spain, more than half is imported from the same countries that are such enthusiastic importers of organic Spanish fresh produce: Germany, Holland, France, Italy, and the UK.

And this irony conceals a mystery: why is Spain such a poor consumer of its own organic produce? For years it seemed the Spanish would never catch on to the organic movement. While Germany and France saw the arrival of specialist supermarkets where everything was organic, from baby clothes to coffee and meat, and even the big chains had a separate section for organic fruit and vegetables, in Spain the concept still seemed remote from the majority of consumers. Even today the presence of organic products in the Spanish high street is practically negligible, while awareness of the word *ecológico* and its significance is by no means universal. Organic products represent a tiny fraction, around 2%, of the country's total food consumption, and annual expenditure on eco products comes in at just 7.70 euros per person per year, compared with the European average of 30 euros. Several explanations are commonly offered for this state of affairs. First, Spanish consumers value freshness above all other considerations and

would rather buy an apple grown in the next village by conventional methods than an organic one flown in from New Zealand. Second, the ideological concerns of consumers here are not sufficient to compensate them for the higher price of organic as opposed to "conventional" products. Third, the Spanish organic sector has no great interest in developing the local market since it can make a much bigger profit by selling abroad, where, moreover, its products are highly sought-after. Whatever the reason, it would seem like a good idea to close the yawning gap between minimal domestic consumption and maximum exports, as Spain runs the risk that other producer nations may step in to take advantage of an under-supplied local market. Organic food companies now occupy their own patch at any Spanish international food fair of note. Barcelona's Alimentaria, Madrid's Fruit Attraction and Zaragoza's Qualimen all have dedicated organic sections. BioCórdoba, in October, is a well-established event covering organic



olive oil, wine, fresh produce and prepared foods, and Ecocultura in Zamora, a joint Portuguese/Spanish fair, is now in its seventh year. Organic fairs aimed at the national market are less common and occupy a lower profile. Biocultura is one example. Held once a year in the cities of Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia, this long-standing fair, 25 years in the breach, originated in what might loosely be called the "alternative" scene but, like the scene itself, has long since moved considerably closer to the social mainstream. From Murcia I traveled up the Mediterranean coast to Barcelona, where Biocultura was in full swing. The market took place over four days in the Palau Sant Jordi, on the hill of Montjuic, close to the Olympic stadia that brought

Barcelona worldwide fame in the *annus mirabilis* of 1992. The view from the Palau was a panorama of the city where, of all Spanish capitals, the organic and ecological culture of the 21st century has made the greatest inroads on the lives of its inhabitants. Of the 700 stalls at this year's edition, roughly half showcased



organic produce in some form or other. Over the course of that weekend I tasted my way through Spanish organic products as diverse as honey, milk, wine, kombucha, rice, chocolate, cheese, pine nuts, beer, olive oil, saffron (from Teruel), and Ibérico ham (from Jabugo, no less). There were organic butchers, bakers, and caterers (organic weddings are apparently the latest thing). A number of companies offered equipment for growing your own organic veg at home, with innovative planting systems from Spanish masters of domestic organic horticulture like Mariano Bueno and Gaspar Caballero de Segovia. The parallel activities at Biocultura have always been a major element of the fair. Steering clear of the Reiki massage workshops and mantra



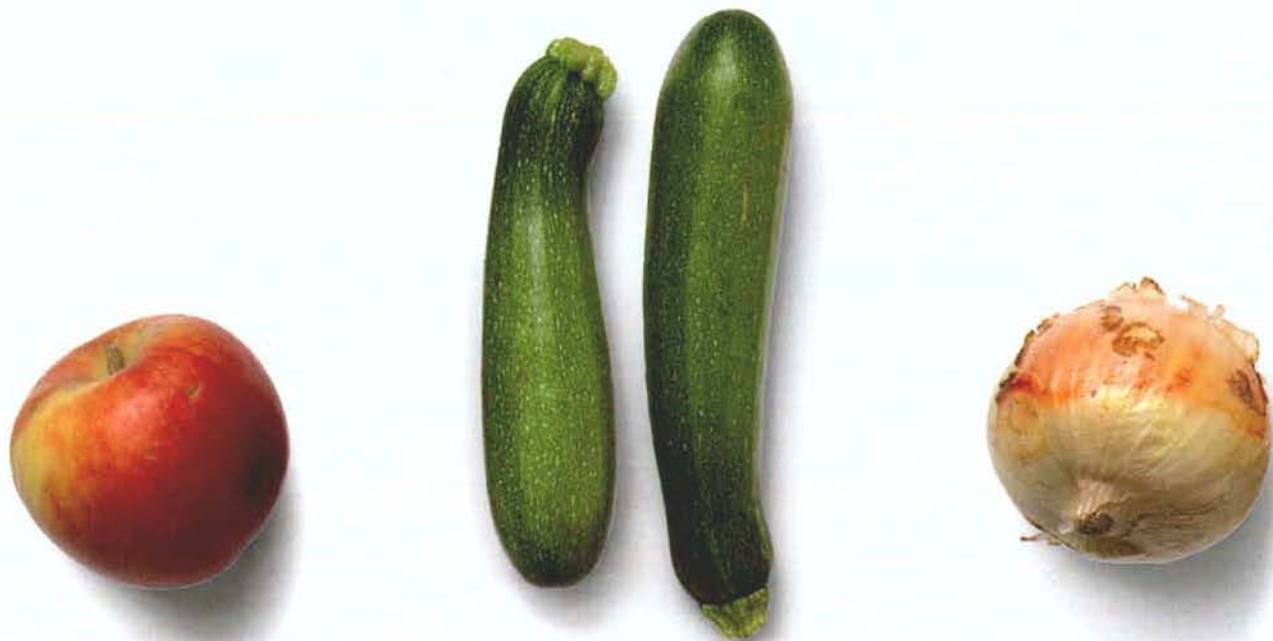
recitals, I attended a talk by nutritionist brothers Pascual and Benito Tàrraga on the whys and wherefores of the organic diet, another on organic theories applied to house building, and a fascinating round table held by a group of Catalan eco-chefs calling itself Km0, which has committed to using traditionally-produced ingredients obtained as closely as possible to the kitchen. The Km0 meeting was graced by the surprise appearance of none other than Carlo Petrini, founding father and high priest of the Slow Food Movement to which much of the organic scene in Spain owes its inspiration.

It all seemed to confirm what I had begun to suspect: that despite the Spanish domestic market's lack of interest in its own excellent organic

produce, a sub-set of the market is both ideologically engaged by the ecological movement and deeply committed to the organic lifestyle. Though the big supermarkets are arguably lagging behind in their supply (indeed, there are those who affirm that the big supermarket as a retail model is, by its very nature, "anti-organic" and unsustainable), there are other places these days to



look for fresh organic produce. Farmers' markets, commonly known in Spain as "organic street markets", are springing up like mushrooms on fall mornings in big cities like Madrid, Barcelona and Zaragoza, as if to compensate for their late arrival on the scene. Small local food marts specializing in organics are also popping up with increasing regularity. Some of these, like Terra Verda, a Valencia-based chain with 15 shops (2004) across the region, have their origins in the traditional Spanish herb and spice store (*herbolaria*). Comme-Bio, a store with a vegetarian restaurant attached, has two establishments in Madrid and two in Barcelona, while Veritas sells 4,000 organic lines in its 19 supermarkets in Catalonia and Andorra.



A tale of two organic producers

1. BIOCAMPO

This is the cutting edge, the serious face of Spanish organic vegetable production on a high-powered scale. Biocampo is a producer in San Pedro del Pinatar, Murcia, and a family business run by the three Sapor brothers. The family began growing organically 15 years ago and have seen business grow exponentially, with year-on-year increases of up to 30%. Biocampo now has 300 ha (741 acres) of open-air cultivation and 28 ha (69 acres) of greenhouses, of which 150 ha (370 acres) belong to the company (the rest is rented land). The vast majority of its huge production of onions, peppers, zucchini, cucumbers, melons, pumpkins, cabbage, maize, celery, leeks, artichokes, broad beans, broccoli and citrus fruit go to France, Holland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and, most importantly, Germany, which represents a full 60% of its exports, and whose demand for organic products is unwavering. In Germany, says Héctor López of Biocampo, organic food is a serious issue, and certainly isn't based on whims or fashions. "You eat organically, or you don't eat at all," he jokes.

2. TARONGES EBRE

The Giné family farm in Tarragona, for generations an important local producer of oranges, know through experience that organic farming is no bed of roses. The family switched over to the organic system in 2006 partly out of conviction and partly as a way of adding value to an undervalued product. The obligatory four-year period of conversion to the organic system has been hard. The Ginés saw output plummet as the trees, suddenly deprived of artificial fertilizers and herbicides, gave as much as 50% less fruit. Disheartened, the family was on the point of going back to conventional methods, but persisted, and now have 70 ha (172 acres) under organic (out of a total of 77 ha / 190 acres). The 2010 edition of Biocultura was one of their first public appearances since going organic (this is the first year in which their citrus fruit officially bear the organic label) and, says Octavi Garcia, son-in-law of owner Joaquim Giné, the reaction to their superb mandarin oranges, unwaxed and untreated with an impressive depth of flavor, has been gratifying: "People like to buy directly from the producer, and that makes us feel good."

Spanish cuisine, enhanced by organic products

The world of Spanish cuisine has been quick to recognize the value of organic ingredients, seeing these items as an extension or refinement of the existing range of gourmet Spanish products. In October 2009, seven-Michelin-star chef Santi Santamaria organized a workshop on organic products at his restaurant Can Fabes. Juan Mari Arzak, Carme Ruscalleda, Rodrigo de la Calle and Andoni Luis Aduriz are other important Spanish chefs known to be committed to the eco cause. The era of the "eco-restaurant" is still in its infancy. The SEAE estimates that there are around 20 offering exclusively organic menus in the whole of Spain, a pioneer being the eco-vegetarian restaurant Sarasate in Pamplona; however, the range is increasing. Initiatives bringing together Spanish chefs interested in organic ingredients are beginning to make



their presence felt. An example is Galicia's Grupo Nove, a coalition of Galician restaurants including Casa Marcelo (Marcelo Tejedor is the chef) in Santiago de Compostela, Casa Solla (José González-Solla) in Poio (Pontevedra), and España restaurant (Héctor López) in Lugo. The group has an ongoing commitment to organic produce, notably the fresh produce of Galicia under the aegis of CRAEGA (the Galician organic certification body) and from time to time offer ecological menus like that of chef Hector López. A recent example of Héctor's special organic menus featured dishes like Cream of vegetables with Tetilla cheese foam, Fish of the day with seaweed and vinegar caramel, and Beef with turnip tops and quinoa. As a consequence of his presence at the 2009 BioFach fair in Nuremberg, Germany (one of the most important organic fairs in the world, with 2,717 exhibitors), López is keenly aware of the high esteem in which Spanish organic products are held in foreign markets. But the real revolution in Spanish

organics, as in so many aspects of 21st century life, has happened through the World Wide Web. For the first time, the information that consumers might previously have lacked about organic practice and products is available at the click of a mouse. More importantly, they can also buy those products online, cutting out the middleman and creating a direct link between producer and consumer: another of the organic movement's cherished ideals.

If information and distribution were the two weak points for Spanish organics, the internet and mail order have made them less so. Take the very good example of Joan Castelló, a farmer in Amposta, Montsià county, Catalonia. Coming from a traditional country family, Joan began farming in 1979 but turned to organics 13 years later, working with the CCPAE (Council of Organic Agriculture of Catalonia) for certification. At first he and his wife sold almost everything to Germany and France, but in 1996 their business took a radical turn. They started a box scheme, of the sort

pioneered in the USA and now common in most European countries, where the client takes pot luck on a box of whatever fruit and vegetables are available in season. The price for a 7 kg (15 lb) box, which can be ordered online or by phone: 30 euros, plus delivery. Joan has seen demand increase to the point where the scheme now constitutes a full 85% of his business, and he has loyal customers in Bilbao, Valencia, Málaga and Madrid. If Spanish organic producers want to open up the unexploited market in their own back yard, it's this sort of committed grassroots initiative that may just make the difference.

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Quintessential **Quality**

Spirits distilled from sherry wine date back further than any others in the Old World: distilleries are known to have existed in the Dark Ages. Today, sherry brandies are found all over the world, and this year marks the 25th anniversary of Specific Denomination status for Brandy de Jerez, Spain's leading "spirit drink" (as it is officially categorized) and its most widely exported one.





BRANDY

de Jerez



TEXT

PAZ IVISON/©ICEX

PHOTOS

AMADOR TORIL/©ICEX

TRANSLATION

HAWYS PRITCHARD/©ICEX

In his *Historia apasionada del Brandy de Jerez* (Enthusiast's History of Sherry Brandy), Andalusian author and journalist José de las Cuevas (1918-1992) informs us that alcohol was invented by the Chinese, specifically by Lao Tse (the Chinese philosopher on whose writings Taoism is based, and who lived in either the 6th or 4th century BC, depending on the source consulted). Believed to have been used originally in Taoist rituals, it later became one of the wide variety of substances that made up the Chinese pharmacopoeia. Like so many discoveries during that distant period, alcohol reached the Arab world from China by way of Egypt. When, in 711 AD, the Arabs landed on the south coast of present-day Spain and initiated an invasion that was to entail six centuries of subjugation for much of its Christian territory, they did so along the stretch of coast near the town of Jerez, which faces out towards Africa. They would have found the area densely planted with vineyards, reflecting the existence of an already established and thriving wine trade.

The wines produced there in the 8th century would clearly have been quite different from the sherries we know today, but there is no doubting their importance as a local product. The new colonists capitalized on the region's flourishing vineyards as a source of raisins and, in some cases, also drank the wine they produced, religious strictures notwithstanding. For the most part, however, they distilled the local wines into alcohol, using processes that were already thoroughly familiar in the Arab world. The Spanish words alquitara (pot still) and alambique (alembic) clearly bespeak their Arabic roots as, indeed, does the word "alcohol" itself. (One school of thought believes it to be derived from the Arabic term al-khol, meaning powdered antimony used as eye makeup, still widely used today, and known as "kohl". The Arabs are believed to have used alcohol in perfumery, cosmetics and as an antiseptic, mixed with camphor). The conquerors gradually introduced distillery equipment—their

alquitaras and alembiques—into the new territory, laying the foundations for a thriving distillery industry there, in parallel with others associated with crafts and trades such as cabinet-making, weaving, milling and dyeing. The Arabs were to occupy that part of Spain for the next 500 years, until 1264, when it was reconquered by Alfonso X ("Alfonso the Wise", 1221-1284) in the name of Christendom and Castile. Thanks to a highly informative manuscript kept in Jerez de la Frontera's Municipal Archives, we know that at the time of its reconquest, the region contained numerous distilleries and wineries, including 21 wineries roofed in Arab tiles. In post-reconquest Jerez, winemaking and distilling went from strength to strength, opening up new markets in northern Europe, especially in the United Kingdom. French cognac had not yet appeared on the scene, and would not do so until considerably later. The first reference to this other great distilled wine classic occurs in 1630, by





which time Jerez had been trading in its particular *aguardientes* (distilled liquors) for many years, as we learn from *Noches Jerezanas*, a historical compendium by Jerez historian Joaquín Portillo (1802-1853). It features a fascinating account of the arrival in Jerez in 1580 of representatives of the Jesuit Order (also known as The Society of Jesus), which reveals that the construction of the monastery and school they built there was financed entirely by revenue obtained from *aguardientes*. Although the book is a 19th-century publication, the reference is very precisely dated (January 16, 1580) and gives us every reason to assume that the *aguardiente* trade was very big business indeed in late 16th-century Jerez.

Aguardiente goes Dutch

By the early 17th century, the biggest customer for Jerez's distilled liquors was Holland, which, on the strength

of the Dutch East India Company, had emerged as the most important commercial hub in the western world. Distilled liquor obtained from Jerez was distributed from Holland to the many ports and countries within the company's sphere of operation. The consignments dispatched from Jerez were so enormous that their content came to be known by the name of their primary destination, and *holanda* became an official designation that is still in use today.

What exactly is *holanda*? The Regulatory Council for Specific Denomination Brandy de Jerez stipulates in its regulations that *holanda* is a low alcohol (70% vol. at most) wine spirit obtained by the distillation in copper pot stills of healthy, clean white wines. As a general rule, the alcoholic content of the *holandas* used as raw material for Brandy de Jerez does not exceed the 65% vol. mark. They are rich in volatile substances, which are what give each brandy its characteristic

aromas, and are commonly referred to as "impurities", in this case a positive term, indicating primary aromas and flavors retained from the original grapes. In short, more impurities mean a more aromatic end product.

The close trade links with Holland also gave rise to the word "brandy", which derives from the Dutch word *brandewijn* (burnt wine), the British approximation at which emerged as "brandy". Though brandy is a broad term, applied generically to different kinds of brandy made in various countries, it always signifies a spirit distilled from grape wine.

For many centuries, *holandas* did not spend a maturation period in wooden casks or barrels; this practice was not introduced until the latter half of the 19th century, when, as so often in Old World wine and spirit lore, its benefits were discovered by accident. In 1869, the Pedro Domecq Winery (founded in 1823) received an order for a large consignment (500 *bocoyes*) of prime



quality brandy: (1 bocoy = 500 liters, so the total order was for around 250,000 liters). However, no sooner was distillation underway than the customer (unidentified in legend) cancelled the order. Pedro Domecq was left with a great deal of surplus stock on his hands, which he placed for storage in the American oak casks used in the winery for ageing wine. When tasted five years later, in 1847, the brandy was found to have acquired outstanding finesse and quality. New market prospects beckoned, and the famous Fundador brand came into being.

