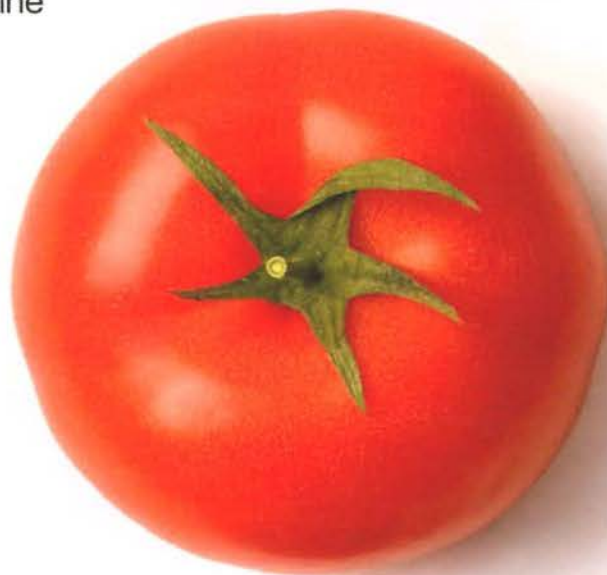


# SPAIN GOURMETOUR

Food, Wine & Travel Magazine

www.foodsfromspain.com



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DOCa Priorat.  
Nature's  
Mosaic

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Rice  
and Shine

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DO Rueda.  
Reviving  
Verdejo

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Spanish  
Breakfast

85

May-August  
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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# EDIT

New times, new approaches... And here at Spain Gourmetour we can't—and won't—get left behind. After 26 years of publishing the paper version of our magazine, we're moving with the times and preparing to channel our energies into reaching our readers more nimbly, quickly and comprehensively online via the [www.foodsfromspain.com](http://www.foodsfromspain.com) portal (page 4).

In this, our final printed issue, we look at products that are notable for their enduringly deep attachment to their origins and tradition, products such as bread and rice, which have undergone a clever process of renovation with end results that will appeal to our readers all over the globe. This issue serves as a link between the present and the future, specifically the dynamism of content that [www.foodsfromspain.com](http://www.foodsfromspain.com) represents. Our aim is for it to be readily accessible to all our readers and use this online platform to extend our catchment even further. In-depth reports on products and chefs, up-to-the-minute news and items of Spanish relevance from all over the world, and the gastronomic gen, hot from Spain, that will give your visits there that extra edge... All in all, quite a menu: it's accessible from wherever you are and designed to cater to your appetite for knowledge. So let's raise our glasses to the future, with a true Verdejo or a rich Priorat red to mark the occasion in style. We look forward to your visits to the portal where, more than ever, your comments and input to [www.foodfromspain.com](http://www.foodfromspain.com) will be most welcome. It's a resource that is as much yours as ours.

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# www.foodsfromspain.com

An à la carte menu, superb ingredients, delectable treats and other delicacies in the form of news and feature articles, gastronomic routes, upcoming events, blogs, videos, and more. ICEX (Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade) has launched in March its new Spanish Gastronomy Portal ([www.foodsfromspain.com](http://www.foodsfromspain.com)), providing users with full, up-to-date information on Spanish foods, a sort of virtual sampler menu.



It's been seven years now since the digital version of Spain Gourmetour made its first appearance—seven years since the publication, which aims to promote Spanish food products abroad, decided to showcase itself on the internet. And with time, the possibilities of the world wide web have multiplied even further, with a revolution in online communication resulting in concepts such as the Web 2.0, based on user participation and fast, effective information sharing.

Considering how powerful the internet has become as a tool for communication and promotion, we at *Spain Gourmetour* decided our web site needed to grow, mature and bear juicier, more appealing fruit. So 2011, the second year of a new decade in the Western calendar, marks the start of a new stage for [www.spaingourmetour.com](http://www.spaingourmetour.com). After almost three years of careful preparation, this new platform has been unveiled, sharing with its printed "sister" both goals and

requirements: to provide all the latest on Spanish foods in a reliable, thorough way with contemporary, eye-catching visuals. Creativity and graphics are trademarks of the new ICEX Gastronomy Portal. The design is fresh and crisp, with a selection of photos, videos and illustrations reflecting the wide-ranging flavors and aromas of Spanish food products and gastronomy. And users are able to find out all they need from the articles, fact sheets on products grown and made in Spain, interviews with well-known chefs, traditional and signature recipes, gastronomic itineraries covering many of the regions of Spain, and suggestions on where products can be bought and tasted in Spain and abroad.

## A well-fed website

Although the new portal mainly addresses professionals—food importers, chefs, retailers, hospitality schools, the media, etc.—the

openness of the internet allows us to reach all sorts of users. Each section covers a different type of content, with many cross-references. The homepage includes several sub-homes as well as direct links to the latest news, blogs, digital fora and a year-long food calendar marking all the gastronomic events in Spain and the rest of the world.

But the backbone of the Gastronomy Portal is the *Products & Recipes* section. This area provides detailed fact sheets on the main Spanish food products, including all those having a quality seal guaranteed by the European Union, specifically, Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographic Indication (PGI) and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG). Alongside this basket of products full of quality and flavor are recipes—traditional ones from all the regions of Spain, and new ones—with tapas and signature dishes devised by some of Spain's top chefs, illustrating the giant strides of avant-garde cuisine in recent years.



# CLICK

to taste

## Ideas, advice...

Where is Spain? How many regions are there? These and many other questions are answered in the section *Spain & Regions*, a user-friendly source of information about the country, with data on economic, social and cultural aspects and full information on regional gastronomy.

The *Doing Business* section is a juicy source of data for commercial users. A calendar features all the main food trade fairs where you can contact Spanish producers, with a full list of all legislation on the production and sale of Spanish products, directories of Spanish companies in the food sector, contact details of all of Spain's trade offices throughout the world and statistics on Spain's foreign trade in food products.

Users interested in keeping track of Spain's best-known chefs will like the *Chefs & Training* section. In it they will find profiles of more than 100 of Spain's star chefs, as well as videos explaining some of the traditional

and cutting-edge culinary techniques used in their restaurants. Users will also be able to take note of the dates and venues of the most important gastronomy congresses.

