SPAIN GOURMETOUR

Food, Wine & Travel Magazine

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The Purple Rose of La Mancha

Turrón Temptations

DO Toro. Taming the Bull

Different by Design

84

January-April 2012. 6 €

In the Mediterranean
we eat supper not when
the hands on the clock
say its time, but when our
body tells us we are hungry.

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BORGES

Mediterranean taste. Borges taste.

EDIT

If the Romantic travelers of the 19th century were to retrace their route through Spain today, would they still complain that it smells too much of garlic? Like it or not, Spain is one of the five main producers of garlic in the world, and in this issue we introduce you to the delights of a particular species, grown in the land of Don Quixote.
Turrón is another thoroughly Spanish specialty; although other countries produce ersatz versions of it, the true, genuine article is certainly "made in Spain". The turrón we know and love here, and eat particularly to celebrate Christmas and the New Year, is currently acquiring even more devotees as it conquers new horizons.
A growing number of foreign visitors to Spain are showing an interest in gastronomic tourism. Many of our regions have a great deal to offer by way of wines and plenty of opportunities to sample them in situ and explore the local artistic and historical heritage in the process.
One winegrowing region well worth making a detour to visit is Toro. Despite a name suggestive of another iconic symbol of Spain, Toro also stands for wines, and prestigious ones at that. As, indeed, does the Grandes Pagos de España association, whose member *bodegueros* (some of the biggest names in Spanish winegrowing) produce world-class estate wines.
This first issue of 2012 also brings you a report on the selling power of design: we learn how certain brands (just a few examples—there are many more) achieved impressive growth in international sales by making design work for them.
Oh yes! By the way: should you happen to be in Panama around the festive season, this issue's Have a Spanish Break recommendation sounds like just our kind of place: great wine list, fusion tapas…

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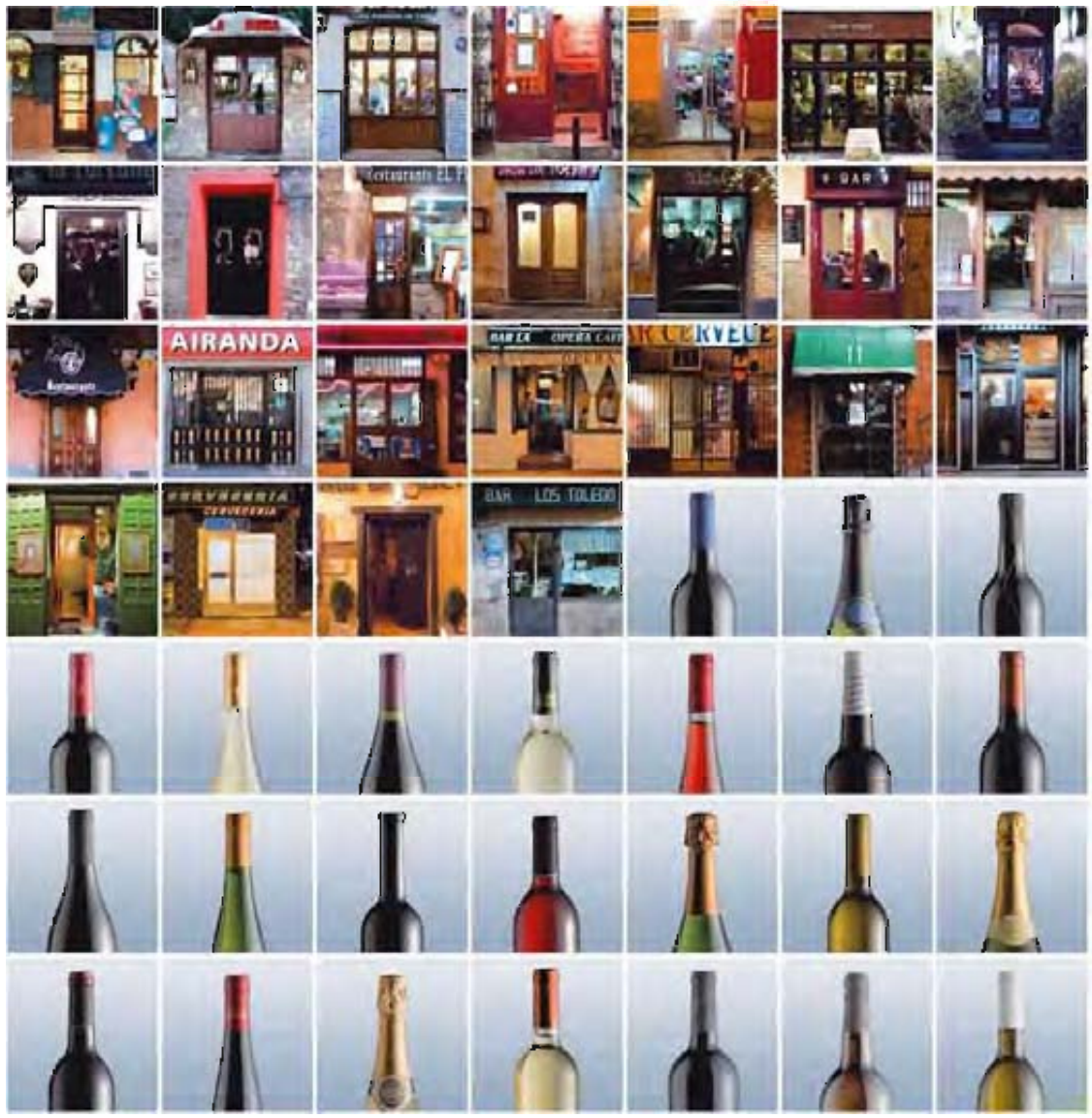

In Spain there are more than 10.000 wines. It is little wonder that there are so many places to enjoy them.

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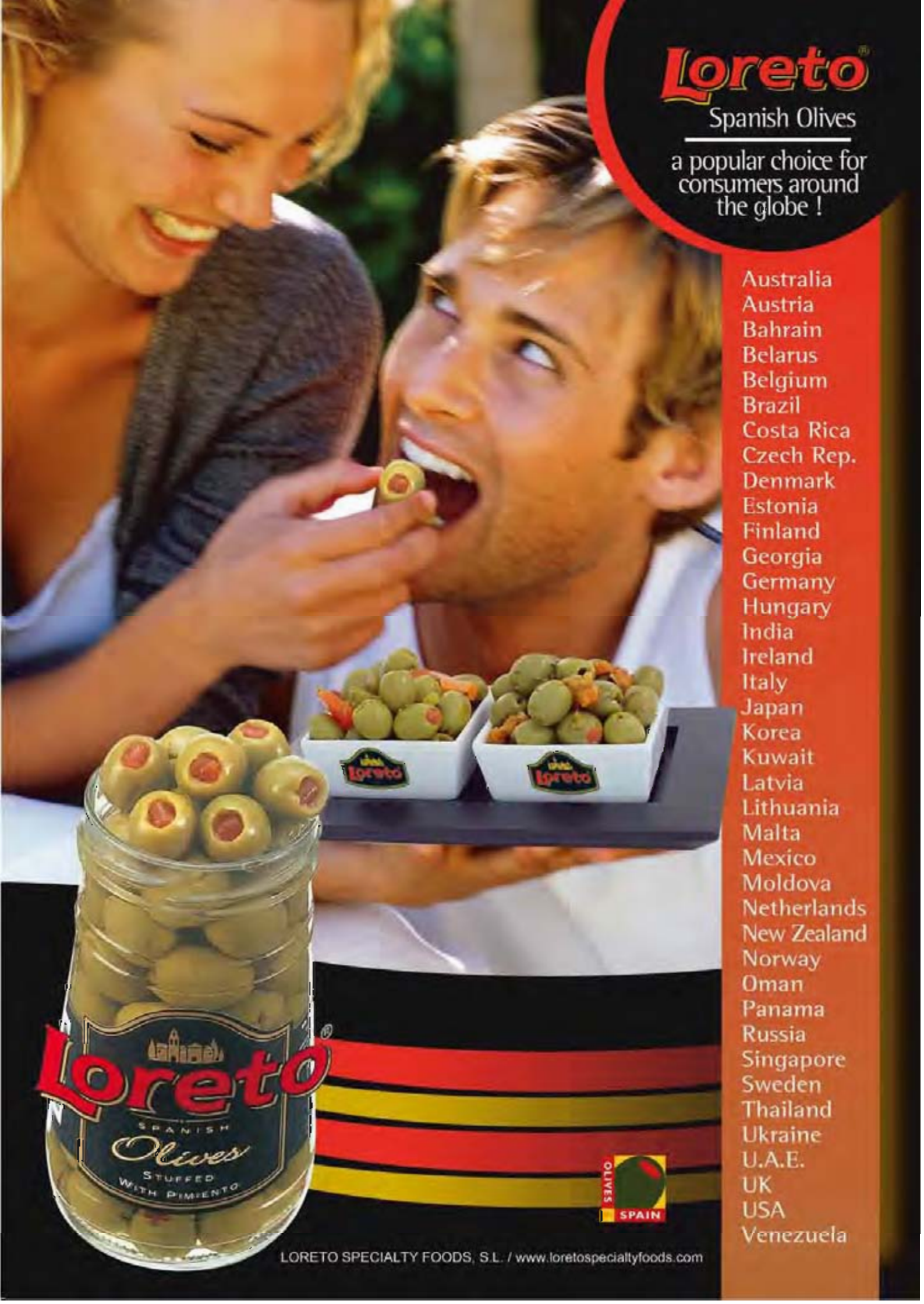
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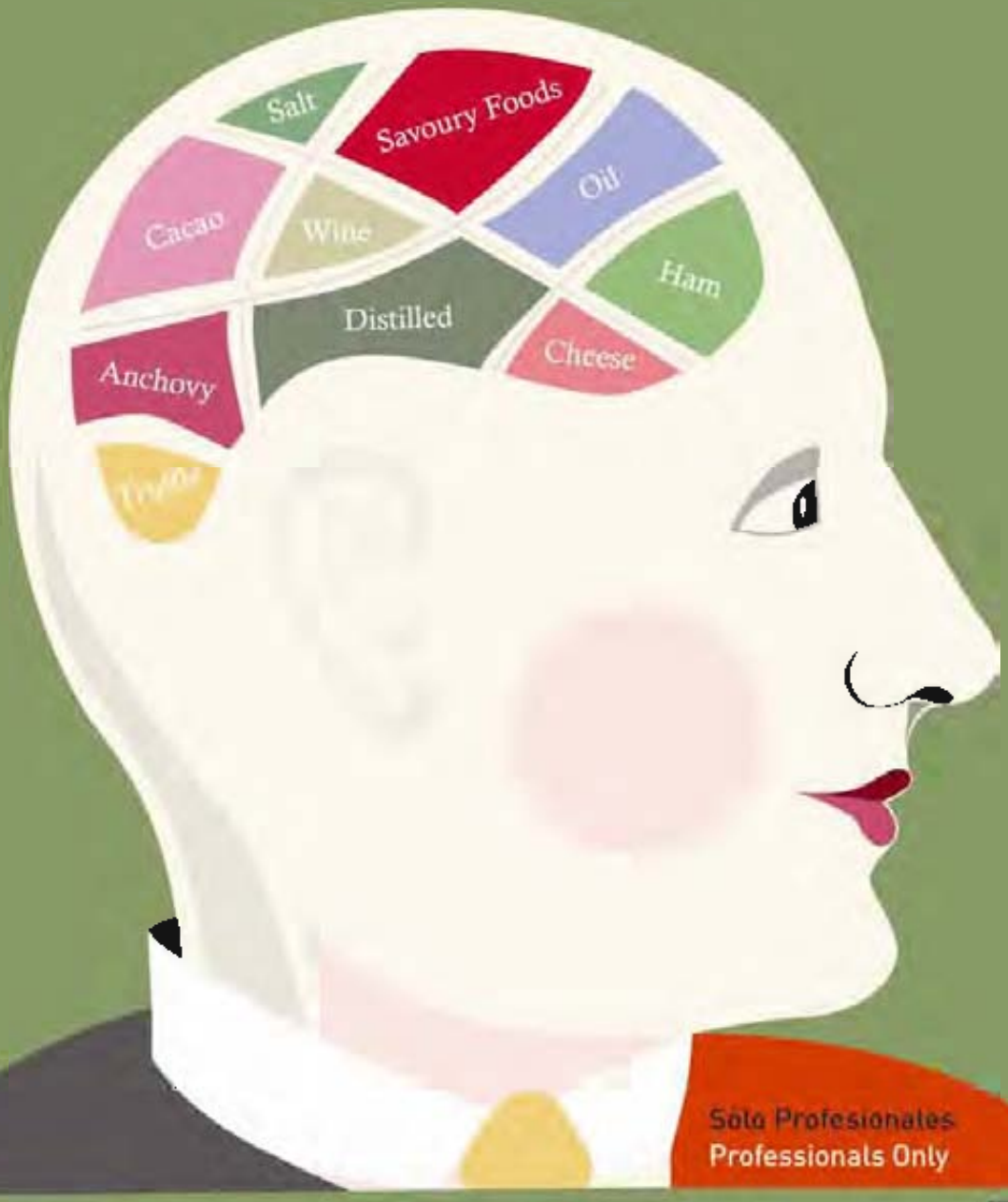

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A distinctly Spanish range

Une gamme à l'espagnole

Una gamma dal carattere spagnolo

Different by DESIGN

Any brand with its sights set on the market's upper reaches needs the magnetic pulling power that the right container and packaging exert. The way our products are perceived—their image—is largely dependent on the messages that their packaging sends out. Good design deploys innovation, sustainability and creativity to ensure that a brand's image is coherent and effective through and through. Spanish design, respected worldwide and with a clutch of awards to prove it, is something of a pace-setter in this field. You'll see what I mean…

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JUAN M. SANZ/©ICEX

TRANSLATION
HAWYS PRITCHARD/©ICEX

For the most part, the products we use come in containers that become part and parcel of our daily lives, an ingredient in our common cultural heritage. The brand reinforces this effect, taking on comfortable familiarity as time goes by. Good packaging, in essence an exercise in communication, should be evocative not only of good taste, but also of experiences and emotional responses.
Spanish brands have demonstrated their grasp of this principle by harnessing design to tell the world who they are and what they do. This in itself functions as an introductory calling card: design encapsulates an approach to life, a mindset, a communicative style. It's a broad gesture whose effects are felt culturally as well as commercially.
We should remember, too, that periods of crisis can spur us on to greater feats of creativity and originality (assuming, of course, raw material of a certain quality in the first place). Renovation and adaptability are essentials for any firm aiming to compete in a global market. A word of warning, however: old doesn't always mean valuable any more than new is always best. The fact is that companies have accepted that good packaging scores plus points and recognized that image is an extra factor that has been decisive in consolidating their position. Current trends? The general public and sector professionals will tell you there are lots; meanwhile, on the strength of a swift fact-finding tour of some of the flagship firms in Spain's food and gourmet sector, I'm in a position to report that we are among the leaders in this field, and that the creativity and originality that good design entails add to the pleasure of sitting down to eat.

The simpler, the better

Lluís Morillas, head of Morillas Brand Design, believes that originality is at a premium these days "…and a rational approach even more so. We need to connect with the consumer sincerely and openly, letting the packaging reflect the importance of R&D (research and development)," he explains. "A product should emanate security and reliability—properties that strategically cut through formally imposed obstacles to communication."
This is an area in which Spain has extended itself, learning the differentiating potential of design in the process and putting that knowledge into practice with considerable success. Morillas is convinced that Spanish attitudes and lifestyle equip Spaniards with a particularly sensitive understanding

of other cultures, and that this quality is recognized abroad: "We're good at keeping up with what's going on at a global level while retaining an affinity with local cultures."
This proactive attitude is exemplified by Ibérico charcuterie company Cinco Jotas (5J), in whose redesigned image Morillas was involved. The colored icons of the original packaging were changed, limiting the palette to just red and gold to give this top-flight gourmet product the upmarket look it merits, while also making it more immediately identifiable at points of sale. Appealing little box-shaped packs containing Ibérico ham hand-cut into slices and chunks, and even ham bones (as called for by so many traditional recipes) were an inspired idea: they were designed as a "starter pack" for countries unfamiliar with Ibérico ham and how to slice it—an art form in itself and essential to full enjoyment of all its subtle qualities.
The accompanying graphics are simple, retaining time-honored traditional elements and emphasizing the name to the full by fine-tuning the typeface, colors, highlighting and finishing touches. The response was instantaneous: to see one is to want one. At the moment, the product is on the market in 37 countries and can be sampled from Shanghai, Japan, Hong Kong, Brazil, and the US to almost anywhere in Europe. It's stocked by the world's poshest gourmet shops, including City'super in China, Harrods in the UK and Volpetti in Rome. Thanks to this and other initiatives, Cinco Jotas' exports now account for 15% of its total sales.
I note that Galician canning and bottling company Real Conservera Española of Cambados, Pontevedra, is adopting a similar approach, namely using its image—simple and direct—to evoke quality. In this case, the company can capitalize on a famous name, Peña, and almost a century of family tradition. Three generations of the same family have devoted their careers to canning and bottling the fresh products of Galicia's fjord-like rías. The Peña family's products appear under three different brand names, each aimed at a different customer catchment, and all having recently undergone an image update. I study all three and detect a common thread, subtle but effective: Real Conservera Española distinguishes the premium segment with a stylishly evocative logo based on the initials JP; José Peña, meanwhile, features a sleeve designed with reference to the original graphics used on canned and bottled products in the early 20th century, a clever choice and nicely done. The third brand, Peñita, aimed at a younger, bar-going, tapas-seeking public, uses bright colors and understated retro design features likely to appeal to this target group. The idea is to provide young people aged 25 to

30, just starting to get interested in food, with a reasonably-priced, attractively-designed can containing a quality product that is a cut above the average supermarket purchase. “Customers will buy this range both for its quality and its stylishness,” observes José Peña proudly.

Traditional and modern

Combining past and present is never easy. The Manuel Estrada design studio (which designs this magazine) had to do just that when it accepted the brief of updating Carmencita, a company that has been dealing in spices for over 90 years. Though at first sight one might describe it as classic and traditional, the company’s trademark (a head-and-shoulders view of a girl with a curl falling across her forehead, wearing a Manila shawl and Cordoban hat) is such an approachable and eminently

memorable image that it has helped the company become more widely known without needing to advertise with that end in view.
When the Manuel Estrada studio took on the job of updating Carmencita’s image, it opted for reinforcing the brand’s existing strong points. Apart from making aesthetic, rational and functional improvements to the company’s range of containers, it tried to give greater prominence to the trademark on the actual packaging, simplifying some features, changing colors and typefaces and using the face in close-up on containers to create a more memorable graphic identity. A visit to the Carmencita website, which has also been updated, revealed cleaner lines, more dynamic use of design and interesting and easily accessible information. The overall result is a delicately modern take on the company’s traditional image, retaining its essential characteristics with admirable restraint.
Manuel Estrada points out that, specifically in the food sector, “the need to attract as much attention as possible has the frequent effect of products and containers being created in apparent ignorance of the fact that screeching for attention simply doesn’t work. Consumers these days are better informed than

ever before, and any design approach must seek to communicate with them in ways that are attractive, coherent and sincere. The first principle when designing a container is to be honest about what it contains. It's not just an aesthetic principle, it makes sound commercial sense too." Another adherent to these principles is Santa Teresa, a company that produces and markets a wide range of agri-food products such as quince paste, cold soups, sweets, oils and prepared meals. It, too, has undergone an image update and provides an interesting case study. A family firm ready for expansion, it retained its traditional name and image while modernizing its design and extending its product ranges. Having identified its notional typical customer as a reasonably-to-very well-off *bon viveur* with a preference for good quality health-enhancing products, the firm's modernized image was designed with these requirements in mind, using drawings against a white background, good photographs of each product, and featuring the brand logo frequently and prominently. This approach could be said to typify the dominant trend at the moment: providing information and showing contents, against backgrounds uncluttered by anything other than a plain and simple picture of the product and intrinsically expressive and evocative typography. That said, however, not all products send out the same message in the same way. Just as wine labels designed to toy with conventions (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 76) paved the way for a freer, more creative approach, gourmet products seem in the last few years to have demonstrated a notable preference for doing things differently.