Brandy by the bottle

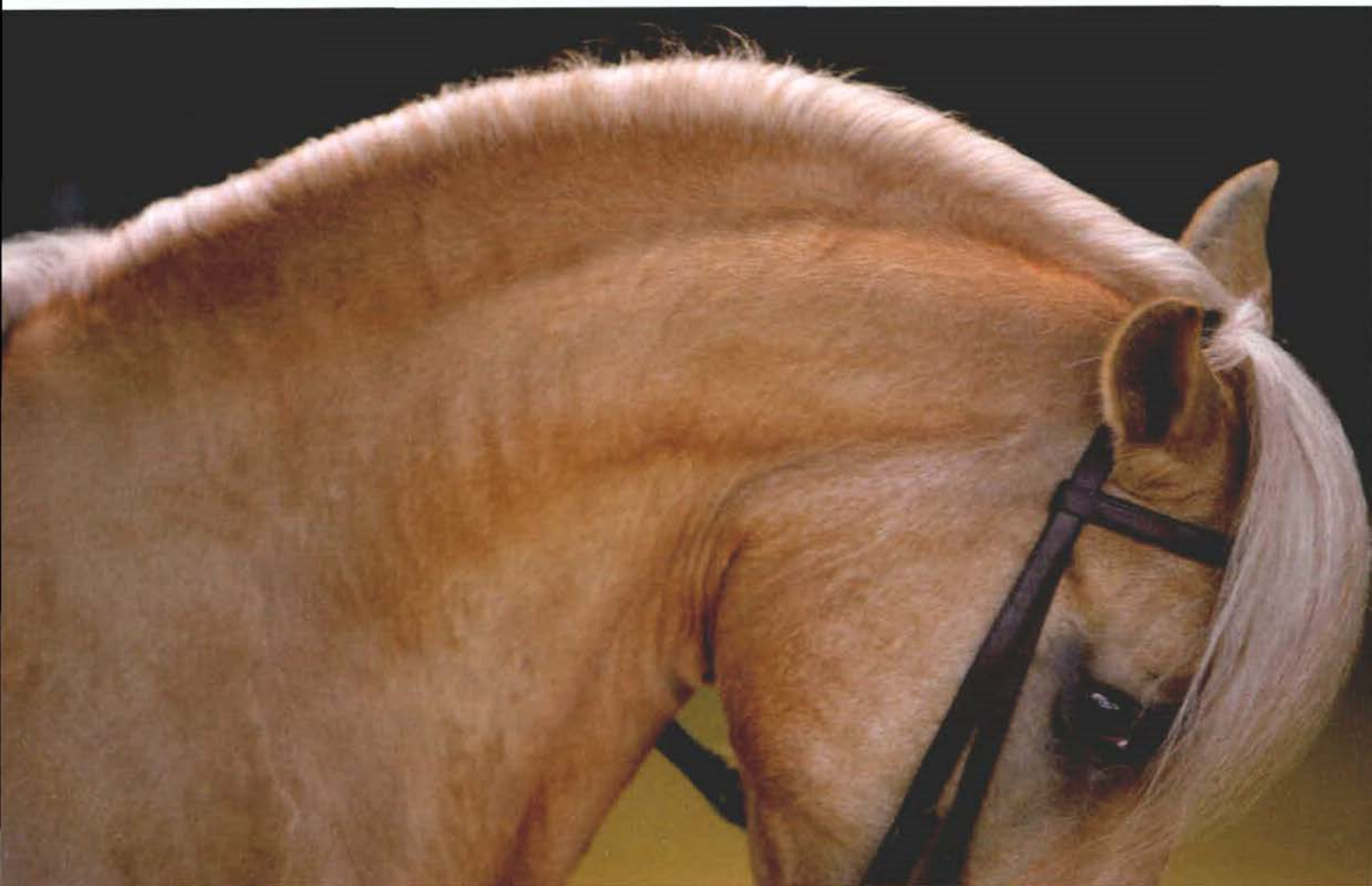
Having discovered the qualitative benefits of ageing holandas in American oak casks previously used for sherry, the region's producers adopted this maturation method. By the mid-19th century, several wineries had been established in Jerez by foreign owners, both

French (Pedro Domecq was one example) and British (such as R.C. Ivison). One member of the Ivison family was Francisco Ivison O'Neale (1831-1890, a distinguished chemist and grandson of Fletcher Ivison (179-1856), an Englishman originally from Cumberland. "Don Francisco", who was a friend and colleague of the great Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), was one of the first winemakers to set up in business in Jerez, and was responsible for important scientific discoveries relating to the process of ageing the local wine, such as using sulfur to clean wooden casks.

In 1880, Francisco Ivison sent his customers in England examples of bottled brandy produced in the (now defunct) R.C. Ivison winery labeled "La Marque Spéciale". The choice of a Frenchified name for his first brand was no doubt intended to tap into the prestige that by then attached to French cognac. Significantly, Ivison had spent some time in France's cognac

producing region, Charentes, studying and conducting research into wine spirits.

From that period of the 19th century on, Jerez's wine spirits became increasingly well known, and the local wineries launched new brands onto the market. All producers adopted the ageing system used for the sherry wines for which the region was famous. The combination of the local climate and the idiosyncratic *criadera* and *solera* system, using casks previously used for sherry, produced aguardientes and brandies (they had not yet acquired a distinguishing name of their own) with characteristics that differentiated them from all the other wine spirits in the world, with salient notes of dried fruit and nuts, blonde tobacco, prunes and carob, providing elegant reminders of their parent wines. By association of ideas with France's Charentes-based specialty, they became known as cognac. At that period, which predated designations of origin

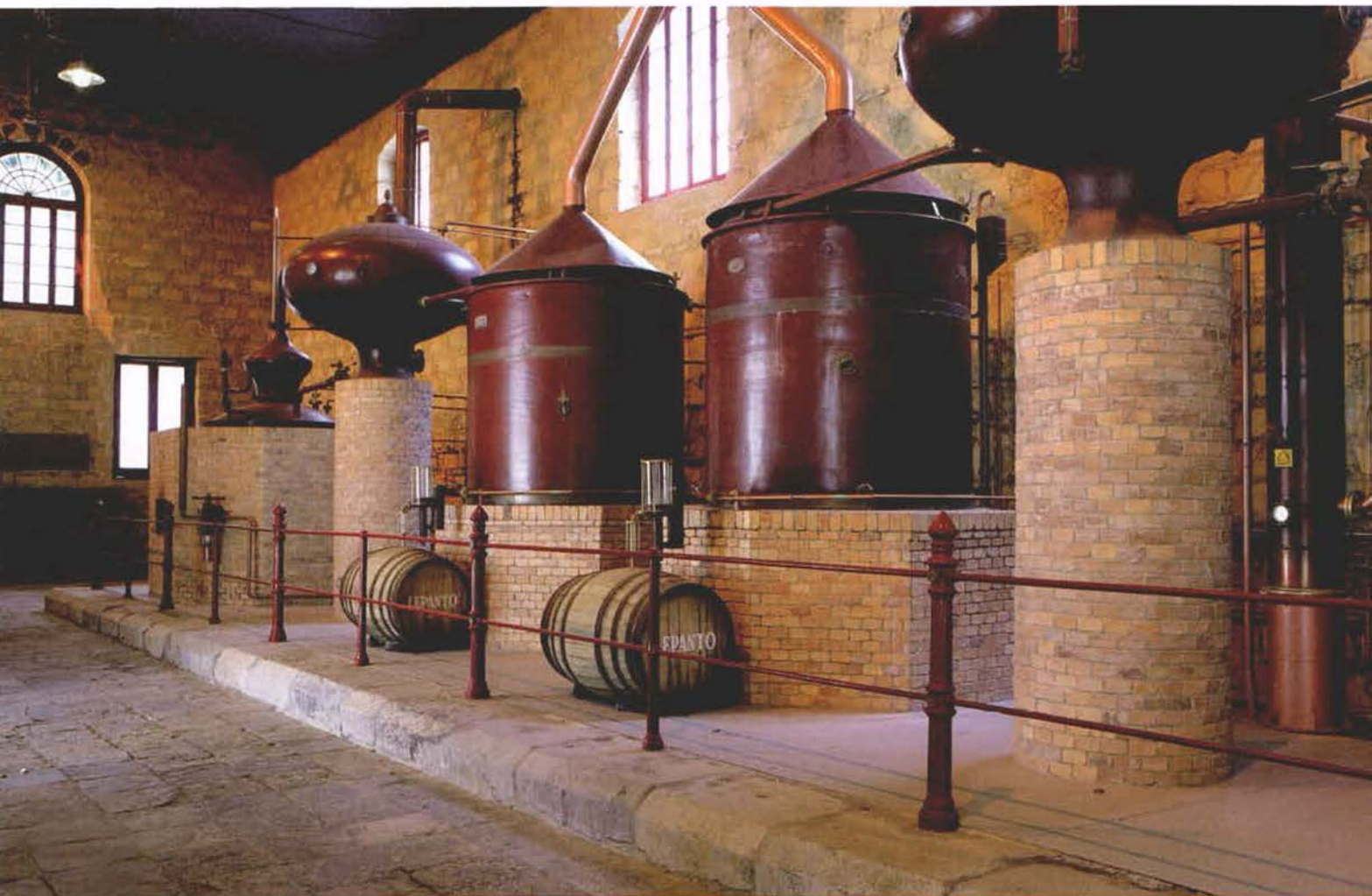


and regulations governing the nomenclature and provenance of wines and other beverages, the term cognac was used prominently and with impunity on posters and other advertising material relating to both French and Jerez products. In Spain, the term soon mutated into the unmistakably Spanish *coñac*, the new word eventually finding its way into the *Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy*. In 1985, the Regulatory Council of Specific Denomination Brandy de Jerez was constituted, and these superb wine spirits aged by the traditional Jerez method adopted the official name of Brandy de Jerez. Brandy de Jerez thereby joined cognac and armagnac to form a select group of the only wine spirits in Europe possessing designation of origin status.

Categories

The Regulatory Council covers three types of Brandy de Jerez: Brandy de Jerez Solera, aged in wood for at least six months; Brandy de Jerez Solera Reserva, aged in wood for at least one year; and Brandy de Jerez Solera Gran Reserva, aged for at least three years in American oak casks previously used for sherry wines. All three types are required to be made by distilling healthy wines obtained from grapes. The production and maturation area coincides with the part of Cádiz province contained between the three towns of Jerez de la Frontera, El Puerto de Santa María and Sanlúcar de Barrameda—the so-called “sherry triangle” that is also the officially stipulated production and maturation area for sherry wines. The specified

ageing method is the classic criadera and solera system, also known as the dynamic method and, in Spanish, *corrimento de escalas* (running through the levels), traditional to the area. This unique, highly labor-intensive method endows both the wines and brandies for which it is used with consistent quality and with absolutely exclusive characteristics. It consists essentially of barrels of wine or spirit stacked in tiers, those in the upper tiers being known as criaderas (“nursing” barrels) and those on the bottom as soleras (ground level barrels). A small quantity of liquid is systematically extracted from each barrel in turn and added to the next in sequence, from which a similar quantity will have been extracted and added to the next one down. This is performed throughout the sequence



of stacked barrels until the last one is reached: it is from this solera barrel that the definitive brandy is extracted for bottling. Its alcoholic strength will first be reduced, by adding water, to a level no lower than 36% alcohol by volume, which is the minimum permitted by Regulation (EC) No. 110/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council, governing spirit drinks. This dynamic system (whose origins historians have as yet been unable to trace convincingly) does not feature specific vintages, given that the youngest brandies are constantly being mixed with the oldest, creating an essential amalgam to whose final version it is impossible to date. The regulations also permit the use of a “static”, vintage-specific, ageing method which, in the case of Brandy

de Jerez, is often used in conjunction with the system described above. Some producers prefer to keep their brandies static, in the same barrel (in the Charentes style), at either the beginning or the end of the ageing process. In other words, there are two maturation systems in use. The Regulatory Council of Brandy de Jerez covers 350 brands, made up of brandies of all three categories, produced by 34 wineries. In all cases, these brands apply to products that are already bottled when dispatched from Jerez: brandy sold in bulk does not qualify for the authenticating Brandy de Jerez stamp.

Spirit of enterprise

Brandy de Jerez, like the wine whose name it shares, has always been

produced—and still is—with the export market very much in view. Sales figures (expressed in number of bottles) for 2009, provided by the Regulatory Council are around 28,639,306 for the domestic market, and 23,808,000 for the export market, composed of over 60 countries worldwide. In terms of production and export, it is Spain's leading spirit drink by a considerable margin. Bearing in mind that it takes six liters of wine to produce one of holanda, the 52.5 million bottles sold in total in 2009 represents over 230 million liters of wine. Another aspect of this impressive commercial performance is a beneficial effect on the national landscape directly attributable to Brandy de Jerez, which requires vast areas of vineyards to sustain

Jerez, Brandy capital



Jerez, situated just a few kilometers from the Atlantic Ocean, has more inhabitants than Cádiz, the provincial capital, and its many stately homes and elegant townhouses bear witness to a glorious and prosperous past (it has the claim to fame of being the second town in Spain, before Madrid and Barcelona, to install public street lighting).

Fount of sherry, brandy and Spain's most prestigious breeds of horse (including the unique white Carthusian), this city has an amazingly beautiful historic quarter. Reminders of the various civilizations (the ancient and mysterious Tartessians among them) that have occupied the site in the course of its long history are provided by relics from the Roman and earlier periods (the oldest remains in Spain). Its splendid Arab heritage (the Alcázar, baths, gardens...); medieval town walls; huge, flamboyantly Gothic churches; Renaissance palaces; and Baroque buildings all coexist harmoniously, providing an enviable backdrop for a heterogeneous, and famously life- and fiesta-loving populace.

Among other attractive features is the town's *Jardín Botánico y Parque Zoológico* (Botanic Gardens and Zoo, www.zoobotanicojerez.com), one of the most interesting of its kind in

Spain and noteworthy both for its great age and for its zoological collection. The gardens, established in 1869, extend over 50 ha (123 acres) and display 400 different plant and 200 animal species. The zoo's star exhibit is a white tiger, the only one in Spain (though it has been bred in the zoo).

The *Real Escuela Andaluza del Arte Ecuestre* (Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art, www.realescuela.org) is in a category all its own. It occupies a large palace surrounded by gardens, designed in the 19th century by French architect Charles Garnier, who also designed the Paris Opera, and incorporates an important Carriage Museum. The School also serves as the headquarters for one of Spain's most captivating horse shows, entitled *Así bailan los caballos andaluces* (How Andalusian Horses Dance).

Jerez's busy festive calendar includes Vinoble (www.vinoble.org), a trade fair for specialty, fortified and noble wines, which is held every two years, and its famous annual fair dedicated to horses and horsemanship, which is held purely for fun. This is, of course, a favorite area for wine tourism, and always has been: the González Byass winery is the second most visited in the world, and is renowned as the

source of such classics as Lepanto brandy and Tío Pepe fino sherry. The winery complex includes a pavilion known as *Bodega La Concha*, reputed to have been designed by Eiffel (of Parisian tower fame). Another excellent resource for wine buffs is the association for the *Rutas del Vino y Brandy del Marco de Jerez* (Sherry Wine and Brandy de Jerez Routes), which take in nine districts, over 30 wineries, hotels and restaurants, and an informative museum: *El Misterio de Jerez* (The Mystery of Jerez Sherry). A highly informative website in Spanish and English provides information about the routes (www.rutadeljerezybrandy.es).



production, so that much of the landscape is kept verdant, even during the long, hot, consistently dry summer months, which is when the vines are at their peak, just before harvest time.

Brandy de Jerez is distributed all over the world. Whereas up until the 19th century, Europe, particularly Holland, constituted the primary market, today's biggest customer is the Philippines, where Brandy de Jerez sales have soared spectacularly. Williams & Humbert is the leading supplier in that particular market, accounting for over 40% of Brandy de Jerez sales. It also leads the field at top-of-the-range (Solera Gran Reserva) level with its new Alfonso XO brand, backed up by its prestigious Gran Duque de Alba in the same category. This latter brand, originally created in 1942 by a small winery called Antonio R. Ruiz (no longer in existence, having been taken over by Williams & Humbert in 1993) has recently brought out two new premium brandies which are, paradoxically, older than their

parent product: the 18-year-old Gran Duque de Alba XO, and the 25-year-old Gran Duque de Alba Oro, both of which are already distributed in the Philippines. With a presence in five Chinese provinces, New Zealand and Australia, Williams & Humbert is consolidating its Australasian markets. Beam Global Spirits & Wine Inc., present owner of the legendary Fundador, is a close second, at least as far as the Philippines are concerned. This US company acquired major brands and wineries of the caliber of Harvey's, Terry (Centenario) and Fundador Domecq some years back.

Europe and America

Another pacesetter in the export field, especially within Europe, is premium brand Cardenal Mendoza, a force to be reckoned with since as long ago as 1871. It is a favorite in Germany, which has been its principal foreign market for many

years, though it also does extremely well in Italy, the US and Mexico. It is made by Sánchez Romate, one of the oldest wineries in Jerez, dating back to 1781 and still run by the same family. It specializes particularly in top-of-the-range brandies and has recently brought out two new lines under its Cardenal Mendoza label, again examples of offspring outstripping parent: Cardenal Mendoza Carta Real, 25 years old and considered a star product, and Cardenal Mendoza Non Plus Ultra, around 50 years old and luxuriously presented in a craftsman-blown glass decanter. Extracted from a set of 38 barrels from which only 800 half-liter bottles are taken per year, the latter—a Brandy de Jerez Solera Gran Reserva—sells at around 400 euros, making it one of the most expensive on the market, second only to Bodegas Garvey's Conde de Garvey.

The Latin American market, particularly Mexico, is another major destination for Brandy de Jerez, the mid-range Solera Reserva



Cooking with Brandy de Jerez

Brandy de Jerez has a lot to offer on the cooking front, and there are many recipes, both traditional and modern, that capitalize on its particular qualities. Urta (red-banded sea bream) is a local fish that is cooked in various ways, including the classic *Urta al brandy*. Local chefs have long since adopted the technique of injecting Brandy de Jerez into poultry and other meat before roasting, achieving flavor-packed, juicy results. In the region's restaurant cuisine, Brandy de Jerez is the spirit of choice for flambé dishes and for desserts featuring chocolate (a match made in heaven). These and other dishes

incorporating Brandy de Jerez are on the menus of the recommended restaurants incorporated into the excellent local wine tourism routes (Jerez, Brandy Capital, page 32). The following examples give some idea of what to expect:

La Mesa Redonda

Manuel de la Quintana 3
Tel.: (+34) 956 340 069
www.restaurantemesaredonda.com
Jerez de la Frontera

Fillets of local bream stuffed with wild mushrooms and steamed with Brandy de Jerez (*Lomos de sargo rellenos de rebozuelos al vapor de Brandy de Jerez*); Partridge stuffed with Brandy

de Jerez-infused foie gras (*Perdiz rellena de foie gras al Brandy de Jerez*)

El Faro del Puerto

Avda de Fuentebravía s/n.
Tel.: (+34) 956 870 952
www.elfarodelpuerto.com
El Puerto de Santa María

Lobster tails served on a bed of parsley-root purée flavored with Brandy de Jerez (*Colas de langosta sobre puré de raíz de perejil al Brandy de Jerez*); Brandy de Jerez flavored chocolate soup served with mango and red fruit sorbet (*Sopa de chocolate al Brandy de Jerez con sorbete de mango y frutos rojos*)



type being the category that does best there. One representative of this category is Bodegas Osborne's Magno, a long-established brand which, three years ago, acquired an older sibling in the form of Alma de Magno, a Solera Gran Reserva brandy which has been particularly well-received in Mexico, which has always had a soft spot for Brandy de Jerez. Legendary brand Centenario, with its readily recognizable yellow mesh and Andalusian white horse trademark (originally a Bodegas Terry product, now owned by US multinational Beam Global) is also notable for achieving an impressive comeback. Quite apart from these big names, various wineries in Jerez, some of them small-scale and recently

established (albeit in possession of stocks of old wine), are showing signs of interest in brandy. One example is Rey Fernando de Castilla, whose Fernando de Castilla Único and Edición Especial labels are finding themselves a comfortable niche in the upper echelons of the market, particularly in Scandinavia (specifically Norway, Sweden and Denmark). Meanwhile, back in Sanlúcar de Barrameda, big-name winery Barbadillo is also backing Brandy de Jerez, cleverly giving its newly-launched Solera BB brand a very 21st-century look and feel. Designed specifically for drinking with cola-type mixers (it works beautifully!), it is clearly aimed at a younger public. One way and another, new

consumer patterns are emerging, promising a suitably exciting future for this venerable Spanish classic.

Jerez-born journalist and author Paz Ivison specializes in food and wine. Winner of Spain's Premio Nacional de Gastronomía, she has published several books, including El Vino: Uso y Protocolo (Temas de Hoy). She is a regular contributor to publications such as Joyce, Vogue, GQ España and GQ México, El Economista and El Mundo.



The Canary Islands are one of the world's richest treasure troves for vines, with varieties unlike those found anywhere else growing naturally on their own ungrafted roots. In the past, Canary wine was famous enough to have been mentioned by William Shakespeare (1564-1616); today at least 33 grape varieties, most of them native, regale the nose and palate. All seven major islands in the archipelago make wine, but thanks to groundbreaking work by pioneering oenologists and viticulturists, some truly stand out.