## ...and plenty of surprises

Are you planning a gastronomic tour of Spain? Do you need recommendations for places to eat in San Sebastian or Seville? Or maybe you live in New York or Melbourne but want to eat out Spanish-style or buy ingredients for a tapas meal at home. *Shop, Travel & Dine* will help you plan to perfection, with its culinary routes and information on restaurants, food stores, museums and gastronomic festivals in every corner of Spain. It also includes routes with a Spanish flavor in the main cities of the world and suggestions for places where you can try Spanish dishes and products in more than 20 countries. A cornucopia of data on Spain and its gastronomy is available in *Foodpedia*, a

small but comprehensive encyclopedia with collections of articles, the library of Spain Gourmetour's printed edition, a who's who of the most important people on the Spanish gastronomy scene, videos, interactives, a shelf full of books, a gastronomic glossary, etc. Behind all this content is a team committed to the task at hand and to the goals of the Gastronomy Portal. In addition to the coordination and editorial team in Madrid, we have a network of colleagues and correspondents in different Spanish cities and in the main Spanish food export markets, helping us keep users informed about the Spanish food and gastronomy scene. This is a pioneering, ambitious project with plenty of surprises in store. Follow the trail of our breadcrumbs throughout the culinary portal with just the click of your mouse. ¡Buen provecho!

*Rodrigo García Fernández is a journalist and member of the editorial team at [www.spaingourmetour.com](http://www.spaingourmetour.com).*



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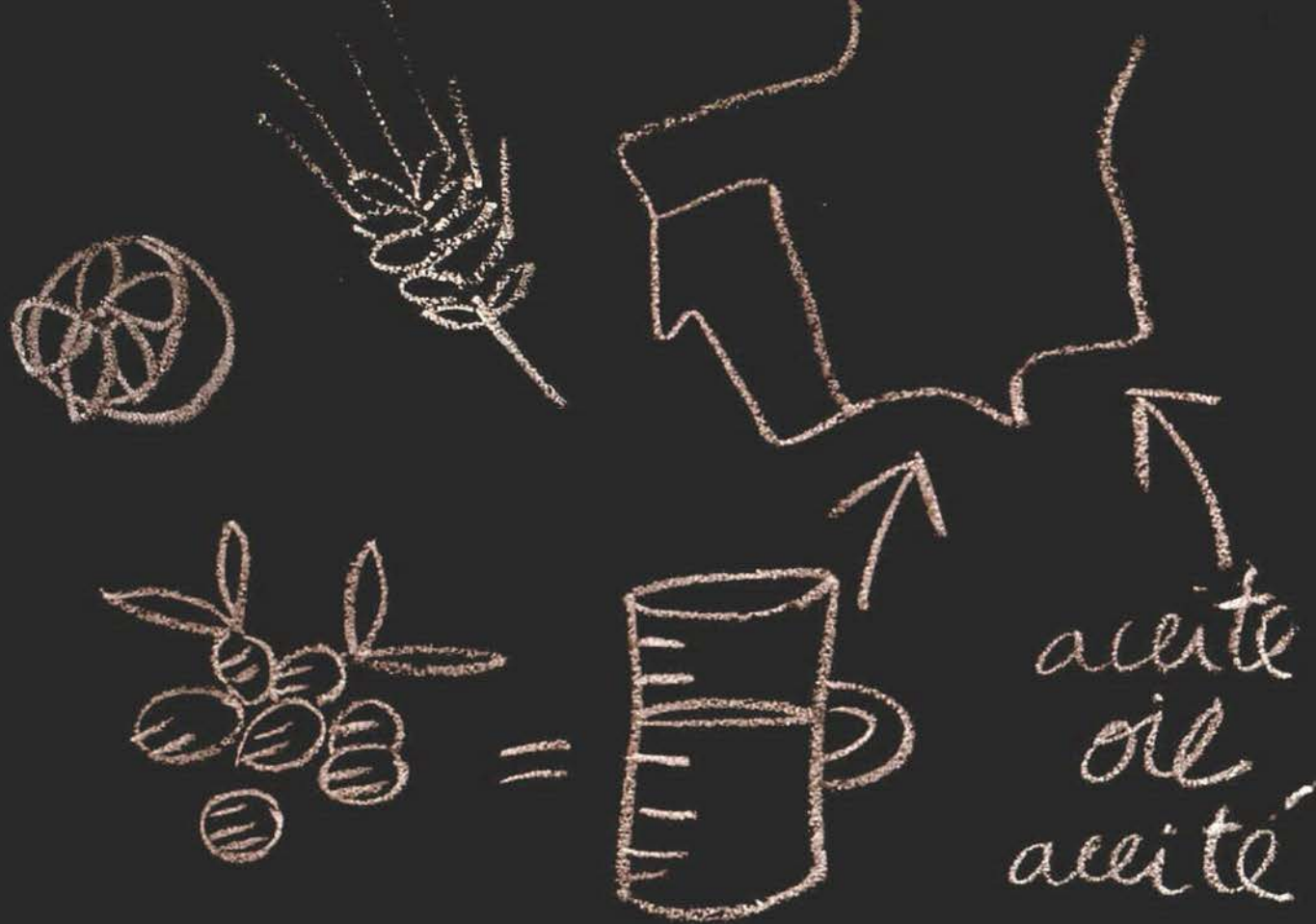
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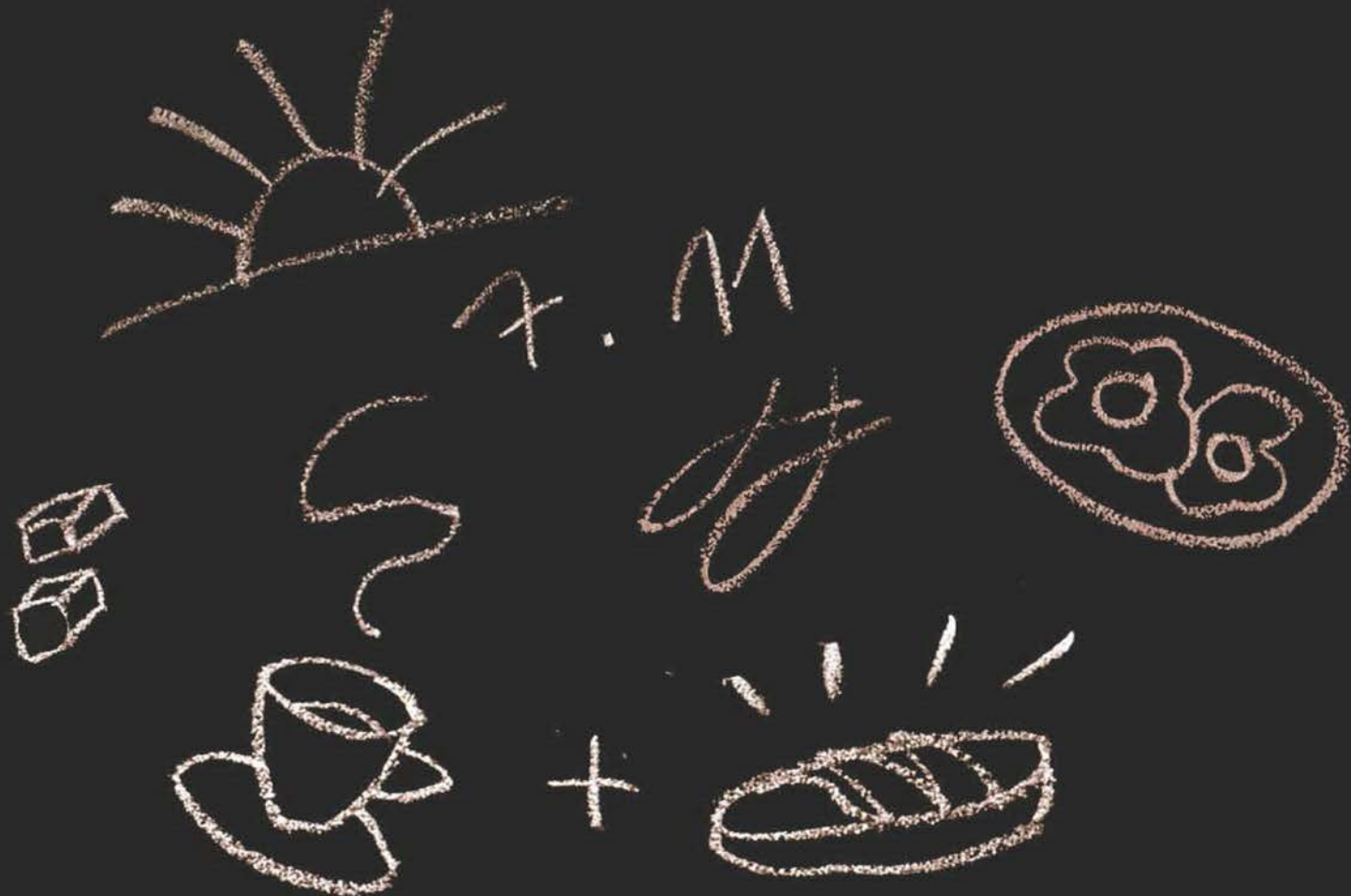