Gourmet world

When it comes to marketing hitherto unfamiliar products, design has an essential role to play in getting the desired message across. Sosa Ingredients is a case in point: this firm works closely with top-flight restaurants to create products that improve flavors, aromas and textures. It has also launched the Home Chef range of gastronomic ingredients, presented in smaller formats and aimed at a wider public. "We spent a lot of money on giving the product an image that was as attractive as possible and suggestive of a modern approach to cooking. Whatever it cost to make consumers aware of what we are all about was money well spent," declares proprietor Quico Sosa. And it shows: jars and packets have clean-cut, well thought-out labels and are color-coded according to product; the company website is stylish and highly informative, as are its catalogues, which feature over 1,500 products. Sosa and his staff are convinced that design is "the only way of being properly prepared for the wider market. We make our living by

being innovative and our image has to reflect that," he says emphatically. Another project with its origins in the Spanish food world is Texturas Albert y Ferrán Adrià, whose design is also based on color-coding and product photographs. The aim in this case is to express the notion of a "natural product" to contrast conceptually with the high-tech methods used to create this range of state-of-the-art gourmet products such as gelifiers, spherifiers, thickeners, emulsifiers and freeze-dried ingredients. Catalan company Sol Graells handles the worldwide distribution of Texturas; Juan Dávila of Cosmic design studio in Barcelona is responsible for its image design. "Spain's gourmet sector has grown and matured a lot in recent years and it is still hugely dynamic," comments Dávila. "In this specific case, innovative products are matched by attractive, quality packaging and well-expressed customer information and instructions within an overall design scheme that presents these products and what they do in a clear, functional way."

Flor del Delta, another upmarket brand of cooking ingredients, is the brainchild of Joan Roca, proprietor/chef of the 3-Michelin-star restaurant El Celler de Can Roca, in Girona, whose reputation has been capitalized on to promote this product. He has personally created blends of 100% natural Mediterranean *flor de sal* sea salt (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 76), rich in minerals and oligoelements, with various spices. Packets of four different flavors of salt are tucked into aluminum cans which provide a silvery background for simple, exclusively typographical, color-coded labels. It couldn't be simpler, but this sort of simplicity wins prizes, specifically the Liderpack Award at the International Packaging Exhibition, Hispack, in 2010. Flor del Delta's cutting-edge container and contents achieve their impact without further help. Antoni Terradas reports: "People buy it more for the packaging than for the product itself!"

Galician company Porto-Muiños (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 72) provides another example. It, too, needed to navigate a route into the gourmet market for an innovative foodstuff by persuading consumers to give it a go. The company specializes in edible seaweeds—very healthy greens indeed. The entire range is presented in impeccably designed and produced bags that come inside a cardboard package whose color-coding indicates its contents; another format is an attractive lidded cardboard box of assorted products. "We wanted a container that used gentle colors and simple lines, with plenty of white, to communicate the dedication we put into our products. At first we met with opposition from head buyers and departmental managers who suggested that we should do everything in black or dark green, which they claimed was the "in thing". But we had other ideas, and

now many others seem to have adopted our approach," recounts manager Antonio Muiños. Response to both product and packaging has been excellent (and the packaging has been featured in one of the world's leading specialist packaging blogs, thedieline.com). The design also appears prominently in a book entitled *Basic Pack*, published by graphic design specialist Index Book. The demand for seaweed has risen by 30% in the last year and Muiños and his team are convinced that they have their image to thank for at least some of that.

Breaking with the past

Many designers look on typography as the keystone of all projects. Clear, rounded, simple, unadorned lettering can express strength and sobriety. It stands for straight talking, not beating around the bush. And changing it can be a radical gesture. When La Catedral de Navarra decided the time had come for a new corporate image, their intention was "to make a clean break, not just with our previous image but with the predominant design approach in the sector as a whole. We were the first company in the canned and bottled vegetable sector to move away from that often over-the-top traditional image: all ochre colors, medieval-looking typefaces and pictures of parchment scrolls," explains Cayo Martínez, manager of this company located in the Ebro Valley, Navarre, an area famous for top-quality vegetables, some with designation of origin status. The company's chosen design is uncluttered and features the initials LC prominently in white against an otherwise plain black background—a reference to the simplicity of the products of this fertile region. Meanwhile, square jars and black tins with initialed lids are all suggestive of solidity. Cayo Martínez declares confidently: "The brand's design makeover was certainly done with an eye to its possible effect on exports. The fact is, it's been a great success in that regard: the number of customers interested in selling La Catedral de Navarra in other

countries has increased fivefold. And that's not all: in the next two years, we expect our exports to go up 300%: that's a big increase, especially when you take into account that foreign sales represent less than 10% of the total for this brand."
The Arroces Sivaris story is too good to leave out. It has become famous for its packaging design, which has won many awards both in Spain and abroad: the Liderpack Award in 2006, the Spanish Association of Design Professionals (AEPD) Prize in 2007, the Anuaria Prize for Packaging in 2007, the World Stars for Packaging in 2007, the Certificate of Typographical Excellence in 2008 (awarded by the Type Directors Club of New York); and the International Society of Typographic Designers (ISTD) Prize in 2009. Designed by the Pepe Gimeno Proyecto Gráfico studio, the packaging for a product as traditional as rice is a complete departure from the norm: tubular containers made of recycled cardboard are color-coded to indicate the type of rice they contain and are otherwise plain except for lettering. This simple, economical, unconventional formula has made the product readily recognizable in the marketplace and famous for its packaging alone. "We decided to impose a total ban on illustrations and engravings of the sort used so often in classic food packaging, the 'grandma's home cooking' aesthetic," explains Pepe Gimeno, who is a great believer in taking a radical approach when dealing with a sector that can be "…rather timid. Good packaging can be clever and operate on much the same level as communication design. Whereas it's true that a brand provides a product with continuity, I'm convinced that packaging is more important." For Miguel Minguet, a member of this family business, the key to success in this area is for industry and designers to understand each other. "The product can't make it on its own: it has to be given some sort of added edge. We export to 25 countries and we haven't put much effort into finding out who buys our products. The packaging has been so important and has generated so much publicity for us that importers seek us out. If we'd had to spend on advertising, the outlay would have been a lot more," confirms Minguet.
This same radical attitude is in evidence at LA Organic, the organic extra virgin olive by La Amarilla de Ronda, a product that bears the joint signatures of Pedro Gómez de Baeza and celebrity designer Philippe Starck, with Michelle Roland as advisor. "When we started La Amarilla, our intention was to give Spanish olive oil the design it deserved so that Spain could become a contender in selling olive oil not in bulk but ready bottled, as it merits. And why on earth should one put up with an ugly, badly designed object that

costs as much as an attractive one?" demands Elisa Álvarez. She's the manager and has a lot to say on the subject of the importance of good image. From his first design, Starck favored tins as the best containers, using color to give them a modern look. Today, his extra virgin olive oils are readily recognizable by their containers' formats and sizes, different shades of green, and stylish lettering. The idiosyncratic bottles popularly known as "inkwells" were designed in response to demand for glass containers: interestingly, many countries, including Brazil and Ireland, look askance at tins.
LA Organic currently has a market presence in 23 countries all over the world, sales abroad accounting for 50% of the total volume sold.

Approachability

In certain sectors, particularly in export markets where less money is allocated to advertising, packaging assumes the role of brand ambassador. In such cases it is important for packaging to communicate approachability and familiarity as well as be functional. This principle has been seen in action at Conservas Garavilla, one of the most innovative companies in Spain's food sector, encompassing various brands of canned and bottled sea products and boasting an impressive export record. During an initial renovatory phase it adopted a color-coded system for grouping different flavors while retaining other characteristic features of the brand. It followed this up in 2010 with an image makeover, shifting its focus to "meal-solution" products and using Naturfresh technology, which enabled it to adopt lighter weight, more convenient containers whose practical advantages and ready recognizability have given excellent results.
The approachability that close-up images and an intimate style of presentation can create is discernible, too, in the artisan-made gourmet products based on the traditional cuisine of Almería produced by La Gergaleña. Using an image designed to suggest natural products prepared naturally, this company is currently in the initial phases of an expansion strategy aimed principally at Germany, Hungary, France, the Netherlands and Austria. Whereas the company recorded zero exports in 2005, by 2010 some 8% of its total turnover was attributable to foreign sales. Much of the credit for this leap is due to its adoption of a dynamic design scheme which manages to be both traditional and elegant and makes clever use of a confidence-inspiring paper label that gives information about the product and the traditional recipes cooked by chef Antonio Gázquez of Las Eras restaurant in Tabernas (Almería, southern Spain).
The case of the family firm of Gorrotxategi, which produces and markets top-of-the-range artisan *turrón* (almond nougat), chocolates and biscuits, proves that expanding need not mean sacrificing approachability. "Some people seem to think that if you change your image nothing will stay as it was, you'll no longer be recognizable. That's why they're so resistant to change. But we've got the best of both worlds: we still use the same picture as before,"
—a photograph of three members of the family smiling—,"we're still associated with a quality product, and now we've got a reputation for being innovative, too. We decided that we had to adapt if we were going to grow," explains Iñaki Gorrotxategi, the company's commercial and communication manager. Stylishly designed packaging—sleeves, boxes, special assortment presentations with easy-open individual compartments—using rich, warm colors juxtaposed

with gold features the aforementioned photograph as a reminder of ongoing family tradition. “We’re delighted with the result. Sales have increased considerably,” confirms Iñaki, mentioning no actual figures but speaking with great confidence about the company’s expansion into foreign markets, particularly in Central Europe, where they know a thing or two about traditional cakes, sweets and pastries.

Feast your eyes

Certain areas of the sector can carry off more sophisticated design than others. The world of chocolate and its seemingly boundless range of taste experiences, for example, might need flamboyant graphic assistance to get its message across. In the case of ChocoLate Orgániko, the product itself is innovative, so its avant-garde modern packaging is part of the whole: vivid colors, imaginative typography and noble or experimental materials used for wrapping are ongoing features of an endless quest to stand out from the rest. Carlos Ortiz and Eugenia Pozo, progenitors of ChocoLate Orgániko, share a joint vision of their business: “It’s primarily our design that makes us different,” admits Carlos. “We start off by attracting attention, then people find out more about us and end up as customers because of the quality of our product. We’ve also been prepared to evolve and adapt in response to demand from international markets: knowing what you’d like to sell is all very

well, but you're sure to be asked for something quite different," he explains. True to the spirit of their projected image, the aluminum cans, cardboard and plastic in which they pack their chocolate are 100% recyclable. At present they have distributors in Chile, Mexico, the US, Canada and the whole of Europe "…in very prestigious markets, such as Switzerland—a very desirable market for us," declares Carlos emphatically. Exports accounted for 70% of ChocoLate Orgániko's turnover in 2011, representing a 28% increase on 2010, economic crisis notwithstanding.

Steeped in his own special environment of aromas, colors and flavors, I find Oriol Balaguer, Catalan master chocolatier and pâtissier and winner of many awards. He finds it impossible to imagine practicing his skills without first spending time planning exactly what the end product will look like. "I don't design anything without its own spectacular pack. I'm involved throughout the entire process because I enjoy design and drawing; they are so closely related to my own creative area," he declares categorically. A perfectionist with a keen eye for detail, Balaguer believes firmly that 50% to 60% of sales are made on the strength of packaging and presentation, and is adept at using his skills so that good presentation need not mean added expense. "Here in Spain we're not good at letting the world know what we're really like," he declares. "We need to get rid of our inferiority complex

and learn to use marketing techniques to explain that we are good people, that we do things well, and can match the best in the world in quality and design." Well said Oriol! As a sign of respect, I plunge into a box of his High Tech Chocolate: an exclusive, innovative concept that brings together technology and chocolate in one attention-grabbing pack (and even includes a DVD)!

Swathed in sophistication

To sum up this brief but intensive survey of Spanish packaging, I can report that, money and inclination permitting, this is a field in which imagination is given free rein. Some companies reinforce their already considerable market presence by introducing an element of exclusivity: Joselito's Colección Premium (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 73) highlights the "gastronomic gem" status of its Ibérico ham by presenting it in hand-crafted containers. For the last few years, these have been designed by famous figures from the Spanish arts industry, including fashion designer Andrés Sardá and architect Rafael Moneo. Sardá came up with the idea of a curved box clad in black leather and red silk and completely wrapped in black Chantilly lace. Moneo (working

with the Moneo Brock Studio) remained true to his understated, functional style with a design for a versatile framework composed of pieces that could be fitted together to make either a lamp or a CD case once the ham had been eaten (one wouldn't forget that brand in a hurry). The downside is that these special packs are sold in the most exclusive shops in the world. And there are waiting lists for them! Another example of famously imaginative packaging is Conservas de Cambados' net-wrapped can—a novelty some 20 years ago and known the world over. Wrapping tins of canned fish in miniature fishermen's nets was a trail-blazing idea in its time that consolidated sales at home and ushered the company's products into new markets in Italy, France, the US and Japan. The feature that wins most plaudits for ready recognition is that nets and labels are color-coded to indicate the flavor of sauce that comes with the fish. Versatile resources, clever ideas and rigorously-designed schemes represent just one aspect of the exciting and welcome transformation undergone by Spain's agri-food sector. The quest is still on for channels of communication that are effective, open-minded and iconoclastic. Innovation and design are the way forward, and we have plenty of both. We're getting there, and we're doing it our way.

***Gloria Escribano** is a journalist and cultural advisor specialized in culture, architecture and design. Born in Argentina, she has lived in Spain since 1989 and is a contributor to Spanish and Latin American publications such as* La Nación, Raíces del Cine, Obras y Ambientes *and* REM Diseño, *among others. She is also coordinator of the Ibero American Design Biennale organized by DIMAD in Madrid's Matadero Design Center.*

Taming the **Bull**

Ignited by high ratings from Robert Parker and others, DO Toro wines exploded onto the international wine scene in the late 1990s. Since then, DO Toro wines have become infamous for being over-extracted, over-oaked and high alcohol “fruit bombs”. Over the past decade, Toro’s finest bodegas have focused on incredible old vines and specific terroirs to control the often rustic and brawny Tinta de Toro grape and produce refined wines that balance power with elegance and finesse.

DO TORO

is Redefining Wines from
Treasured Terroir

TEXT
CHRIS FLEMING/©ICEX

PHOTOS
PATRICIA R. SOTO/©ICEX

Walking the narrow streets of Toro, you sense a spirit with dual aspects. One is rooted in history, the other looks ahead to a panoramic future filled with promise. La Colegiata de Santa María la Mayor is an impregnable limestone Romanesque church nearly eight centuries old. This church is Toro's most prominent point, a beacon for a steady stream of international tourists. Due north, locals gather in a relaxing, tranquil plaza lined by family-owned shops selling food and artisanal goods.

A few blocks away, at the chic, contemporary Restaurante La Viuda Rica, Chef Emilio Leoz Vila turns out tapas and main courses as hip, creative and scrumptious as any served in Barcelona or Madrid.

Toro is dramatically perched on a hilltop, visible from all around. From the promenade next to Hotel Juan II that overlooks the valley, a grandly sweeping view south encompasses many square miles of countryside, DO Toro's real riches. In front of you, the Duero River exudes a brooding power, announcing itself with a full, lusty "rush" as its waters snake eastward on an indirect course for the Atlantic. A small bend of the river flows north directly toward you, crossed by an arched, stone bridge that dates from the Romans. Small, chirping sandy-brown birds, *gorriones*, swiftly flit about in nervous search for food.

DO Toro is a land of rustic *paisaje* (landscape). As you drive over country roads, your car's passing will flush a flock of small black birds, *tordos*, from the roadside bushes.

Each bird darts off quickly in a different direction, apparently angry or crazy, a defensive response to confuse predators. Stepping through the forests and vineyards, profuse and heady scents of *tomillo* (thyme), *romero* (rosemary) and wild herbs inform the aromas and flavors of the grapes, a wonderful reminder of the wine's place of origin.

With winegrowing that predates the Romans, Toro is one of Spain's oldest wine regions. During the age of Cervantes (Spanish writer, 1547-1616), Toro's wines were more famous than Rioja's. With characteristically burly tannins, Toro wines accompanied Columbus to the Americas for their ability to support the trip. Toro was recognized as a region by Spain's regulatory Wine Statute of 1932 (as were Jerez, Priorato and Cariñena) and DO Toro was established in 1987. Just seven bodegas twelve years ago have grown to fifty today.

Toro's highest vineyards are situated at over 800 m (2,625 ft) elevation. The region's best sites are on *paramos* (plateaus) near the villages of San Román de Hornija, Morales de Toro, Villaester, Villafranca de Duero, Valdefinjas, Venialbo, Villabuena del Puente, El Pego and Argujillo. Vineyards in this region have sandy topsoil that thwarts phylloxera. As a result, DO Toro is one of the few places left on earth with *pie franco* (ungrafted) vines planted on original rootstocks, some well over 100 years old.

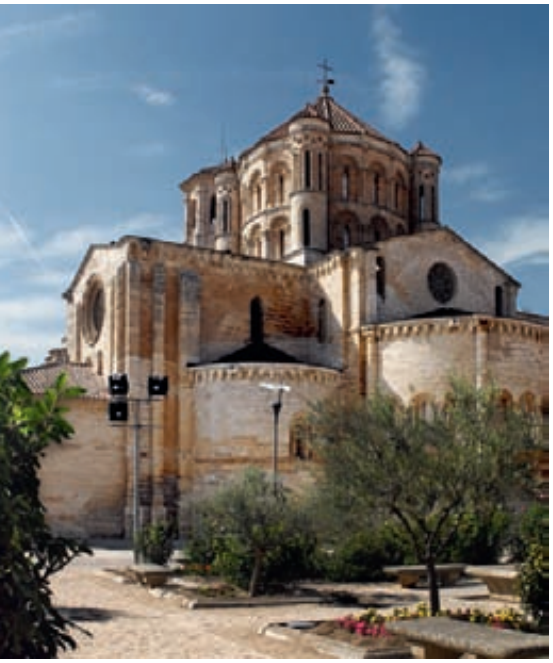
These Tinta de Toro grapes have distinct personality, aromatic depth and complex flavors.

From prestigious international wineries to small, relatively unknown bodegas, the following are notable for viticulture that gives the vineyards their most authentic means of expression. These wineries use knowledge of terroir and organic winegrowing (or the equivalent) to grow Tinta de Toro grapes that show a clear sense of place, the identity of Toro wines.

"White chalk" in the heights of Toro

Founded in 2007, Bodega Cal Blanca is located in the small, sleepy village of Venialbo. A 15-20 minute drive away, the Cal Blanca vineyard is 15 km (about 9 mi) southwest of the town of Toro. Eight hectares (20 acres) in size, this is large compared to vineyards typical of DO Ribera del Duero and DOCa Rioja, for example, but with Toro's traditional, low density of plantation (1,000 vines/ha or 400 vines/acre) and miniscule yields, this entire vineyard produces 2,250 cases, which can be found in the United States, Germany and Switzerland.

DO Ribera del Duero and DOCa



Rioja vineyards are planted at a density 2-5 times higher.
Proprietor Juan Pablo Peñalba (his family owns Torremilanos in DO Ribera del Duero) and winemaker Pablo Rubio (also vineyard manager at PSI in DO Ribera del Duero) walk me through the vines in early June. Just after flowering, the short, 25-year-old bush vines exude a visceral, positive energy, with leaves a verdant shade of lime green and numerous *sarmientos* (young canes or shoots). On a slight upward grade, this remote vineyard is isolated, a hidden gem among pine trees and cereal fields. Strong winds blow and it's very fresh for June. The soil is quite similar to a blend found in the best vineyards in Bordeaux. Pablo explains, "There is a lot of sand here, but it's not the same soil you normally find in DO Toro, which is quite different, with a bit more clay and very sandy. This is limestone. There is gravel with lots of silt and sand in a calcareous mattress; all the elements are cemented by calcareous soil. There is only a meter (3.3 ft) or so of topsoil then bedrock." There's almost no limestone throughout DO Toro vineyards and only two or three areas are known to contain any.
Pablo continues, "The previous owner used fertilizer, which we stopped. Every year, the vines have better balance. We do organic viticulture to respect the character of the vines, and the fruit has been getting better. The way people used to work 20, 30 years ago is becoming fashionable again. We're not going to do strange things in the winery. We are simply going to observe, watch the grapes and the wines evolve, and we're going to try to grow better grapes. The goal with Cal Blanca is to make a natural wine that's easy to drink."
Cal Blanca 2009 shows expressive black fruit aromas, with garrigue and wild herb notes. Beautifully poised, dense and mineral-driven dark berry and plum flavors framed by tangy acidity have great balance and texture. Cal Blanca 2010 has greater minerality, structure and a more velvety mouthfeel.

Elías Mora: an artisanal *château*

In 2000, owner and winemaker Victoria Benavides and another partner established this winery, recently renamed Bodegas Elias Mora. The winery and best vineyards are located 5 km (3 mi) southeast of Toro in San Román de Hornija, a village where Maurodos and Vega Sicilia's Pintia also have parcels. For quality wine growing, San Román is to DO Toro what Gevrey Chambertin is to Burgundy's Côte de Nuits. Elias Mora farms 70 ha (175 acres) of vineyards, 12 of which are estate-owned, the rest are under long-term contract with local growers. Eighty parcels contain traditional *en vaso* (bush) trained, ungrafted old clones of Tinta de Toro.
Vicki and I visit one of her best parcels near the border of DO Toro.