VOLCANIC SURVIVORS



TEXT
HAROLD HECKLE/©ICEX

PHOTOS
EFRAÍN PINTOS/©ICEX



The grapevines of Spain's Canary Islands are rare, precious survivors from an ecological disaster that forever changed the nature of global winemaking. Adding to the drama, all around the beautiful islands you see evidence of a violent, volcanic past. This story begins 20 million years ago when a massive telluric collision between the Africa and Eurasia continental plates caused a tear in the earth's mantle. The tectonic pile-up caused explosions of lava to erupt through the Atlantic Ocean and billions of tons of magma to cool, forming islands like scar tissue on the Earth's surface.

But the history that makes these islands so special for wine is more recent. Clinging onto ash black soils, atop hillsides windswept by trade winds on these rocky volcanic specks in the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean, you find vines that maintain a living link with an ancient viticulture that

Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) would have recognized.

No one could have predicted that Spain's discovery of America would unleash devastation on the historic vineyards of the Old World. Yet, the arrival of a louse, an unwanted American import if ever there was one, did exactly that. It caused irreparable damage to Europe's (at that time most of the world's) wine industry. The accidental introduction in 1860 of a North American bug wrecked for all time a viticulture that had taken thousands of years to perfect.

From the moment Phylloxera (a tiny aphid) arrived in Europe, it began voraciously infesting vines this side of the Atlantic with an incurable root-withering disease. "The Phylloxera louse induces the vine to reject its own roots and, hence, effectively commit suicide," explained wine expert Hugh Johnson. To overcome this blight, growers have had to graft vines onto

Phylloxera-resistant non-*Vitis vinifera* American roots, inevitably altering aromas and flavors, except here in the Canary Islands, which have remained miraculously free of infection.

Lanzarote, vines set in black obsidian

In 1730, Lanzarote was again convulsed by eruptions that spewed continuously for six years. A quarter of the island was coated in ash and lava. Drought and another eruption in 1824 made life hard. To survive, farmers dug through ash to find remnants of topsoil and lovingly planted vines capable of finding water and converting it into treasured grapes. To avoid silting up the resulting cones, little stone windbreaks were built on each vine's windward (northeastern) side. The practice is known as digging *hoyos*



(holes) and protecting them with *abrigos* (overcoats). "The prevailing winds (*vientos alisios*) come from the northeast," said Javier Betancourt of the DO Lanzarote Regulatory Council. Bodega Los Bermejos, DO Lanzarote, was founded in 2001 and makes five styles, i.e. "20% of the island's production," said manager Ana de León. Their 20 ha (49 acres) of organically cultivated vines are supplemented with 250 ha (618 acres) owned by 200 small growers. "The Diego (white) variety is generating interest," she said. Camels imported centuries ago help carry harvested grapes from the vineyards to the winery, said De León, conjuring one of European winemaking's most evocative images. Bodega La Geria is strategically situated in La Geria nature reserve and receives 300,000 visitors annually, each being offered wine to taste. Winemaker Alejandro Besay makes refreshing Manto

2009, "Malvasía Volcánica", which offers herbal hints and a clean finish. He also makes rosé (*rosado*) from Listán Negro.

Bodega El Grifo, DO Lanzarote, is one of the ten oldest wineries in Spain. Within its vineyards you find Muscatel vines so old they could have been planted just after the last eruption. Winemaker Tomás Mesa Guanche began working here in 2007, when he joined 15 full-time staff, a number that rises to 38 during harvest. "We are able to cultivate and maintain our old, historic varieties without relying on plantations from elsewhere," said Mesa. El Grifo makes three solera-style Canary wines from 100% Malvasía: 1997, 1956 and two *barricas* (barrels) dating from 1881. The older two can occasionally be sampled at trade fairs. The '97 was dark orange and had a solera's oxidative style, mingling traces of wood with huge orange marmalade aromas surrounded by hints of

honey. Its lingering finish was reminiscent of bright summer fruit. Solera 1881 was almost mahogany dark with aromas of figs and vibrant orange peel. Its huge palate was amazingly full of life, with a luxurious mystery that only age confers.

Bodegas Stratvs, DO Lanzarote, is one of the flagship wineries of the Canary Islands. Winemaker Alberto González Plasencia (born on nearby La Gomera) vinifies 350,000 liters, "of which 20% is our production." Infinite care is taken, with manually-selected grapes kept in a chilled chamber overnight before gentle pre-fermentative crushing. White grapes are Malvasía and Diego, while reds include Tinta Conejera and Listán Negro, with Muscatel reserved for sweet Canary. Nitrogen excludes oxygen and the latest 14,000-liter Ganymede stainless steel tanks, with CO₂ bypass valves to break the musts' caps, are used for fermentation.



His Tinto Roble 2008 spent six months in oak (US and French) and was 60% Listán Negro and 40% Tinta Conejera. Its clean fruit was reminiscent of New World wines while retaining some unique refinement derived from the minerals in its black obsidian ash-rich soils. Crianza 2007 was 60% Tinta Conejera and 40% Listán Negro. Greater vineyard age will improve these wines.

La Palma, la isla bonita

Eliseo Carballo is a fifth generation winemaker on La Palma, the most verdant of the islands. Its beauty and tranquility are celebrated in Madonna's song, "La Isla Bonita," referring to its nickname among islanders. "My ancestors include original Benahoaritas natives who intermarried with invading Spaniards in the 15th century," said Carballo. A devastating fire, followed by

landslide-provoking floods, lashed the island in August 2009, and Bodegas Carballo, DO La Palma, lost the few Engaja vines it had been propagating. "In Madeira the variety is known as Sercial," he said. One bottle of 2006 survived. Harvested with a total acidity of 6.6 in sulfuric (10.1 in tartaric) and vinified after gentle crushing, it—the original wine—fermented totally to leave 2 g (0.07 oz) residual sugar per liter. "The variety was often used to naturally correct acidity without having to rely on tartaric acid," said Carballo. As soon as it decanted naturally, with no filtration, it was placed in 50 cL bottles. Gorgeous light amber in color, it had clean, honeyed aromas of fleshy peaches. In mouth it was dry with explosive, glycerin-laden fruit vaguely reminiscent of a solera style. "It's precisely an aperitif wine," said Carballo, accompanying it with *almendrado* biscuits made from ground almonds, egg yolks, lemon rind and sugar.

Carballo's star wine is a traditional Malvasía, of the type Shakespeare would have recognized. "Only tourists in the know buy it," he said, while showing me photographs of bills of lading dating from the 16th century, when 6,000 liters of La Palma wine were loaded onto ships bound for America. A fount of history, Carballo explained that Santa Cruz de La Palma was, at its peak, the Spanish empire's third most important port, after Antwerp (now in Belgium) and Seville (southern Spain). A prestigious imperial court of law, *Juzgado de Indias*, was based here, creating a need for top-quality wines to satisfy demanding judges and lawyers. Carballo said that by the 19th century, La Palma hosted refined cultural events and had electric lighting; telephones; a cinematograph; two theaters; and Bajada de la Virgen de las Nieves, the archipelago's most imposing festival.



La Gomera: a feisty promising comeback

At the heart of La Gomera are the ancient woodlands of Garajonay National Park, intact survivors from the Tertiary Period (65 million-1.8 million years ago). Skirting it, in valleys and slopes on all sides of this round island, are steeply terraced vineyards, many now in disuse, a testament to the hardy determination of resident *Gomeros*. Enthusiastic winemakers under the encouragement of DO La Gomera president Armenia Mendoza and talented technician Nancy Melo are injecting new life into production. Bodegas Insulares in Vallehermoso demonstrated, with its barrique-fermented Cumbres de Garajonay 2007, the quality of the autochthonous white Forastera Blanca variety. Fresh fruit, mingled with coconut hints and sweet lemon

aromas, showed evidence of well-integrated wood. On the palate it was very dry. Winemaker Ricardo "Richard" Gutiérrez de Salamanca oversees 140,000 liters annually from 210 members, of which "around 40" use the cooperative facilities regularly. Carmen Fino, who looks after the commercial side, lamented the steady loss of historic terraced slopes. Some ascend for hundreds of feet. "I hope it is only a cyclical trend and that the need for sustainable agriculture may see them resurrected," she said.

At Arure, on the western side, María Milagros Santos Negrín has turned three old caves, once used by her ancestors to store agricultural produce and tools, into the modern Bodega Las Cuevas Santos Negrín. Her Viña Cheo 2009 blends 80% Listán Negro with recently-planted Negramoll and Syrah, and offered complex aromas of Morello cherries and ripe plums. On the palate it was light, needing firmer tannins, but

very pleasant. Another producer, Ramón Marichal Felipe, makes Los Roquillos 2009, with 70% Listán Negro and equal measures of Tintilla, Rubí and Castellana (a Canary grape, despite its name) which exuded dark berries cocooned in oak-influenced leathery nuances. Montoro 2009, by C.B. Montoro, is an ambitious blend of Forastera Blanca, Listán Blanco, Muscatel, Pedro Ximénez and Malvasia that, though low on aroma, had great structure. Aceviñón 2008, by Antonio Arteaga Santos, combined Listán Negro (50%) with Syrah, Tempranillo and Merlot. True Merlot on the nose, it also had attractive hints of Listán.

Tenerife, the driving force

Every revolution has its defining moment. For the Canary Islands this came when a gifted chemist turned his attention to winemaking. Juan



Jesús Méndez Siverio had been lecturing at La Laguna University for around a decade when his father confided that age had gotten the better of him. Ever since he could remember, Méndez had helped his dad, a small-scale farmer and shoemaker, harvest ancestral vineyards and make wine for domestic consumption. The prospect of giving up horrified Méndez, so he took on the family tradition, applying scientific insight to improve techniques, allowing him to run a small winery and also continue his academic career. The results are worthy of the widest international recognition. At La Guancha, on the north coast, he built Viñátigo, DO Ycoden Daute Isora, a technologically-advanced winery named after a Tertiary Period tree species (*Laurus indica*) common to the area. Méndez uses satellite links to track vineyard developments to the finest detail, including how thirsty the plants are for water. Each wine can be traced back to its vines. At every stage before bottling he analyzes grapes,

must, and then wine by using (Danish) WineScan technology that allows 17 measurements at once. "In three minutes it does what used to take a laboratory technician all day," he said. He uses gravity or, at worst, peristaltic pumps. These devices, originally developed to carefully pump red blood cells through dialysis machines, are expensive but very gentle. You can detect the loving care taken wherever you look in Viñátigo, and it comes as no surprise to find that true love blossomed between Méndez and his oenologist, Elena Batista. After 14 years making wine together, they married in April 2010. Even greater meticulousness is observable in the vineyards, where year after year Méndez has painstakingly compared vine performance to terroir characteristics and obtained astonishing results. Thanks to the inherent quality of Canary vines, Viñátigo's white wines today are setting standards matched only by wineries in northwest Spain. An example is Gual. "The 2009 Gual is tough, undrinkable; all its

complexity and roundness, the mature grapefruit, only comes with age," said Batista. Gual 2008 (tank sample) exuded brambles, apple peel, greengage and gooseberry and had an unctuous, firm structure in mouth. "It still needs bottle finesse," said Méndez. With two years in bottle, Gual 2007 was delightfully rounded, brimming with bright fruit and summer floral hints. It immediately gave the impression of having spent time in wood. "Juan Cacho (research chemist) used chromatography and discovered it contained whisky lactone, a compound found in products that have had contact with wood," said Méndez. But it never touched wood, said Batista.

Ancient Portuguese influence

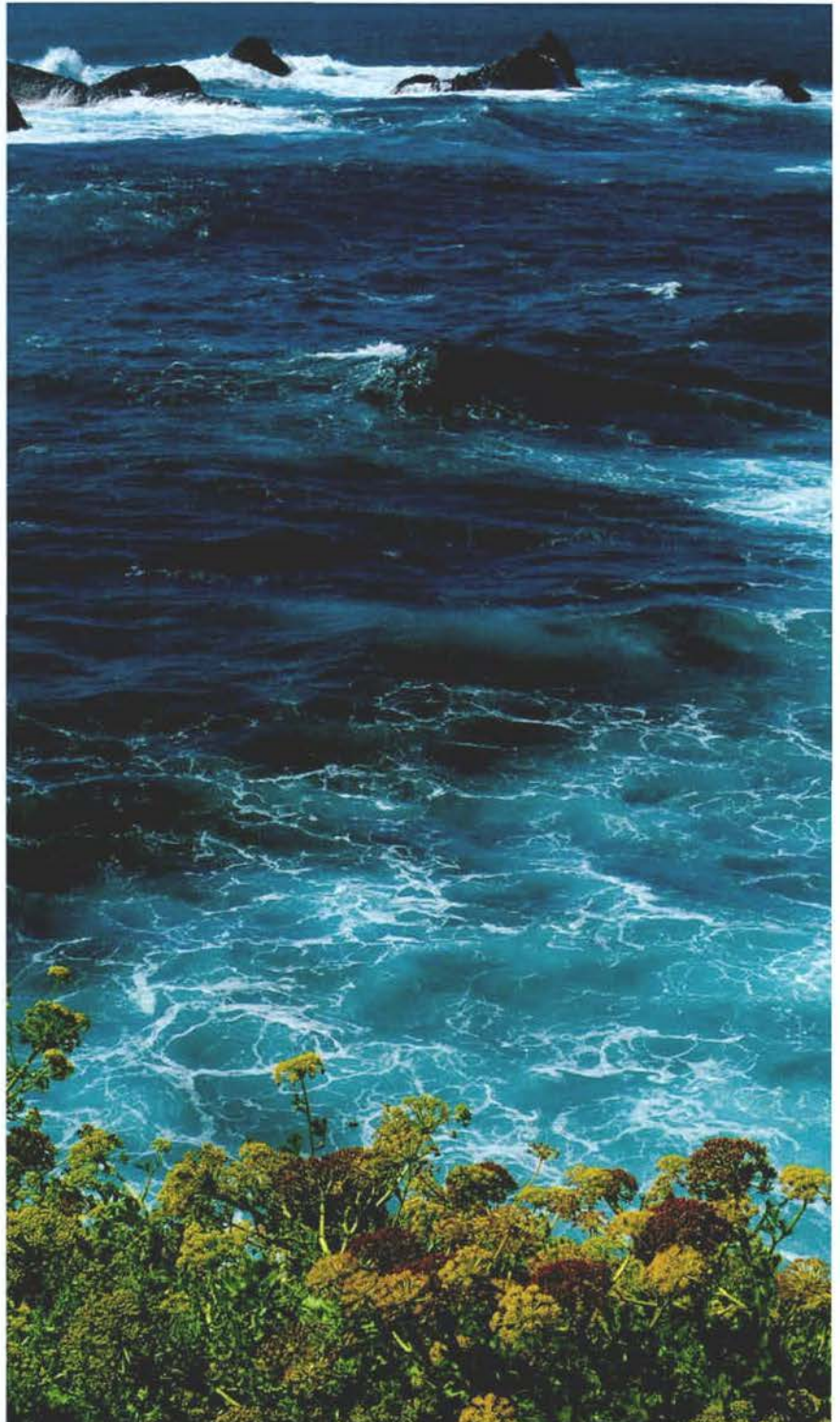
The first serious growers on the islands were Portuguese, and for years their varieties and cultivation techniques prevailed. "My dad used them," said Méndez, adding that Gual has a curious oxidation process, slow and very noble, unlike most whites. Another such grape, Verdello, is not related to mainland Verdejo. It is found only in the Azores, Canary Islands and Madeira, said Méndez. The 2009 (tank sample) had the complexity of Gual but even greater aromatic magic. But the star white was Marmajuelo. This variety is originally from El Hierro, "the real repository of pre-Phylloxera varieties of Spain," said Méndez. The 2008 exhibited a big, attractive nose with subtle hints of pear, pineapple, passion fruit and melon. "It's our most tropical grape," he said. Méndez noted that what surprised him most in over a



decade of research into recuperating local varieties was how well structural complexity, attractive aromatic compounds and acidity coalesce despite relatively high daytime temperatures. "There isn't another region of Spain where all these characteristics come together so successfully," he said.

Success hasn't been restricted to whites. Negramoll is a grape found under different guises from the Bosphorus to the Canaries. Romanian wine expert Dan Muntean said it is related to Negru Moele, found 3,000 mi (482 km) away at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Viñátigo's 2009 tank sample was soft and round, with well-polymerized tannins. Aromatically it was Gamay-like, with appealing ripe plum fruitiness. Méndez said it is a difficult grape which can easily spoil in the vineyard unless subjected to careful pruning, which he is still perfecting. For steep vineyard work, Méndez has designed a robot tractor he built in Switzerland. "It's very small, operated remotely with a joystick," he said.

Tintilla is a grape that develops excellent color and tannins. "Its DNA hasn't been found elsewhere," said Méndez, adding that its phenolic maturation is very tardy, so it must be harvested late to avoid herbaceous qualities emerging in the wine. The 2007 was aged in Allier oak and exuded dark chocolate and red berries in a deep, aromatically polished manner. A bottle sample of Baboso 2008 had a huge, perfumed nose redolent of violets, flowers and juicy fruit





leading to velvety tannins and a tightly structured finish. Some say this wine is Méndez's masterpiece, but he insisted greatness comes when a blended wine succeeds globally. Tacande 2006 is Viñatigo's first coupage: 60% Baboso (aromatic beauty, base), the rest in equal proportions is Tintilla (structure), Vijariego (acidity) and Negramoll (silkeness), all cultivated and vinified separately, then blended.

Improvements are vineyard based

The full potential of reds in the Canaries is yet to be explored, said Rodrigo Mesa and Jorge Zerolo, partners in Arca de Vitis, DO Valle de Güimar, a company that has invested heavily in local grape varieties and is making excellent wines. "The hard work has to be done in the vineyards," said Loles Pérez Martín, who worked in Bordeaux and then with Peter Sisseck at Dominio de Pingus in DO Ribera del Duero before becoming winemaker at Bodegas Buten in El Sauzal. Her Cráter 2006 was a supple and deliciously balanced 65% Listán Negro, 35% Negramoll. The bigger, more complex Magma 2006 (soon to be 2008) is a 50-50 Syrah-Negramoll blend harvested from venerable vineyards that now observe biodynamic practices learned while working with Sisseck. Bodegas Monje, DO Tacoronte-Acentejo, at La Hollera in El Sauzal was built around a farmhouse handed down at least five generations, said Felipe Monje.

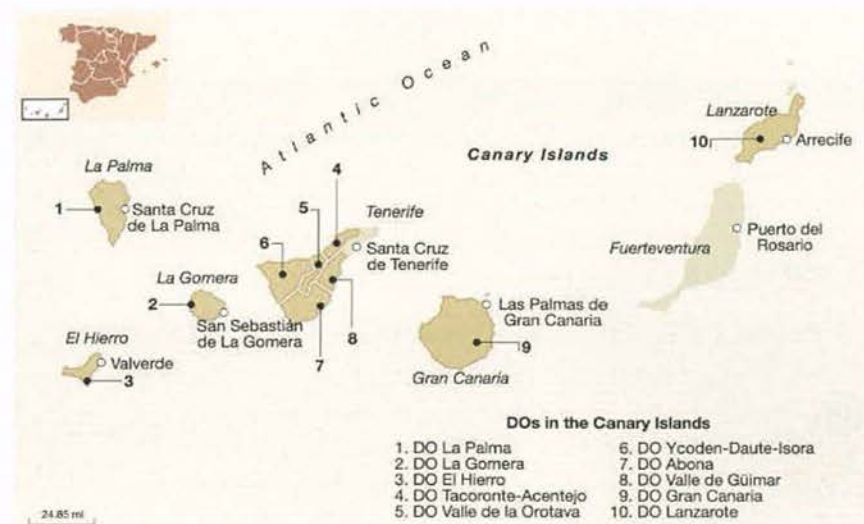


Today it houses a modern winery producing an extensive array of styles as well as a wine appreciation space (designed by architect Isabel Monje), which also serves as a musical and artistic venue.