# WAKKEY

Spain's day begins when dawn breaks over Mahón, capital of the Balearic Island of Menorca (situated in the Mediterranean, just off the mainland's east coast), and ends when the sun sets behind Cape Finisterre







# WAKEY!

in Galicia (northwestern Spain). Its daily trajectory embraces a culinary repertoire whose wealth of flavors, textures and aromas reflects the traditions and culture —ancient and ongoing— of this country of diverse regions.



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TEXT  
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---

TRANSLATION  
HAWYS PRITCHARD/@ICEX

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PHOTOS  
TOYA LEGIDO/@ICEX

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Spain is generously endowed with fertile land where fruit and vegetables thrive, an extensive coastline and a good deal of highland terrain, and it is to these attributes that much of the credit must go for the quality of its produce. The evidence is there for the tasting at any time of day, but it seems particularly obvious in the early morning, when one is only just awake and one's palate still unclouded, and therefore so much more responsive to the finer points than later in the day.

Breakfast is, in some regards, the most important meal of all, taking place as it does just after we have emerged from a prolonged period of sleep and need to break our fast, to assuage a hunger and thirst that are both physical and spiritual. Early morning food preparation offers no scope for camouflage: there are no sauces beneath which to conceal things that haven't turned out quite right, no cream for softening the effect of the frankly boring. Breakfast food is generally exempt from the modern trend for arty presentation, and has so far mostly avoided being reinvented via spherification or other cutting-edge techniques... and that's surely because, as we're still half asleep, we need to engage with reality to become well and truly awake. For breakfast, we eat what comes to hand: a cup of coffee or tea



accompanied by something sweet or savory. Yet how many of us could bear to eat the same thing for lunch every day? Not many of us would willingly subject ourselves to an unwaveringly repetitive daily diet. But breakfast (and only breakfast) positively embraces uniformity, providing the exception that proves the rule. We find ourselves having the same things morning after morning: scalding hot coffee and some kind of bun to put an end to long hours of fasting.

In present-day Spain, especially in the larger towns and cities, the day starts in a rush: we gulp down a coffee while it's still too hot and, time permitting, a slice of toast drizzled with olive oil, or some kind of sweet cake, like a little sponge or madeleine. We then bide our time for a while, about as long as it takes to get to work, before coming fully awake and realizing that we are hungry. It's around 11:00 by the time the second coffee of the day is drunk, this time accompanied by a little savory snack: a chunk of Spanish omelet, a *sandwich mixto* (grilled ham and cheese sandwich), a few churros (or their fatter relatives, *porras*) for dunking in the coffee.

Having said that, however, there is a definite shift of attitude towards "breakfast cuisine" in the air: the



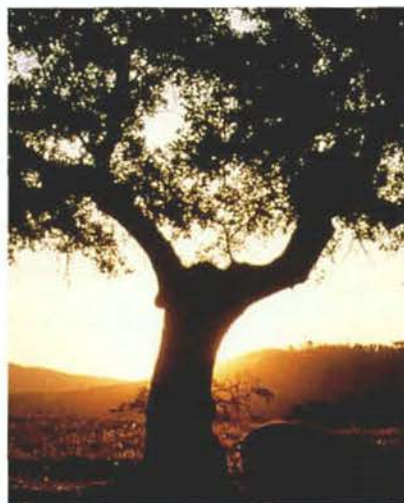
customary basic snacks are being revamped, seasonal fruits attractively presented, and more and more places are putting on a special brunch menu at weekends, at once an invitation to overeat and an example of the tenets of the Slow Food Movement (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 82). On days off, one can now devote time to reading the morning papers while tucking into a well-deserved calorie-packed breakfast as a reward for having completed another working week.

## What do the Spanish have for breakfast?

North or south, east or west, inland or by sea... what the Spanish have for breakfast varies according to the part of the country in which they live. For example, farmers and seafarers lead physically demanding lives and, therefore, need to pack in many more calories at the start of their day than city dwellers do. What they actually have for breakfast will vary depending on place, time of year and occupation. Meanwhile, the current trend of having a breakfast of bread and (extra virgin) olive oil seems to be catching on nationwide.

One could easily devise an olive oil route that crisscrosses Spain, tasting as





one goes and detecting the characteristics contributed by the olive varieties grown in different parts of the country: Arbequina, Blanqueta, Cornicabra, Lechín, Hojiblanca, Manzanilla, Morisca and Picual, to name just a few.