The *Monte Viejo* (Old Mountain) area between the Duero and Hornija Rivers has two terroirs. The more typical of Toro has iron-rich red clay; the other has many big stones, pebbles, very sandy soils and clay subsoil. "More pebbles mean better vineyards," Vicki explains. Like Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the ground is covered by large river stones, which absorb the day's heat and radiate it at night. Vines show copious thick leaves, which protect clusters from the relentless sun, and many new canes. Compared to neatly pruned bush vines in DO Ribera del Duero or DOCa Rioja, these are amazons compared to gymnasts.
Like a *château*, the winery is 15-20 minutes from the furthest vines. Vicki's own team harvests all her grapes. "What good is a sorting table if you don't have good people picking the grapes?" she asks. A purist, traditional winegrower, Vicki is an intuitive and creative winemaker. "I've been here 11 years and I'm still learning. To make wine you must listen, to the climate, to the old growers. When I blend different parcels together, it's like making a puzzle. I like to work with each vintage a bit differently. It's not mathematics. Every vat, plot, parcel is different and to taste and feel this is very important. Toro is a special and rare place. It's challenging to make wines that are so powerful, but in the end, you can make really nice wines." More than 50% of their wines are sold in Europe, America and Asia.
The 2009 Viñas Elías Mora shows juicy black fruit, licorice and fresh, balsamic aromas, and ripe flavors without being jammy. The 2008 Elías Mora Crianza is bigger with good components, but rougher and not quite integrated. The 2004 Elías Mora Reserva exhibits dense, floral and complex aromatic red fruits with sweet, toasty oak notes and beautifully silky, suave flavors on the palate. A beauty! The 2007 Gran Elías Mora has red and black cherry aromas and clean flavors in the mouth that are very profound and long. The Benavides 2010 (dulce) has explosive aromas of anise, fennel and stone fruit flavors. Wow!

Expression of old vineyards

The Eguren family established Teso la Monja and released its first vintage in 2007. The family wanted to produce a different style of wine in DO Toro, driven by terroir rather than winemaking. The winery and some vineyards are located near Valdefinjas, about 8 km (5 mi) southwest of Toro. Teso la Monja follows traditional, organic winegrowing methods over half a century old. Located in Valdefinjas, Toro and Villabuena del Puente, the 50- to 100-year-old (or more) estate vineyards are the most impressive array of old vines in Toro, each with a palpable aura of timeworn character and distinct identity, like an old photo of a beloved grandparent.

Winemaker Eduardo Eguren and Vineyard Manager Luis Felipe Cuesta de Toro tour me through old vineyards, and each shows a different personality than the next. Valmediano is on a slope with northern exposures, so its grapes ripen later and have a fresh, cool climate character. The soil's varied composition is visible as colored bands; lower is grey-white gravel and river stones, mid-slope is khaki-beige sand, and upper slope is reddish brown iron-rich clay. El Rosal is very sandy, La Jara is an ocean of river stones, and Marinacea is sandy with small stones.

Almirez 2009 is assertively floral, with red berry, herbal aromas and toasty oak notes. Surprisingly light and fresh in the mouth, it shows sweet, ripe flavors, structure and tannins. Almirez 2008 shows more black fruits and is better integrated, with notes of wet stones and very fine tannins; this is more linear on the palate. Victorino 2008 is a step up in quality, with mineral-driven black fruit aromas and caramel notes. Silky on the palate, tannins are massive but fine. Victorino 2009 (barrel sample) shows expressive herbal, violet and floral aromas. With silky fruit, it has great depth on the palate, with beautiful acidity, soft tannins and candied notes. Alabaster 2008 has shy aromas of herbs and red berries. In the mouth, cool climate fruit is complex, fresh and suave, with noble tannins. Alabaster 2009 (barrel sample) has very dense, profound and earthy aromas of forest herbs (thyme, rosemary) and chewy red and black fruit flavors. Alabaster shows a great wine's blend of power and finesse. With a 50% export quota, this bodega is a new top producer to watch in DO Toro.

Modern-style Toro wines

In 1994, renowned winemaker Mariano García (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 75) investigated vineyards in Toro for Vega Sicilia, where he was Technical Director at the time, and for Mauro, his family winery. Recognizing the potential, Mariano bought parcels and he established Bodegas Maurodos in 1995. San Román 1997 was the first modern-style Toro wine, vinified at the old Mauro winery in Tudela de Duero and released as a generic Vino de la Tierra de Castilla y León. In 2000, the Maurodos winery was built near Villaester, about 12 km (7.5 mi) east of Toro. Of the winery's 95 ha (237.5 acres) of vineyards, 65 (162.5 acres) are estate-owned and the rest are under contract. Mariano and his son Eduardo are General Director and Head Winemaker, respectively, and collaborate on winemaking. Forty percent of production goes to 50 export countries, including the US, the UK, Germany and Switzerland. Each year, Maurodos blends 22 parcels of 25- to 80-year-old vines located in 8 villages, including San Román de Hornija. The Garcías believe that since one vineyard cannot give adequate aromatic or flavor complexity, blending different parcels is key. On a June day with strong winds, Eduardo and I notice vines with many broken branches and canes. Visibly upset, Eduardo exclaims, "On days like today, I don't like to see the vineyards." Eduardo is very protective of the vines, which are close to his heart.

"Toro is a very special place. It's a place with continental conditions and you have an Atlantic influence with the soil and orography of the Mediterranean, like Jumilla or Yecla (Murcia, southeast Spain). The vines are very wild; scientific winegrowing

Main information on DO Toro

- DO Toro established in 1987
- 50 producers governed by DO Toro Regulatory Council
- DO Toro is situated to the southeast of the province of Zamora and in the west of the province of Valladolid
- Grapes: for reds, Tinta de Toro and Garnacha Tinta; for whites, Malvasía and Verdejo
- Of the DO Toro's total of 62,000 ha (153,205 acres), 5,500 (13,590 acres) are registered as vineyards to 1,200 growers
- In 2010, total grape production was 16.5 million kilograms. 9.5 million (75 cl) bottles of DO Toro wine were produced
- Of total wine production, 23.1% (16,235 hl) were sold abroad and the 76.9% (54,076 hl) in Spain. Main markets are the United States, Germany, Denmark, Benelux, Japan, Poland, the United Kingdom, Finland, and Canada.
- **www.dotoro.com**
  DO Toro Regulatory Council
  (English, German, Japanese, Spanish)

is not good here, it's better to have more traditional, artisanal methods. "We like grapes from Villabuena, one of the only places in Toro with limestone, which gives finesse and complexity from quite sandy soils and very old vines; and Argujillo, a colder place unlike San Román or Morales, with more acidity and good balance."

The 2006 San Román has assertive red berry aromas, with toasty oak and caramel notes. Lively and juicy black raspberry flavors are surprisingly buoyant for a wine with such sweet, hefty tannins. In perfect unison with the tannins, the wine's acidity lends great balance for drinking now and for aging. The 2007 San Román has more spicy, mineral, ripe red fruit flavors. The 2008 San Román has ripe, sweet, black cherry aromas, given an edge by wild herb, espresso, mocha and toasty oak notes. With a creamy, silky texture, this shows beautiful balance and svelte tannins. This will be one of the best vintages of this wine. The 2008 Prima has fresh, crisp blackberry fruit.

Pintia: Vega Sicilia's boutique bodega

To establish Bodegas Pintia, Vega Sicilia methodically purchased vineyards in 1998 and did extensive tests from 1997-2000 before producing its first vintage in 2001. In 2006, an elegant, efficient winery was built in San Román de Hornija, about 5 km (3 mi) southeast of Toro, close to Elías Mora. One hundred ha (250 acres) of vineyards are in San Román de Hornija and in the Toro and Morales de Toro area, all Tinta de Toro vines on ungrafted rootstocks. Grupo Vega Sicilia Technical Director Xavier Ausàs and I visit vineyards near San Román. Ubiquitous river stones that carpet the ground atop sandy and gravel topsoil "store energy and act like a battery," while clay subsoil retains water for vine roots "like a sponge," explains Xavier. Pintia's vines are carefully pruned and they look tailored like a tree, compared to the others. This controls growth of vegetation upward rather than out, which helps protect and aerate grape clusters better.

"In Ribera del Duero, at Vega Sicilia, we make a classical wine in an elegant region. In Toro, we want to make an elegant wine in a rustic region. No matter what you do, the

bull will show its horns. The most important thing for us in Toro is to respect the fresh fruit aromas. Pintia begins with a basic, rustic style then develops elegance with time in bottle. It's necessary to police this rusticity. Until 2006, Pintia was kept one year, but now we keep Pintia two years in bottle before release," says Xavier.
The 2007 Pintia shows ripe, black fruit aromas and flavors with wild herb notes and Mediterranean character. Atypically, this shows a linear aspect, not round. The 2008 Pintia shows black raspberries, red cherry, bramble, spice and herbal aromas, with silky fruit on the palate. With noble tannins, this has elegant structure. The 2009 Pintia has black fruit and wild herb aromas, with mineral and oak notes. The flavors are fresh, juicy and svelte with a velvety texture. Pintia is available in more than 100 export countries.

Close to the soil

Founded in 1999, Quinta de la Quietud was acquired by the current owners in 2001. The winery and vineyards are located about 5 km (3 mi) south of Toro and around 3 km (1.9 mi) southwest of San Román de Hornija. Since 2002, all 22 ha (55 acres) of 10- to 80-year-old vineyards are tended using certified organic viticulture. Natural sheep manure compost and natural treatments like nettle, valerian, lavender and comfrey are used.
I ask Technical Director Jean François Hébrard to compare a French appellation to DO Toro. "The closest conditions to Toro are in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, but without the altitude. You have the same type of soils, the river stones and a lot of sand. You have traditional bush plants, you have little rain, a lot of wind. We don't get the mistrals here but in DO Toro we lose 10-15% of our vines each year from the wind. The unique difference is altitude. Here we have 700 m (2,300 ft) altitude; in Châteauneuf it's maybe 100-200 m (328-656 ft). Of course, the Grenache and Tinta de Toro are different grapes, but both denominations make wines with lots of personality that are maybe not easy to understand, at first.
I think we can make wines with their own identity, similar to what they've done with Châteauneuf. Châteauneuf has a very long story

Tinta de Toro: Tempranillo by any other name

In DO Toro, Tempranillo is called Tinta de Toro. Tempranillo is Spain's indigenous, most well-known and most-planted red wine grape, with over 200,000 ha (500,000 acres) planted. It is thought to be named after the Spanish word *temprano* (early), due to the grape's tendency to ripen ahead of other varieties. The grape has different names across Spain: Tempranillo in DOCa Rioja; Tinto Fino or Tinta del País in DO Ribera del Duero; Tinto de Madrid in DO Vino de Madrid; Ull de Llebre in Catalonia; and Cencibel in DO Valdepeñas and DO La Mancha. Despite the potential for confusion, these names convey the concept that Tempranillo has an ability to adapt over centuries to different *terruños* (terroirs) and climate conditions to express an identity and character specific to each place of origin. Top winemakers liken Tempranillo to Pinot Noir and Nebbiolo in its ability to express minute variations in terroir. Tinta de Toro bunches and grapes are smaller than those of Tempranillo in DOCa Rioja, for example, with skins twice as thick and darker in color, able to withstand the greater temperature extremes of the Duero Valley. Similar to old clones found in DO Ribera del Duero and DOCa Rioja, some Tinta de Toro vines have hairy leaves. APT (Anthocyanins, Polyphenols and Tannins) are critical metrics used by winemakers to analyze their grapes. Tinta de Toro's APT levels are among the highest observed in Spain. The result is a terrifically dark, inky color; exuberant aromas; very expressive, concentrated flavors; and perhaps the most powerfully structured wines from Spain. Tinta de Toro's ripe, sweet tannins are fine-grained and persistent on the palate.

to tell for quality wines. In DO Toro and the rest of Spain, it's a short story. We're at the beginning." The 2009 Corral de Campanas has attractive red fruit aromas and fresh, crisp fruit in the mouth. The sprightly acidity and soft tannins help this wine's clean character. The 2005 Quinta de la Quietud has meaty, earthy aromas with leather, licorice, fennel and roasted brown sugar notes. The fruit shows a slight, oaky sweetness and a bit of warmth on the finish. The 2000 Quinta de la Quietud is a bit reduced but has big black fruit aromas and flavors, with a plush mouthfeel and cleansing acidity.

A classic reinterpreted

At Bodegas Numanthia Termes, the history of the winery's name is associated with tough locals who resisted Roman conquest for over 20 years. A similar heroism was demonstrated by DO Toro's Tinta de Toro vines, which resisted the phylloxera epidemic that afflicted almost all of Spain's vineyards at the turn of the 20th century. When the 1998 Numanthia was awarded 95 points by Robert Parker, it was a breakthrough for DO Toro wines. This helped increase Numanthia's export markets: 33% of Numanthia and Termanthia and 75% of Termes is exported to the US, the UK, Mexico, Germany, Switzerland, Japan and Hong Kong. The Eguren family established Numanthia in 1998 and sold the property to Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH) in 2008. About 49 ha (121 acres) of 70- to 100-year-old vines are organically farmed, including the 1-ha (2.5-acre) Termanthia vineyard, over 120 years old. For Termes, grapes are bought from

growers under long-term contract. Estate Director and Winemaker Manuel Louzada and Viticulturist Daniel Del Río show me vines, explaining how they carefully prune to form a crown of a small number of bunches. This promotes balance in the vine's production for optimal ripeness and to maintain space between bunches so that drying breezes can pass through. Manuel showed me Tinta de Toro's more compact cluster, without "shoulders" normally found on Tempranillo in Rioja, and 10-20% lighter.

Termes 2009 has very bright, floral, red fruit, spice and herb aromas, with gutsy, vibrant blackberry flavors. A meaty mid-palate edge is appealing. Numanthia 2009 (components tasted from barrel) has serious black fruit aromas with notes of espresso, wild herbs and minerals, with a minty bite. This shows a terrific, ripe, silky texture and fine, sweet tannins that are very long. Termanthia 2009 (barrel sample) has high-toned aromas of dark berries, mocha, roasted earth and minerals, with a eucalyptus note. The super-concentrated flavors are intensely vibrant. The acidity and finely honed tannins will help this become one of the great vintages of Termanthia.

Bodegas Fariña: looking ahead

Established in 1942, Bodegas Fariña has been a founding winery in the region. The estate farms 350 ha (875 acres) of 20- to 140-year-old Tinta de Toro vines. Older vines are traditional en vaso trained, while a double Guyot trellis is used for younger vines. Winemaker Bernardo Fariña believes this results in better canopy management and more efficient photosynthesis so that the number of bunches and grape size are reduced and grape quality is improved.

Fariña reminds me that DO Toro's conditions (one of Spain's driest regions, receiving 3,000 hours of sunlight each year) make the growing season short, 3.5 months compared to 4 for DO Ribera del Duero.

Bernardo's father Manuel Fariña is a winemaker who has helped raise the image of DO Toro wines in Spain and around the world; 35% of the total production is exported to 31 countries.

"The most important thing the wine has is the character of the vineyard. You can't change this. Tinta de Toro is a concentrated grape and has this special power." Dama de Toro 2010 has fresh red current and cherry aromas and an easy drinking character. The Dama de Toro 2009 Barrel Aged is similar but has a more round, charming aspect. The Dama de Toro Crianza 2005 has expressive red fruit and herbal aromas, and shows fresh, beautifully crisp fruit.

DO Toro winemakers are focusing on their vineyards, specific terroirs, the Tinta de Toro grape and their region's identity. Manuel observed, "Today, every winery in DO Toro wants to improve quality, which has helped the region. A few years ago, DO Toro winemakers wanted to make wines with high scores; now everyone is focusing on making wines with the personality of our region. In doing this, their wines have been highly rated. Consumers want something different, so we have to make wines with the character of our region. Our identity is our strength."

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Pulling THE CORK

Text
Anke van Wijck Adán/©ICEX

Photos
Alfredo Cáliz

ON SITE

Say Rioja, say Sherry, say Priorat or Ribera del Duero and most wine lovers will immediately place them on the map and in their taste memory. But what about Rías Baixas, Utiel-Requena, Condado de Huelva or any of the less widely-known up-and-coming Spanish wine territories? There is no region in Spain which doesn't produce wine, and no efforts are spared to offer top-quality products. It comes as no surprise that wine tourism (or enotourism) has developed into a much-demanded leisure activity and, of course, there is an ever-increasing number of well-organized and differentiated Spanish wine destinations to ensure that your specific expectations for a fascinating, instructive and pleasure-filled wine vacation are met.

Gone are the times when, with the exception of a small number of known wineries, most Spanish wine was sold in bulk, often to flavored wines abroad. Over the past 25 years, however, vintners everywhere in Spain are increasingly and successfully stamping their own mark on their products, clearly linking them to their *terroir*. This evermore diverse and highly enticing winescape is achieved through the effective recovery and rehabilitation of autochthonous grapes and the implantation of new varieties thriving in this specific environment; by perfecting monovarietal wines and creating particular coupages which consistently prove to be great and get outstanding ratings; by consciously preserving the architectural features of their original cellars (like the Puig i Cadafalch Modernist winery of Codorníu in Penedès) or by investing them with a spectacular contemporary image (like Frank Gehry's iconic titanium design for Marqués de Riscal in Rioja Alavesa); by using cutting-edge bottle and packaging design; and increasingly by opening up wineries and vineyards to visitors. As a result, with the invaluable assistance of the latest internet, navigation and tracking technology, Spain is fast becoming a much sought-after destination for wine travelers from around the world. Well over two million visitors a year and rising!

Synergizing

In 2007, on the occasion of a series of articles on wine tourism (*Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 70 and 71), Celia Hernando suggested to venture out on any of the recommended wine routes "before word got out…". That was not that long ago, one might argue, but there is little doubt that word actually did get out and that, thanks to a concerted effort by public institutions, private companies and the local population, Spain's wine route network has become as extended as diverse and enjoyable. A case in point may be the Somontano route (Huesca, Aragón). Launched in 2006, interest has grown so exponentially that statistics for 2010 alone revealed the sizeable number of 49,000 visitors. Yet such success can only be achieved through the natural confluence of circumstances together with the firm will to propitiate its synergy. Situated in southern Europe and thanks to its great topographic and climatic diversity, Spain is in a highly privileged position when it comes to agriculture in general and viticulture in particular. But not only that: Spain's dense history, steeped in the longtime and lasting influence of different cultures, has left its traces throughout the country, where castles, ramparts, aqueducts, cathedrals, bridges, and century-old farmsteads and wine cellars all still tell tales of its rich and variegated past. Tradition

and folklore have been kept alive everywhere, resulting in a wealth of age-old handcrafting, regional dance and music and a yearly calendar chockfull of merry, colorful (and at times outrageous) festivals, not lastly in celebration of the country's widely-praised gastronomy and formidable wines.

Finding your way

Wine tourism, of course, refers to all leisure and travel activities centering directly or indirectly on wine and all that surrounds it. Maria Fustero, a board member of the *Acadèmia de Tastavins* (wine culture and tasting school since 1964) of Vilafranca del Penedès, sums up some of the advantages of enotourism: "Routes are not rigid, you can turn in any direction; they are flexible, you are free to choose and not squeezed into a prepackaged program; wine culture means no time limits, wine tourism likewise." Proper wine tourism is antithetic to mass tourism and also requires some previous homework by the traveler. Criteria for planning a wine trip to Spain may vary widely: You have scheduled a business meeting in Barcelona, so why not take a side trip to the Priorat or Penedès areas?; you have chosen a golf holiday in trendy Marbella and may want to give your clubs a few days rest to find out about Málaga or sherry wines; you feel burnt-out and yearn for some peace and relaxation, so you head to a wine spa set against breathtakingly beautiful vanguard architecture in La Rioja; or you may have a preference for a single grape variety and want to check out its terroir; you have heard about the new exciting Spanish rosés and would enjoy visiting one or two production areas when the climate is perfect to sample them nicely chilled overlooking the vineyards in, let's say, the lofty hills of Navarre; by chance you tasted a lovely coupage from DO Toro at home and now want to find out more about its makers and perhaps even meet them; or what about an introduction to pruning in January? Just some food (or wine) for thought before you start planning. But in a country with the largest surface of vineyards in the world (1.1 million ha / 2.7 million acres), over 80 DOs (Designations of Origin) for wine and around 5,000 *bodegas* (wineries), the choice, albeit great, is not easy. Over the past 15 years, the DO areas and respective wineries have taken great strides and made investments in improving and consolidating their organizational structures, visitor and tasting facilities and promotional efforts, together with the direct implication of a wide array of interrelated activities with wine at their core. Thus, the wine routes offered are most frequently directly related to a specific designation of origin. But if you think of a wine route as a neatly dotted line on a map, you need to think again, as you may have to tailor your trip around wine country, which in itself is, of course, a great pleasure. No doubt that today a great source for wine route scouting is the internet. Yet the notorious problem here is the overwhelming information overload, and wine tourism is no exception.