Tajinaste, in northern DO Valle de La Orotava, farms 6 ha (15 acres) of immaculately tended 15-year-old Listán Negro, Albillo, Marmajuelo and Verjadiego Negro, with their own remotely monitored weather station in the vineyard. From 120,000 kg (own and rented vines), Agustín García (father and son) look for mineral nuances to shine through the purity of clean fruit. Their Listán Blanco 2009 succeeded, also showing the yeasty effects of battonage from the 30% of the blend that went into new oak. Currently they are propagating cuttings from their own vines, using massal selection, in a bid to increase grape production.

Canary: Shakespeare's tippie

Christopher Columbus stopped at the Canaries on September 6, 1492 before setting sail on his fateful, first voyage of discovery. Subsequent travelers who colonized America rapidly realized the potential of winemaking part way to the New World. Thus, the Canaries became a vital port of call before tackling arduous ocean crossings where wine remained drinkable far longer than water, which has a tendency to turn green and go off in hot conditions. English traders became particularly fond of "Canary," imposing strict guidelines about how to cultivate, harvest and make their preferred product. Its fame grew to the point



that Shakespeare referred to it several times in his plays. "I will to my honest knight Falstaff, and drink canary with him." Act 3, Scene II, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Its beneficial effects were also felt on the other side of the Atlantic. "There is evidence that after signing the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson (third president of United States, 1743-1826) suggested a toast with a wine that appears to have been Canary," said gastronomy expert Manuel Iglesias. No doubt fortified by it, Spanish soldiers inflicted a rare defeat on England's foremost Admiral, Horatio Nelson (1758-1805), who lost his right arm in a failed battle to capture Tenerife. Today most Canary wineries offer a version of what Elizabethan (16th century) merchants referred to as Canary, or Canary Sack. Sack may be a reference to *saca*, the final stage where wine is removed from a solera for bottling. Viña Norte's Humboldt Malvasía Clásico 2005 was a vibrant white redolent of wild honey, maple syrup and summer

flowers. This impressive co-op (Tenerife's Bodegas Insulares, DO Tacoronte-Acentejo) has a great range. Humboldt Vendimia Tardía was a mouth-filling sweet Listán Blanco, while the port-like Humboldt red is made from Listán Negro that spent 18 months in American oak.

El Hierro: the treasure chest

Hierro means iron, the element whose oxides provide a red stain to what is the most recent volcanic island (1.2 million years old). Its new topsoil, full of ferruginous mineral and ash content, nourishes some of Spain's most fascinating grape varieties. Some trace their ancestry to Middle Eastern traders like the Phoenicians, who used Spain's offshore islands as staging posts before the Greeks and Romans. These vines have survived, untroubled by Phylloxera, for centuries in this distant and isolated paradise. Over the last decade, two varieties have emerged as superstars:



Vijariego and Baboso. Both have red and white clones, with tintos taking the plaudits. Once again, Méndez had a decisive influence in their rediscovery and propagation. Gonzalo Padrón, once his university student, invited Méndez to assess a family plot on El Hierro. The results were so stunning that undergraduate and professor began working on a joint project called Tanajara, DO El Hierro. Padrón coaxed his older brother, Pedro Nicolás, to plant 4 ha (9.8 acres) under Méndez's guidance 11 years ago and the resulting wines have become a legend among top restaurateurs and wine buffs in Spain.

Demand began to exceed supply and other local growers started hiking prices for grapes, so Padrón planted more, opting for a massal selection from the best vines. Tanajara now has a vineyard at La Frontera and three at El Luchón, each with different

solar orientations, using Guyot training on volcanic soils. The first harvest for the new plots was 2009, so look for improvements. The small, almost *garagiste* winery is housed in an Art Deco building in El Pinar.

Its vinification area is on the ground floor and two barrel halls are in the basement. Vijariego Negro 2009 (barrel sample) was fruit-driven with dark blackberries and cranberries cocooned in soft spice. The variety crops three times as much as Baboso, said Méndez, and allows them to vinify 15,000 liters of Vijariego to 7,000 liters of Baboso. Vijariego Negro seduces with its ability to convey joyfully attractive ripe fruit with the vaguest trace of sassafras on the nose, whereas Baboso is clearly a much bigger wine, able to command attention from beginning to long finish.

Baboso, a rising superstar

Baboso 2009 (barrel sample) had spent five months, roughly half its expected *crianza* (oak aging), in new Allier *barriques* (mainly medium toast). On the nose it delivered fleshy fruit, red plums and berries surrounded by wood-related leathery hints. In the mouth its mineral qualities infused gloriously ripe fruit over a meaty base held together by firm, refined tannins, great acidity and a long fruit-and-leather finish. Méndez said Baboso is more concentrated and minerally than Vijariego, which tends to appeal to a younger clientele. This was confirmed by Padrón's youngest brother, Martín, who confessed he preferred Vijariego Negro. Tasted vertically, both varieties take a couple of years in bottle to knit in well with wood, so that while Vijariego Negro 2007



showed hints of oak, the 2006 was rounder, more developed. Baboso 2007 was huge on the palate, with rumbustious fruit held in place by large-scale tannins and crisp, fresh acidity surrounded by nuances of oak. The 2006 showed great marriage, a beautifully silken mouthfeel and a superbly long finish free of oaky interference, while the 2004 showed almost no signs of aging compared to the previous vintage.

Vijariego Blanco is easily the most acidic grape in the Canaries, Méndez said. "It reaches 14-15 alcohol with 8-9 acidity in tartaric," he said. Padrón admitted they had given up making it because it broke all the preconceptions local buyers have for whites. "No one around here was willing to accept that you needed to age a white, so they drank it young and the high alcohol and acidity blew their mouths off," he said. He solemnly pulled out the last remaining bottle of Vijariego

Blanco 2004. Fresh peaches and plums floated over a beautiful honeyed background supplied by well-integrated wood. Customers will never know what they missed.

A priceless legacy

British wine expert Oz Clarke was forthright about the need to protect and promote Canary Island wines. "Phylloxera crippled Europe's wine industry and wiped out an enormous amount of priceless genetic material," he said. "It's incredibly important that we should take the Phylloxera-free condition of the Canary Islands seriously, and that any promising old vines be preserved and have cuttings propagated. Who knows what jewels we might discover for future generations to enjoy?" he said. Fortunately for wine lovers across the world, a growing number of inspired viticulturists and wine producers on the Canaries have taken on the mantle and are making exceptional

products. No one can doubt the importance of their work, especially when you take into consideration the fragility of their environment, and that of an economy so distant from the world's great markets. On islands where vegetative growth tends to be long and slow and cooling trade winds keep temperatures surprisingly temperate, and where volcanic minerals infuse aromas and flavors and altitude can be experimented with, producers are making mold-breaking wines.

Harold Heckle is a correspondent for the Associated Press. Since he first visited Spain as a student he has kept himself connected with Spanish gastronomic culture. On this topic, as a journalist he has contributed to the BBC and magazines such as Decanter, Wine Magazine, and Wine & Spirits. He ran the Wine Club and the Spanish Wine Club with tastings at Canning House in London for more than a decade in the 1980-90s.



21st Century

BITES



Pop-in posh food

Tapas are back in the limelight again. Not that they were ever really out of it: it's just that they have recently been thrown into sharper focus by the emergence of the "gastrobar" phenomenon. Gastrobars are tapas bars with a difference. Masterminded by some of Spain's top chefs, they combine tradition and innovation to create a whole new take on tapas: top cooking and attentive service in an informal setting and at everyday prices. In short, pop-in posh food.

TEXT

RODRIGO GARCÍA / ©ICEX

TRANSLATION

HAWYS PRITCHARD / ©ICEX

Patatas bravas, ensaladilla rusa, croquetas, anchoas, boquerones... these are just a few examples of tapas you are sure to find in bars all over Spain. So what can be said about them that hasn't been said before? Critics, cooks and consumers seem united in declaring tapas a particularly Spanish approach to eating out—informally—among friends, and for the pure pleasure of it all.

Interestingly, eating tapas-style has proved to be an exportable gastronomic model. The idea of spending time in pleasant company, when the conversation flows and fun is had, punctuated by personally selected mouthfuls of delicious food and drink and all for very little money goes down equally well in New York, Tokyo, London and Melbourne.

So far, so familiar, but in the last few years tapas have acquired powerful champions in the form of Spain's avant-garde chefs for whom tapas represent another outlet for creative

expression: capitalizing on the fact that that they are so intrinsic a part of Spain's culinary heritage, they are using them as a way of making top-flight gastronomy accessible to the eating-out public at large. Over the last five years or so, many chefs (all of *Michelin Red Guide* standard) have adopted a new approach, channeling their haute cuisine skills and experience and their carefully sourced raw materials into the traditional world of tapas.

For the most part, the chefs in question combine running upmarket restaurants with others that are more accessible to the average consumer, in terms of both the food they serve and what it costs. Top chef plus tapa format plus informal service plus affordable prices: it all adds up to a winning formula.

Name the trend

Every new artistic movement or fashion trend needs a good name to

separate it from what came before. The top-chef-and-tapa concept has yet to find a definitive one: there have been various good stabs at it, the best so far coined by José Carlos Capel, food critic and co-founder of the Madrid *Fusión* food conference. Some time around 2007, a review by Capel of *Estado Puro*, a tapas bar launched by Madrid chef Paco Roncero (of 2-Michelin-star *La Terraza del Casino*), appeared in Spain's national daily paper *El País*, drawing media and public attention to a new gastronomic trend and investing it with credibility in the process.

Capel is credited with coining the term "gastrobar", which seems to be the label most often used in food circles. He was also the first to catalogue certain basic features of this new phenomenon: they are owned or set up by prestigious chefs; they serve a "gastronomic" menu composed of tapas or small servings; they charge reasonable prices;



La Chimenea de Echaurren, La Rioja



Bacus, Almería

service is attentive but informal. Other attempts at naming exponents of the trend include 21st century bars, neobars, up-to-date *tabernas*; designer *tascas*... The name is, of course, the least important thing about them: what is important is what's on the menu, how they make their tapas, how they present them, and what knock-on effect they have had on the restaurant world so far. Signs of evolution are already discernible within the gastrobar trend. Much was made initially of maintaining the time-honored custom of eating tapas standing up at the bar. However, gastrobars have demonstrated how borrowing small details from top-level restaurants can send out subtle messages that differentiate them from run-of-the-mill tapas bars. Good glassware, courteous service, an interesting wine list (many sell by the glass at good value for money) and imaginative tapas are just some of the little things that mean a lot.

Speaking at the 2010 Madrid Fusión food conference, Andoni Luis Aduriz, owner/chef of Mugaritz (Erretería, Basque Country) declared that gastrobars—a cross between tapas bars and top-level restaurants—“represent a real revolution in Spanish gastronomy: elite chefs using their skills at the service of a simple style of eating, combining their years of training and acquired technique with affordable prices.”

The Mediterranean connection

The gastrobar was already up and running as a business model well before Capel coined the term. One of the first chefs to make the leap from haute cuisine to tapas bar was Albert Adrià, brother of Ferran of elBulli fame. He opened Inopia (on the edge of Barcelona's lively El Raval district) in 2006, an obvious tribute to Spain's tapas tradition.

He opted for small-scale premises, picturesque décor, and a menu of simple classics: *patatas bravas* (chunks of fried potato with piquant sauce), *fritura de gambas* (fried prawns), *croquetas* (thick béchamel plus other ingredients, shaped into logs, then crumbed and fried), *anchoas* (anchovies), and the like. Inopia is always teeming with customers, its top-quality ingredients and creative presentation ensure that they come back for more. In September 2010 Inopia closed and Albert Adrià made public his next project: a new tapas bar with his brother Ferrán in Barcelona city centre. Shortly after, also in Barcelona, Carles Abellan (Michelin-star-holder at Comerç24 and chef at two other restaurants, Bravo24 and Velódromo) also recognized the potential in updating the traditional tapas bar. He set up Tapas 24 in small premises on calle Diputació, very near the elegant Paseo de



La Moraga Airport, Málaga

Tapas 24, Barcelona



Graça. Beyond its modest entrance is a long bar at which customers seated on stools sample the tapas for which it has become famous: *ensaladilla rusa* (diced potato and other vegetables in mayonnaise), *callos* (stewed beef tripe), *albóndigas* (meatballs), *calamares rellenos* (stuffed squid)... It is not unusual to see would-be customers outside in the street waiting for a place at the bar in what has become one of Barcelona's most popular destinations with locals and tourists alike.

Another pioneer of the gastrobar movement is La Taberna del Gourmet, again in a Mediterranean location, albeit further south, in Alicante. In 2003, chef María José San Román (of Michelin-starred Monastrell restaurant) and her daughter, Geni Perramón, started

exploring the possibility of setting up "a tapas bar serving top-quality products." Geni, just back from completing hospitality industry training in Switzerland, had very definite ideas: "My scheme was to champion a local product and reacquaint the public with something that had become a thing of the past: the natural, essential flavors and aromas of food," she explains.

The minute you enter La Taberna del Gourmet you notice the attention given to prime materials. Behind the bar, waiters can be seen making tapas, slicing a splendid pure acorn-fed Iberico ham by hand, and rustling up an Alicante-style salad out of nothing-but-the-best ingredients (tomato, dried salted tuna, grey mullet roe, chunks of

artichoke, marinated olives, extra virgin olive oil and salt). Everything on the menu looks so delicious that one ends up dithering.

In its quest for the best, the Taberna del Gourmet team carried out a research project with botanist Santiago Orts, owner of the Huerto de Elche company, into 25 varieties of organically-grown tomato. Geni Perramón reports that one result of the project was "one of our most delicious dishes: our natural tomato medley." Food doesn't get much simpler than that. "It's amazing that a dish of different kinds of tomato cut up with a slosh of olive oil and a few flakes of salt can give so much enjoyment." And why does it? "It's because our customers want the real thing—true flavors and aromas—and the simple natural product



is generally where these are to be found."

The Taberna also serves an artichoke dish that is another example of this personal campaign for quality products. Geni reveals the secret of its success: "We use organically-grown artichokes and vacuum cook them for six hours: it's a technique that preserves all their nutrients and all their flavor, because they cook in their own juice." The only addition is a little vinaigrette as a finishing touch to a dish packed with garden-fresh flavor.

Posh food for all

All the cooks and food pundits consulted while preparing this article were unanimous in identifying "democratization of haute cuisine"

(to quote Paco Roncero) as one reason why the new gastrobars are doing so well. Roncero opened Estado Puro, Madrid's first gastrobar, just two years ago. The launch at the end of 2010 of a second Estado Puro (also in Madrid; both are located in hotels in the NH hotel chain) so soon after the first is a clear indicator of how well it has been doing. "We apply our haute cuisine know-how to running a tapas bar, creating a hybrid product that encourages the public to try new gastronomic experiences," declares Roncero. Estado Puro is located opposite the Prado Museum, one of Madrid's major tourist magnets, and its interior décor incorporates a reference to traditional Spain in the form of over 1,000 white mantilla combs, which cover the ceiling and one wall.

When a customer sits down on a stool at the one of the high tables, he or she is issued with a "welcome kit" composed of the menu, napkins and cutlery, and invited to select his tapas from an imaginative range created by Paco Roncero, which includes: patatas bravas evocative of a Cubist painting; *bocadillo de chorizo* (chorizo sausage sandwich) full of classic flavor, although it has a rather different look; and, among the most popular favorites, *mini hamburguesa* (a miniature hamburger made of prime minced meat, served with old-fashioned mustard). Paco Roncero is not the only big name chef to combine top-flight restaurant skills with a tapas bar in the Spanish capital. Having won two Michelin stars in his Madrid restaurant, Sergi Arola also opened

Le Cabrera, Madrid





an informal alternative where customers can sit at the bar and sample the tapas while enjoying a front-row view of the fascinating spectacle of cooks at work. Le Cabrera is in one of the smartest parts of town, the Justicia district, where it rubs elbows with shops like Marc Jacobs and Carolina Herrera. Sergi Arola has given an added twist to the gastrobar concept in that Le Cabrera combines an atmospheric tapas bar with a de luxe cocktail bar (managed by barman Diego Cabrera, a respected figure in his field). In his usual way, Arola appointed a member of his team to run the kitchen: Frenchman Benjamin Bensoussan, whose professional career has been spent largely working alongside Arola, first at La Broche and later at Sergi Arola Gastro, his two-Michelin-star restaurant. Bensoussan, another devotee of top-quality products, monitors absolutely everything that comes into Le Cabrera's kitchen. "Wild mushrooms, artichokes,

asparagus and Tudela lettuce hearts are delivered to me every week by Rafa, a young market gardener from Navarre," he informs us. He gets his tomatoes directly from market gardens in inland Majorca, razor clams from Galicia, and extra virgin olive oil is conspicuously present in his kitchen. His menu includes a highly idiosyncratic version of Caesar salad made with the lettuce hearts from Navarre; *pantumaca* (homemade bread rubbed with ripe tomato and garlic whose pungency has been tempered by being soaked in advance), which is a great favorite with customers; and delicious chicken wings obtained from Virgilio, a poulterer's very close to Le Cabrera and fount of some of the best poultry in Madrid. "The challenge is to produce great food, food that is interesting and of high quality, using readily affordable products to keep the cost to the customer as low as possible," explains this enthusiastic young

chef. "Our approach, as well as providing tasty, entertaining tapas, brings more added value with it: memorable décor, attentive service (everyone who works here speaks three languages), and a wine cellar that is small but contains interesting wines which we sell by the glass." Benjamin designed Le Cabrera's tapas menu working closely with Sergi Arola, though half a dozen changes were subsequently made to the initial selection of 30 tapas on Benjamin's advice. "We've removed tapas that didn't really work and made other seasonal additions," he explains. "When designing the menu one has to bear in mind that customers of Le Cabrera aren't all the kind of people that also eat at Sergi Arola Gastro, and don't have that much money to spend, either." This in no way inhibits him if he finds marvelous red prawns in the market one morning: "What I do is buy in small quantities, because of the 30 people a day who come in for lunch, two or three are likely to



Estado Puro, Madrid

choose the prawns, no matter how delicious, because they will inevitably send the cost up." Which tapas do their customers like best? "Possibly Sergi's version of patatas bravas (caramelized potatoes served with a homemade spicy sauce) or our own version of kebab (milk-fed lamb, the usual kebab spices and herbs) served with caramelized onion, finely-chopped lettuce, a tub containing yoghurt, cream cheese, cucumber, mint, coriander and parsley and another containing pita bread cut like french fries. As for fish, *chopitos a la andaluza* (tiny fried cuttle fish in chick pea flour batter), and *vieiras con cítricos* (scallops with citrus fruits) keep customers coming back for more. According to Benjamin, one of the advantages of working somewhere like Le Cabrera is the face-to-face contact with the clientele: "It's a luxury that just isn't possible in a smart formal restaurant. Here, the customer sits on a stool at the bar, orders his tapas and we chat away while I make them." The gap between cook and customer can't get much narrower.