Indeed, many places offer an “oil list” from which the customer can choose which variety to have with breakfast. Among Spaniards, Arbequina, Hojiblanca and, to a lesser degree, Picual, are the favorite varieties for dribbling over hot toast first thing in the morning. The luxurious liquid is drizzled over some form of bread, half a *mollete* (soft roll) for example, which is freshly toasted. In central-southern and eastern parts of the Iberian Peninsula, the bread is rubbed first with a cut, raw tomato and then seasoned with a good sprinkling of *flor de sal* (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 76). Known as *pan tumaca*, this is becoming one of the most popular breakfast snacks, often served with a little Ibérico or Serrano cured ham. Coffee, bread, tomato, extra virgin olive oil, salt and Ibérico ham: it couldn't be less complicated. This emerging taste for the simpler things—appreciation of good bread, for example—is another recent trend in Spanish gastronomy as a whole (see Upper Crust, p. 58).

## Mapping the morning

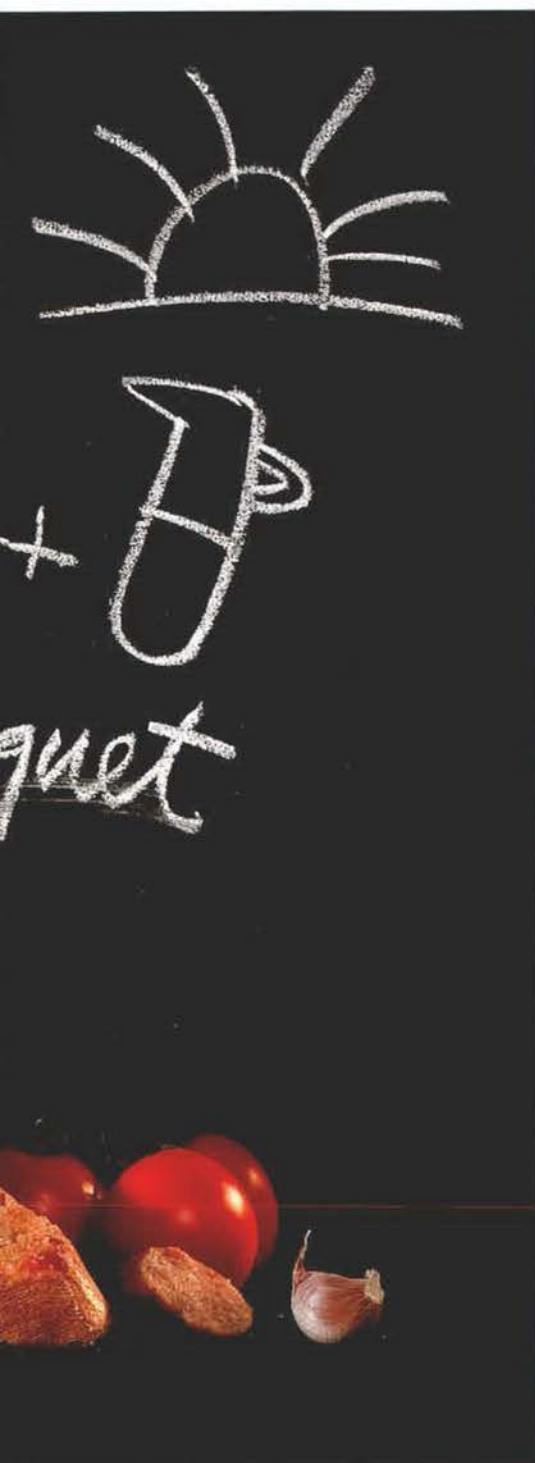
There are as many equivalents of this start to the day as there are places in Spain. The geography of Spanish breakfast could, in broad terms, be expressed as follows: As the sun rises over the Balearic Islands, one can choose to start the day reinforced by a big cup of milky coffee and an *ensaimada*. The dough for this coiled pastry (one of several local specialties) is made with flour, water, sugar, eggs, mother dough, and pork lard. *Ensaimadas* come in two types: plain and unadorned (except, perhaps, for a sprinkling of icing sugar) or filled with *cabello de ángel* (candied pumpkin). An alternative is another Balearic classic: *sobrasada*. This raw, cured sausage is made from specific cuts of pork seasoned with salt, *pimentón* (Spanish paprika) and black pepper to create a paste, which is delicious spread on hot toast.

Some minutes later, in Catalonia, the day begins with *pan tumaca* (mentioned earlier). In certain parts of the region, such as along the Costa Brava, the standard accompaniment of Ibérico cured ham is replaced by anchovies. An attractive feature of Catalan anchovies is that they can be

eaten bones and all. They are soaked in milk before frying, and this simple process gives them the special Mediterranean taste and texture that makes them such an excellent snack. Unsurprisingly for such an important fruit and vegetable-producing region, the people of Murcia have a sweeter tooth. The region's famous jams, spread on bread or various types of buns, are an integral part of breakfast, preceded or accompanied by local orange juice, which Murcians love as much as their neighbors in Valencia do. In Valencia, famous for its citrus fruits, any breakfast worth the name will certainly include orange juice and quite possibly *horchata de chufa* (earth almond, or tiger nut, milk) and *fartons* (sweet, elongated, spongy bread rolls made with flour, milk, sugar, oil, yeast and eggs). In the heart of Valencia's city center are two deeply traditional establishments for which local people head when they need to shrug off the effects of a late night: both are *horchaterías* (bars that specialize in earth almond milk), one called *Horchatería El Siglo* and the other *Horchatería Santa Catalina*. For late breakfasters with a hearty appetite, they offer the opportunity to sample a long-established classic combination consisting of coffee, bread and *blanco y negro* (white and black, referring to two







types of sausage: pale beige *butifarra* and almost black *morcilla*). Still following the sun as it rises over Spain, we now enter Andalusia, whose typical flavors encompass sea, desert and orchard. In Almería, all three make their contribution to the idiosyncratic “breakfast sandwich” that is something of a local specialty, variously known as *serigá*, *cherigá*, *seridá* or *cherigán*. This initially baffling word turns out to be a bowdlerized version of the English surname Sheridan and to date back to the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The village of Rodalquilar, in Almería (which today lies within the Cabo de Gata Natural Park) was once the site of one of the biggest gold mines in Europe. Such was the importance of this tiny Almerian enclave that it boasted a population of national and foreign inhabitants that was enormously large for the period. Among them was Mr. Sheridan, who was, for a time, boss of the mine. A characteristic feature of his was that he liked to eat his breakfast standing at the counter in Almería’s various bars, and that he always ate the same thing: a slice of bread topped with charcuterie, cheese or something similar. The Englishman’s name and breakfast preferences live on in the little sandwich-like *cherigás* (or *seridás* or *serigás*) that are still very much a feature of the local morning menu. In western Almería, the ambient smells are underscored by the aromas emanating from the olive groves of Jaén. Meanwhile, in the more built-up areas there is a whiff in the air of dressed olives (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 70) and of the extra virgin olive oil that is an essential ingredient in any decent breakfast in Jaén. Spreading up from the south, dawn is



less predictable by the time it reaches the Basque Country, on the northeastern tip of the Iberian Peninsula. In some cafés hereabouts, one can still enjoy homemade junket, with the inimitable delicate flavor imparted by the griddle-heated stones or iron implements immersed in the freshly extracted milk from which this delicacy is made. Heading southwest, it becomes clear that a heady smell of olives in the air is not limited to Andalusia, but is also a feature of Extremadura, where it coexists with the essence of the *dehesa* (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 83), the wooded scrubland for which this region is famous and whose species include holm oak, French lavender, cistus, broom. . . This is Ibérico pig-raising territory, a fount of top-quality pork and cured hams which, unsurprisingly, feature locally in the first meal of the day, as they also do in Upper Aragón and Castile. All these regions are largely rural and for country folk the day starts early and cold. The traditional shepherds’ way of coping with this was to cook up a warming dish of *migas*