Mapping your route

In view of Spain's enormous potential to attract wine travelers, and keenly aware of the fact that a more cohesive approach would greatly contribute to substantiating the offer, ACEVIN (Spanish Association of Wine Cities) was founded in 2001 under the auspices of Spain's Ministries of Tourism and the Environment and is part of RECEVIN, the European Network of Wine Cities. RECEVIN is an association of different municipal administrations in wine regions which has the goal of integrating resources and services so as to ensure optimal global quality while simultaneously preserving the uniqueness of each area and product offered. Membership in ACEVIN requires rigorous compilance with a series of quality standards and self-regulatory rules before the

corresponding certificate is granted. Today the association comprises 21 wine routes throughout the country, from emblematic ones like Rioja Alavesa or Penedès to routes as-yet less traveled like Alicante or El Bierzo. The website (Websites, page 41) will give you a synopsis of the wine-related history of each specific wine area and provides information on how to get there; grapes grown and wines produced; local resources such as hotels, spas, tasting facilities, museums etc.; cultural and historic heritage sites; festivals; gastronomy; as well as other interesting activities, providing the appropriate search engine to get the specifics to configure your route.
If that association is primarily

centered on the wine sector, the tourism sector, with very similar goals in mind, has created the Spanish Food and Wine Tourism Association. Its approach is less institutional and more pragmatic, with links to a number of selected agencies operating both in Spain and abroad and offering a clearly client-oriented service.
It proposes a number of already laid-out yet always adaptable routes, but is also most proficient in made-to-measure trips.
A good example is A Taste of Spain, a Spanish operator with a highly expert multi-lingual staff fully focused on gastronomic trips, of which wines are an intrinsic ingredient. Just reading the contents of their website will transport you to the rolling hills and shadowy yeast-scented caves of Spain, and transmit the joy of a great wine paired with a superb meal. Imagine what they can do for you in real life!
Another example is Cellar Tours, a US-based agency with specific expertise in top-of-the-line customized wine routes worldwide. Their offer in Spain is especially creative. Who wouldn't be tempted by an Art, Wine and Design Route or a Spanish Odyssey Wine Vacation? Response has been optimal. "Spain is definitely one of our most popular destinations," explains Gen McCarthy, Cellar Tours' dynamic representative in Spain, adding "It has grown phenomenally for us over the years, and in fact it's still growing."

If you just feel like venturing out on your own or deciding on the spur of the moment, there are many national and international travel guides which increasingly focus on wine tourism. A great source for Spain is the traditional *Repsol Guide*, which has continued its longstanding success with a comprehensive, user-friendly online version (available in English), specifically focusing on wine and gastronomic tourism. This year, in staying with the times, Repsol has launched a free application available for downloading to the iPad, punctually tracking your specific location to inform you about nearby facilities. Yet as essential as the latest technology is, it remains only a tool to help transport the traveler into the bounties and depths of millennia old-wine culture.

Genius loci

Wine culture is imperatively linked to the land, and enotourism—like no other tourist activity—brings the traveler irremediably and desirably in touch with the *genius loci*, the spirit of each specific place. So let us try to capture the spirit of a wine region which, despite receiving the largest number of visitors (almost 500,000 a year) and having pioneered wine tourism in Spain, has preserved a remarkable authenticity, and as such is no doubt paradigmatic for other wine areas in Spain.
The Penedès region is situated some 40 km (25 mi) south of Barcelona and not even 20 km (12.5 mi) from the ebullient Mediterranean shore, and is a welcome (although not yet fully exploited) hinterland for wine visitors to the area. Watched over and protected from the north by the majestic massif of Montserrat and tucked in between the coastal and pre-coastal mountain ranges lies the magnificent vine-strewn Central Valley. No visitor should miss the vantage point at the Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Foix to drink in this gorgeous panorama, as stretched out before you lies the landscape that yields the prestigious wines and world-famous cavas of DO Penedès, DO Cava and DO Catalunya. It will certainly help you understand the idiosyncrasy of local viticulture. "Cava grapes (principally Macabeo, Xarel·lo and Parellada, although new varieties like Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are successfully experimented with) mainly proceed from the valley as they need freshness, while the higher calcareous slopes imprint more character, more terroir," explains Josep Maria Albet, the newly elected President of DO Penedès. Its fabulous still wines constitute only 10% of total regional production. Albet and his brother Antoni are the third generation running the winery Albet i Noya in Sant Pau d'Ordal, one of Spain's earliest and leading organic wine producers. He emphasizes that now well over 50% of DO Penedès production is already organically grown and his goal is for it to become the first fully organic DO in the world. Their winery receives some 5,000 visitors per year. Nearby lies smaller Cavas Guilera owned by Pere Guilera, who is VP of the Subirats Tourist Board and heads the organization of the Congress for Arts, Wine Landscapes and Wine Tourism, with the ambitious goal of taking all the

Websites

Information on enotourism and routes

www.wineroutesofspain.com
ACEVIN (Spanish Association of Wine Cities). ACEVIN recommended routes covering most of the national territory, including the islands. (Spanish)

www.enoturismoygastronomia.com
The Spanish Food and Wine Tourism Association (English, Spanish)

www.guiarepsol.com/es_en/gastronomia/rutas_denominacion_origenm
(English, Spanish)

Operators

www.atasteofspain.com
A Taste of Spain (English)

www.cellartours.com
Cellar Tours (English)

www.elmolitours.com
El Moli Tours (Catalan, English, Spanish)

necessary measures to preserve the landscape and to combat increasing urbanization with "ruralization", as coined by Ton Mata from prominent Cavas Recaredo. Preserving what Lawrence Durrell (British writer, 1912-1990) called "the essence of landscape values" (*The Spirit of Place*, 1969) means the responsible and sustainable modernization, expansion and promotion of a medium that has and will afford this region, as well as others in Spain, long-term prosperity and prestige. A number of international experts in landscape preservation and enotourism are regularly called in to participate, like Paul Wagner from Napa Valley, or Rainer Brusis, a wine tourism consultant from Barcelona who, commissioned by the provincial Chamber of Commerce, drafted a strategic plan for the development of wine and cava tourism in the Penedès region. Presented in 2005, it has meant a true turnaround in the region with highly tangible results. Since then, Brusis has created similar plans for other regions and wineries and created the Vintur Project for assessing wine tourism standards and regulations for wine tourism of a wider European scope, for RECEVIN.

Intrinsic to the spirit of place are its people. Not only the smaller but also the large, world-renowned wineries—like Torres, Freixenet and Codorníu—are family-owned and also family-run. It means dedication, perseverance, intergenerational commitment; it means calloused and purple

furrowed hands, but above all it means pride and affability. We have seen it at Albet i Noya; Pere Aguilera is assisted by his daughter in charge of PR, marketing and design; Josep Ventura from Mas Bertran has made a leap forward now that his son and daughter work with him, building new premises and planning to take production of their excellent cavas up to 100,000 bottles; several generations of the famous Torres family still live and work on the original estate; but especially telling is the case of the Cusiné family of Parés Baltà, where the fifth generation is now gradually taking over, not only Josep and Joan Cusiné but also their young wives, a pharmacist and a chemist, now accomplished enologists who are taking the business to new heights, as their wines are receiving impressive international ratings. If you want an unforgettable tour to see for yourself what efforts and expertise underlie each bottle produced and sip you take, visit their vineyards in a 4x4, which will take you through the gently rolling vineyards in the valley, up into the near-inaccessible slopes, where the Foix River has its source and where small terraced patches of vines are grown to perfection. "Ninety percent of wine tourists use the car, but it's biking which truly brings you in touch with the terroir," stresses Maria Fustero. And this is exactly what Paddy Mannion understood a long time ago. Mannion is an Irish expat who, despite his tall unequivocally non-Mediterranean physique, has

completely integrated into local society. He perfectly masters both Spanish and Catalan and has acquired in-depth knowledge on the history, landscape, amenities and wine culture of the area, of which he is proud and at all times ready to share with friends and clients. "We would never have found all these exciting places on our own," smiles Ralph Strauss, an architect from Brentwood, CA. He is treating his two sons (studying architecture and enology) to a trip in the Penedès and for lack of time is driven around in Mannion's van. But El Moli Tours (named after the old paper mill Mannion lives in) specializes in biking tours, mainly laid out on the old, mostly flat rural roads away from traffic, lined by vineyards in every nook and cranny and dotted with old *masías* (the typical Catalan farmhouses). He will pick you up at the train station in nearby Vilafranca del Penedès (a 50 minute ride from Barcelona), drive you to his bike depot in Torrelles, and off you go leisurely pedaling into wine country, stopping here and there to sample different grape varieties, visit a church, tour a winery, participate in a tasting, and enjoy local food. It is undoubtedly one more success story, and he's taking it further by organizing the Penedès Greenways and reaching agreements with a number of stations in the area to allow bikes to be deposited there. Business keeps growing!

Embracing enotourism

All agents involved are keenly aware that enotourism is intrinsic to a new kind of knowledgeable, well-documented traveler who knows what he or she wants. Quality and personal attention are key. "Practically all wineries are now investing in offering up-to-date differentiated visiting and tasting facilities," says Nuria Salas of Consorci de Promoció Turística de l'Alt Penedès, the institution of reference in the area, offering courses and workshops as well as a comprehensive, well-structured website, including suggestions for wine trips, often in combination with the cultural offer, like the magnificent Modernist heritage of this area. She is very pleased with the ever greater impulse wine tourism is taking, not in the last place thanks to the collaboration and new initiatives among wineries. It is unsurprising that legendary Bodegas Torres which, besides its 10,000 professionals, receives around 100,000 visitors a year, offers spectacular visiting facilities. One is their open train, which enters a tunnel of wine seasons displaying a mega video screen and filling the air with corresponding wafts of burnt vines, the scent of fermentation, etc., and then crosses the vineyards, entering the barrel-stocked bodega where the history of wine is shown, and finishes off with a tasting. Full explanation is given in over ten languages through specially-provided headphones. Their premises also include an excellent restaurant and auditorium and, like other large wineries such as Vallformosa, they host events, from conferences to weddings. But small- and medium-sized wineries are definitely doing their share in creating their own special touch through innovative proposals and in simply making things more visitor-friendly. Pere Aguilera shows a patch of land he has habilitated for caravan parking. Accordingly, he and a number of wineries in the area are responding to a potential client sector and have consequently been included in

the prestigious *España Discovery* guide. He also offers a tasting session of 25 different grape varietals he specially grows on a plot near the main house.
In-house shops get an increasingly attractive image and are handled more efficiently in regard to display, invoicing and shipping. Onsite wine sales are growing to such an extent that at Albet i Noya, for example, it constitutes the largest single point of sale. Asked about the price of winery visits, Salas is firm: "Only by charging a fee for visits and tastings will we be able to keep up quality." Quality indeed comes with structure, efficiency, dedication and trained personnel. But let nobody be alarmed, prices are extremely reasonable and are based on a rigorous price/quality ratio.
Not only wineries but also other branches of wine tourism are increasingly jumping on the bandwagon. Probably due to the vicinity of Barcelona and the coastal area, and in contrast to other emblematic wine areas like La Rioja, good restaurants and accommodation facilities are as-yet not numerous in the Penedès region. But not to worry because you'll be able to sample some of the best regional cuisine with a special emphasis on local products at a number of places throughout the area. Food is outstanding at two recommendable rural hotels at almost opposite ends of the Penedès region: Cal Ruget Biohotel, a charming getaway in Vilobí, where Florian (from Germany) and Verónica (from Catalonia) have created an atmosphere wholly conducive to relaxation and wellbeing, and that includes their organic cuisine often made with produce from their own garden.
In Sant Pere de Ribes, just 3 km (1.9 mi) from glamorous coastal Sitges, you will find Ostería Ibai, a pretty country inn at the edge of a riverbed, overlooking the whitewashed village. Here also produce comes from their own vegetable garden and bread is freshly baked every morning for a delightful breakfast before you head into wine country. And if you feel like being pampered, you may want to drive up to Can Bonastre, the region's sole wine spa, located in Masquefa with astonishing views of Montserrat and a splendid dining facility called The Barrels Room, housed in a 19th-century cellar.
In the small village square in Sant Pau d'Ordal you will find Cal Xim, where charming Santi Amigó, a local TV personality, will heartily welcome you. Here you will savor the best and most delicately wood-fire grilled dishes you could ever imagine: Roasted fresh duck liver with a confit of the delicious recovered Ordal peach, Tiny slightly pink lamb cutlets with parsley topped chickpeas from Anoia, Cod stuffed with squash flowers on a bed of roasted *samfaina* (ratatouille) and, from November to March, his widely-known grilled artichokes. All wines and cavas from his impressive wine list are served in Riedel glasses. Satisfaction guaranteed!
The two major towns in the region, around which many of the bodegas are clustered, are Vilafranca (the region's capital) and Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, and here also things are changing to cater to national and international wine travelers. Cal Ton is a family-run restaurant in Vilafranca just off the beautiful tree-lined Rambla de Nuestra Señora. "This year has been spectacular," says chef Ton "with visitors from the US, Singapore, Russia, Japan…" It must be his

delicate meat filled mini-cannelloni (as traditional here as in Italy) in a wild mushroom sauce, or perhaps his almost airborne cod puffs, fresh shrimp from nearby Vilanova, a silky magret of autochthonous duck, crisp poularde from Penedès... all very professionally and affably served by Ton's sister and brother-in-law. The five-star hotel Torner i Güell in Vilafranca, housed in a beautiful rehabilitated Modernist mansion, has a bar with over 40 different gins. And while in Vilafranca, make sure to walk over to the Forn de Sant Joan bakery to sample their sweet *coca* (flat pastry), and especially their traditional *catanies*, caramelized almonds coated with cream and dusted with chocolate powder. Be warned, they are addictive. And of course let yourself be surprised by the virtual and interactive exhibition at Vinseum, the local wine museum housed in the magnificent 12th century Royal Palace, at present being refurbished.
In Sant Sadurní, where cast iron street markers have a cava cork shape, on the main pedestrian street you will find Cal Feru, a pretty wine shop which also offers tastings, vineyard walks and even personalizes your wine bottles. Yet what certainly will surprise you when you enter this town is the wonderfully pungent scent of roasted cocoa beans coming from Simón Coll, the oldest uninterruptedly operating chocolate factory in Spain, still owned by the same family. Besides an extensive product line of top-

quality chocolates which are exported worldwide, they produce chocolate cava bottle corks and caps filled with a delicious cream of *marc de cava*. They also organize chocolate pairings with regional wines and cavas, and plans are underway to open a comprehensive chocolate museum. And last but not least, like in other wine regions, there is a wealth of thematic events, contests and festivals. The first edition of Most, the new European film festival, took place in Vilafranca in November 2011. It included a short film contest and showcases the best of movies related to viniculture, wine and cava. The Vijazz festival is celebrated every first week of July and combines a large wine fair, where around 50 regional wineries participate with their products and tastings, with a free open air jazz festival featuring such celebrities as Branford Marsalis and Randy Brecker. This article is meant to give you an insight into all of the good and exciting things awaiting you here or in any other wine destination throughout Spain, a sort of script. Now it's up to you to put it in practice and start having fun. But first make sure to pour yourself a glass of your favorite Spanish wine. *¡Salud amigos!*

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GARLIC

The purple rose of La Mancha

Spain is one of the top five per capita producers of garlic in the world, and accounts for over two-thirds of all garlic grown in Europe. The so-called stinking rose is central to Spanish culinary customs and traditions, and John Barlow travels to the plains of La Mancha in search of the country's stellar product, the purple garlic of Las Pedroñeras.

TEXT
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ILLUSTRATIONS
QUINO MARÍN

Garlic is a truly global product, found in kitchens throughout the world. Yet it has a complicated reputation. Said to have appeared in the footprint of Satan after he left the Garden of Eden, it has been used to repel demons, werewolves and vampires. It also has an especially important role in the food cultures of southern Europe and the Mediterranean basin. Spain exports around 45% of its annual 150,000 ton crop, but that still leaves in excess of two kilos (4.4 lb) per person for home consumption.

Stepping back into old Spain

To look more closely at Spain's relationship with garlic, I've come to the region of Castile-La Mancha (center of Spain). Dotted with ancient castles and windmills straight out of *Don Quixote* (novel written by Miguel de Cervantes in the early 17th century), its arid plains immediately evoke the sense of "old Spain". From the window of my hotel I look up and see Belmonte Castle, the 15th century Gothic-Moorish fortress with massive zigzag walls where Charlton Heston and Sofia Loren got all steamed-up in the movie *El Cid* (directed by Anthony Mann in 1961); and just down the road are the very windmills thought to be the ones described in Cervantes' *Don Quixote.*

But I'm not here for the windmills, or to remind myself how great Sofia Loren looked in a red wimple. La Mancha accounts for half of Spain's garlic output, followed by Andalusia, Castile-Leon, Valencia and Extremadura. All these regions have pretty good garlic growing climates, but it's in La Mancha that you'll find garlic heaven, and it's here that I've journeyed in search of the best stinking rose known to Man.

The cultivation of garlic goes hand in hand with the development of human civilization. A precursor of today's plant is thought to have been cultivated 10,000 years ago by hunter-gatherer nomads in the central Asian mountains, then carried along the trade routes eastward to China and westward to Europe. Its medicinal properties have long been recognized: in ancient Egypt eating garlic was thought to strengthen and invigorate the body, and it was given in large quantities to the slaves who built the pyramids. Roman gladiators also ate it, believing that it had a stimulating effect on their bodies and also worked as an aphrodisiac.

As far as cooking goes, the oldest known recipes in the world, the Yale Babylonian Tablets (1600-1700 BC), are full of references to garlic, and in ancient Greece the significance of garlic in daily life was such that a section of the market in Athens was simply known as the garlic (*ta skoroda*).

In Spanish cooking too, it has always assumed a prominent role. From the simple fried garlic sauces (*ajada*) of Galician fish dishes, to traditional garlic soup and *ajoblanco* (a cold soup made from ground almonds, bread, garlic, water, extra virgin olive oil, salt and vinegar), *ali-olis* (garlic mayonnaise), *pil-pils* (olive oil emulsionated in fresh stock), the rich red pepper sauce of the Basque Country (*salsa vizcaína*), Andalusian *gazpacho* (cold soup made from tomato, garlic, sweet bell pepper, cucumber and bread), plus stews and casseroles of innumerable kinds from innumerable places... a Spanish kitchen without garlic is simply unimaginable.

Yet even in Spain the old ambivalence occasionally surfaces. For example, in *Don Quixote* the deluded knight errant goes in search of his beloved "lady" Dulcinea, but finally discovers that she is a sturdy peasant girl who "gave me a whiff of raw garlic that made my head reel, and poisoned my very heart." Cervantes is thought to have chosen the agricultural landscape of La Mancha as the setting for *Don Quixote* because, despite the castles, it represented a down-to-earth, agricultural backdrop for his spoof of chivalric literature; whenever garlic is mentioned in the book,

it is as a symbol of the quotidian, of the squalor and smell of the low-born rural classes.

The stinking rose of Las Pedroñeras

And garlic does, of course, stink. Each odor-free clove is like a tiny time capsule of flavor and smell. Its pungency is only released once the flesh is cut or bruised, at which point a volatile compound known as allicin is produced, giving garlic its characteristic smell and taste. All *alliums* (garlic, onions, leeks, chives) produce such compounds, known as secondary metabolites. They ward off predators, disease and parasites, whilst attracting pollinators.

As to the plant itself, it thrives in a well-drained sandy loam with some clay and chalk, and also likes potassium and magnesium, all of which is typical of the soil profile of the elevated plateau of La Mancha, where the best garlic can be found. The Arabs called these plains the "wilderness" or "dry land", but a better description might be the *madly changeable* lands.

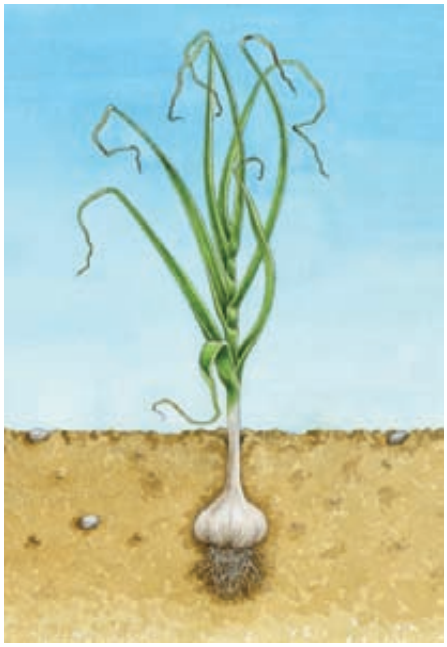
Garlic needs cold to germinate (so don't refrigerate it at home; this will encourage premature sprouting). Planting tends to be done in the middle of winter, when the Manchegan plains are bitterly cold, with temperatures well below freezing and heavy snowfall common. After a chilly start, however, garlic likes it hot and dry. Fortunately, the plains of La Mancha are blessed with an

extreme continental climate, with searingly hot summers. So, perfect garlic country. And the center of it all is a town called Las Pedroñeras, the kilometre zero of garlic.