Eating at the bar

In Spain, it has always been the custom to go from bar to bar for one's tapas, following a kind of pilgrimage route punctuated by glasses of wine and little snacks: savory morsels on sticks, one's share of a helping of the house specialty... These days, that pattern is paralleled by another, which still involves eating at the bar, but in

this case comfortably seated on a chair or stool.

Le Cabrera is one example of this new pattern, as is La Moraga Banús, one of the gastrobars masterminded by Dani García (of one-Michelin-star Calima restaurant in Marbella). The La Moraga project is one of the most ambitious of the new arrivals, both for the number of establishments involved and for its international aspirations. It all began in Malaga in 2008, when Dani García opened La Moraga, an up-to-date, modern tapas bar in the historic quarter of town, right in the epicenter of traditional tapas territory. "People who knew me associated me with the luxury and elitism attached to a haute cuisine restaurant, but I wanted to reach a wider public and to do so through tapas." Dani decided to model his first tapas restaurant on the traditional bar at which customers eat standing up, just like all the

other tapas destinations in town. His *croquetas de pringá* (croquettes made with the pork belly, *chorizo* and blood sausage from a traditional *cocido* stew), *flamenquines* (slices of cured Serrano ham wrapped around pork loin, breadcrumbed and fried), and *gazpacho de cerezas* (cold cherry soup) were soon a huge success among a public avid for new gastronomic treats; the second Moraga followed, this time in Puerto Banús, Marbella: "There, I realized that the customers might be more comfortable seated around a big central bar, and that one could carry the comfort of a restaurant over into the tapas milieu and create a user-friendly sort of luxury in the process." The tapas menu there includes Iberico cured ham in various guises, fresh peach *gazpacho*, an oxtail burger (known as *burger bull*) and grouper sashimi with soy and lemon.



Inopia, Barcelona



The next move was the launch of designer patisserie La Moraga Sweet, a joint venture with master chocolatier Paco Torreblanca, a La Moraga at Málaga airport, and a La Moraga in Madrid. Any plans to take La Moraga international? "We've already reached agreements with local partners and we've appointed kitchen teams to open in Manhattan, Tokyo and London. We've also received very interesting offers from Mexico, Brazil, Portugal and even Latvia." The challenge is to ensure that the quality standard set by the tapas at Málaga's La Moraga is replicated at all the other Moragas: "We've selected recipes that can travel all over the globe without needing to be adapted, and of course the fundamental answer is to create teams that are committed to La Moraga's philosophy and objectives."

Customer loyalty

The hybrid formula that characterizes the new generation of tapas bars is a good way of overcoming the dread that posh restaurants can induce in some people, as noted by Dani García. Indeed, gastrobar customers sometimes make a shift to their famous chef's "proper" restaurant. Alejandro García is a young chef from Andalusia and owner of the one-Michelin-star Alejandro restaurant in Roquetas de Mar, Almería, and of a taberna called Bacus. He is well aware of the opportunity this represents: "The informal bar and tables set-up at Bacus is perfect for someone who just wants a quick glass of wine and a small snack. Another day he might

have a go at a couple of *mini-raciones* (small helpings) of tapas and, over time, gradually work up to staying for Bacus's full dinner menu of tapas and mini-raciones." Such a menu might include *salmorejo* (cold soup made with tomato, water, vinegar, extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper) served with *mojama* (dried salted tuna), a pork rib hamburger, or curried Iberico pork cheek. The subject of popularizing haute cuisine again crops up in conversation: "I'm convinced that a large segment of the public has the wrong idea about the sort of food that top chefs produce. Thanks to the success of the Bacus taberna, many customers have been able to overcome their wariness, have got to know and like our cooking, and in many cases have gone on



to book a table at Alejandro.” Alejandro García’s Bacus taberna provides further proof that these signature tapas bars need not be the exclusive preserve of big towns like Madrid, Barcelona and Málaga. In Asturias, the Loya family has injected extra verve into Gijón’s tapas scene with the opening of its restaurant-cum-tapas bar Avant Garde, located within a hotel very close to San Lorenzo beach. The Loyas are the proprietors of the much lauded one-Michelin-star Real Balneario de Salinas restaurant in Avilés, and of the Deloya in the Asturian capital, Oviedo. Javier Loya is the eldest son of family patriarch, Miguel, and runs Avant Garde a tapas bar that serves new interpretations of traditional Asturian recipes and other dishes that have been on the menu at the

Real Balneario de Salinas for decades, now given a new twist to adapt them to the tapa concept. In drawing up the menu, “we divided our list of dishes into two sections: mini-tapas, consisting of one or two mouthfuls, and tapas that are the equivalent of half helpings, to enable our customers to sample a wider range of dishes.”

The local cuisine closely reflects the top-quality products obtained from the sea and from inland Asturias. Examples include *bocadito de chorizo criollo* (bite-sized tapa of local sausage), *fritos de pixín* (monkfish goujons) and *mejillones escabechados* (pickled mussels).

A space that was barely paying its way was what spurred on Francis Paniago (of one-Michelin-star Restaurante El Portal de Echaurren

in La Rioja) to create his own gastrobar, La Chimenea del Echaurren. “We redesigned what used to be the cafeteria of our hotel, the Echaurren, to create an informal

Useful websites

- www.tapasenestadopuro.com
Estado Puro (Spanish)
- www.projectes24.com
Tapas 24 (English and Spanish)
- www.latabernadelgourmet.com
La Taberna del Gourmet (Spanish)
- www.lecabrera.com
Le Cabrera (Spanish)
- www.lamoraga.com
La Moraga (Spanish)
- www.echaurren.com
La Chimenea de Echaurren (Spanish)

Tapas Around The World



José Andrés: the Midas touch

Thanks to Asturian chef José Andrés, North Americans have been enjoying the pleasures of Spanish tapas for over a decade. Food critics and the eating-out public are unanimous in declaring him the best ambassador for Spanish food to the United States, through the medium of his three Jaleo restaurants, his Minibar, and frequent appearances on various US television programs. His last idea (he always has some new project in mind) was the well-received restaurant The Bazaar, located in Los Angeles's SLS hotel. One section of it, called Rojo y Blanca, is dedicated entirely to showcasing the pleasures of tapas and top-quality Spanish products. A tempting menu ranges from life-long tapa classics to cutting-edge ones that use 21st century techniques. Info: www.thebazaar.com

Josep's bikinis

Josep Barahona arrived in Tokyo over 20 years ago to try his hand at running a restaurant and has been there ever since. Catalan by birth and Japanese by adoption, he has devoted his professional career to teaching the

Japanese everything there is to know about tapas and what can be done with them. With various hugely successful ventures under his belt (he is also the author of best-selling books about tapas), Josep's current Tokyo establishments are a restaurant, L'Estudi, which has a cult following (it has just the one table, seats 8, and is where he gives his more avant-garde tendencies free rein), and two bars, Bikini and Bikini Tapa, that specialize in tapas and small helpings of dishes inspired by Catalan cuisine.

Freixa down under

You can't get much further away from Spain than Australia, but that is where chef Ramón Freixa (one Michelin star, Madrid) has gone. Having earned himself a loyal following, first in Barcelona and then in Madrid, he made for Melbourne to implement an impressively ambitious scheme: a restaurant called Planta 27 (meaning "27th Floor") and a tapas bar called Sótano (meaning "Basement"), both in the Hilton Melbourne. The tapas bar combines the sophistication of a de luxe hotel with the culinary potential of imaginative tapas. Acorn-fed Iberico cured ham and a selection of great Spanish

wines are just two of the attractions that Ramón Freixa can offer Australian gourmets. Info:

www.hiltonmelbourne.com.au

A little bit of Asturias in London

Portland Street, on the edge of London's West End, is the site of Ibérica Food & Culture, a veritable temple to Spanish gastronomy: it incorporates a bookshop, an events room for receptions and presentations, a shop selling Spanish foodstuffs, a top-class restaurant run by Nacho Manzano (of 2-Michelin-star Casa Marcial, in Asturias) and a tapas bar where perfectionist managerial standards are much in evidence. Nacho is ably supported at hands-on level by Santiago Guerrero, a young chef with several years' experience in London. Ibérica's range of hot and cold tapas, some traditional, others new wave, and the occasional hint of the Asturian culinary repertoire pulls in customers every evening, especially after work (*Spain Gourmetour* No.78). A genuine taste of Spain seems to help people switch off at the end of the working day. Info: www.ibericalondon.co.uk



venue with good service and affordable prices, with the added attraction of offering views onto the plaza in front of the church in our village, Ezcaray." Customer favorites at this gastrobar include *ensaladilla rusa*, *panceta con alcachofas y manzana* (pancetta with artichokes and apple) and croquetas made by Francis's mother, Marisa Sánchez, that are already a local legend.

A return to tapas at their most traditional form is represented by Koldo Royo. Having retained his Michelin star at his restaurant in Palma de Majorca for nearly a decade, this Basque-born chef decided early this year on a change of direction. The result is *Aquiara*, a bar specializing in classic tapas and pinchos, also in Palma. "Although restaurant critics and the press seemed unable to focus on anything

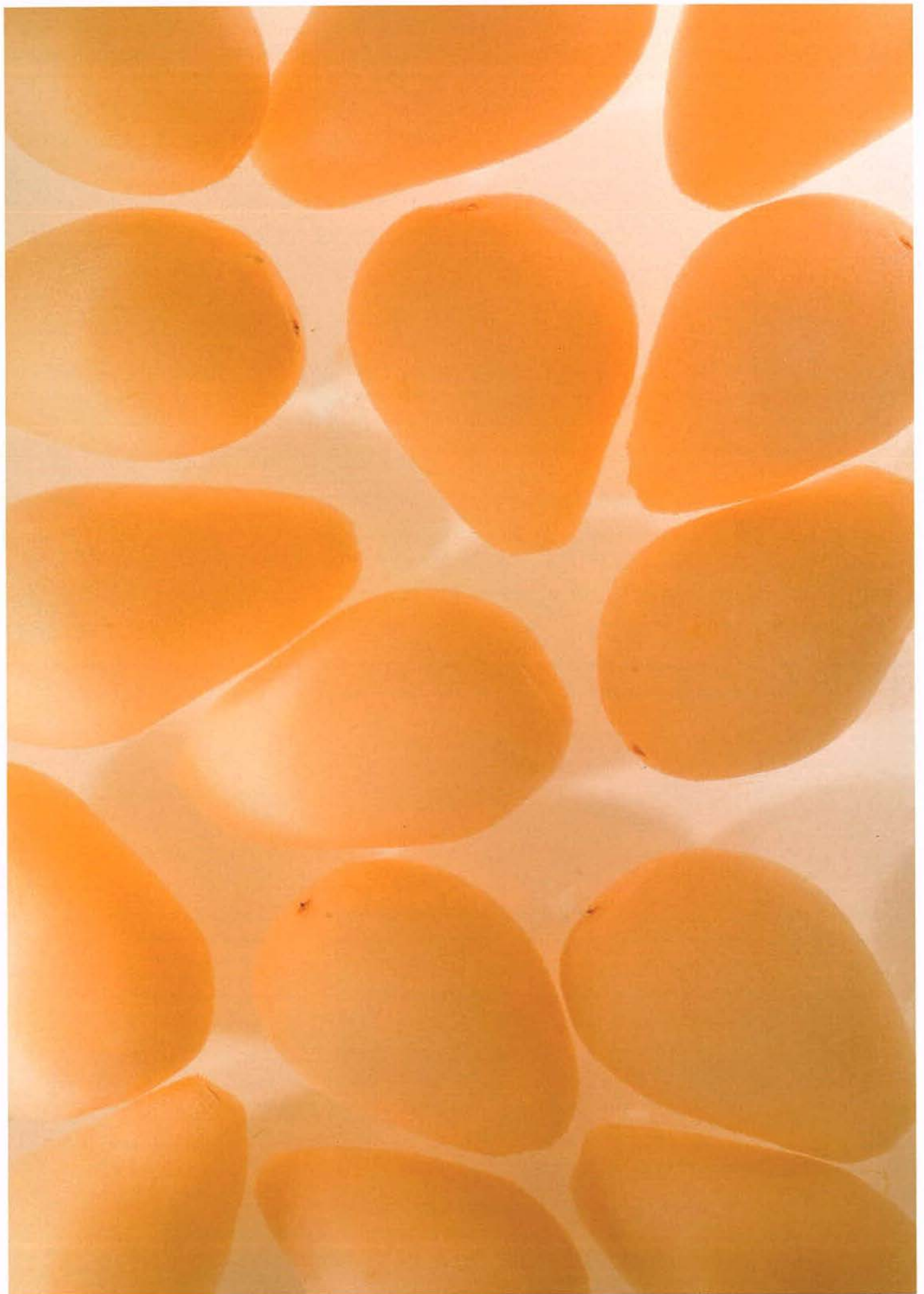
but posh restaurants at one period, the fact is that Spaniards have always been more inclined towards tapas-type eating than eating out in restaurants," declares Koldo Royo. Majorca is a year-round tourist



destination, and as such provides a good gauge of how tourists get on with tapas: "Foreign visitors not only respond very positively to top quality tapas, they actually come here with the specific purpose of seeking them out."

Spain's top chefs are obviously determined to keep the tapas tradition alive and kicking, whether in the form we have always known and loved or in a freer, more creative guise. As a result of this multidirectional approach, tapas are more popular than ever, confidently occupying their place in Spain's gastronomic repertoire, past, present and future. Are you keeping up?

Journalist Rodrigo García Fernández is a member of the editorial team of www.spaingourmetour.com.





PRESERVING SPAIN

Text
Adrienne Smith/©ICEX

Photos
Toya Legido/©ICEX



Peek in the window of any Spanish shop specializing in traditional gastronomic goods and you will see row upon row of glass jars flaunting a colorful variety of contents. There are vegetables and legumes to be sure, and possibly a pickled partridge or trout, but also an astounding array of fruits such as peaches, pears, apricots, figs, cherries and chestnuts. They have been preserved whole in every imaginable way with syrup, water, whiskey, brandy, wine, vinegar and honey. And while these *conservas* (preserves) might vary from region to region in terms of types of fruit, harvest times, and preparation methods, the companies that create these specialty products share a dedication to preserving their artisanal quality, while keeping an eye on future industry trends.



Preserving fruits such as grapes and figs through drying or soaking in honey, vinegar or alcohol has been practiced on the Iberian Peninsula since pre-Roman times. Another traditional technique consisted of coating fruit in beeswax or resin and burying or storing it in caves to prevent spoilage. While many of these methods are still used today, the most common preservation practices involve the hermetic canning technique developed by Frenchman Nicolas François Appert in the late 18th century. Appert's experiments with preserving food in glass jars paid off in the early 19th century when he won an award offered by the French government to anyone who could devise a way to preserve foodstuffs for Napoleon's armies. His method involved placing food in glass containers that were sealed with wax and a cork stopper and then boiled in a type of pressure cooker. Although a thorough understanding of why this technique prevented spoilage would have to wait another 50 years for Louis Pasteur's research on microbes and food sterilization, Appert's process quickly spread to Spain and the rest



of the world, where it was gradually refined for industrial use as new technologies came into play. On both an industrial and domestic level, food preservation provided a way to make seasonal and surplus food available throughout the year. And while the technology of containers has changed, the artisanal preparation of today's gourmet fruit preserves has remained virtually unaltered since the process was first discovered. While these products form an integral part of Spain's long gastronomic tradition, they also appeal to the culinary avant-garde and a growing export market. For this reason, the companies that make them not only honor historic and artisanal traditions, but also pursue new and original ideas that allow the industry to evolve and grow, both locally and internationally. Despite their hallowed place in Spanish gastronomy, it is difficult to gauge the commercial value of these specialty gourmet products. They represent only a small niche in Spain's massive canned fruit industry which, according to the Federación Nacional de Asociaciones de la Industria de Conservas Vegetales



(National Federation of Associations from the Fruit and Vegetable Preserves Industry, FNACV), accounts for 35% of the 1.5 billion tons of vegetable preserves (fruit, vegetables, jams, tomato preserves) produced annually. The gourmet conservas market varies by region, and areas that produce the most fruit or even fruit preserves do not necessarily have the greatest variety of gourmet products. However, some loose generalizations can be made about certain areas based on the types of companies found there. Three examples bear mentioning: El Bierzo, in the northwest, which has a long and historic tradition of making artisanal fruit preserves; Teruel, in the northeast, a province whose fruit preserves center on its famous peaches; and southeastern Murcia, one of Spain's major fruit producing provinces, where new gourmet lines demonstrate confidence in the market's future.

Bountiful El Bierzo

It's springtime in El Bierzo, and the rust-colored hillsides are dotted with bright purple *brezo* (heather) and



lush green vineyards. The entire valley seems to bustle with warbling birds and buzzing bees. In the town of Carracedelo, the floor of the small canning factory at De lo Nuestro Artesano is all but deserted and the machines are silent. This family-owned company grows all of its own fruit, and while it's still on the trees, José Manuel Sernández, the Technical and Quality Control Director, can be found outside checking on the cherry, fig or pear orchards, or looking over plans for the new organic quince plantation. José Manuel knows that the secret to producing great conservas is the care he takes throughout the creative process. What goes on in the factory is only the final step.

The region of El Bierzo is located about 100 km (62 mi) west of the city of León in the province of the same name. This leafy valley is surrounded by mountains that create a temperate microclimate in which fruit trees abound and, according to locals, their fruit develops a special concentrated fragrance unique to this area. Of particular note here are the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) Reineta apples, Conference

pears, Napoleon cherries, and the small and flavorful El Bierzo chestnuts. The latter were introduced by the Romans at the historic Las Médulas gold mines (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) and were used there as food for the slave miners. This region was also the site of the country's first artisanal preserving industry, founded in 1818. In El Bierzo, preserving fruit is a tradition handed down through generations, along with the corresponding secret family recipes. Even the most common technique of preserving fruits in a sugar-water syrup, known in Spain as *almíbar*, can vary greatly from one recipe to the next depending on the proportions used.

El Bierzo is not one of the largest fruit producing regions in Spain, but is known for the quality of its produce. Country-wide, most of the pears used to make the 13,345,000 tons of pear preserves produced in 2009, came from Catalonia, Aragón or La Rioja; according to data provided by the FNACV. However, as José Manuel Sernández points out, the Conference pears from El Bierzo sell for 20-25 cents a kilo (2.2 lb)

more than their counterparts grown in other areas. The exceptional pears grown here are also protected by a *Marca de Garantía*, or Quality Guarantee, given by the Asociación Berciana de Agricultores (El Bierzo Agricultural Association).

To prepare their whole pear preserves in red wine and honey, the pears are hand peeled and bottled in wine made from the local Mencía grape. The honey, also bottled alone or with walnuts, is harvested on-site every year. In spring, bees pollinate the mountain heather before being moved down to the orchards when the apple and pear trees are blooming. The result is a honey of unusual color and aroma and a key ingredient of the distinctive pear preserves.