(stale bread torn up and soaked in water and then fried with streaky bacon/pancetta, chorizo, peppers...). Extremadura is a land of contrasts: anyone waking up in the north of the province, in the Las Hurdes area, will not only discover a thrilling, unexpected landscape, but will also be served a treat at breakfast in the form of excellent local jams made with cherries from the Jerte Valley. Up in the hills, haunt of hunting and shooting

enthusiasts, the day may well be given a kick-start with a helping of *sopa de limones* (literally "lemon soup"). It is, in fact, a mixture of lemon and orange juices, with slices of both fruits floating in it and, surprisingly, is served with chorizo and cured ham. It is considered excellent protection against colds and viral illnesses. The Basque Country (where, as we know, day dawns early) is connected to Galicia by the breathtaking Cantabrian

coast, which is not only beautiful but also a privileged source of seafood, fruit and vegetables. In the inland areas of Cantabria and Asturias, cold weather breakfasts feature local cheeses such as *quesucos de Liebana* (little softish cheeses made primarily with cow's milk) and Asturias' famous *Cabrales* (*Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 73, 74 and 75), eggs laid by local hens, and chorizo sausages cooked on a grill over an open fire. Just on the border between the two







provinces, at the foot of the Picos de Europa mountains, are the Pas Valleys, source of individual sponge cakes known as *sobaos pasiegos* (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 82). These popular favorites are prepared with a beaten dough made of wheat flour, eggs, lemon rind, star anise and honey, which is poured into individual molds for baking, then allowed to cool before packing for sale. After eating a *sobao pasiego*, one is left with a lingering

aftertaste of butter obtained from the cows grazing in the valley and a zing of star anise, which helps get one's system going when gradually coming to after a night's sleep. With the sun well and truly risen all over Spain, the prize for the most unusual breakfast goes to the little town of Tui (Pontevedra province, Galicia) where, on market days (usually Thursdays, in the Paseo da Corredoira), in the center of town right next to the

Cathedral is a little *hostal* (modest boarding house) known as Vello do Cabalo Furado, which serves an unforgettably hearty breakfast of beef tripe cooked with chick peas and boiled langoustines.

## Churros and porras

*Churros* (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 82) consist of the simplest ingredients—flour, water and salt—cleverly

## My favorite breakfast haunts

**Almería.** La Ola, in the little town of La Isleta del Moro. This is a simple seafarers' restaurant with an outside terrace at whose plastic tables one can have breakfast looking out at the sea. Local specialties such as *cherigás* (savory morsels sandwiched in bread), and tomato-rubbed bread dressed with olive oil predominate.

**Barcelona.** El Pinotxo in La Boqueria Market (La Rambla, 91) is a not-to-be-missed classic. My advice is to explore the market first and then stop here, where they prepare delicious savory snacks with ingredients obtained from the surrounding stalls.

**Cádiz.** Bar Las Nieves (Plaza Mendizábal). *Mollete con aceite de oliva y jamón* (soft bread roll with olive oil and cured ham) as served in this unpretentious Cádiz bar gives morning a whole new look: this is the way the locals start their day. Excellent bread. Breakfast on the little terrace gets the day off to a charming start.

**Madrid.** Chocolatería San Ginés (Pasadizo San Ginés) is one of Madrid's legendary establishments. It would be worth having breakfast here for the atmosphere alone, but be sure to pay homage to the Spanish tradition of eating churros dipped in chocolate while you're at it.

Brunch at Café Oliver (C/ Almirante, 12) is an enduring favorite of mine. It serves a wide choice of breakfasts in very attractive premises right in the heart of Madrid. The Parisian décor is aimed at a young clientele, and the menu is notable for its breakfast-time salads and the famous eggs benedict.

**Majorca.** The Residencia Hotel in picturesque Deià (Calle de los Son Canals) is reputed to do the best breakfast in Spain, and in certain respects this is true: it is a sort of banquet staged in a stunningly beautiful natural setting.

Restaurante Senzone, the in-house restaurant of the Hotel Hospes Maricel in Cas Català (Ctra. de Andratx, 11), has a

reputation for being the *crème de la* Spanish *crème* in the breakfast department. It takes the form of an opulent *buffet* using strictly seasonal market produce, and there is always a wide range of juices, fruit, homemade flavored butters (leek and bacon, raspberry...), savory dishes (always including *sobrasada*, a raw cured sausage paste), and sweet ones, with *ensaimadas* (a coiled pastry) being given pride of place.