Julio Bacete is the President of Coopaman, an umbrella-cooperative that groups together six garlic-producing cooperatives in Las Pedroñeras and the surrounding area. He's a farmer to the core, born on the land, and as we drive out to some of his own plantations it becomes clear that he couldn't ever really leave. His 15-year-old son is helping in the fields right now, but for the young lad it's something of an annual chore (at about 30º C / 86º F, one has some sympathy); for Julio, though, the dark terracotta earth is invested with an almost magical richness. And, despite the heat, I can see why.

From the vantage of some high-lying scrub land, fragrant wild thyme under foot, we look out across the plains. There's a hardy grandeur to the place, how it stretches out for miles with little more than the vague indentations of human life, small villages for the main part, plus the odd zigzaggy castle. And in every direction are fields of onions and garlic, cereals, olives, sunflowers, and the low-lying grapevines characteristic of La Mancha. Plus, the land here offers up wild partridge, quail, hare and rabbit, as well as grazing land for sheep and goats. The weather might be a bit extreme, then, but this is a source of an exceptional abundance of edible riches.

The first garlic-based dish I tried when I arrived was *ajoarriero*. It is said to have originated with the mule drivers (*arrieros*), who for centuries were the transporters of



A history of **medical uses**

For its strength-giving properties, garlic was given to the slaves building the pyramids in ancient Egypt, to Greek soldiers before battle, and to Roman soldiers, oarsmen and other physical workers.

Dioscorides' (c. 40-90 AD) *De Materia Medica*, which was to remain the primary work on botany for 1,500 years, lists 23 medicinal uses for garlic, including cleaning the arteries, repelling intestinal parasites, a mild diuretic against various poisons, and as a palliative of diarrhea and amoebic dysentery.

In folk medicine around the world, garlic is used variously as an aphrodisiac, antipyretic, diuretic, expectorant, sedative, for asthma, bronchitis, and to stimulate hair growth.

In the late 19th century, Louis Pasteur demonstrated garlic's natural antibiotic properties. More recently, research has suggested that the antibacterial properties of allicin might form the basis of an effective treatment of MRSA-related infections.

Allicin is thought to have anti-inflammatory and anti-thrombotic properties, to help reduce blood pressure, and to maintain a good lipoprotein balance. Yet solid medical research has often been inconclusive, not least because the form of garlic used in tests varies so much in quality and quantity.

A research group at the University of Castilla-La Mancha has recently developed a method of obtaining freeze-dried extracts of garlic which preserve higher levels of allicin than earlier methods. These extracts have been studied at the Ramón y Cajal Hospital in Madrid, and have been found to be more effective than some currently used medicines in combating the bacteria responsible for gastritis, stomach ulcers and MALT lymphoma. Not surprisingly, the allicin-rich Las Pedroñeras garlic was the most effective.

Researchers at Madrid's Ramón y Cajal Hospital are now looking at other medical applications. Doses of garlic extract have been shown to lead to a reduction of cancerous cells in patients with prostate cancer, and the use of the same extracts to treat arterial tension and as a blood anticoagulant and vasodilator are also being investigated.

goods across Spain's vast countryside, camping on the plains for days at a time and cooking for themselves. A bit of dried fish boiled up with a potato, then ground to a paste with a clove of garlic and some olive oil. That's it. Ajoarriero figures on a lot of menus in La Mancha, and is often topped off with walnuts and boiled egg. The result? Something far more subtle and delicate than it promises, its simplicity enhanced by the history that comes with it, a sort of historical *terroir* at its tastiest. On the plains of La Mancha you get the sense that great regional food can be had almost anywhere. There's something robust about the cooking that takes you right back to the times of *Don Quixote*, the ingredients still taken straight from the land. Such is the case with *morteruelo*, pig's liver and small game cooked in stock (and garlic), then seasoned with sweet spices and turned into a soft meat mash. Again, turbo-powered terroir and utterly fantastic. I would go on to have both ajoarriero and morteruelo again during my stay, although in somewhat different circumstances...

PGI

But let us return to garlic. The variety grown in Las Pedroñeras has cloves of a rich purple color, and is generally considered to be the best there is. Why? Well, purple garlic tends to have a greater concentration of allicin than white, and as a consequence has a stronger taste. The particular strain grown in Las Pedroñeras derives from a variety originating in nearby Cuenca (*ajo morado de Cuenca*), and has adapted and developed over the centuries to the special conditions in Las Pedroñeras to become the very supreme example of the species, with an exceptional intensity. This increased strength, though, is not simply a stronger version of other garlic; it is complex, with an almost sweet edge to its ultra-spiciness. Perhaps because of its elevated allicin content, the Las Pedroñeras garlic keeps longer. All garlic should be stored at room temperature, somewhere ventilated and cool, preferably in a clay pot with holes in it, where it will last for between 2 to 6 weeks, or a little longer in the case of our purple rose from La Mancha. The garlic from Las Pedroñeras had no problem fulfilling the stringent criteria for Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status, within the EC's Protected Geographical Status framework (varietal excellence, optimum growing conditions, location-specific history), and in 2002 achieved the coveted PGI status. The PGI's growing area now includes around 230 nearby villages, where garlic has traditionally been the main crop, and where the soil and growing conditions are more or less identical to those in Las Pedroñeras itself. Las Pedroñeras is a town of just 7,000 people, yet these days it serves as the center of an annual production of some 40,000-50,000 tons of PGI product, roughly a third of all garlic grown in Spain. It is exported to North Africa, South America, and to most of Europe (particularly the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy), and seems to make converts wherever it goes: three years ago a few containers were sent to Australia to test the market; this year 200 tons were sent. Despite the size of the operation, many individual producers are small-scale, sometimes growing for their own consumption and a bit of extra income, and some with as little as half a hectare (1.2 acres) of land. A two-tier system of local and central cooperatives (such a Coopaman) means that even the smallest growers can sell to the four corners of the world. Of the three types of garlic commonly grown in Spain—traditional white, newer Chinese strains (often a light pink in color and mild in taste) and purple—the latter harvests latest (end

of July) and needs a little more attention in the field. Las Pedroñeras purple garlic also produces slightly fewer and thinner cloves per bulb, and rarely exceeds *Extra flor* size-grade (bulb diameter of 2.1-2.4 in / 55-60 mm); by contrast the highest size-grades for commercial white and Chinese varieties are *Elephant* (above 2.7 in / 68 mm) and *Jumbo* (2.4-2.7 in / 62-68 mm).
But does size matter? There is a slight advantage in a larger clove if you're peeling and chopping lots of them by hand, but there's no taste benefit at all, and in fact smaller cloves keep longer and offer a slightly enhanced flavor, given that they have a lower water content. The PGI Las Pedroñeras garlic does cost slightly more, but its taste is stronger and more intense (and richer), so you need less of it, meaning that it is in fact excellent value. At the opposite end of the grade scale, the smallest grades of the PGI purple variety offer better value than comparable white and Chinese garlic: if you are an industrial user, or indeed any user who doesn't mind about size, the fact that you need less of the PGI product due to its strength means you win both ways.

The main attraction

With any PGI food you're also getting an extra level of quality assurance. The PGI garlic can only be produced by certified growers, and crops are monitored closely for quality and to check that they conform to the stipulated ecotype. And this attention to quality immediately becomes clear when you start cooking. I did a quick taste test with two batches of my own Andalusian gazpacho: two cloves of Las Pedroñeras PGI purple garlic in one batch, three cloves of normal white garlic in the other. The purple variety lent the dish a richer, subtler taste, making even a simple gazpacho more interesting, with a curiously alluring undercurrent of flavor.
Then, I head off for lunch at Las Rejas, a Michelin-starred restaurant in Las Pedroñeras, and home to the renowned chef Manuel de la Osa (see Close-up, page 84).
The restaurant's amazing tasting menu uses a lot the local garlic, and before long I am reacquainted with both morteruelo and ajoarriero, although Manuel de la Osa's version of the latter involves caviar, which I don't think would have been in the saddlebags of many mule drivers 400 years ago.
My lunch companions at Las Rejas are organizing a purple garlic extravaganza to be held at Fruit Attraction (October 2011, Madrid), Spain's international fruit and veg trade fair; the PGI garlic is finally going to be put center stage and given the culinary fanfare it deserves. As we eat, the conversation revolves around

Website

· **www.igpajomorado.es**
PGI Ajo Morado de Las Pedroñeras Regulatory Council (Spanish)

the list of speakers for the event, a wide-ranging collection of experts, including chefs, medical researchers, biologists, anthropologists, specialists in naturopathic medicine... all with their own story to tell about the extraordinary properties of Las Pedroñeras garlic. Meanwhile, Sergio Giraldo, the restaurant's *jefe de cocina*, keeps nipping out of the kitchen to discuss the garlic-based catering for the show. By the time you read this, the purple-colored starlet from Las Pedroñeras will have made its debut in Madrid as a certified gastronomic star.

Size, strings and special sauces

After lunch I meet Rafael Ramirez, who tells me he is 75. Seventy-five? I ask several times as I watch him work. He could be ten years younger, and puts it down to the raw purple garlic he eats every day, thinly sliced with tomatoes. On the wall of his workshop is a 70-meter (230-ft) string of garlics hanging from a series of hooks (*ristra*), as if Rapunzel just called in for a haircut. Opposite, a framed newspaper cutting describes how this ristra is the longest string of garlics in the world, and got Las Pedroñeras into the *Guinness World Records*.
Ristras, old-style decorative garlic strings, are Rafael's business. The process involves weaving the bulbs into lengths of dampened rushes. This is the last remaining workshop in Las Pedroñeras, and Rafael's ristras find their way into a lot of the country's finest gourmet food stores. The place itself is long and dark, with the air of a quiet, efficient cottage industry. In the shadows at the back, local women sit around a long table piled high with garlics, cleaning up the heads in preparation for the workshop.
Garlic in Las Pedroñeras was traditionally a family affair, everyone lending a hand to get the sudden deluge of garlics ready for market. Come summer harvest, both sides of the main road running through the town would be piled high with the stuff, the air filled with a sweet, almost sickly aroma, and tiny fragments of the silvery skin carried on the breeze like miniature confetti.
If that sounds picturesque, the traditional form of cultivating garlic was anything but pretty. Planting was done by hand in the freezing cold Manchegan winter, pushing each clove into the frosty ground with your fingers. Then, by the time harvest came around, the relentless sun would be beating down on your back as you yanked the plants from the arid and now shimmeringly hot ground.
"And we didn't take breaks every five minutes like they do now," Rafael says with mild contempt, as he effortlessly weaves another string of garlics and explains how recent mechanization has put paid to the worst of the toil in the fields.
Nostalgia? No, I haven't heard anybody complaining about the demise of the old ways here in Las Pedroñeras. Especially not from José Suárez, the man who brought me to the ristra workshop. José's company (SalsasJR.com) sells fresh purple garlic, peeled and ready for kitchen use, and also in preserved form. He's is in his early 70s but, like Rafael, has the vitality of a man half

his age. As President of the PGI Association (*Asociación IGP Ajo Morado de Las Pedroñeras*), he's traveled far and wide in the cause of purple garlic, including "a bit of industrial espionage" in China, where he went to sniff out the competition in what is the world's largest garlic producer and exporter. He was also the first producer in Las Pedroñeras to make sauces, and the results are a little bit special. Question: how often do you open a bottle of some fancy-labeled sauce with a tantalizing name, only to find the contents rather bland? Industrial food production has many advantages, but one of the downsides is the tendency for nothing to be very extraordinary, for each carefully marketed product to be aimed at the middle of the road. José's sauces are not middle of the road. They speed down the fast lane at 100 mph with a fag in the mouth. And they don't wear seatbelts. The alioli is knock your socks off stuff, and the *tzatziki* has such a creamy punch that I ate most of it right from the bottle, letting it glug onto salt crackers; others at home did the same, and it was all gone before we got around to cooking anything even vaguely Greek. The full range includes chimichurri, BBQ and other sauces for meat, plus several *mojos* (sauces made with garlic, olive oil, cumin and sweet bell pepper or *pimentón* —a type of paprika from Spain) from the Canary Islands (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 68). What strikes you about each of them is the unashamed prominence of the garlic, up there at the forefront of the taste, not lurking out of sight in case someone takes offense. However, we might also remember that this is Las Pedroñeras garlic, which has that alluring complexity, allowing it to be right there, up front with the other flavors, without ever being overpowering. These sauces remind me what food should be like, that it should excite and surprise and dazzle... Wholehearted and genuine, José's sauces are bottled antidotes to blandness and predictability. And, of course, the key is the deep richness of flavor imparted by the purple gold of La Mancha: the Las Pedroñeras garlic. So there we have it. From the Manchegan plains comes the world's foremost gourmet garlic. If you fancy something milder, there's plenty more garlic to be had in Spain, be it traditional white or pink-blushed Chinese varieties, and including a number of ecologically-certified growers. Then there are the stalks of purple garlic, preserved in brine (*brotes de ajo*), and germinated garlic shoots (*brotes germinados de ajo*) which really sex up your salad bowl. And the common factor in all this is the special cold-hot, damp-dry conditions that make Spain an ideal place for one of the oldest cultivated crops known to Man.

***John Barlow**'s fiction and non-fiction has been published in eight languages. His latest book,* Everything But the Squeal, *describes a year-long sojourn in his adopted homeland of Galicia, northwest Spain, exploring the gastronomic and cultural significance of pigs.*

Visit our website, www.foodsfromspain.com, in whose Products & Recipes section you'll find comprehensive information about Spanish products.

Manuel
de la Osa*

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The wines have been selected by Víctor Moreno, the restaurant and wine manager at the Las Rejas restaurant.

SMOKED AJOARRIERO

with herring roe

(Ajoarriero ahumado con huevas de arenque)

Also popularly known as *atascaburras*, this dish reminds me of the village grocery store where I still buy the cod I use to make it…

SERVES 4

For the ajoarriero: 250 g / 9 oz onions; 200 g / 7 oz leeks; 2 cloves garlic; 6 ratte potatoes; 200 g / 7 oz smoked cod; 100 g / 3 1/2 oz cod skin; 50 g / 2 oz Boletus edulis; 1 bay leaf; 750 ml / 3 1/4 cup *cocido* (chickpea, vegetable and meat stew) stock; 500 ml / 2 1/6 cups cream; 25 ml / 2 tbsp garlic-infused oil; 25 ml / 2 tbsp Boletus edulis-infused oil; salt.

Other ingredients: 10 ml / 2 tsp green oil (parsley with sunflower oil); garlic croutons; finely chopped chives; 50 g / 2 oz herring roe; 10 g / 1/3 oz Boletus edulis; sprouting greens.

Infuse the cocido stock with the cod skin, remove the skin and set the stock aside. Brown the two cloves of garlic, add the onion and leek and fry lightly. Then add the potatoes broken into small chunks, the cod, the cod skin (previously infused in the stock), the bay leaf and the Boletus edulis. Once this mixture has been heated through, add the cocido stock and cook for about 25 minutes until the potatoes are tender. Add the cream, remove from the heat and blend. Using a sieve, strain the mixture and emulsify with the garlic- and Boletus edulis-infused oils, then add salt to taste. Chill.

To serve

Fill half of a glass bowl with the ajoarriero cream. Drizzle a circle of green oil around the edge of the ajoarriero, and add the chopped chives and herring roe. Finally, add the garlic croutons and the sprouting greens.

Preparation time

40 minutes

Recommended wine

Vallegarcía Viognier 2009 (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla), from Bodegas Retuerta del Bullaque. The smoky flavor of the ajoarriero is a perfect match for the toasted notes of this barrel-fermented wine.

*For a more in-depth look at the chef, see Close-up

Chilled Las Pedroñeras

PURPLE GARLIC SOUP

(Sopa fría de ajo morado de Las Pedroñeras)

This dish, a hallmark of our hometown of Cuenca, is served hot during the cold months and chilled when the temperatures rise, and is a recipe that conjures up memories for us all.

SERVES 4

For the red pepper coulis: 5 kg / 11 lb red peppers; 500 g / 1 lb 2 oz Ibérico *chorizo* (a type of red sausage); 500 g / 1 lb 2 oz smoked Ibérico *morcilla* (blood sausage); 4 cloves Las Pedroñeras purple garlic; 1 l / 4 1/4 cup 0.4º olive oil; cumin; 50 g / 4 tbsp mushroom confit oil; 50 g / 2 oz sugar; salt.

For the parsley oil: 150 g / 5 1/2 oz parsley (stalk removed); 1 l / 4 1/4 cup 0.4º olive oil.

For the soup: 2 heads Las Pedroñeras purple garlic; 100 g / 3 1/2 oz Serrano ham; 100 g / 3 1/2 oz round rustic bread; chervil; chives; 4 eggs; 350 g / 1 1/2 cup clarified chicken stock; 4 g / 0.14 oz isinglass (a neutral gelatine); sunflower oil.

Other ingredients: chervil; chives.

Red pepper coulis

Liquidize the red peppers (with the white pith removed), add the sugar and reduce to 1/5 of their original quantity. Slice the Ibérico chorizo, the smoked Ibérico morcilla and the cloves of garlic, and confit in 0.4º olive oil. Once ready, add the red pepper reduction along with the mushroom confit oil and blend with an electric blender until you have a smooth texture. Season with salt and cumin.

Parsley oil

Place the parsley and oil in the Thermomix and blend on full speed for five minutes. Strain and cool as quickly as possible.

Soup

Separate the egg whites from the yolks, placing the latter in a cocktail glass and setting to one side. Poach the egg whites. Heat the clarified chicken stock and flavor with a head of garlic chopped in half. Add the gelatine and allow to cool slightly. Meanwhile, cut thin slices of rustic bread and rub with half of the head of Las Pedroñeras purple garlic. Keep the other half for later. Cut the garlic-flavored bread into 1 cm x 1 cm / 0.4 in x 0.4 in squares and place in a preheated oven (180ºC / 356ºF) for four minutes until toasted. Slice the ham as finely as possible and fry in sunflower oil, then do the same with the half of the garlic set aside earlier. Finely dice part of the ham and the fried garlic and set to one side.

To serve

Take the cocktail glass with the egg yolk and cover with the warm stock. Place in the fridge to allow the gelatine to set. Once ready, place a little red pepper coulis (approximately 60 g / 1/4 cup) in the center and surround with the parsley oil (again, approximately 60 g / 1/4 cup). Sprinkle with a little finely chopped garlic and ham. Just before serving add three bread croutons, the fried ham, the chervil and the top of the chive.

Preparation time

60 minutes

Recommended wine

Vino Manuel de la Osa 2006 (DO La Mancha), from Bodegas Parra Jiménez. This is an organic wine with five varieties (Syrah, Tempranillo, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Graciano), aged for 12 months in French oak. The powerful flavor of the garlic and the fresh herb touches make the dish the perfect match for this wine, which has a strong character and is brimming with personality.

MOJETE MANCHEGO with cheese

(Mojete Manchego con queso)

This is a modern, refreshing twist on the classic *mojete manchego* (a tomato- and red pepper-based dish), which we serve in the summer. I love the touch of flavor added by the cumin, an essential spice in my kitchen.

SERVES 4

For the mojete: 500 g /1 lb 2 oz ripe tomatoes; 1 clove garlic; 1 shallot; 20 g / 1 oz red pepper; 2-3 peppermint leaves; 1 sprig basil; 2 g / 0.07 oz cumin; sugar; salt.

For the chee*se moshi*: 200 g / 7 oz Manchego cream cheese; 20 ml / 1 heaping tbsp milk; sugar; salt; 5 g / 1/6 oz iota carrageenan (gelling agent); 5 g / 1/6 oz alginate; 1 l / 4 1/4 cup mineral water.

Other ingredients: extra virgin olive oil; 20 g / 1 oz garlic cheese from Las Pedroñeras (Cuenca); cocoa nibs; savory; thyme; rosemary flowers; garlic croutons.

Mojete

Combine all the ingredients in a Thermomix (ripe tomatoes, garlic, shallot, red peppers and cumin) and strain, making what we call "tomato water". Pass the mixture through a muslin cloth and remove any foam. Add salt and sugar to taste, followed by a sprig of basil and two or three peppermint leaves. Leave to infuse, then strain and set to one side.

Cheese moshi

Mix the Manchego cream cheese and milk in a blender, then season with salt and sugar. Add the iota carrageenan and blend until the desired consistency is obtained (the mixture should not be too thick). Place the mixture in a squeeze bottle and create spheres in the alginate bath, then pass them through a mineral water bath to remove any surplus alginate. To make the alginate bath, add 5 g / 1/6 oz alginate to 1 l / 4 1/4 cup mineral water.

To serve

Place the cheese moshi in the middle of the plate, and top with the garlic cheese, cocoa nibs, savory, thyme and rosemary flower. Just before serving add the garlic crouton and pour the well-chilled mojete around the moshi on the plate.