Other traditional products include the delicious El Bierzo chestnuts, either roasted or bottled in brandy, water or syrup, and Napoleon cherries. Like all of the other fruit in syrup, the cherries are cooked at a lower temperature to preserve their natural qualities, and then steeped in either *orujo* (a distilled beverage from the remains of grapes after pressing them) or whiskey. According to



Roberto Carballo, Sales Manager of De lo Nuestro Artesano, "the secret to making good preserves is using good ingredients. When there is an ingredient that we cannot produce ourselves, such as orujo or whiskey, we look for the best that we can find elsewhere to complement our fruit. To that end, we conduct exhaustive analyses and tastings before making the final selection." He further explains that when using an alcoholic ingredient such as orujo or whiskey, it is not necessary to pressure cook the bottle. At a certain proof, alcohol acts as a sterilization agent and as long as the bottle is sealed correctly, the product can last a lifetime. An air of tradition envelops this 25-year-old company, from its natural ingredients and family-run atmosphere to the quaint cloth-topped bottles in which its products are sold. At the same time, the small factory is sleek and modern, and the company is clearly focused on developing its export business and growth strategy. It currently exports

about 10% of its products to countries in Europe such as the UK, Holland, Belgium, Sweden and France; as well as to Mexico and growing markets in Singapore, China and Japan. In Asia the company's most popular product is sweet-and-sour figs, preserved whole in vinegar, salt, sugar and powdered mustard seed. This unique product illustrates the company's goal of creating preserves that are both traditional and innovative at the same time. "The purpose of these specialty products is to add another dimension to the fruit, presenting it from an entirely new angle," explains José Manuel. This particular preserve has also gained popularity at the nearby Parador de San Marcos (a national heritage hotel), in León, where you can sample Grilled veal medallions with sweet-and-sour figs and roasted red peppers, yet another of their products. Two years ago, the company's roasted chestnuts in syrup were featured on a Spanish-themed menu at 52 Omni Hotels across the United States, while its sweet-and-

sour figs are currently included on the menu of Scandinavian luxury Viking Line cruises.

Just across the valley in Canedo, José Luis Prada of Prada a Tope has been channeling the riches of El Bierzo into artisanal, handmade fruit preserves for 37 years. One of Prada's many specialties are the chestnuts in syrup, made from the "Pared" chestnut variety, carefully selected from local producers. Finding the best chestnuts is only the first step in this long and involved process. The chestnuts are soaked for two days and the peel is removed by hand. The peeled chestnuts spend another day of soaking to soften their inner meat, before being briefly boiled in small batches of only 20 to 30. Then they are tenderly hand-wrapped in squares of gauze (to hold their shape) and cooked with sugar intermittently for five hours over three days. Finally, they are drained and combined with the syrup from the cooking process in glass jars, which are heated and sealed.



Fruit Preservation

Methods



Physical Preservation

· Sterilization or Pasteurization:

Fruit and ingredients are sealed in glass jars after boiling or pressure cooking to kill microorganisms (bacteria and fungi). This practice is commonly referred to as "canning".

· Freezing:

Low temperatures slow down all biological processes including decay. Freezing also makes water less available to microbes.

· Freeze Drying:

A dehydration process, which evaporates water at low temperature and pressure. The reduced water content (1-4%) inhibits the growth of microbes. Flavor, aroma and nutritional value are usually restored when fruit is rehydrated.

· Air Drying:

A method of slowly evaporating water from fruit using hot air (traditionally the sun and wind). Some changes in taste and texture often occur.

· Vacuum Packing:

Fruit is stored in an airless environment to hinder the growth of certain microbes. This is not a long-term storage option.

· Irradiation:

Fruit is exposed to ionizing radiation that kills microbes and reduces its oxidation. It is sometimes called "cold pasteurization".

· Coating:

A traditional method of coating fruit with beeswax or resin, followed by burial or storage in caves. Darkness and cold help slow oxidation and decay.

· Crystallization:

Fresh fruit is cooked in syrup, then dried and preserved; dried fruit is covered with crystalline sugar, syrup, honey or molasses. Versions of these may be known as candied fruit, *glacé*, or *confit*.

· Pickling:

Fruit is marinated in an acidic solution (usually vinegar), which is sufficient to kill most bacteria. Anti-microbial spices such as mustard seed and cinnamon may be added, as well as sugar for a sweet-and-sour effect.

· Alcohol:

Soaking or cooking fruit in alcoholic beverages (such as wine or brandy) can effectively sterilize it. Sugar is often added as well.

Chemical Preservation

· Sugaring:

In syrup: cooking in a sugar-water syrup, or *almibar*, creates a hostile environment for microbes. *Confitado* refers to preserving fruit in a higher density sugar-syrup.







This labor-intensive process typifies the care that goes into all of their products, which also include pear, cherry and fig preserves. These and other products can be sampled at the Palacio de Canedo Restaurant, part of a beautiful 300-year-old building on the same property that was converted into a hotel earlier this decade. According to José Luis Prada, who likens the restaurant's dish of Chestnuts in syrup over lemon cream to a kind of ecstasy: "This place exudes a sensuality that truly envelops people." In case you can't make it all the way to El Bierzo, the company exports about 4% of its annual sales, primarily to European countries and Mexico.

Prada a Tope is not the only company to emphasize the culinary applications of its preserves, a detail that is especially important when it comes to exporting. Outside of Spain, these may be unfamiliar products that people are unsure how to use. As Roberto Carballo explains,

"While someone in the UK might be interested in trying sweet-and-sour figs, it can be interesting for them to be informed, for example, that they are an excellent accompaniment for lamb." Therefore, many companies include tips and recipes on their websites or in their catalogs. De lo Nuestro Artesano has 25 pages of *Recommendations From Our Kitchen*, with suggestions such as Sweet-and-sour fig tempura. Another such company is Rosara, in Navarre, which makes peaches, pears, and chestnuts in syrup and currently exports around 30,000 euros worth of these products to Panama, the United States and France. Its webpage has a section called "Chef Fermin's Corner", listing *tapas* recipes by product. Navarrico in Navarre has a recipe for Peach tart on its website, and even the official Conference Pears of El Bierzo site is replete with recipes using fresh and preserved pears. Taking this one step further, the Conservas Calanda

(Teruel) webpage has a section in English called "Curiosities", which provides a detailed history of each product, cooking tips and culinary suggestions.

Peachy Teruel

Conservas Calanda is located on the opposite side of Spain, in the province of Teruel in the Autonomous Community of Aragón. Together with neighboring Navarre and La Rioja, Aragón is the second-largest producer of vegetable and fruit preserves in Spain. According to the FNACV, some 79,900,000 tons of peach preserves are produced nationwide every year, by far the largest amount for any fruit. Here in Teruel, their peaches really steal the show. These are the famed *Melocotones de Calanda* (Calanda peaches), the sweet and meaty Amarillo tardío variety that is so valued for its fragrance, crispness and creamy yellow tone,



that its special traits are protected by a PDO. These peaches can only be cultivated in the southeast Ebro River Valley between the provinces of Teruel and Zaragoza, and the fruit makes its grand entrance from the 15th of September to the end of October.

Calanda peaches are a gastronomic tradition (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 60), with mentions all the way back to the Middle Ages. Every summer, during the months of June and July, the peaches are individually wrapped in paraffin-coated paper bags while still on the tree. Each peach is literally kept under wraps for a minimum of nine weeks, during which it is protected from disease and climatic mishaps. Once picked, they are placed immediately in cold storage and then packaged or processed locally. In general, most fruits lose their PDO when they are converted into preserves since their essential characteristics change. However, Calanda peaches in either

syrup or wine are such an institution in this area that they are allowed to keep their PDO, providing that they adhere to certain parameters.

According to Ismael Conesa Sanz, the Director of Conservas Calanda, who sells this and other gourmet preserves under the brand ISMAEL, "It is highly important in the marketplace that a quality product be accompanied by a Designation of Origin seal, and (outside of Spain) our job is to promote the Protected Designation of Origin Calanda Peaches, given that it is a product that is treated in a manner so completely different from any other peach on the market."

Conservas Calanda has a variety of other gourmet fruit preserves, such as pears in syrup or wine, and prunes in brandy; all are made with the utmost care and using natural and locally-produced ingredients. Even so, the products made from PDO Calanda Peaches offer the most varied selection, including whole

and half peaches in syrup or wine, dried peaches, and a unique product of dried peaches preserved in a local red Tempranillo wine. These preserves are great in stews, with duck magret or as dessert. Like José Manuel Sernández, Ismael Conesa Sanz believes that tradition and innovation go hand in hand: "The secrets of quality Spanish products come to us from generations past. What we are trying to do today is to improve the presentation and preparation standards of products through research to guarantee their quality and safety."

Conservas Calanda is currently on a mission to expand its export market, in part through participation in both national and international fairs such as the bi-annual Alimentaria in Barcelona in 2008 and 2010, and the 2007 London Food and Drink Event (IFE). The fairs allow companies to showcase their products for importers and distributors from all over the world. Currently, Conservas



Calanda's fruit preserves are exported to Italy, Belgium, Germany and the UK, accounting for around 2% of the company's total sales. Ismael Conesa Sanz believes that this number will grow: "Spanish products are being positioned in the finest stores and restaurants throughout the world. In Spain, we have a great gastronomic tradition and a large variety of products of the very highest quality."

Mighty Murcia

What sets Murcia apart the most in terms of fruit preserves is neither artisanal tradition nor Designations of Origin—which is not to say that it does not possess these as well. Murcia's strength lies in the sheer volume of its production, the technology that it has developed to deal with an arid Mediterranean climate, and its strong export market. The canning industry in Murcia did not take off until well

into the 20th century. According to the Murcia Instituto de Fomento (Institute of Development), the region is currently the largest producer of fruit and vegetable preserves in Spain, and its products account for 50% of all Spanish conservas. Its fruit production consists primarily of lemons, peaches, apricots and oranges, of which 40% are transformed into preserves. Murcia is the third region in Spain in terms of agricultural exports, and 65% of all fruit is exported.

Again, these numbers refer to the fruit preserve industry as a whole, and do not distinguish between artisanal gourmet preserves and the much more common canned fruits in syrup that are produced and exported in huge quantities. At first glance the gourmet products do not seem nearly as prominent in Murcia as they do in other regions. However, this is a gap in the market that companies seem eager to fill. One

such company is Cofrusa, which attests to being the largest fruit and vegetable preserves company in Spain. Founded in 1968, in 2008 Cofrusa launched its first line of gourmet products consisting of peaches in brandy, a selection of five fruits in rum, and cherries with Kirsch. According to the company's Marketing Director, Ana Cebolla, "It is very important to innovate on a continual basis and to keep launching new products in the marketplace. In response to these changing consumer trends, we have developed a new line of high added-value products to address the needs of today's consumers." This confidence is shared by the company Bravo Lozano, although the similarities end here. Bravo Lozano, a small, family-run company located in the region of Jumilla, is dedicated to growing peaches, apricots, pears and the noble Monastrell grapes used for making the regional red wine. In this extremely arid region, the company



follows traditional cultivation methods while using new technologies to implement strict water controls and other environmental measures. Another innovative move came in 2009, when Bravo Lozano launched its first and only line of fruit preserves, an artisanal product made from Jumilla pears, whose high quality and special characteristics are protected under the Protected Designation of Origin Jumilla Pears. These Ercolini variety pears have been traced back to the 16th century, and are described by the owner, José Antonio Bravo, as being slightly small, crunchy, and extremely aromatic. Although the pears lose the official DO status upon their transformation into preserves, their unique characteristics still come through in the final product where they are preserved in local organic Monastrell wine with sugar, cinnamon, and natural lemon juice. Despite the differences between these two Murcian companies, both profess a positive outlook on the gourmet fruit preserves industry and a dedication to innovative products. This is a trend that the province of Murcia is working hard to encourage through institutions such as the Centro Tecnológico Nacional de la Conserva y la Alimentación de Murcia (National Technological Center for Preserves and Food, CTC), whose purpose, according to Francisco José Gálvez Caravaca of the

Center's Communications Office for Investigative Results (OTRI), is to "promote innovation and competitiveness in the food and agricultural sector through scientific testing by their next generation technological department, and information exchange by the OTRI, which keeps the industry informed of scientific and technological advances." Essentially, they provide the agricultural sector with the tools that it needs to develop its business. As José Antonio Bravo explains, he turned to the CTC for help in developing different "recipes" and preparation methods when preparing his company's new product. Other services provided by the Center include: technological consulting, fairs, patent information, educational opportunities, and helping companies comply with international quality requirements such as the British Retail Consortium (BRC), ISO 9001 Quality Management Standard and rules of the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Essential to exporting, these quality standards are recognized all over the world and serve to protect both the company and the consumer.

Preserving the future

The gourmet fruit preserves industry in Spain is increasingly

vibrant, especially when it comes to exporting. In 2009, approximately 241.6 million euros worth of fruit preserves were exported, up 4.3% from the year before, according to data provided by the Instituto Español de Comercio Exterior, ICEX (Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade). And despite regional differences ranging from aesthetic presentations, to types of fruit or selected preparation methods, all producers have a strong interest in expanding the export side of the business.

Artisanal craftsmanship, organically grown fruit, and respect for the traditions of the past have allowed these specialty products to maintain their place of pride in Spain's celebrated gastronomy. Innovative recipes and preparation styles, and a growing appreciation for these products abroad also insure that Spain will continue to share its treasured conservas with the rest of the world.

Adrienne Smith is a sommelier, chef and freelance writer. She has spent the last decade eating and drinking her way through Spain.

We would like to thank De lo Nuestro lo Artesano, Prada a Tope S.A., Conservas Calanda, Bravo Lozano, Conservas Rosara, Conservas Artesanas El Navarrico and Cofrusa.

FOOD BASICS



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Introduction

María Moneo/©ICEX

Photos, introduction

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Translation

Jenny McDonald/©ICEX

Known in gastronomic circles as an “ecochef”, Oriol Rovira (1974) is a Catalan restaurateur who believes in self-sufficiency. His restaurant, Els Casals, lies at the center of a farm covering about 250 ha (618 acres) in the foothills of the Pyrenees, in the Barcelona district of Berguedà. The farm grows fruit and vegetables and breeds poultry and pigs, and mushrooms and truffles can be gathered in the nearby woods, all of which are then served at the restaurant. Rovira calls his philosophy “Closing Circles”, because Els Casals sees the process through from start to finish: from planting the seeds to serving the customers. His team, made up of his siblings—Carme, Miquel, Jordi and Lluís—and his wife, Marta, watch over the agricultural activities that he needs for his gastronomic creations. He insists that, whenever possible, the ingredients he uses should come from his farm: pumpkins, eggplant, beans, peppers, potatoes, peas, onions. Of the six tomato varieties they grow, the fleshy Montserrat (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 77) takes pride of place. And Els Casals breeds four pig varieties as well as select poultry such as capon. While top-class products form the basis of his cuisine, creativity and innovation are also prime concerns for this chef. The wines suggested here were recommended by the restaurant’s sommelier, David Gomis, and by Oriol Rovira himself.

Beefsteak tomato preserve with Gillardeau oysters, peas, asparagus and scallion *(Tomate corazón de buey en conserva con ostras Gillardeau, guisantes, espárragos y cebolleta tierna)*



We consider beefsteak tomatoes to be one of the best varieties, and the idea of this recipe is to offer them all year round; as a result, we make our own tomato preserve and serve it in a surprising way with vegetables and Gillardeau oysters.

SERVES 4

A handful of young peas; 8 wild asparagus spears; 8 young scallions; 8 cauliflower shoots in vinegar; pea flowers; salt; salt flakes.

For the beefsteak tomato: 4 beefsteak tomatoes; 1 basil leaf; extra virgin olive oil.

For the Gillardeau oysters: 12 Gillardeau No. 3 oysters; 1 lemon; 8 g / 1/3 oz soy lecithin.

Peas, asparagus and scallions

Blanch and cool the vegetables and add a little salt.

Beefsteak tomato preserve

First place the tomatoes in an airtight glass jar and blanch. When cool, remove the skin and seeds and transfer to another glass jar with a basil leaf and a little extra virgin olive oil. Steam for 45 minutes at 90°C / 194°F. Leave to cool, then pour off any liquid and slowly reduce it.

Gillardeau oysters

Open the oysters. Beat the water from the oysters with the lemon juice and soy lecithin to create an air of oyster and lemon.

To serve

First plate the tomato with the cauliflower in vinegar, reduced tomato juice, asparagus, scallions, peas and pea flowers. Then arrange the oysters on top with the oyster and lemon air, and sprinkle with salt flakes.

Preparation time

30 minutes

Recommended wine

Pda 2009 Picapoll (DO Pla de Bages), by Celler Solergibert. The grapes come from old vines of Picapoll, a variety that had all but disappeared. After aging in acacia wood, the result is a dry, very fresh wine that blends well with the briny and sharp flavors in this dish as well as with the sweetness of the tomato.



Creamy ball of St. George's mushrooms with clover and young almonds

(Bolita cremosa de perrechicos con trébol y almendra tierna)

An extremely simple but surprising dish that makes an excellent *amuse-bouche*, especially in springtime, when nature offers us this outstanding, short-lived mushroom.

SERVES 4

200 g / 7 oz St. George's mushrooms (*Calocybe gambosa*); 50 g / 2 oz clover; 100 g / 3 1/2 oz cream; 100 g / 3 1/2 oz young almonds; salt; extra virgin olive oil; grey or white pepper.

Beat the cream, add a little salt and the chopped mushrooms (150 g / 5 1/2 oz). Use a spoon to form the mixture into balls and coat with freshly-sliced mushrooms (50 g / 2 oz).

To serve

Plate a mushroom-coated ball and decorate with a few sprigs of clover and fresh almonds. Dress with a little olive oil and grey or white pepper.

Preparation time

20 minutes

Recommended wine

La Llopetera 2006 (DO Conca de Barberà), by Bodega Escoda-Sanahuja. This is a biodynamic wine, made from Pinot Noir, a variety that is not always easy to grow. Its very special personality and extreme smoothness allow it to combine to perfection with the very aromatic mushrooms. The main tasting note is dry hay.





Fried goose egg with potato cream, warm sobrasada, and honey

*(Huevo frito de oca con cremoso de patata,
sobrasada tibia y miel)*

The tradition and roots of Spanish cuisine come together in this dish. All the main ingredients—eggs, potatoes, *sobrasada* (sausage paste), and honey—are home-grown.

SERVES 4

For the egg: 4 fresh goose eggs; 20 ml / 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil.

For the potato cream: 750 g / 1 lb 10 oz potatoes; 350 g / 12 oz butter; sea salt.

Others: 100 g / 3 1/2 oz sobrasada; 4 or 5 cubes quince paste; sprigs of chervil; honey.

For the egg

Pour a little oil into a small, deep, non-stick pan and heat until it smokes. Carefully add the egg and fry until just turning brown.

For the potato cream

Peel the potatoes and cut into pieces. Boil until soft, then drain, season with salt and blend. Add butter and beat until they are the right texture.

To serve

Arrange some potato cream (in the shape of the egg) and top with the egg. Heat the sobrasada in the oven and place to one side. On the other, place the cubes of quince paste with the chervil and honey.

Preparation time

20 to 30 minutes

Recommended wine

Solergibert Selecció 2000 Cabernet Sauvignon (DO Pla de Bages), from Celler Solergibert. This is a powerful but balanced wine that retains freshness and a touch of acidity. As an old-style wine it makes the perfect partner for both the sobrasada sausage and egg combination and for the sweet quince and the honey.





Twice-cooked home-grown poulard with butifarra sausage and young onions

*(Pularda de la casa asada en dos cocciones
con butifarra de matanza y pequeñas cebollas tiernas)*





This is a dish we are very excited about because we decided to start breeding these chickens a few years ago and this recipe is the culmination of a lot of hard work. The flesh has an unmistakable depth and texture. A classic product in a new style.