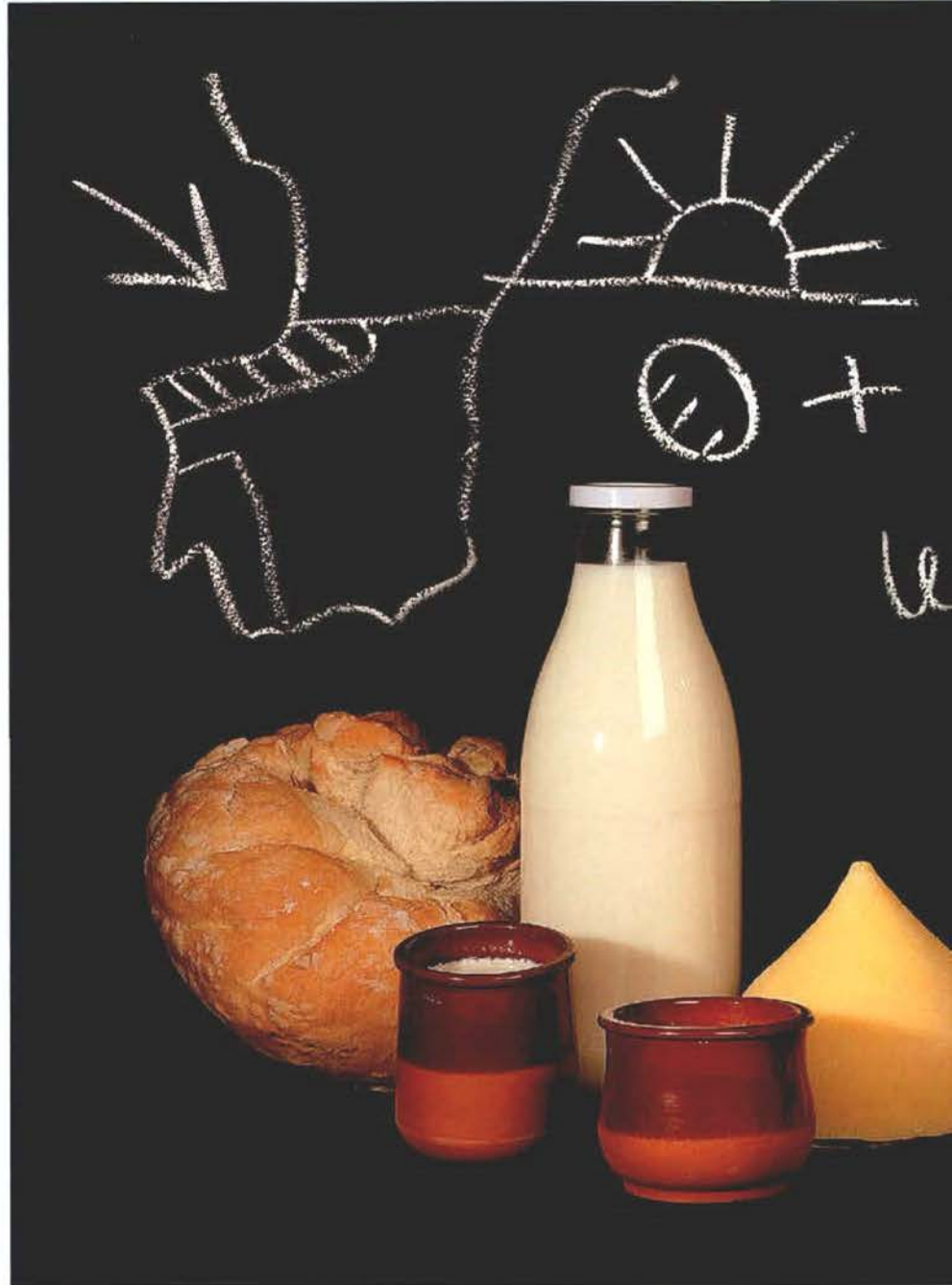
**Valencia.** El Siglo (Plaza Santa Catalina, 11). Founded in 1836, this café still retains the bohemian, intellectual atmosphere of the coffee houses of that period. Gilded mirrors, decoratively tiled floors, lamps suspended at various heights from the immensely high ceilings: this is a marvelous place to withdraw from the outside world and relish the authenticity of this Valencian experience, accentuated by the availability of *horchata* (earth almond milk) and *fartons* (elongated spongy textured sweet bread rolls).





transformed into a Spanish classic by deft frying. Wherever you are in Spain, you will have the option of starting the day with a large cup of hot chocolate served with half a dozen of these fluted crunchy strips of fried dough. We have master *churreros* (churro-makers) in Spain, anonymous craftsmen who are out of bed before sunrise preparing the day's supply of one of the nation's favorite breakfasts in modest *churrerías* all over the country, though Madrid and its province lead the field in terms of quantities consumed.

Madrid's appetite for churros is said to date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a period when the city was a magnet for traveling showmen and market vendors, and it is they who are believed to have introduced this delicious snack, cleverly contrived out of the cheapest ingredients. What was originally invented as an accessible, filling food for the masses somehow became a luxury enjoyed by the aristocracy before again returning to its popular origins. Nowadays, buses converted into mobile churro-and-chocolate stalls are a common sight in many Spanish towns and cities (there is one beside Madrid's Atocha Railway Station, for example) and at fairs and



fiestas all over the country. The sight and smell of freshly-fried churros trigger Proustian responses that are hard to resist.

Churros are part of a family known as *frutas de sartén* (fruits of the frying pan), namely, fritters made using a flour-

based batter and given various different shapes. Another prime example are *buñuelos* (little ladlefuls of well beaten flour-based dough fried in hot olive oil so that they are crisp on the outside and spongy on the inside); *pestiños* (flour-based batter containing beaten eggs,





fried in hot oil until crisp and then dipped in honey); *rosquillas* (dough made with flour, eggs, olive oil and milk and shaped into rings before frying and sprinkling with sugar)... all of these would be considered suitable breakfast fare.

## The fashion for brunch

Though there are still some cafés in Spain that retain echoes of the atmosphere, charm and social function they enjoyed in their heyday, the

passage of time has wrought irrevocable changes. Today, Spain is open to the cultures of the wider world. Its principal provinces have become destinations for foreign settlers who bring their inbuilt culture with them, with the result that the Spanish larder has been enlarged by new aromas, flavors and textures. Nowadays, in theory, one could start the day with the foreign breakfast of one's choice without having to move from Madrid. Each of Madrid's constituent *barrios*, or neighborhoods, accommodates people from other parts of the world. In Usera, for example, you would have no problem finding breakfast as eaten in south China. Lavapiés is the place to go for the Moroccan and Indian equivalents, Barrio de Salamanca and Chamberí lean more towards the British style, and Las Letras even offers Scandinavian-style breakfast. Madrid's population represents a rich mix: nowhere else in the whole of Spain can match it for the plurality, variety and fusion exemplified by its breakfasts. Our readiness to welcome other cultures perhaps explains why we were so ready to adopt the fashion for brunch and why it has become the



unchallenged favorite model for weekend breakfast.

No one seems to know how the concept of brunch came into being: some believe it to have been a British invention, while others attribute it to New York, more specifically Harlem. Wherever it originated, the fact is that these days you can choose to start your day with brunch almost anywhere in the world. Here in Spain, one of the first places to adopt brunch was Madrid's Ritz Hotel, whose huge tables were laden with sweet and savory bite-

sized morsels for guests to choose from. The concept spread from hotels to restaurants: one pioneer was the Hispano, which has been providing buffet-style brunch at weekends for many years now. Today, no description of Spain's breakfast habits would be complete without a mention of brunch. And similarly, no Spanish brunch can be considered complete unless it includes a particular dish—Spain's version of eggs benedict (*huevos benedictine*), consisting of a slice of sweet bread topped with smoked pork belly or bacon and poached eggs), and a particular drink—the Bloody Mary. A good Spanish brunch will also feature a table devoted to different types of bread, several types of butter, assorted jams, virgin olive oil, and natural fruit juices. In Spain, Sunday mornings could be said to start in earnest at around 11:30, which is when brunch becomes available. The Hotel Palace and the Intercontinental Hotel, both in Madrid, are excellent Sunday brunch destinations where one can eat and drink at a leisurely pace to the accompaniment of live chamber music and operatic highlights. There are times when the expression "Good morning" takes on a whole new dimension!