Preparation time

30 minutes

Recommended wine

Paso a Paso 2010 (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla), from Bodegas Volver. This is a very refreshing Verdejo, and blends perfectly with the acidic undertones of the tomato.

Tasting the Holidays
All Year Long

TURRÓN
Temptations

Many would say that *turrón* (Spanish nougat) is the heart and soul of the Spanish Christmas season, a time when this beloved sweet magically appears on dining room tables all over the country. A centuries-old confection, typically made from honey, sugar and almonds and shaped into large rectangular tablets, turrón has done more than endure the test of time: it has flourished. Nonetheless, companies are striving to get Spaniards to see turrón as more than a Christmas sweet by promoting new varieties and innovative gastronomic applications. Meanwhile, the world has developed a taste for Spanish turrón, and companies are expanding into new markets that are happy to consume this delectable sweet all year long.

While the exact origins of *turrón* (Spanish nougat) are unknown, it was most likely introduced here by the Moors, whose gastronomy included many sweets made with almonds and honey. Nowadays, turrón might be made with a variety of toasted nuts, such as almonds, peanuts, hazelnuts, pine nuts and walnuts; or incorporate things like candied fruit, chocolate, caramelized *yema* (egg yolk), marzipan, liquor and sesame seeds, among others. Its texture can be hard, soft, crunchy, crumbly or creamy, and even the shapes and sizes of certain formats are evolving from the traditional rectangular tablets or round *tortas* to new smaller portions. Given this variability, coming up with a working definition for turrón seems pretty daunting. There are, however, three specific kinds of turrón that have been designated with a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI): Alicante, Jijona and Agramunt turrón. This designation not only recognizes the quality of these products, but also their geographic, cultural and historic ties to the places they're made and the ingredients used in their confection.

The birthplace of turrón

The last time I brought up the subject of turrón with my Spanish in-laws, it launched a two-hour family discussion that centered on trying to remember grandfather's favorite brand. It was hardly the first time we had sat around the dining room table surrounded by stacks of open boxes of turrón, each of us championing our favorite. It was, however, the first time we had done it in August. I had just returned from a visit to the

TEXT
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PHOTOS
FERNANDO MADARIAGA/©ICEX

town of Jijona (also called Xixona), the area responsible for around 68% of all traditional turrón produced and consumed in Spain, while accounting for 52 million euros in annual sales.

Jijona is located in Alicante province, about 25 km (15.5 mi) from the city of Alicante and the Mediterranean Sea. The town climbs gently up a rocky mountainside on the edge of a sweeping valley of green piney forests. In the 1,020 m (3,346 ft) Carrasqueta mountain pass overlooking the town, the summer air is potently scented with the wild thyme, laurel, lavender and rosemary that cover the mountains and lend their delicate aromas to the honey that is produced here in large quantities. Another of the area's bounties, almond groves, carpet the valley below. Perhaps it's the abundance of these natural ingredients that have given Jijona the nickname "the birthplace of turrón", though I imagine it also has to do with the fact that these confections have been made here for over 500 years.

The authentic PGI Alicante and Jijona turrón originated and are still exclusively produced in Jijona. The hard white Alicante turrón came first and initially consisted of cooked honey with whole toasted almonds. Its existence is noted in many 16th century documents, including a play by celebrated Golden Age playwright, Lope de Vega, and a letter signed by King Phillip II in 1595. It was this King's Master Chef who is thought to have instigated the consumption of turrón at Christmas, a trend that eventually migrated to the rest of the population where it evolved into tradition. Around the 17th century, egg whites were incorporated into the mixture, improving its consistency and imparting the characteristic white color. The recipe was modified again in the 18th century, coinciding with the cultivation of sugarcane in the Americas. As sugar became more available, turrón makers began to substitute it for part of the honey. Finally, Alicante turrón is typically covered with a thin, white edible wafer called an *oblea* (now made from potato starch), which keeps the turrón from sticking together.

A soft change

Jijona turrón is considered the child of the Alicante version. Its name was first used in the 17th century in reference to a softer turrón made with ground almonds. During the 19th century, the quality of this creamier and more refined product was improved, thanks to the advent of industrial cooking techniques. In any case, its invention has been attributed to several different factors. According to Sagrario Sirvent, Marketing Director at Almendra y Miel, "Jijona turrón was created to meet the storage challenges presented by hard Alicante turrón in very dry or very humid climates." It also gave elderly people and children a softer, more tooth-friendly option. Alexis Verdú, of the PGI's Regulatory Council, adds that Jijona turrón was created in response to the wild popularity of marzipan, a sweet made with sugar and ground raw almonds. Jijona turrón is made using the Alicante turrón base of cooked honey, sugar and egg whites, to which ground almonds are added. The mixture is then cooled before being ground in a mill and refined until achieving the texture desired by the *maestro turrónero* (Turrón Master). Finally, it's cooked again in a special spherical receptacle called a *boixet*, which functions like a slowly heating mortar and pestle. The finished turrón is placed in molds and left to sit for a day or two to let the excess almond oil seep out.

For both Alicante and Jijona turrón, it's interesting to see how little things have changed over the centuries. This is apparent in the antique photographs on display at the regulatory council offices and in the excellent Turrón Museum at

Almendra y Miel, which was opened the 1960s. These depict entire families participating in making turrón, which typically took place in the winter months during the farming off-season. Today, many of Jijona's companies, both big and small, are still family-run operations headed by descendents of the original turrón makers. What's confusing is that, in this town of approximately 7,500 people, surnames such as Sirvent, Mira, Garrigós and Monerris crop up over and over again on the letterheads of prominent companies. Some are related and some aren't. In many ways the production processes also seem relatively unchanged over the years. The tools and techniques found in today's factories are reminiscent of those depicted in the exhibits. This is because the production of these turrón is still artisanal, following recipes that have been handed down through generations.

Personalizing the recipe

Despite the well-established recipes, which must adhere to strict requirements established by the regulatory council, the slightest variation in ingredients or techniques can have an immense impact on the quality, texture and flavor of the final product. I had the opportunity to see this first-hand during my trip to Jijona. The approximately 20 companies range from small operations like that of Primitivo Rovira e Hijos, which produces around 30,000 kg (88,184 lb) a year in a historic workshop in the town center, to mid-sized and larger companies that inhabit the handful of industrial parks on the outskirts of town.

My first stop was Mira y Llorens, a company founded by three sisters in 1969 and better known for its brand, El Artesano. I should mention that, like everyone else in Jijona, Mira y Llorens make and sell a range of other turrón and sweets that fall outside of the PGI definition, although the traditional turrón are by far the most popular. As we toured the bustling factory, Marketing Manager Patricia Gómez explained how factors such as cooking temperatures or the amount of honey (10% minimum) can greatly affect a final product. Also important is the amount of time that Jijona turrón is heated in the traditional boixet. At Pablo Garrigós Ibáñez, owner Pablo Garrigós, who runs the company with the help of his daughter, Henedina Garrigós, believes that, "a good product must be heated very slowly." However, he goes on to explain that the most important factor in determining a turrón's quality is the quantity and type of almonds it contains. This was apparent in the wonderfully fragrant toasting room at Mira y Llorens, where large crates containing different sizes and types of peeled almonds were being toasted to varying levels of golden brown. Indisputably, the best almonds are the famed Marcona variety that comes from this region. These round, white almonds are valued for their sweet and delicate flavor, nutritional properties and level of almond oil. According to PGI regulations, there are two categories for both products: Extra and Supreme. Supreme Alicante must be at least 60% almonds, while Supreme Jijona requires a minimum of 64%. In general, a company's finest products might use upwards of 67-70% Marcona almonds. While these differences may sound subtle, after tasting dozens of turrón over the course of my "research", I was amazed by the range of distinctive flavors and textures that these changes can produce in a 500-year-old recipe.

Exporting tradition

Quality aside, there are other factors that have helped these turrón reach the level of distribution and fame that they've achieved, both in Spain and abroad. In the late 19th century,

Websites

- **www.jijona.com**
  PGI Jijona y Turrón de Alicante Regulatory Council. (English, French, Spanish)
- **www.igp-torrodagramunt.com**
  PGI Turrón de Agramunt Regulatory Council. (Catalan)

Tasting Jijona Elsewhere

While Alicante and Jijona turrón must be made in the town of Jijona, this fact didn't deter intrepid Jijonencos from traveling to the far corners of Spain, often over a century ago, and setting up shop where they landed. In fact, some of the country's most traditional turrón stores can be found in cities like Pamplona, Santander and Madrid, among others. Most of these charming establishments are run by the descendents of these early traveling salesmen. Like their grandparents and great-grandparents, they return to Jijona in the winter to make their artisanal turrón. Here is just a taste:

Turrón Casa Mira, Madrid.

Founded in 1842 by Luis Mira, little seems to have changed in this historic store over the years. The crest of the Spanish Royal Family, bestowed by Isabel II, looks down on traditional glass cases lined with rows of Alicante, Jijona, Coconut, and Cadíz (made with sweet potato) turrón. These and other versions are sliced to order. At Christmas, lines can take up to four hours.

Tel.: (+34) 914 298 895

Turrón Monerris, Santander.

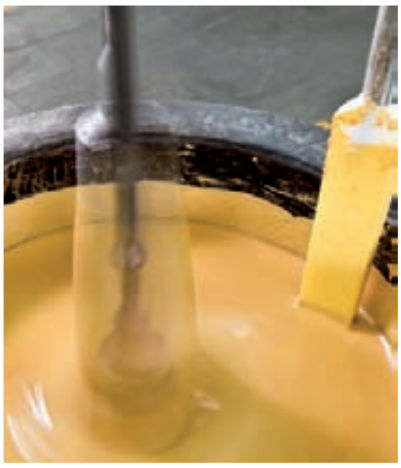
Alfredo Mira Monerris inherited this business from his great-grandparents, who opened it in 1893. His passion for the history and traditions that surround these products is evident in their quality. He believes that, "Superior Jijona turrón has an exquisite texture and homogenous finish from the sugar being so intimately mingled with the other ingredients." Now with two shops, in the summer they sell artisanal ice cream.
www.monerris.com

Turrón Primitivo Rovira e Hijos, Pamplona.

Primitivo's family has been making turrón in a small factory in the center of Jijona since 1850. Turn-of-the-century equipment and generations of experience help make his turrón unique in texture and flavor. The Pamplona shop opened in 2002 also sells artisanal ice cream.
www.turronesprimitivo.com

turrón makers left Jijona to sell their wares in the rest of the country, often directly from carts or temporary stands set up on street corners, doorways or marketplaces. Every person I spoke with here emphasized the fact that people from this town have always had a deeply ingrained entrepreneurial spirit and fortitude. Although many vendors focused on Spanish cities like Barcelona and Madrid, others traveled as far away as Europe, North Africa, South America, and particularly Cuba, where some intrepid *Jijonencos* even set up factories. Today, exporting turrón from Jijona is still an important and growing part of the business. According to the regulatory council, between 2009 and 2010, the production of Jijona and Alicante turrón destined for export outside the European Union grew by 34.62%, with total exports of almost 600 metric tons.

Turrón exports used to be directed almost entirely at Spanish-speaking countries or Spaniards living abroad. According to Don Harris, the owner of La Tienda, a well-known importer of Spanish products to the United States where he sells around 34,000 turrón tablets a year, "Our customers are about a third Spaniards. Many families came in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and have been here for generations. Around another third are people who have visited or lived in Spain... Latinos are also enthusiastic customers." This market, however, is



expanding. Almendra y Miel currently exports to 41 countries including destinations in Europe, Latin America, the United States, China and the Middle East. Mira y Llorens exports 13% of its turrón to many of the same markets. Pablo Garrigós, who has been exporting for 23 years, considers his approach as somewhat atypical, looking away from Spanish-speaking countries and towards places like Kuwait where, "the link between turrón and Christmas doesn't exist." This results in a whole new set of challenges, including changing traditional formats and trying to explain the product to people who are unfamiliar with it. Antonio Torrents, Sales Director of Enrique Garrigós Monerris, a company that produces approximately 1,200 tons of turrón a year, says that some of the most interesting markets are the Middle East and India, where people are already "big consumers of almonds and honey and therefore understand the product." In any case, it's clear that opening the export market to new places has made it possible to expand sales and production long past the holiday season.

Beyond Jijona

With such a long history in Spain, it's natural that the turrón tradition should extend to other corners of the country. The town of Agramunt, in Lérida (Catalonia, northeast Spain), has its own history of turrón that, according to oral tradition, can be traced back for several hundred years. The oldest written mentions of Agramunt turrón, or *torró D'Agramunt* as it is called in Catalan, appear in some letters written in 1741 by one of the town's most noble families. These letters describe the number of people dedicated to each of the town's trades and document the fact that turrón making was the

most widely practiced occupation in Agramunt at the time.
As opposed to other turrón, this hard confection must be made entirely by hand. The honey is slowly cooked, either alone or combined with sugar, and then stiffly beaten (also unique) egg whites are added to the caramel colored mass, turning it white. Finally, toasted peeled hazelnuts (or occasionally almonds) are added and stirred until perfectly distributed throughout the mixture. The "dough" is scooped onto a floured table to be divided into the portions needed for the traditional round tablets that are pressed between two wafers.
There are currently four companies that make PGI Agramunt turrón. The largest of these is Turrónes Vicens, a family operation that has been making these traditional sweets since 1775. They didn't stop there, however. Today, the company produces around 80 different varieties of the most innovative turrón I've ever seen. In addition to endless versions of the classic Agramunt turrón, others are dipped completely or partially in white, milk or dark chocolate, or covered in pistachios, gold "leaf", orange slices, pineapple or fluffy coconut. There are traditional-style turrón with surprising centers of brownies, cherries soaked in Kirsch, coffee praline or macadamia nuts, and the list goes on. Company owner, Ángel Velasco, is said to be a creative

genius when it comes to inventing new flavors of turrón, and truly, these artistic and delicious combinations couldn't be the result of anything less.
The company is on the verge of opening a hands-on museum dedicated to the history and production of Agramunt turrón. Additionally, it owns several specialty boutiques, including one in Barcelona's famed Boqueria Market. Exports, which account for 20% of sales, are primarily destined for the European Union, followed by Miami, Brazil, Switzerland, India, the United Arab Emirates and Latin America.

Innovating the future

Whether talking about turrón from Alicante, Jijona, Agramunt, or anywhere else, their importance as a holiday tradition is indisputable. Almost all turrón consumption in Spain takes place from mid-December to early January, and many factories operate only during the three or four months prior. Although the expanding export market is helping overcome the seasonal nature of this business, companies still face the challenge of convincing Spaniards that turrón is delicious all year round.
One way to accomplish this is by sparking consumer interest through innovative approaches to products and formats. Pablo Garrigós emphasizes the need for continual innovation, from the packaging—which he revamps every ten years—to the product itself. An example of this is his collaboration with the University Miguel Hernández in Elche to study the enrichment of sugar-free Jijona turrón with an all-natural probiotic and high fiber substance called inulin, which is extracted from wild chicory roots. He's also a big proponent of the nutritional benefits of turrón as a natural, high-energy food that has been eaten by climbers on the slopes of Mounts Kilimanjaro and Everest.

To this end, he collaborated in a course at the University of Alicante in 2009, which addressed the advantages of turrón for athletes. Innovation and product development is also vital at Almendra y Miel. This company, which produced a staggering 1,592 tons of turrón in 2010, is perhaps better known by its incredibly familiar brand names: El Lobo and 1880. Founded in 1725, it's currently run by the tenth generation of the sam family. Despite this deep-rooted heritage and high production level, its respect for past traditions is evident in its dedication to the industry's future. In the words of Sagrario Sirvent, "The future will depend on our company's ability to grow and innovate, as well as ensure value and set ourselves apart so that the public believes in and chooses our products." This juxtaposition of old and new is apparent upon visiting the company's installations in Jijona. The building's entrance is a wall of glass that casts light into the glossy modern lobby, graced by a lavish crystal chandelier, boldly patterned sofas and antique photographs of turrón makers.
On one side, a heavy wooden door welcomes people into the informative Turrón Museum, which, in addition to its incredible collection of antique photographs, tools and other historic items, offers visitors the opportunity to view the working factory below. According to Sagrario, the company's most popular product overall is Alicante turrón. However, she believes that market trends and consumer interest in trying new things has made research and development in their in-house laboratory a key part of their strategy. They have recently launched

a new line called Imperial 1880 and Crema 1880, hard and soft turrón that are mingled with exotic flavors like saffron, salt, thyme, papaya and squash. (I've tried the papaya. It's delicious). Another product is the Turrón Cream, which is a liquid version of Jijona turrón that is recommended for cooking and baking.

Another burgeoning trend is the creation of modern boutiques intended to entice people into eating turrón year-round. In the Gourmet Experience section of the Alicante Corte Inglés, I stopped by Concept, a "sweet and chic" store set up by Henedina Garrigós. In addition to turrón-flavored ice cream, a traditional summer product, this New York-style shop has a selection of delicious cupcakes, muffins and cakes that creatively combine turrón with chocolate, fruit and other flavors.

Almendra y Miel recently opened a luxurious boutique in Valencia called Espacio 1880, where it sells premium 1880 products packaged in sleek black boxes and elegant gift assortments. Last spring, the store hosted a party under the motto, "No one can tell you when or how", featuring a unique way to enjoy turrón year-round: in cocktails! Made with the company's liquid turrón, the featured cocktails included combinations like Chocolate Jijona turrón with turrón truffle foam and a touch of pineapple, and Red fruit fusion with white chocolate turrón truffle foam and coconut.

Aside from these foodie boutiques, the industry is making an effort to involve some of Spain's most famous chefs in promoting gastronomic applications for turrón that go beyond the holidays. In May 2011,

the Regulatory Board of Jijona and Alicante Turrón hosted a cooking show event that featured top Spanish chefs Quique Dacosta (two Michelin stars), Martín Berasategui (three Michelin stars), Jacob Torreblanca and Paco Morales (one Michelin star), preparing dishes using turrón. To emphasize the strong ties between Spanish haute cuisine and turrón, Enrique Garrigós Monerris created a special line of turrón called Maestro Turrónero, in collaboration with chef Martín Berasategui.

I also spoke with chef José Manuel Varó of Maestral Restaurant in Alicante, who has been using Jijona turrón in a variety of dishes for many years. Past examples of this are his Terrine of foie gras and turrón and Beef tenderloin with Jijona turrón cream sauce. Varó is not the only chef in Alicante to incorporate this sweet into his dishes. Last year, Almendra y Miel compiled a cookbook featuring stunning recipes from the area's most innovative chefs. Contributions include: Strange leaves, by Quique Dacosta, which calls for olives, ham fat, truffle and hazelnut oils, avocado and turrón; Scallop with turrón, eggplant and smoked saffron air, by María José San Román of Monastrell Restaurant; and Shrimp with guacamole, black olives and turrón milk, by Paco Morales of Hotel Ferrero.

Despite the steadiness of the Spanish market, supported by a population that is hopelessly in love with this traditional product, and the growing appreciation for it in the rest of the world, Spanish turrón makers are not resting on their laurels. Instead, they're seducing the public with innovative and tempting new products, formats, shops and gastronomic experiences, enticing people here and abroad to embrace this Spanish national treasure 365 days a year.

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Visit our website, www.foodsfrom spain.com, in whose Products and Recipes section you'll find comprehensive information about Spanish products.

Manuel
de la Osa*

Translation
Synonyme.net/©ICEX

Photos, recipes
Toya Legido
and Tomás Zarza/©ICEX

The wines have been selected by Víctor Moreno, the restaurant and wine manager at the Las Rejas restaurant.

TURRÓN ICE CREAM with cinnamon and lime

(Helado de turrón con canela y lima)

The tradition of turrón sellers on the street during village festivals is something that always comes to mind when I work with this magnificent product.

SERVES 4

For the turrón ice cream: 600 g / 1 lb 5 oz Jijona turrón; 800 g / 3 1/2 cup cream; 200 g / 3/4 cups milk; 80 g / 3 oz procrema (ice cream stabilizer).

For the citrus soup: 2 limes; 2 lemons; 15 g / 1/2 oz sugar; 6 mint leaves; alginate.

For the cinnamon air: 125 g / 1/2 cup TPT syrup; 100 g / 1/2 cup water; 2 cinnamon sticks; lecithin.

Turrón ice cream
Mix the cream and milk with the turrón and heat until the turrón has melted, then set to one side to cool. Add the procrema and mix well. Refrigerate for 24 hours.

Citrus soup
Squeeze the lemons and limes and infuse with the mint in the fridge. Add the alginate and strain.

Cinnamon air
Infuse the liquids with the cinnamon, allow to cool, add the lecithin and emulsify.

To serve
Add a little crumbled turrón to a bowl and place a quenelle of ice cream on top. Pour the citrus soup into the bowl. Top the ice cream with the cinnamon air.