SERVES 4

1 poulard; 500 ml / 2 1/6 cups dark chicken stock; 6 butifarra sausages; 24 young onions; 1 truffle; 100 ml / 3 1/2 oz truffle juice; salt; pepper.

First cooking

Season the poulard with salt and pepper and place in a vacuum pack with the dark chicken stock and truffle juice. Close the bag and cook in a steam oven at 73°C / 163°F for 7 hours and 15 minutes. Remove and prevent further cooking by placing the bag in a cold bain-marie.

Second cooking

Transfer the contents of the bag to an aluminum pan, cover and roast in the oven at 190°C / 374°F for about 35 minutes. Uncover and leave in the oven for another 25 minutes at 215°C / 419°F. Five minutes before the end of the cooking period, add the lightly fried butifarra sausages, the sautéed onions and the truffle in 2 mm / 0.07 in dice.

To serve

Place the poulard at the center of the plate and add the sautéed onions, butifarra sausages and diced truffle. Dress with the cooking juices.

Preparation time

12 hours

Recommended wine

Ingenius Brut Nature (DO Cava) by Vins I Caves Júlia Bernet. This is a top-class Catalonian sparkling wine produced in small quantities that clearly reflects the grapes from which it is made (Xarel-lo, Macabeo and Chardonnay) while keeping any acidity under control. With its pleasing, light sparkle, it is an ideal match for the white poultry meat and the fats and gelatine of the butifarra.

Home-made Caramel custard with textured cream

(Flan de la casa con natas en texturas)

Caramel custard, known in Spanish as *flan*, is a classic dessert that comes in a multitude of versions. Ours is very simple, based on the best possible ingredients.

SERVES 4

For the caramel custard: 1 1/4 1/2 cup milk; 250 g / 9 oz sugar; 480 g / 1 lb 1 oz eggs; 70 g / 3 oz egg yolk; rind of one lemon; rind of one orange; 1 cinnamon stick; 200 g / 7 oz caramel.

For the vanilla cream: 200 g / 7 oz cream; 1 Tahiti vanilla pod.

For the milk veil ice cream: 1.32 kg / 3 lb milk veil; 2 1/8 1/2 cup milk; 90 g / 3 1/2 oz ice cream stabilizer; 190 g / 6 1/2 oz sugar.

Home-made caramel custard

Aromatize the milk with the cinnamon stick and lemon and orange rinds for about 12 hours. Strain the milk, then mix in the sugar, egg and egg yolk, and beat. Coat a mold with caramel, then pour in the milk and egg mixture. Cook at 125°C / 257°F for about 40 minutes.

Vanilla cream

Start beating the cream. When half done, shave the vanilla pod over it, then finish beating.

Milk veil ice cream

Mix all the ingredients and chill for about 12 hours, then beat.

To serve

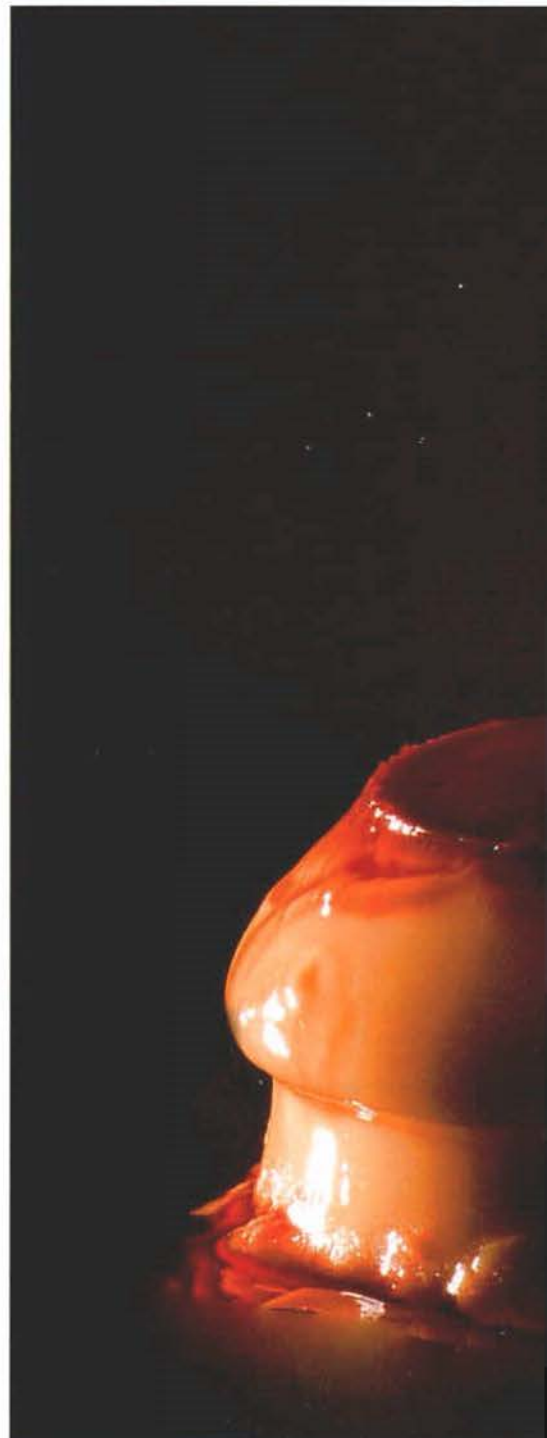
Place the caramel custard at the center of the plate with a ball of vanilla cream on one side and a ball of milk veil ice cream on the other. Finish by drizzling with caramel. Top with a crisp.

Preparation time

45 minutes (the milk veil ice cream should be prepared the day before).

Recommended wine

Carratell Ranci del Montsant (DO Montsant), by Celler de Capçanes. This sweet wine, made from the grapes of old Garnacha Negra vines, is an outstanding foil for the sweetness and creaminess of the caramel custard.





Text
Almudena Martín Rueda/©ICEX

Translation
Hawys Pritchard/©ICEX

Photos
González Byass

THE NICEST TRADE

González Byass

Presiding jauntily over Madrid's Puerta del Sol (the very center of Spain, "kilometer zero" from which its roads radiate) is a figure whose image is indelibly imprinted on the visual memory of most Spaniards, and many a tourist, too: the trademark of Tío Pepe, the world's best-selling sherry. The sight is so comfortably familiar that few register the importance of this historic brand and the commercial group to which it belongs. In 2010, González Byass celebrates the 175th anniversary of its original bodega in Jerez—nearly two centuries in a business that has combined tradition and innovation in equal measure. Pedro Rebuelta, the group's current vice-president, belongs to the fifth generation of the González Byass family, which is still very much involved in the everyday running of the bodega. We have an appointment in his office in Jerez de la Frontera, with its close-up view of the city's 12th century Arab fortress, the Alcázar.





Historic sites always make me feel insignificant and ill-informed, and the imposing walls of the González Byass winery, witnesses to radical changes in the course of their existence yet still impassively true to their origins, exert the usual effect. Equally imposing is the fact that this long-established winery is still run by the González family, the fifth generation of which is currently at the helm. They have been trailblazers right from the start: they installed the first electric lighting in Jerez, illuminating the part of town where the bodega stands and creating an effect that must have been quite something back in 1888. This combination of commitment to a deeply traditional product with an instinctively innovative approach (clearly a genetic feature in this family) has been instrumental in shaping and sustaining one of the biggest wine-producing groups in Spain. Of all the impressive innovations introduced in the course of the bodega's long history, I single out its setting up in the mid-20th century of the first private oenological research center (the CIDIMA, which literally spells out Quality, Research, Development, Innovation and the Environment) in the wake of a visit to Davis University in California by Mauricio González. "My uncle persuaded the family to set up a center for wine research when he got back to Spain," explains Pedro Rebueta, "and it has served as the winery's research and quality control center ever since. At first the research was limited to sheries only, but over time its brief was extended to monitoring and improving our entire



range of wines. We consider its role to be hugely important: we have a great respect for history and are firm believers in tradition, but we are also committed to innovation." The González Byass bodega was founded in 1835, shortly after the dissolution of the vintners' guilds, with their restrictive requirement that vine growing, winemaking and exporting be conducted by separate entities. Manuel María González, a young bank worker from Cádiz, found himself drawn to the wine trade, in which he detected a certain grandeur (as, indeed, I do myself). He says as much in a letter written to his mother at the time: "The wine trade is the nicest trade I know, and I intend to devote the rest of my life to it." He went on to lay the foundations of what would prove to be one of Spain's most enduring family-owned wine groups. "And that wasn't all," relates Pedro

with obvious pride. "He did things in such a way that, five generations later, not only are we still dedicated to the business as a family, but we are still pursuing the same quality goals and taking our wines onward and upward." Manuel María González showed clarity of vision from the start, deciding that the export market was the one to concentrate on for sherry. Indeed, in the very year that the winery was founded, it shipped its first ten casks to England. Very soon after, González had agreed distribution terms with one of England's leading business families at that period, the Byass family (in 1855 they became part of the bodega, remaining shareholders for 133 years). Pedro, who was the winery's export manager for many years, shares the same uncluttered sense of purpose. There is respect in his tone when he tells me: "...the international market has always been particularly important for us. For example, just 20 years after it was founded, our bodega was already the biggest exporter in Jerez. In the 1860s, González Byass's foreign sales represented 2% of Spain's total exports." Both Spain and González Byass have changed a lot since then, but as far as the winery is concerned, the export market is still the bedrock of its business. "At present, our sales are 50% domestic and 50% foreign, but we aim over the next 10 to 15 years to bring that export portion up to 70%. There's a wide world beyond Spain, and those foreign markets are where we'll find opportunities for growth—creating products to match their demands, investing in different markets and fostering them..."



Trademark

González Byass's product range is large, but the firm applies a clearly defined strategy that entails endowing each product with its own personality, working closely with its distributors and, of course, exercising quality control. "Quality is an absolute must; there's no excuse for making poor wine nowadays. But though quality is a key element, the fundamental one is personality. In a market where the offer is so huge, the products that succeed are those that possess and are able to transmit personality." Tío Pepe meets both those criteria. Any "creative team" would be proud to have dreamed up such a memorable brand name but, yet again, we have the company founder to thank for Tío Pepe. Manuel María González, who was apparently no wine expert, relied heavily on the advice of his uncle, José María Ángel Vargas, when selecting wines and in matters concerning production. As a gesture of gratitude, Manuel María dedicated the winery's first *solera* (the tier of casks from which sherry is extracted) to his *tío* Pepe (Pepe is a diminutive of José; the name means "Uncle Joe") and registered the name as a brand, creating what would eventually

become an iconic Spanish trademark. "Wherever you go in the world—Madrid, London, Paris, Buenos Aires, Hong Kong—you're sure to find Tío Pepe. That's really what our work is all about," declares Pedro.

The Tío Pepe trademark has certainly worked hard for González Byass since 1935, when it was elevated from *solera* designation to (eventually) iconic trade name. Today, it is the flag the company flies when approaching new international markets. "We generally use sherry, Tío Pepe, as our passport. It opens doors for us, and we then follow through with our full range of products."

Diversification

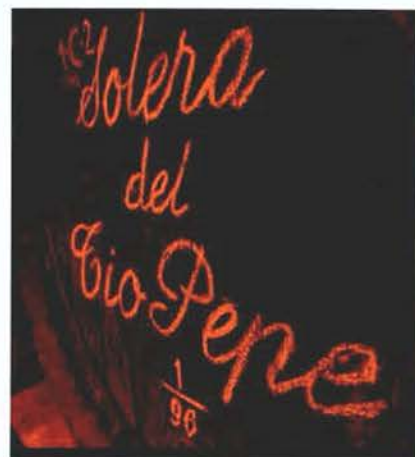
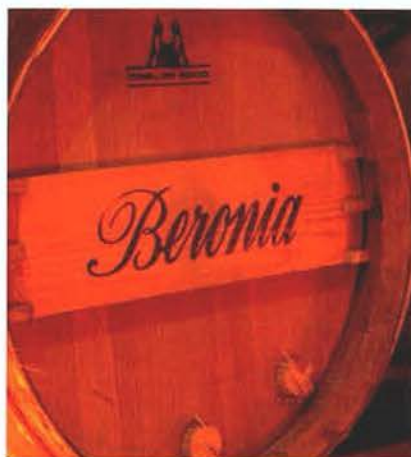
Having started off in the 19th century specializing in sherry, González Byass spent most of the 20th developing the brandy market, until the 1980s, when it started to diversify "...though not straying too far from what we are good at, which is making and selling wine," explains Pedro. This new phase was launched in 1982 with the purchase of a winery in DOCa Rioja (Bodegas Beronia), followed by another, a year later, in DO Cava (Cavas Vilarnau). The company's sights were set on

becoming the definitive supplier of Spanish wines: "Those acquisitions put us in the position of owning sources of the three great wine types for which Spain is famous: sherry, cava and rioja." The start of the 21st century



González Byass

- **Workforce**
523 on average
- **Gross turnover 2009**
160 million euros
- **Export quota**
50%
- **Products**
DO Jerez, DOCa Rioja, DO Cava, DO Penedès, Tierra de Castilla, Tierra de Cádiz wines; brandies, anisettes, liqueurs and spirit drinks.
- **Website**
www.gonzalezbyass.com
(English, Spanish)



saw them move into a second diversification phase, this time into new generation locations and products. They bought a 50 ha (123 acre) estate in nearby Arcos de la Frontera and planted it with Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah vines. "Many people were of the opinion that it wasn't a suitable area for growing red varieties, but reds certainly feature in the archives from the early years of the 20th century. We brought out a top-quality wine, Finca Moncloa, and are very pleased with it." I've had occasion to taste this Andalusian red myself and was frankly astonished to find such finesse and freshness in a red wine produced in this part of the country. Diversification continued in 2006, when work began on building a new winery, Finca Constancia, surrounded by 270 ha (667 acres) of land in Toledo province (central Spain) which they had bought five years earlier. "Finca Constancia is geared to producing new generation, fruit-led wines that are more in tune with the international marketplace." The Vinos de la Tierra de Castilla range produced at the new winery consists of two very well-conceived lines: an introductory line—Altozano—made up of young,

straightforwardly fruity wines, and a premium line—Finca Constancia—of more complex wines in which fruit and wood work well together, and which shows potential as a *vino de pago* (estate wine) in the not-too-distant future. The company's acquisition in 2008 of high-profile Viñas del Vero, DO Somontano's productive field leader, further endorsed González Byass's commitment to Spanish winemaking at its most modern. Pedro is notably downright when he declares that the company's aim with regard to foreign markets is "to become the supplier of Spanish wine, so that when a foreign importer decides he wants wines from Spain, he automatically turns to González Byass." He goes on to explain: "That's why our output is made up of brands with a character of their own: we invest effort in endowing each winery with its own personality. There's no reason why consumers should know that the various wineries all belong to the same group, though it is important that the trade does."

Consumer contact

González Byass products have a presence in over 100 countries, mostly achieved through importers. This must

surely make it difficult to make any sort of contact with the end consumer. The company's strategy is for González Byass staff to work directly with their importers and distributors abroad, collaborating with them on promotional events wherever in the world they have a presence. "In the end, it all boils down to adapting to the market in question and supplying products that consumers like. That's what makes it so important to get as close to our consumers as possible." They have a subsidiary company in their principal market, the UK, and in Mexico, where Lepanto brandy and, above all, Soberano sell very well. "It's a very traditional market for Spain, mainly for brandy, though wine consumption is increasing in Mexico. Chinchón anisette is also a big hit there." This last piece of information takes me completely by surprise, and I admit rather shamefacedly that I have always thought of Chinchón as being strictly local to the area it comes from (the village of the same name, not far from Madrid), the sort of thing that people drink as they while away the afternoon in the *terrazas* on its picturesque Plaza Mayor. The group also has its own



sales force in both the UK and Mexico so that it can deal directly with its customers and establish rapport with them. Meanwhile, it is honing in on two potentially huge markets—China and the US—and has set up marketing offices (in Shanghai and New York, respectively), again with a view to achieving closer consumer contact. “We have our own staff there, and the fact that they are in direct touch with the distributor means that we can respond much more nimbly to market requirements. It involves collaborating with the importer and distributor in various activities, mainly PR and meet-the-customer events... In other words, we are involved in the market at hands-on level.”

Oenotourism, originally introduced as a PR gesture aimed at end consumers, has gradually evolved into a business facet of González Byass in its own right, becoming so successful that the Jerez winery is currently one of the most visited wineries in the world. I made the most of my professional visit there to play the tourist game of spotting famous autographs (Steven Spielberg, Fernando Alonso...) among those on the hundreds of

barrels that make up the winery’s stocks. Like most wineries in Jerez, González Byass has been welcoming tourists for decades. However, in 1992, the year the Universal Exposition was held in Seville (90 km / 55.9 mi from Jerez), realizing what a crowd-puller the event was sure to be, the family took a strategic decision and started charging an entrance fee. “Consumers pay more attention to something that they’ve paid for. We set a price for the visit, and doing so made it incumbent upon us to improve the experience. We had to adapt and modernize the premises and spend a bit of money, but the consequence was that our visitor numbers went up from 20,000 to 250,000 a year. It’s run as a separate business, but it’s also closely allied to our marketing department because of its role in communicating product image: one has to make absolutely sure that the image it presents is a positive one and is in tune with brand strategy.” On the strength of the success of this venture in Jerez, the company is extending it to the group’s other wineries. Finca Constanca and Cavas Vilarnau already have oenotourism departments, while

at Viñas del Vero an equivalent program put in place by the previous owners has been retained. Bodegas Beronia is next in line.

González Byass’s motto for this anniversary year is “175 años mirando al futuro” (175 years looking to the future), a tribute to the visionary qualities of its founder, Manuel María González, and to the subsequent generations of a remarkable family whose entrepreneurial spirit and innovative drive have built up his sherry exporting business into the González Byass Group: one of Spain’s biggest producers of wines, brandies and spirits. And it’s still growing. With new markets waiting to be conquered, Tio Pepe won’t be hanging up his hat just yet.

Almudena Martín Rueda was head of foreign market promotional activities for one of Spain’s Wine Designations of Origin for seven years before joining Spain Gourmetour, where she has been editorial coordinator for the last three years.



Have a Spanish Break!

In the shadow of San Francisco's iconic Transamerica Pyramid, nearly 10,000 km (6,213 mi) from Madrid, Bocadillos captures the elusive essence of a great tapas bar like no spot I know outside Spain. The food is exceptionally good and the wine well chosen, and, just as important, there's a relaxed, convivial feel that promotes spontaneity. Pop in for a quick drink and bite, and you may find yourself lingering for hours over a *cazuelita* of braised tripe, a glass of *tinto* (red wine), and conversation with a newfound friend.

Owned by the award-winning (Critics' Choice Awards, San Francisco, 2003) Basque chef, cookbook author, and raconteur Gerald Hirigoyen and his wife,

Cameron, Bocadillos occupies the narrow ground floor of a 19th century building that survived the 1906 earthquake and later was one of the city's first gay bars. The interior décor blends clean, contemporary lines with warm touches of ebonized wood. Electric votives flicker against a vibrant tangerine-colored brick wall, and chrome wire chairs line a communal table. Next to the entrance, like a blessing of welcome, hangs a painting of a *lauburu*, the curvilinear Basque cross.