Author and journalist **Sara Cucala** is a gastronomic coordinator at TVE, founder of the gastronomic cultural center *España A Punto*, and author of two books, *Desayunar en Madrid. Del churro al brunch* (2008. RBA) and *Los templos de la tapa* (2009. RBA).

Visit our website, [www.foodsfromspain.com](http://www.foodsfromspain.com), for detailed information about Spanish food and wine.







Mosaic

# NATTORE'S

In Priorat you have to be patient. I drive along the narrow, winding roads, in low gear, enjoying the view: pines, holm oaks, the occasional olive tree and those impossible vineyards. And it is the same for the wine that is born here—it cannot be hurried. Open it, let it breathe and





wait for it to talk to you. First in whispers, then gradually getting louder as its aromatic complexity tells you a thousand stories—about its life, its slow production process, the aging in the bottle that rounds up all its virtues. Finally, in the glass, it needs time to express itself fully.



## TEXT

ALMUDENA MARTÍN RUEDA/©ICEX

## TRANSLATION

JENNY McDONALD/©ICEX

## PHOTOS

MATÍAS COSTA/©ICEX  
JUAN MANUEL SANZ/©ICEX

The DOCa Priorat is located between the sea and the mountains, in eastern Spain in the province of Tarragona, in Catalonia. The Mediterranean Sea is just 30 km (18.6 mi) away, but the mountains that frame Priorat keep out the sea's influence, which only just squeezes in through the area of Porrera and some of the southern parts. It is this single opening that lets in most of the climatic influences, allowing the damp sea air to mix with the Ebro Valley winds. The landscape is mostly low mountains, with pines, holm oaks, olive, hazelnut and almond trees and, of course, grape vines. Rock rose, thyme, rosemary and many other small aromatic plants complete this truly Mediterranean environment. And all this life grows out of a soil that is sometimes black, bluish or even purplish, from the slate, known in Catalan as *licorella*, the key distinguishing trait of the DOCa Priorat.

## Not just rock

"The terroir is not just the soil. It's not all up to the *licorella*," says René Barbier, owner of one of the mythical wineries in the DOCa Priorat. When he bought Clos Mogador in 1978, the 22 ha (54 acres) were already a farm. His philosophy is total respect for biodiversity. It is not unusual to find olive trees, holm oaks and the odd almond tree in the middle of the vineyards, which he has planted alongside the original vines. This land is home to small wildlife and even some animals that are not so small, as we can see from the tracks of wild boars in the vineyard that produces



the white Nelin. "And," he assures me, "There are over 900 flower species."

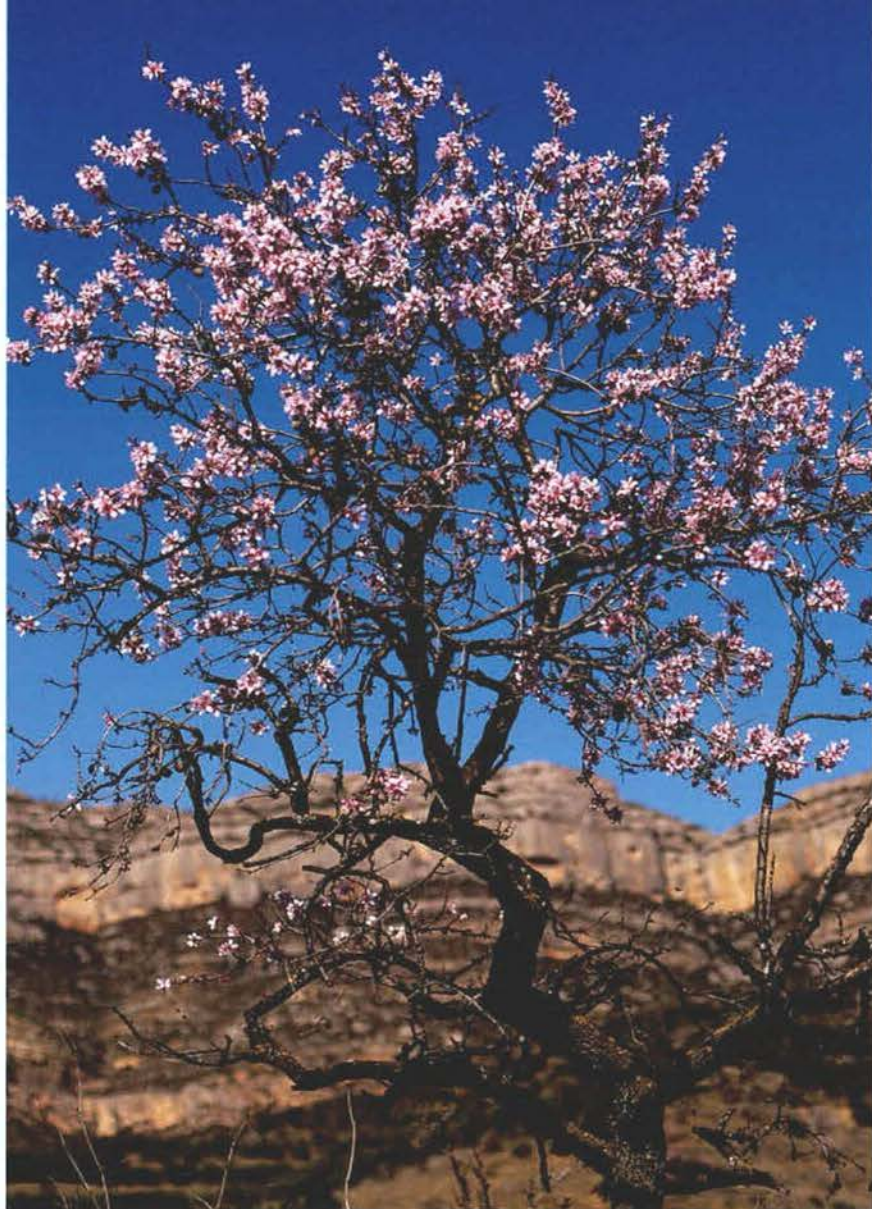
His wines reflect the character of their surroundings, including marked mineral flavors which stem from the slate soils that are the key characteristic of DOCa Priorat. The aroma of Clos Mogador 2009, made from local Garnacha and Cariñena and completed with Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, is very flowery and transports me to the nearby Mediterranean woodland, with its thyme and rosemary. As it opens up, it releases notes of berries and then spices. Nelin, a white made mostly from Garnacha Blanca and Viognier, is equally surprising. My first impression takes me back to the almond blossom I saw in the middle of the vineyard that it comes from. This passion for vineyards and their environment is explained with vivacity by Sara Pérez, daughter of one of the "reinventors" of Priorat (Josep Lluís Pérez, DOCa Priorat in a nutshell, page 26) and currently in charge of Mas Martinet. "Priorat comes from here," she says, pointing with vigor to her heart. Sara forms part of the second generation of producers in Priorat who are even more convinced than their predecessors about the value of the terroir and about the native varieties, Garnacha Tinta and Cariñena. In her three wines, Sara aims to show the production methods used in the three periods of Priorat's wine history: pre-phyllloxera, up until the arrival of the much-feared plague in 1893, in Els Escurçons; the 20<sup>th</sup> century after