Preparation time
40 minutes

Recommended wine
Finca Antigua Moscatel, from Bodega Finca Antigua. The creaminess of the ice cream, countered by the acidic touch of the citrus soup, makes this sweet wine the perfect accompaniment for this dish.

*For a more in-depth look at the chef, see Close-up

TURRÓN WITH FOIE GRAS, fennel and seasonal herbs

(Turrón con foie gras, hinojo y hierbas del momento)

The village and the surrounding area are covered in fennel, and its pleasant perfume drifts into the houses where, in this particular recipe, it blends perfectly with the foie gras and the *turrón*.

SERVES 4

4 50 g / 2 oz pieces of micuit duck foie gras; 2 raspberries; balsamic vinegar reduction; salt; pepper; fennel sprouts and flowers.

For the turrón praline: 100 g / 3 1/2 oz DO Jijona turrón; 10 g / 2 tsp sunflower oil.

For the fennel bath: 150 ml / 2/3 cups of liquidized fennel; 0.8 g / 0.03 g of kappa carrageenan (gelatine).

Turrón praline

Crumble 50 g / 2 oz of turrón and, using a spatula, mix thoroughly with the sunflower oil. Set to one side.

Fennel bath

Mix the liquidized fennel and the kappa carrageenan in a saucepan and heat to 70ºC / 158ºF. Remove from the heat and cool to 50ºC / 122ºF. Meanwhile, place the foie gras on a wire rack, season with salt and pepper and coat each piece with a thin layer of the fennel mixture. Set to one side.

To serve

Decorate the plate horizontally with the turrón praline, and place the coated piece of micuit foie gras in the center of the praline mixture. Cut a few slices of turrón, quarter the raspberries and place on the plate. Drizzle with the balsamic vinegar reduction and top with the fennel sprouts and flowers.

Preparation time

30 minutes

Recommended wine

Cuvee Cecilia (DO Manchuela), from Bodega Finca Sandoval in the DO Manchuela. This sweet red wine from Víctor de la Serna, prepared using a late harvest of Syrah and Muscatel grapes and aged for five years, has notes of red fruits and walnuts, a perfect match for items such as foie gras and turrón.

Manuel
de la Osa

Text
Almudena Muyo/©ICEX

Photos
Tomás Zarza and
Toya Legido/©ICEX

Translation
Hawys Pritchard/©ICEX

Quintessentially QUIXOTIC

Las Rejas, a Michelin-starred restaurant in Las Pedroñeras (Cuenca, central-eastern Spain), is regarded by many as a pilgrimage destination. The dishes prepared in Manuel de la Osa's kitchen are tantamount to eloquent odes to this, his native area of Spain. Prime ingredients of top-most quality are treated with the respect they deserve—always recognizable, never disguised or distorted by textures or flavors not intrinsically their own. His talent for rediscovering and renovating the basic principles of La Mancha's cuisine and giving it universal relevance has earned him his own personal niche in the food firmament.

Manuel de la Osa is one of those eminently approachable people to whom interpersonal relations come naturally. He chats readily and interestedly, and one can easily picture him as the life and soul of those post-prandial conversations which, fuelled by a good dinner, keep us at the table long after the food has been devoured. These are hardly surprising qualities, given his background: he was born into a bar- and restaurant-owning family and brought up in the business, acquiring the skills on which he has built his career. De la Osa's professional experience goes back a long way, and he has absorbed and experimented with many influences en route. He is currently in the throes of redefining his cuisine. I get the impression that this course of action is the end result of much introspective analysis on his part. "The more I see of what goes on these days, the more straightforward and simple I want the food I serve at Las Rejas to be. I'm developing a deep interest in my home patch and its products, and in the local traditional approach to food handed down to me by my grandmother, mother and aunts… In the food world as a whole, we've reached a stage where everything is very 'samey': we sit down to eat and there are no clues as to what part of the country we're in. Somewhere along the way, truly local cuisine seems to have got lost; no matter where you go in Spain, you'll end up eating the same things. And I, for one, am starting to feel saddened and alarmed by this state of affairs."

His way of tackling the sadness and alarm has been to return to the essentials of Manchego cooking—not that he had ever lost sight of them, though "in the past I did stray rather far from my roots, which I now think was a mistake. I have to be more purist than ever in my approach to cooking. Forget the fireworks; I need to get back to a more natural approach. I spent over ten years experimenting with textures, spherifying, aerating and that sort of thing, developing one technique or another… I now know categorically that what I really want to do is to use local La Mancha products to make flavorful dishes that are simple but beautifully executed, with occasional grace notes to contribute complexity."

Manuel de la Osa gives me the impression of knowing exactly where he wants to take his cuisine. Even if he can't quite come up with a "concept", his head is teeming with ideas. "I'm embroiled in the details. Many of my dishes need tightening up to capture the flavors that are traditional to the cooking of this region—'Cervantine cuisine' (named after Miguel de Cervantes, 17th-century Spanish author of the classic novel *Don Quixote*)—while still accommodating more recent evolution." In short, then, his aim is a style of cuisine that is personal, typical of La Mancha, and cosmopolitan all at the same time. Or to put it another way, the sort of food for which he is famous, but with flavor given even greater prominence.

Dynastic skills

Manuel's current stance is based on a lifetime's accumulated experience: he has been cooking professionally for over 30 years and, within the context of the traditional family business, acquiring the many skills involved since the day he was born. He has a fund of childhood memories, often to do with food and feeding people: "My father had several businesses in the village, Las Pedroñeras, including a bar. My earliest memories are of nipping between bar and kitchen, helping with the breakfasts, doing a bit of cooking, being sent out shopping. And my father used to love preparing all kinds of dishes for his pals: special occasions always involved a meal with lots of people around the table, having a good time. He saw it as one of life's pleasures." Manuel's uncles and grandparents, meanwhile, were dealers in fresh produce, so his gastronomic leanings were reinforced still further from that quarter. "When you're in constant contact with products such as saffron from La Mancha (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 81), honey from La Alcarria (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 78), garlic from Las Pedroñeras (see The Purple Rose of La Mancha, page 48), cheeses—Manchego and others (*Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 73, 74, 75), wine… you learn how things should smell and how to enjoy their flavors; it's the sort of training that money can't buy, a unique and continuous learning experience from early childhood onwards."

His student days in Cuenca were largely dedicated to going to restaurants and observing how they set their tables, presented their dishes and designed their menus. He returned to Las Pedroñeras having hatched a scheme to transform the bar into a sort of *mesón* (an informal, rustic restaurant). "I fitted out the central area with little tables, arranged farming implements and other rural bits and pieces about the place by way of décor, and served simple, regional cuisine, presented in earthenware dishes so that customers could share servings of *pisto* (a ratatouille-like mixture of tomato, green pepper, onion and zucchini), *gachas* (a farinaceous staple made of grass-pea flour and used in various recipes), *migas* (moistened bread fried with red pepper, chorizo and pork belly) and so on, with local color very much at the fore."

Manuel de la Osa's friendly gaze softens still further with nostalgia as he tells the story of how a film provided the nudge forward that he needed to launch what has turned out to be a long and influential career. "They were filming *Flesh+Blood* (entitled *Los señores del acero* in Spanish, directed by Paul Verhoeven in 1985) in a little place near here called Belmonte, and the whole crew used to come to my mesón for dinner every evening. We all got on very well together, and either they would order something in particular, or I would come up with something different every day. In the circumstances, and being self-taught, I thought I

needed a young person with more technical skills in the kitchen to complement the traditional cuisine that was my territory." In fact, he ended up hiring a young chef with great technical experience—a tradition that he still upholds today. As he himself learned new techniques, he also pursued his enthusiastic interest in the intellectual and sensory aspects of gastronomy, visiting different cultures and their restaurants, analyzing their different attitudes to food, reading and collecting relevant publications and attending countless conferences.

The knowledge gained in the process found expression on the menu at Las Rejas down the years, contributing to the evolution of a "signature cuisine" that was unfailingly impeccable and delicious and characterized by its skilful juxtaposition of the quintessentially Manchego and the universal, present in varying proportions from dish to dish. This highly personal approach has earned him a Michelin star and many awards, Spain's National Gastronomy Prize for Best Chef in 1998 (awarded by the *Academia Española de Gastronomía* and the *Cofradía de la Buena Mesa*) being a particularly prestigious one. His *sopa de ajo morado de Las Pedroñeras* (Las Pedroñeras purple garlic soup) showcases his style perhaps better than any other dish. Whether eaten cold (see page 62) or hot, this timeless dish transcends the category of star recipe to qualify as an unmissable gastronomic experience.

Culinary arts

As I marvel at the smooth subtlety of the *mantequilla con ceniza de ajo* (garlic ash butter) that I've just been served as an appetizer, Manuel declares that he enjoys his own company, and that one of his favorite things is the two-hour walk he takes every morning through the pine forests near his village. "It's a time when one can think over what one's been reading and doing, a time for posing questions and finding answers, because one's relaxed. That's quite often when I reshape some of my dishes, or think up new ones. When I'm back in the kitchen, I try and translate what I've seen inside my head into reality. Anything that involves the latest techniques I leave to the youngsters, and I've always got somebody beside me at the stove who's adept at that sort of thing. That's how I started off, and that's how I'll continue."

My visit to Las Rejas coincides with the first few days in harness of its new head chef, Luís Contreras, former colleague of Grant Achazt at the 3-Michelin-star Alinea restaurant in Chicago. I wonder whether he had a hand in the palate-awakening *queso manchego con verduritas* (Manchego cheese with baby vegetables—an intensely flavored dish whose acidic edge is balanced, and whose overall effect is lightened, by the organic vegetables) that I sample next. More than likely, I should think. It is certainly conceptually on-message, as Manuel likes those who work with him to be.

Young chefs with innovative ideas and a traditionally rooted repertoire of recipes sounds like an unlikely mix, yet the resultant cuisine is charged with nuance, surprise and sensory impact. The key to all this is perhaps the huge capacity for excitement that Manuel still retains, despite what many years in the profession might have done to deprive him of it. "I'm very easily excited by small details, by smells and tastes. I was in the patio at home a little while ago, when a smell of open fire and homemade *sofrito* (the gently fried onion, garlic and tomato mixture that is the basis of so many dishes) wafted by me, and it struck me that these smells are unrepeatable—there's nothing else like them. That's why I'm intent on capturing them, getting at their essence, to prevent their being lost."

He works at it assiduously, tracking down old recipe books and tapping into folk knowledge by chatting with local shepherds, farmers and old ladies. What he wants to know is how their diet varied according to the time of year, what products they ate, how they were cooked or prepared… "Just think, the villages where my two grandmothers were born—Villarrobledo (Albacete, central-southeast Spain) and Las Pedroñeras (Cuenca)—are less than 30 km (18.6 mi) apart, yet there are considerable differences between their culinary customs," Manuel

explains, to give me some idea of the scale of the task that he seems to have been engaged in all his life in some form or other, and is now tackling with a new intensity. "Unless we learn about our traditions, and find out how things were done by our forefathers, we'll never produce contemporary cooking of quality. We need that history, that culture and that tradition as our foundations," he declares conclusively.

Produce of La Mancha

This indefatigable gastronomic explorer is now focusing his attention on producing cuisine that is at once more Manchego than ever (if that were possible), out of the ordinary and global in its appeal. Using local products is a key principle, and La Mancha's repertoire is, as he points out, virtually inexhaustible: "Few places can count on local supplies of such variety and quality as Castile-La Mancha. "We were talking earlier about saffron, garlic, honey, cheese and wine, which are the most obvious ones, but there are plenty more: game and its derivatives (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 79), eggplant from Almagro (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 83), almonds from the Sierra del Segura (Albacete), olive oils, marzipan from Toledo (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 82), La Mancha melons (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 61), cured ham, Pan de Cruz bread from Ciudad Real (central-southern Spain) and Manchego lamb and suckling pig. These products are an inspiration to me and provide the basis of traditional cooking with their flavors of scrubland, smoke and open fire." And these are precisely the aromas I inhale when the *lechón con fritada, manzana, membrillo y jugo* (suckling pig with *fritada*—a Manchego tomato-based dish of fried onions, zuchini and peppers—apple, quince and jus) is brought to the table. The meat is delicious, tender and silky, and the whole dish a beautifully managed exercise in contrasts, with delicate sweetness juxtaposed with richer, more intense sweetness and acidic, salty notes and, most importantly, all orchestrated to harmonize with the main ingredient. Not a false note is struck in the whole ensemble.

Manuel tells me that that there have been times when he has been tempted to expunge fish and seafood from his menu, but "I come from a family of great enjoyers, the kind sort of people that always drank good wines and, many years ago, brought in oysters by the basketful. Meals on special occasions always involved seafood and/or fish—in other words, products that didn't exist here in Las Pedroñeras." Nostalgia for those times generates evocative dishes such as *Ostra merengada* (Oyster meringue) and *Rape con tocino ibérico, setas, tripas de bacalao y crema de coliflor* (Monkfish with ibérico pork belly, wild mushrooms, cod tripe and cauliflower cream)—a dish whose powerful flavors are counterbalanced by the touch of sweetness contributed by the smooth cauliflower cream.

After cooking with Manchego products for so many years, it occurs to me to wonder whether Manuel has ever been tempted to market products under his own name. He assures me that he has collaborated with everyone who has approached him about that sort of thing: "I've developed, or helped with the development of, certain foodstuffs, but I'm not really commercially minded, and anyway I haven't got the time." His most direct involvements are in the wine world (he owns a winery that bears

his name), and in garlic-growing (he supports the PGI Ajo Morado de Las Pedroñeras). Meanwhile, there have been many invitations to set up in business in the wider world beyond Las Pedroñeras—in some of the European capitals, as a matter of fact —but he insists that he feels more at ease amid the landscapes he loves, with their quality of light, wide open spaces, charming people… His only adventure, if it qualifies as such, is Ars Natura, his restaurant in Cuenca: the style of cooking matches that of Las Rejas but is more accessible, with prices that reflect the current economic state of affairs.

Fortress Las Rejas

Manuel de la Osa seems to have made his restaurant, Las Rejas, into an extension of himself. Situated in the oldest part of the village, it occupies the building that used to be his grandfather's winery. Pieces of equipment from this earlier incarnation contribute a certain period dignity to a generically Manchego décor with some modern features. A life-sized wire sculpture of Don Quixote and a lithograph by Salvador Dalí greet people at the entrance to the dining rooms, which are rather understated, with very little by way of decorative detail, the unusual design and vivid blue and red of the water glasses standing out against their simplicity. In the new dining room, opposite the kitchen, the atmosphere is different: there are no rural references in this airy, minimalist space, where the overall impression is of wood, whiteness, and play of light.

A delicious *té de río* (watermint tea) is served during the pause before dessert; I realize that, unusually for me, I have been noticing that the generously spaced tables are stylishly set with elegantly functional crockery and cutlery. The dining room staff move unobtrusively among them, friendly, efficient and attentive to just the right degree. When the desserts arrive, it becomes clear that these, too, are an area of interest for Manuel de la Osa: like everything else on his menu, they reflect the current season. By the time we reach the coffee stage, we are exchanging personal confidences, and he tells me proudly that both his sons are starting to show an interest in "this cooking business:" one is currently work-shadowing him, and the other, a student at the moment, will be joining the family business when he qualifies. Manuel's wife, Flor, is involved in it, too, having given up her job teaching to help in the day-to-day running of the restaurant. Well organized and perfectionist, her touch is discernible down to the smallest detail. She is the perfect complement for Manuel, whose personality combines elements of both Don Quixote (highly imaginative, idealistic, undaunted by obstacles, a firm believer in perfectibility) and his down-to-earth henchman, Sancho Panza. A Man of La Mancha indeed.

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The LORE of the Land

Twenty-five estates and their 25 respective wineries all share a common purpose: to produce wines that express the combination of soils, climate and grape varieties that makes each of their *terroirs* unique. From their position at the apex of the quality pyramid, these wines are claiming a place for Spain among the great wines of the world.

TEXT
ALMUDENA MARTÍN RUEDA/©ICEX

PHOTOS
GRANDES PAGOS DE ESPAÑA

TRANSLATION
HAWYS PRITCHARD/©ICEX

Among my background reading for this report on the Grandes Pagos de España was a list of the association's constituent wineries. As name followed name, it dawned on me that these were the makers of many of my favorite wines. And when I say "favorite", I don't just mean wines that I like more than most, but ones the very first taste of which I still remember: the Mediterranean quality of Santa Rosa (Enrique Mendoza), the astonishing complexity of Quincha Corral (Mustiguillo), the elegance of Señorío de Arínzano, the mineral edge of Alonso del Yerro, the amazing scent and floweriness of Art (Luna Beberide), the crispness of Secastilla, the delicacy of Gramona's cavas, the vigor of San Román (Maurodos), the expressiveness of Finca Valpiedra… I can still recall my first impression of nearly all of them. And that's precisely the point of this association, made up of a group of wineries that are motivated by a profound respect for their soils and grape varieties and, consequently, make wines that are unique and have what can only be described as having "personality" —a quality sometimes sadly lacking in international winegrowing circles. Carlos Falcó, president of Grandes Pagos de España, describes its purpose with admirable clarity: "What we're doing is playing at diversity: we have wines made by 25 *bodegueros* that represent a broad range of climates, soils, people and approaches to winemaking. And it's terrific."

What is a *pago*?

Grandes Pagos de España came into being in the 1990s, initially in the guise of Grandes Pagos de Castilla, founded by five estate winemakers in Castile-La Mancha and one in Castile-Leon. Spain's new wine laws were being formulated at that time and, although they would not be published until 2003, the creation of *Vinos de Pago* was already being contemplated. The Spanish word *pago* is derived from the Latin *pagus*, meaning "expanse of land", in the sense of what today we would call an estate. According to the official definition, vinos de pago are wines produced within the area covered by a designation of origin and derived from particular parts of its territory that possess specific qualities as regards soil and microclimate that endow wines made there with distinctive characteristics. For a wine to be categorized officially as a Vino de Pago, there has to be demonstrable evidence that the name of the estate and its wine have attracted consistent recognition in the marketplace for five years or longer, and a comprehensive program for monitoring grape-growing, winemaking, ageing and bottling must be put in place. Not all Spain's Autonomous Communities, with whom responsibility for enforcing the wine laws lies, have incorporated this classification level, which is equivalent to designation of origin; in fact, only Castile-La Mancha and Navarre have done so.

However, there are associates of Grandes Pagos de España (which changed its name in 2003 when new members from other parts of the country joined) in regions other than the two that allocate DO status to certain estates. Carlos explains the difference: "We don't mind whether our associates have DO status or not. For us, it's more important for them to have enjoyed international prestige for over 5 years; to have won a place on the wine lists of top-flight restaurants in countries that we consider important markets; and to have been mentioned in articles in the press and in influential dining out guides and the like," going on to cite North America's *The Wine Advocate* and Spain's *Guia Peñin*, *Guía Repsol* and elmundovino.com as examples. The main prerequisite is, of course, that the grapes come from a clearly identified, freehold estate—with the occasional exception of very specific varieties grown under contract and monitored by the winery—and that the winery itself must be located either on the actual estate or within one km (0.6 mi) of it. In short, a pago is a conjunction of four factors within one single estate: soil, climate, grape varieties and winemaker. "These four factors can produce an infinite number of variants. Given the same estate, the same grape varieties and the same climate, no two winemakers

From left to right, top to bottom: Gramona, Maurodos, Recaredo, Aalto, Alonso del Yerro, Pago de Vallegarcía, Abadía Retuerta, Cérvoles Celler, Finca Valpiedra, Valdespino, Enrique Mendoza, Marqués de Griñón, Secastilla, Dehesa del Carrizal, Mauro, Mustiguillo, Mas Doix, Finca Sandoval, Luna Beberide, Calzadilla, Bodega del Jardín, Can Ràfols dels Caus, Fillaboa, Señorío de Arínzano

will make the same wine." This explains why the word "personality" crops up again and again in the course of this interview. "A true wine-lover likes every year to be different—for some years to be great and for that to show in the wine; for the wine to reflect the *terroir*, the mineral quality of the soil, the direction in which its slopes face… In other words, personality and distinctiveness." The area of land known as Pago de Vallegarcía, situated amid scrubland in Ciudad Real province (La Mancha, central Spain) provides a good example. It's a unique plot, the scrubland having been shaped by erosion effected by centuries of rainfall on the Montes de Toledo into what is now a flat area located at an altitude of nearly 900 m (2,953 ft). On this soil, which is acidic and poor, this winery has the vineyard from which oenologist Adolfo del Horno produces an interesting and original Viognier, a spicy, flavor-packed Syrah, and Hipperia, a forceful red with pronounced mineral features. For the most part, the association is made up of wineries that specialize in reds. Given that Spain's white wines can be regarded as something of an also-ran on some foreign markets, I'm intrigued by a Spanish white that can hold its own among some of the best wines in the world. Fillaboa, a winery within DO Rías Baixas (Galicia, northwest Spain), works exclusively with the local, highly aromatic native variety, Albariño. The estate fulfils all of one's expectations of a prototypical pago: 50 ha (124 acres) of vineyard with the winery right at its center. They make two wines here: Fillaboa, a *coupage* representing the various named plots within the estate, and Fillaboa Finca Monte Alto, a vino de pago. Monte Alto is a special plot: 5.6 ha (13.8 acres) of vines planted 26 years ago on a little eminence raised above the rest of the estate. The soil, composed of sand and pebbles (far from usual in this region), effectively retains the moisture and warmth that the plants need. Because it is southward facing, the vines enjoy the benefit of sunshine from dawn to dusk. These two characteristics provide conditions in which Albariño grapes ripen perfectly, so that wine made from them benefits from their full potential. The expert hand of Isabel Salgado, who has been this winery's oenologist for the last 13 years, and whose professional career has been devoted to Albariño, completes a pretty unbeatable formula. Isabel leaves all her wines on the lees, especially Finca Monte Alto, for which lees contact lasts for at least 12 months: "It allows me to capitalize on Albariño's potential—all of its aromatic eloquence—to the full; but what I aim for most of all in Finca Monte Alto is good structure in the mouth." Fillaboa Finca Monte Alto exhibits fruity aromas typical of this variety, which, with ageing, acquire a candied fruit quality, complemented by flowery, spicy aromas. Rich, silky and long in the mouth, this is definitely a wine to add to my list of memorable first tastes.