A day at Bocadillos follows the rhythm of the surrounding district, an eclectic mix of office towers, hotels, and storefront art, antiques, and design businesses. The rustle of early morning newspapers gives way

to small business meetings over American-style breakfasts with a Spanish twist, including house-made *chorizo* (a type of red sausage) with eggs. From midday into the afternoon, a loud crush of hungry workers on one-hour breaks choose from a dozen *bocadillos*: small, soft buns that might hold anything from smoked salmon to warm *butifarra* sausage with arugula and shaved DO Queso Manchego cheese. Beginning in the evening, as offices and shops close, an exceptional selection of 30-plus tapas—from *pintxos* (small snacks), salads, and cheeses, to items that are marinated, fried, or grilled *a la plancha*—lures a lively and constantly changing crowd. The food reminds me

Christopher
Hall from



SAN FRANCISCO

Text
Christopher Hall/©ICEX

Photos
Bocadillos

strongly of San Sebastián (northern Spain), where the best cutting-edge creations are infused with a traditional spirit. At Bocadillos, many tapas marry high-quality Spanish products, such as velvety, 24-month-aged Serrano ham, *boquerones* (fresh anchovies), and *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain), with seasonal California ingredients like favas, wild mushrooms, heirloom tomatoes, sardines, and squid. I could happily eat the tender grilled Monterey Bay squid with an intense ink sauce and spicy red mojo every day of my life, or the Pacific Rim-influenced snapper ceviche with Thai chilies and Asian pears. If you come in spring, look for a crisp, refreshing salad of thinly sliced asparagus, Spanish

ventresca (tuna belly) and almonds moistened with lemon-miso dressing. You can eat slow or fast; you can have a snack or make an entire dinner complete with dessert, including the intriguingly named *brazo gitano* (gypsy's arm) cake with hazelnut mousse. The wine list frequently changes and features only Spanish and Californian vintages, with an emphasis on smaller producers. On the Spanish side, you'll always find sherries and established names from DO Ca Rioja or DO Ribera del Duero, but you can often sample wines from less well-known regions such as DO Sierras de Málaga or DO Montsant. We San Franciscans are fairly obsessed with our food and

restaurants, so it says a lot that from the moment Bocadillos opened in 2004, it has continually shown up on critics' lists of the city's best restaurants. This marriage of Spain and California, like all good marriages, is standing the test of time.

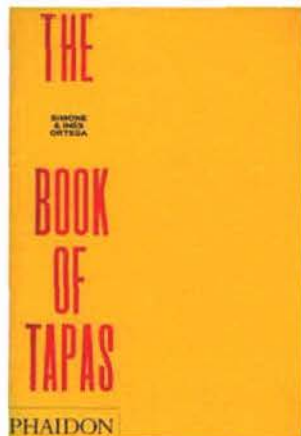
Bocadillos

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Christopher Hall is a San Francisco journalist who has covered food and other cultural topics for a variety of US publications, including *The New York Times*, *Gourmet* and *Saveur*.

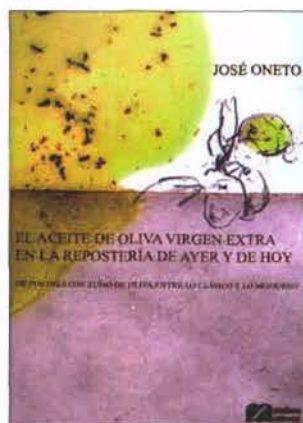
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LASTING IMPRESSIONS



The Book of Tapas

by Simone and Inés Ortega. English. It's hard to keep a secret. Understandably, tapas is one of them, and it looks like the cat's out of the bag: the secrets to making great tapas at home are now within your reach. This book includes more than 150 recipes, a comprehensive glossary and excellent photos. The authors' goal is to "introduce you to the flavors [and] also the culture of tapas". Mission accomplished. Each main tapas ingredient has a chapter—vegetables, eggs and cheese, fish and meat—which are then separated into hot and cold categories. Frogs' legs with onions, Rice with anchovies and tuna, and Warm porcini and mushroom salad are just a selection of the top taste bud pleasers. Something so good just can't be kept under wraps. (Phaidon Press Limited, www.phaidon.es enquiries@phaidon.es)



El aceite de oliva virgen extra en la repostería de ayer y hoy

(Extra Virgin Olive Oil in Confectionary, Past and Present) by José Oneto. Spanish. Olive oil, affectionately known as green gold, is increasingly starring in confectionary in Spain. Here Oneto presents his argument that, often contrary to popular belief, olive oil should not be used sparingly or with fear, as it is, in fact, perfectly compatible with all kinds of desserts. The 100 recipes contained in this book, which range from classic to modern, are for everyone: industry professionals, business owners, students, and dessert-lovers alike. Try the Crunchy cocoa and oil cake, the Carrot bites, or the Churros. Well? What are you waiting for? Tie on that apron, grab the oil, and get cooking! (Aladena Editorial, S.L. www.aladena.com)



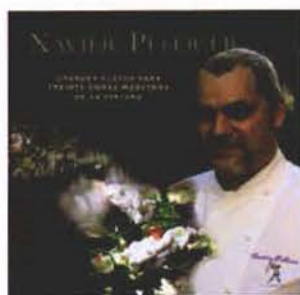
Los templos de la tapa

(Tapas Hotspots) by Sara Cucala. Spanish. Tapas are hit because they are a direct reflection of the Mediterranean way of life: healthy; made with fresh products from sea or land; varied; in small portions; and ideally enjoyed with company any time of day. And while other regions have clearly defined gastronomic identities, beyond Madrid's traditional cuisine, the region also stands out for its outstanding tapas. Here Cucala (literally) maps out the best tapas joints in Madrid, along with top picks from each restaurant, recipes, and photos. From Restaurante Rafa in Salamanca neighborhood (try the seafood tapas) to Bodegas Riela in Sol (taste the tripe) to Fide in Chamberí (anchovies, mmm!), you'll see how an extraordinary culinary experience is right around every corner in the capital. (RBA Libros, www.rbalibros.com)



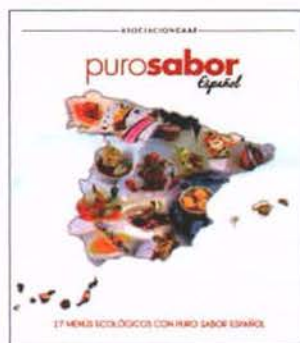
Caminando entre oliveras

(Walking Among Olive Trees) by Firo Vázquez. Spanish. Vázquez, owner and chef of El Olivar restaurant in Moratalla (Murcia province), is one of olive oil's greatest champions. Beyond his traditional training, he has been on a spiritual journey that has made him a true believer in the power of olive oil. Here he shares his passion. The book is peppered with quotes from the Bible, spiritual leaders, and personal conversations, as well as beautiful photographs. Vázquez provides information on how olives came to the Iberian Peninsula; irrigation and planting of different varieties; factors that influence growing, storage and cleaning; important olive growers; olives in gastronomy; maps; brands, and more. His selection of recipes includes Partridge, foie and olive terrine; and Fried, smoked olive milk. (Aceites de Moratalla, SL)



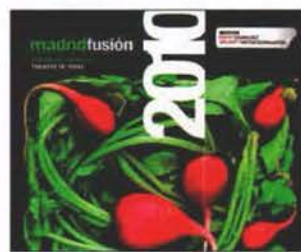
Grandes platos para treinta obras maestras de la pintura

(Great Recipes Inspired by Thirty Works of Art) by Francesc Miralles. Spanish. This cultural/culinary project is the fruit of a collaboration between chef Xavier Pellicer and art critic Francesc Miralles. In this book they endeavor to bring together two contradictory elements, the necessary (cuisine) and the unnecessary (art). Miralles selected works from Leonardo da Vinci, Tiziano, Rembrandt and Dalí, among others, which feature food or dining as protagonists, and then challenged Pellicer to create a recipe inspired by each work. His fantastically creative results unfold over 100 pages (where the art is art and the food is art) and include Oyster croquettes with lemon tartar sauce, Vanilla quince tatin, and Coffee cream. (Galerada, Serveis d'Edició i Traducció S.C.C.L., www.galerada.cat, corre@galerada.cat)



Puro sabor español

(The Authentic Spanish Flavor) by the Council of Organic Agriculture of Andalusia. English, Spanish. This cookbook is a compilation of organic recipes organized into 17 menus representing each of Spain's autonomous regions. They're based on typical organic products in each part of the country, fused with the flavors of local customs, culture, and gastronomy. The recipes come from top restaurants and star chefs such as Quique Dacosta, Martín Berasategui and Xosé Torres Cannas. The text also includes a close look at specific organic products as well as chef profiles. Fancy the Poached egg with lobster and vegetables drizzled with white truffle oil? Perhaps the Macadamia crumble, berries with ginger and rose with prickly pear sorbet is more your style. Whatever suits you best, it's safe to say that eating organic is the new black. (Asociación CAAE, www.caae.es, caae@caae.es)



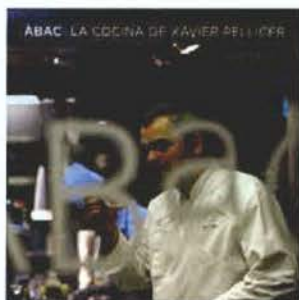
Madrid Fusión 2010

(Theater of Ideas) English, Spanish. Madrid Fusión is arguably one of the most important gastronomic events in the world, bringing together the industry's *crème de la crème* from every corner of the globe for 3 jam-packed days of seminars, tastings, contests, presentations and demonstrations. This year's themes were culinary sustainability and gastro-economics, and the event maintained its ongoing focus on innovative business models and new trends in cuisine. This book offers a damn good overview of what went down at Madrid Fusión in January. Comprehensive is an understatement. It offers countless recipes, excellent information and spectacular photos. Featured chefs include William Ledeuil, Cheong Liew and Thierry Marx, and recipe highlights include Almond and blue cheese tart, Cornish crab mayo with avocado and sweet corn sorbet, and Oak ice cream. (Foro de debate, www.madridfusion.net)



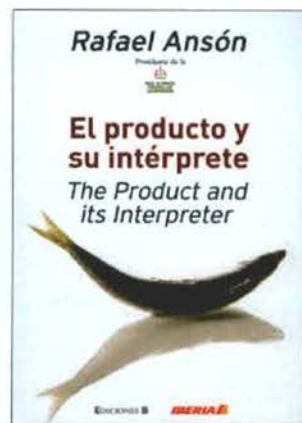
Arquitectura del vino Bodegas Españolas

(Wine Architecture. Spanish Wineries) by the Spanish Royal Academy of Gastronomy. English, Spanish. Spain boasts more than a million hectares of vineyards, outstanding wines, and wineries with cutting-edge architecture designed by world-renowned architects. This book brings together two (increasingly linked) worlds, wine and architecture, with a view to promoting wine tourism in Spain. Take a trip! Check out unique wineries designed by some of the best architects in world! Drink some great wine! More than 20 major wineries are featured and all the DOs are represented. Top recommendations include Marqués de Riscal, by Frank Gehry; Ysios, by Santiago Calatrava; and Bodega Señorío de Arinzano, by Rafael Moneo. These are, according to the authors, the "cathedrals" of 21st century. (Lunweg, SL, lunweg@lunweg.com, www.lunweg.com)



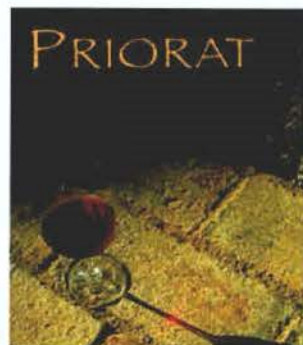
Ábac. La cocina de Xavier Pellicer

(Ábac. The Cuisine of Xavier Pellicer) by Xavier Pellicer. English, Spanish. Leading Spanish chef. Two decades of experience. Owner of Ábac restaurant/hotel complex in Barcelona with two Michelin stars. Pellicer has quite the impressive resume. Here he offers over 60 recipes, which he describes as "honest, combining technique with emotion". Here he celebrates both his team and his suppliers, which provide him with quality products and without whom he wouldn't be where he is today. His book is divided into starters, fish, meat, and dessert and he offers details on everything in between, from vinaigrettes and broths to sauces. Deer carpaccio with smoked foie gras, Potato omelet with truffle, Lobster, honeydew and watermelon consommé, and Carrots with ginger are just a sample of his delicious creations. (RBA Libros, www.rbalibros.com)



El producto y su intérprete

(The Product and its Interpreter) by Rafael Ansón. English, Spanish. Ansón, the Chairman of Spain's Royal Academy of Gastronomy, will tell you that Spanish cuisine focuses on excellent raw materials and is based on a myriad of fine products that truly set it apart. In this book he features those products, each in connection with a top-flight chef and recipe. Francis Paniego writes about Rioja wine, offering Potato and truffle carpaccio. Pepe Rodríguez Rey goes all saffron with his Rice with garlic onion and saffron, and Toño Pérez whips up Jerte cherries into Valley fruit soup with cherry sorbet. Each item is also featured with background and purchasing information and a list of restaurants where they enjoy pride of place on the menu. (Ediciones B, S.A. www.edicionesb.com)



Priorat

by various authors. English, Spanish. Priorat is much more than just a region in Catalonia (northeastern Spain): it's synonymous with wine. With a DOCa spanning nine municipalities, Priorat has a deep-rooted, world-renowned, distinct wine culture. Aside from extensive information on regional history, legends, soil characteristics, cooperatives, grape varieties and bodegas (among other topics), this text offers an original spin: get to know and, beyond that, feel Priorat with a photographic journey of the region. This book offers not only a comprehensive picture anthology of its landscapes, people and traditions—from hillsides and villages to monasteries and festivals—but also a spectacular up-close look at its singular wine country, arguably its greatest claim to fame. (Lunweg, SL, lunweg@lunweg.com, www.lunweg.com)



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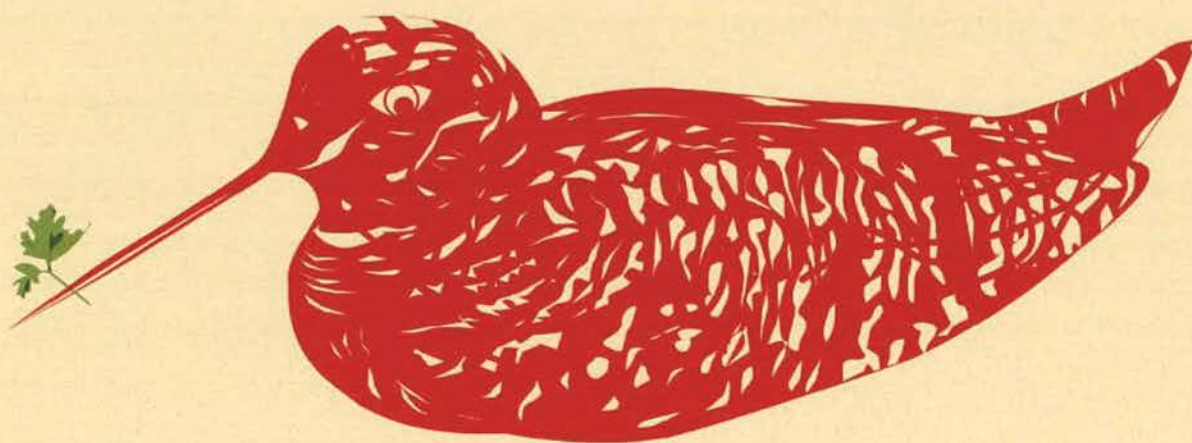


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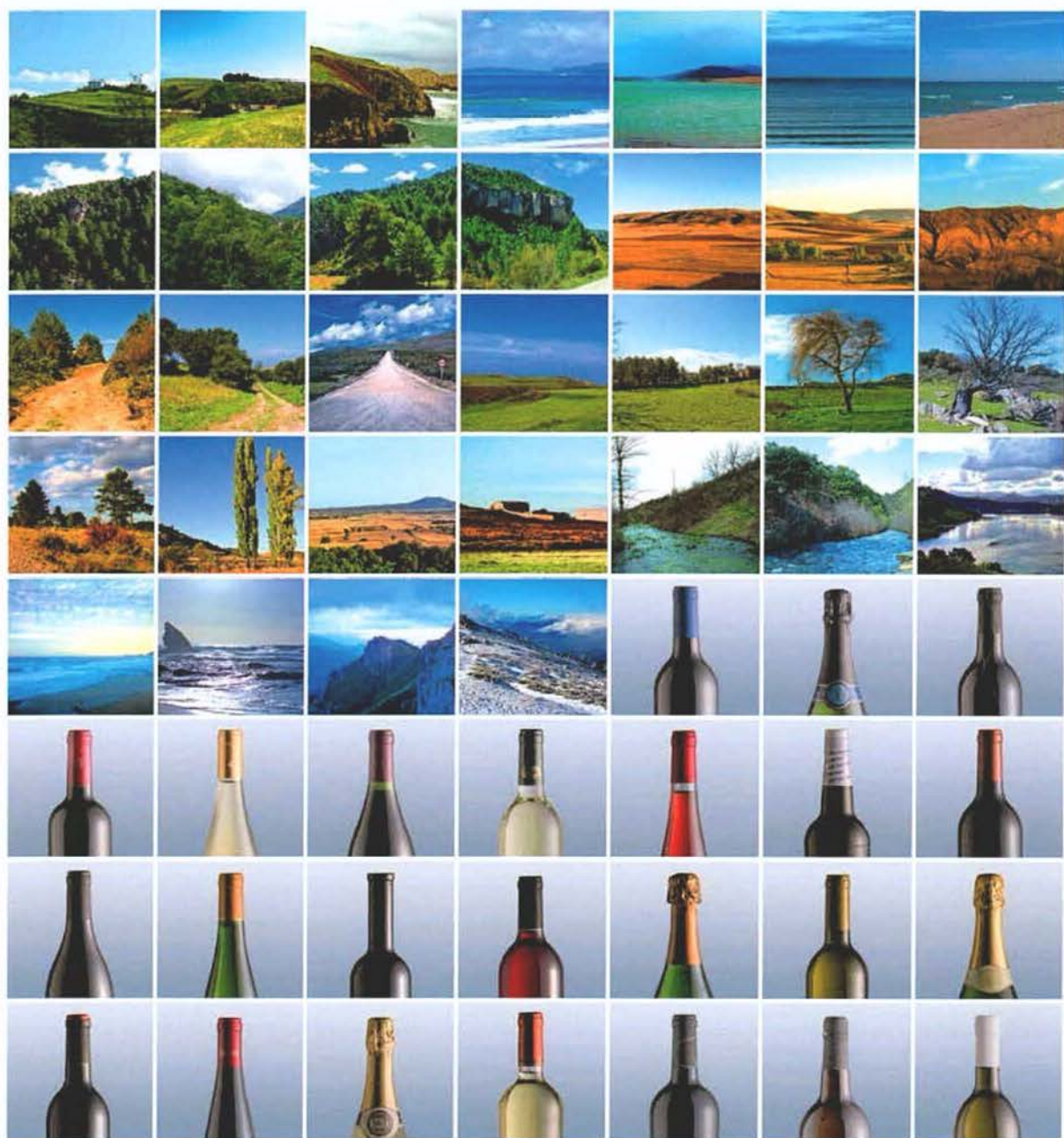
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The Nicest Trade

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Christopher Hall from San Francisco

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p. 97 Hillary Turner

Misprint:

In issue 79 of *Spain Gourmetour*, the image on page 57 was not the corresponding photo for Miguel Sierra's recipe, *Cabo de Peñas sea urchins with cocoa and olive oil*.

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