Contact details

Associate wineries: Aalto, Abadía Retuerta, Alonso del Yerro, Bodega del Jardín, Calzadilla, Can Ràfols dels Caus, Cérvoles Celler, Dehesa del Carrizal, Enrique Mendoza, Fillaboa, Finca Sandoval, Finca Valpiedra, Gramona, Luna Beberide, Manuel Manzaneque, Marqués de Griñón, Mas Doix, Mauro, Maurodos, Mustiguillo, Pago de Vallegarcía, Recaredo, Secastilla, Señorío de Arínzano and Valdespino.

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The website contains contact details for all members (English, Spanish).

Promotion and image

The concept of the pago is far from new; indeed, this group of Spanish bodegueros took its inspiration from the success of models such as France's *grands crus*, a concept that has been emulated in northern Italy and on the banks of the Rhine in Germany. "Why," wonders Carlos "is a consumer in China ready to pay 1,000 euros for a bottle of a premier cru from Bordeaux?" He goes on to answer himself: "Firstly, because Bordeaux happens to have 300 years of history behind it, but also because those wines are guaranteed to have been made by artisan methods, using grapes from the estate, with the result they are never the same. Every year is different from the one before." Vinos de pago from those internationally hailed estates are selected for the wine lists of the world's top restaurants, and this is exactly the sort of target that Grandes Pagos de España has in its sights. Grandes Pagos was set up to demonstrate and prove the point that Spain also makes top-of-the-range single estate wines—a fact that has important image implications for Spain's wine sector as a whole. Admittedly, not all estates that would qualify for membership choose to belong to the association; and there are, of course, great Spanish wines that have no connection with it at all. Meanwhile, however, the member wineries continue to demonstrate their unwavering belief in the importance of the pago of origin. A couple of years ago I wrote a report for this magazine about the Bobal grape variety (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 77). By way of research, I paid a visit to one such estate, Mustiguillo, whose proprietor and oenologist, Toni Sarrión, succeeded in making me as enthusiastic about its old Bobal vines as he was. As we strolled around one of the plots, he explained how, in the early stages, he would attach a monitoring label to each plant to help him pinpoint the ideal stage of ripeness for harvesting. This close attention to detail seems to be another characteristic common to all the members. Indeed, Carlos himself admits that this very morning (our interview coincides with the start of the 2011 harvest) he has been out with his oenologist, Julio Mourelle, "picking grapes from different 'faces' of the vineyard, depending on their degree of ripeness: harvesting grapes doesn't get much more artisan than that!"
The range of grape varieties used is diverse to say the least: Grandes Pagos de España's wines feature both native Spanish (Albariño, Bobal, Cariñena, Garnacha, Monastrell, Mencía, Tempranillo, Tinta de Toro) and international (Viognier, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Syrah) grapes in both monovarietal wines and blends. "We also attach great importance to the soil and reflecting its properties. We use the variety that transmits them best. They are all varieties that have moved about historically, like Cabernet Sauvignon, which we've had in Spain since 1860, in Vega Sicilia, no less. The important thing is for that variety to pass on the soil's mineral quality, capturing the character of the terroir, so that your wine is different from your neighbor's."

In the eyes of the world

As an association, Grandes Pagos de España is not involved in selling wines: each winery sells independently, both at home and abroad. "Grandes Pagos organizes events, conducts tastings and manages image but, beyond that, each winery does its own work, handles its own sales and organizes its own logistics. There have been a few small-scale experimental attempts at marketing as a group, but for the moment we're still thinking about it," explains Beatriz Hernandez, manager of Grandes Pago de España. That being the case, the association stages promotional events for its wines in various parts of the world as an example of the diversity that Spain has to offer. In 2011, it organized guided tastings and presentations in the US, Canada, China, Norway and Switzerland, and plans are in place for future visits to Brazil and Mexico. "We're all heavily involved in the export world. I don't have an exact average, but I think I could safely say that over 50% of our trade is accounted for by exports, and that our joint target is to raise that to 80%," Carlos specifies.

At the various events organized by the association—guided tastings, fairs, showrooms, and so on—wines from all the member wineries are featured regardless of whether the bodeguero can be there or not, and whether or not he or she already has an importer in that particular market. Beatriz serves as brand ambassador and is always accompanied by a coterie of bodegueros who are almost as well-informed about other associates' wines as they are about their own. Guided tastings organized for invited audiences of professionals are often backed by ICEX and staged with the help of Wines from Spain staff in the destination country. Usually, such events are presented by Carlos Falcó and Victor de la Serna of Finca Sandoval; for many years the latter was one of Spain's foremost wine critics, before becoming a bodeguero himself with a reputation for being, to quote Carlos, "a walking wine encyclopedia." These occasions are seized as opportunities for trying out new approaches. "In Montreal," Carlos tells me, "we put on a tasting at which every drop of every brand of our wines that the monopoly had imported was sold. We made computers available both at the presentation and at the dinner that followed, so that people could place their orders there and then, as they tasted the wines. It was a fantastic experience: people drank our wines, liked them, and bought them, just like that!"

The synergistic benefits generated among the member bodegas represent another of Grandes Pagos de España's strengths. There are times when it's no picnic trying to coordinate family-scale wineries with estates owned by Spain's big wine groups, such as Secastilla, of the González Byass group. The partners meet at least twice a year to decide which markets to concentrate on and what actions to take, proposals having been submitted in advance by various committees. I was particularly fascinated to hear Carlos remark that these include an oenologists' committee. Given that its members are some of the biggest names in winemaking Spain, we know who to thank for the extraordinary quality of Grandes Pagos de España's wines.

Almudena Martín Rueda spent seven years in charge of promotional activity abroad for one of Spain's winegrowing DOs before joining Spain Gourmetour. *She has been its editorial coordinator for the past four years.*

PANAMA

Rosa María González from

The sun was setting over Panama City when I reached Orígenes and was ushered in. Musicians were just tuning up for the evening ahead. I took my time before settling at the tapas bar, having first been drawn, as if by a magnet, towards a sort of glass-walled treasure trove of wines, promising liquid bliss in the form of sparkling cavas, red wines from Navarre, La Rioja, perhaps even a taste of El Bierzo or an essence of Duero. It also seems to function as a frontier between the tapas areas and the more formal restaurant.
Little by little, while I reveled in a glass of one of my favorite Toros, bridging the gaps between sips with addictively delicious olives redolent of rosemary, the Tapas & Piano Bar of Orígenes Spanish Fusion came alive, warming to the Cuban rhythms and Spanish flavors that are a culinary motif of this restaurant—a representative of the new generation of Spanish businesses that are just one

Have a Spanish **Break!**

Text
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Hawys Pritchard/©ICEX

Photos
Orígenes

facet among many of the exciting gastro-destination that Panama has now become.
Like the synchronized double act composed of owner Alejandro Pérez (Cuban born, of Galician descent) and the astonishingly young and talented chef Cecilia Russo (Panamanian born, and with part of her training acquired in Spain before she joined the venture in 2009), Orígenes aims to amalgamate the multicultural culinary traits latent in this part of Central America and showcase them in different gastronomic settings under the conceptual umbrella of traditional Spanish cooking combined with mastery of modern techniques and subtly nuanced flavors borrowed from the Caribbean.
The tapas bar is one of the points of Orígenes' flavor triangle, its informal atmosphere evocative of *tascas* (traditional, rather rustic, bars/pubs) in Spain. The luxury element here is the menu in miniature devised by the famously dynamic Russo, and it is indeed a parade of treats, some classics, others more imaginative, like those gorgeous olives, and sizzling *chorizos al infierno* (pimentón sausages with piquillo peppers), and irresistible platters of Ibérico charcuterie that one just can't stop eating. And everything is given extra zing by live music every weekend, and recourse to a cold beer or a favorite Spanish wine at regular intervals.
Start with *patatas bravas* (chunks of fried potato with piquant tomato sauce) or *tortilla* (Spanish omelet), move on to little earthenware dishes of *callos a la madrileña* (Madrid-style tripe) or *gambas al ajillo* (prawns cooked in sizzling olive oil with chopped garlic and chili). Before you know it you're sampling tapas of paella, cured ham or salt-cod croquettes on a stick and eaten like a lollipop, a "hamburger" made of egg, Manchego cheese, alioli and piquillo pepper, or any one of a long list of baguette sandwiches from the most conventional to the frankly sophisticated. Tuna with *tapenade* (spreadable olive paste) and tomato preserve, anyone?
One of the most irresistible attractions of Orígenes and its tapas bar is its wine list, which offers attractive options by the glass, bottles representing all the winegrowing regions of Spain, and even some that are hard to get hold of in Spain itself. But my favorite feature is the exclusive selection known as "La Bodega de Orígenes," a concept thought up by Alejandro, who compiles a list featuring little-known wines alongside famous ones at fantastically good prices. Indeed, one of the aims of the restaurant and tapas areas is to encourage customers to drink more wine, and to provide them with opportunities for discovering new ones. And all this to the accompaniment of Cuban music, charming company and the taste of Spain that is the cornerstone of Creole cooking.
The Tapas & Piano Bar is a not-to-be-missed venue during a night out in Panama, and also something of a hub for the capital's Spanish contingent: the group gets bigger and livelier as the hours slip by, fuelled by familiar favorites. It opens early in the evening and closes at midnight, though it sometimes stays open as long as customers are inclined to stay.

Orígenes Spanish Fusion
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Panama City, Republic of Panama
www.origenespanama.com

***Rosa María González** is Spanish-born and raised in Puerto Rico, and writes about food, wine and travel for www.viajesyvinos.com, www.foodsfromspain.com and other publications in Latin America and Europe, such as* Magacín Lifestyle *and* Wine Style Brazil.

Visit our website, www.foodsfromspain.com, in whose Shop, Travel & Dine section you'll find a comprehensive list of Spanish restaurants, tapas bars and shops all over the world.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

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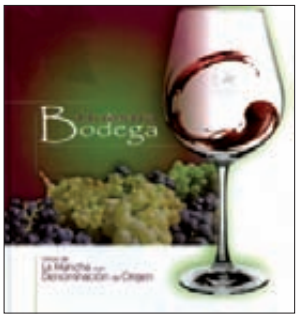

Nuestra bodega

(Our Winery) by the Regulatory Council of DO La Mancha. English, Spanish. This is the fifth edition of an indispensable text for wine lovers. *Nuestra bodega* offers up-to-date detailed information on the close to 200 wineries in the DO La Mancha. But this book offers more than just wine facts. The DO La Mancha's Regulatory Council has also included general information on the grapes and the types of wines typical to this region, as well as advice for tasting and preserving wines. It also provides extensive coverage of tourist and cultural sites. The wineries are organized by area and each has its own page with a photo, contact details, and a range of other information, including the size of the vineyards, average grape production, grape varieties, exports, bottling capacity, and awards. *(Regulatory Council of DO La Mancha, www.lamanchawines.com).*

Paella

by Alberto Herráiz. English. Finally, an all-you-need-to-know book on one of Spain's most delicious exports: paella, from a chef and author who has created a name for himself in the City of Light as the genius behind The Fogón Restaurant. His book is organized into sections, such as basic recipes, paellas on the stove, on the barbeque, sweet paellas and riceless paellas. The 108 recipes include Extra-fine paella rice "a banda" without the "banda", Sweet paella rice with apples and camembert, and Paella rice with crayfish, lemongrass and asparagus. It also covers info on the *sofrito* (an aromatic mixture of onions, garlic and tomato), sauces to be served with paella, and many other insights. Rounding off the text, Herráiz includes a glossary of paella words and a directory of where in the world to buy Spanish food products, including the US, the UK, Australia and Canada. *(Phaidon Press Limited, www.phaidon.com).*

Barrafina. A Spanish Cookbook

by Sam and Eddie Hart and Nieves Barragán Mohacho. English. Barrafina is a highly successful London-based tapas bar, and now the people behind it have published a book with its best-kept secrets. The rave reviews call it "Possibly the best Spanish cookbook ever." Four years going strong, Barrafina is still "packed, stylish and lively." It's a team of champions: the brothers and Basque chef Nieves Barragán Mohacho are wowing British palates with recipes like spicy Padron peppers, grilled razor clams, paella, salt cod fritters, Spanish omelet, cumin-rubbed pork with quince sauce, rabbit stew and roast suckling pig. This cookbook pays homage to their restaurant, with a selection of more than 120 recipes. The combination of step-by-step instructions with excellent photography makes this a great book to have on your kitchen shelf. *(Penguin Books Ltd, www.penguin.com).*

Plancha. 150 Great Recipes for Spanish-style Grilling

by Liliane Otal. English, French. The plancha, a metal slab heated over a gas flame, is an indispensable tool in every Spanish kitchen and—unsurprisingly—increasingly common elsewhere. With over 150 recipes, Otal's book is organized into sections: sauces and marinades (the anchovy butter, rum marinade, and "dog" sauce sound interesting), first course and vegetables (try the parmesan zucchini or the chorizo toast), fish and seafood (the garlic prawns and cilantro clams sound tasty), meat (rib eye with spicy marinade or lamb kidney, anyone?), poultry (how about that chicken churrasco or the spatchcocked capon), and dessert (tuck into the apple brioche or the fruit skewers). With simple to follow instructions and excellent photography, this book will help you cook up something your taste buds will thank you for. *(Éditions Sud Ouest, www.editions-sudouest.com).*

An Introduction. Basic Recipes from Ibérica

by Nacho Manzano, Cesáreo García, Neftalí Cumplido. English. Ibérica Food and Culture is a wildly popular London venue offering Spanish food and more. Now in two locations, Canary Wharf and Marylebone, it is indubitably "at the very center of Spanish cuisine and culture in the UK." The chefs behind Ibérica have published a small cookbook featuring some of their most popular recipes, reflecting the policy at Ibérica: complex dishes are not the name of the game, but, rather, the focus here is traditional dishes prepared using time-honored recipes. The book is organized into cold tapas (such as Fresh marinated sardines with tomato gazpacho and crispy Ibérico ham), hot tapas (Fried squid with alioli and lemon, for example), and main courses (Glazed pork belly with Málaga Virgen sweet wine and sautéed new potatoes). *(Ibérica Food and Culture, www.ibericalondon.co.uk).*

Spanish Cooking

by Miguel Maestre. English. Miguel Maestre is a top Spanish chef from Murcia (southeast Spain) who, after having worked in some of the best restaurants in the world and with several cooking ventures, restaurants and TV programs under his belt, has now found the time to come out with a new cookbook with his favorite Spanish recipes. The text, with a focus on "fresh ingredients, big flavors and artistic flair," is organized into the following sections: My Family (where he shares tales about his relatives), Meat (try the Roasted lamb with pine nuts and rosemary), Rice (Potato and fish broth with cuttlefish rice), Fish (Grilled lobster with Russian salad), Vegetables (Spicy artichokes and mushrooms, serve it up), and Mostly Chocolate (Cinnamon and chocolate torte with bananas and sherry compote), as well as an index of recipes. *(New Holland Publishers Pty Ltd, www.newholland.com.au).*

Vinos ecológicos. Guia Vinum Nature 2011

(Organic Wines. Vinum Nature Guide 2011) by Pablo Chamorro. Spanish. It's finally here: the first guide to Spanish organic/biodynamic wines and cavas. It covers more than 600 wines and cavas from more than 150 wineries, with information including: the wineries and companies that produce organic wines; an organic wine country catalog; definitions and explanations about this type of wine, sans the technical jargon; organic agriculture and organic and biodynamic vineyards; the role of organic wine in sustainable development; the current domestic and international market situation for this product; and scientific references, studies and tests which evidence the healthy properties of this product. While basic misconceptions exist about this segment, the truth is that these wines are not more expensive and "they express the terroir even more, with all the minerality and health properties of wine." *(Ecomundis Editorial, SL, www.ecomundis.com).*

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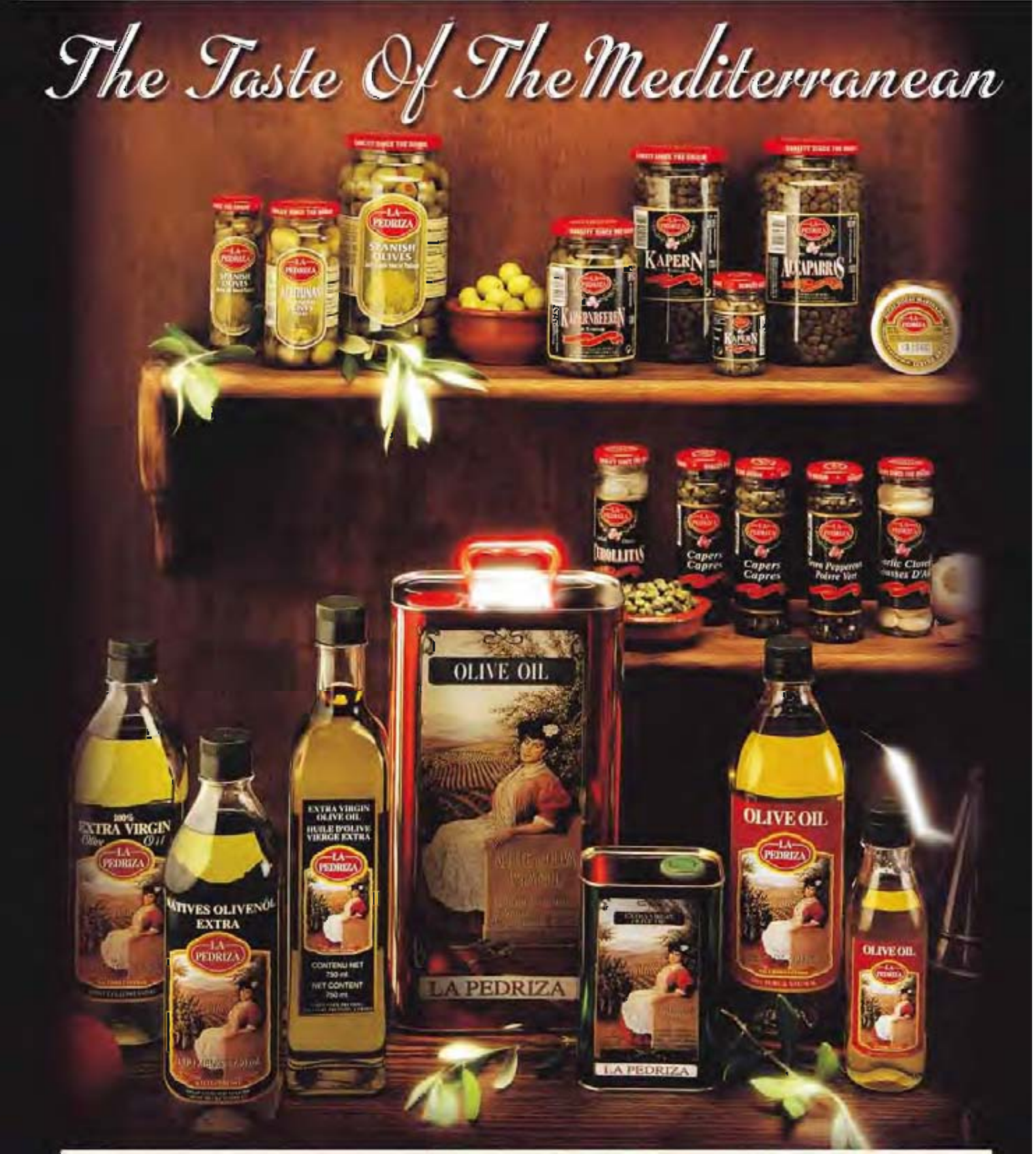

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