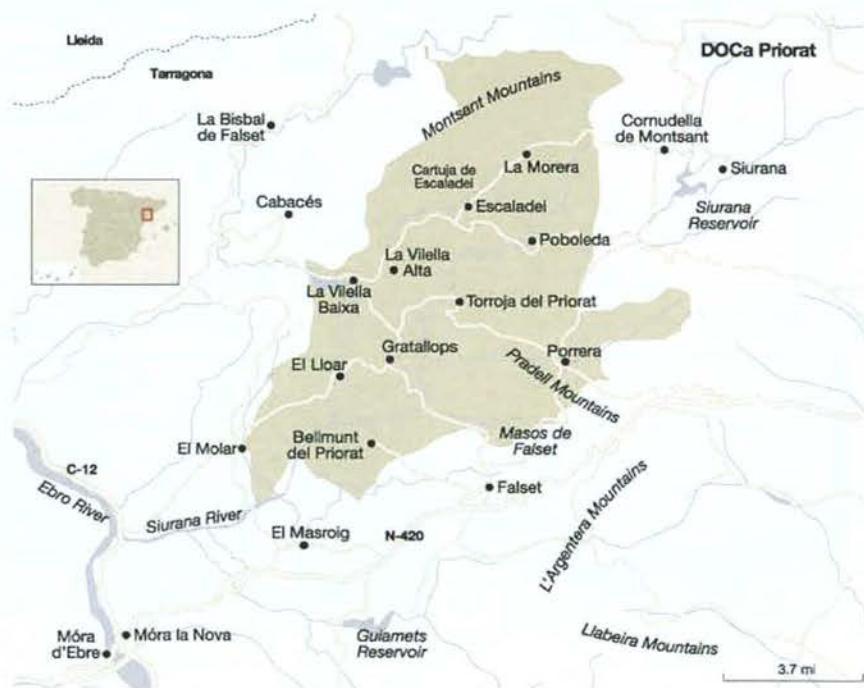




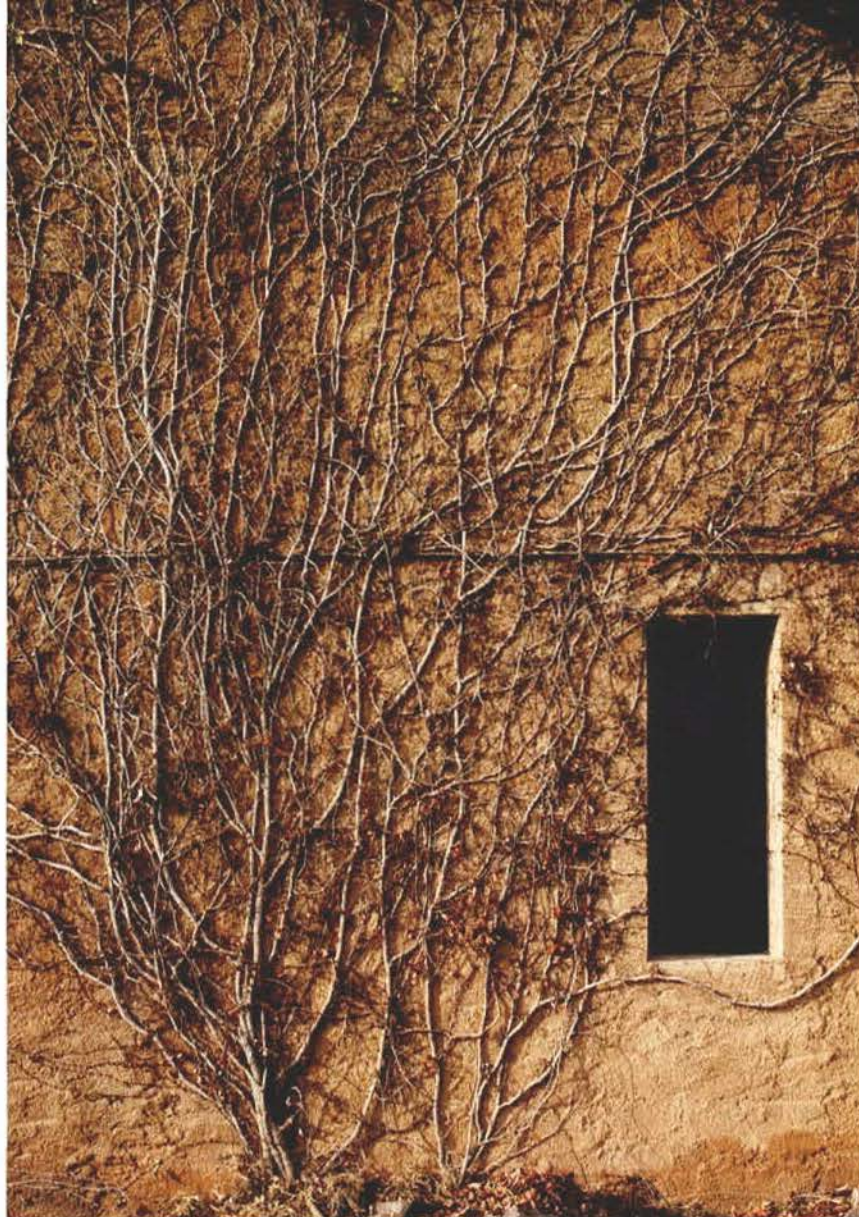
Salvador Burgos, Celler Burgos Porta



phylloxera in Cami Pesserroles; and modernity in Clos Martinet. Els Escurçons comes from a high-altitude Garnacha vineyard on an estate that she recovered after finding and contacting its former owners by searching through family trees in the nearby villages. After years watching the behavior of vineyards and wines, she became convinced about how important it is to maintain a natural balance in the field. She started to adopt organic principles in 2000. By the third year, she felt that life was returning to the vineyards, with the buzz of insects, the wild flowers, etc. "And that was when I decided that was how I wanted to work, that I wasn't going to worry if I had to forego a harvest. An ecosystem manages itself. You don't need chemicals because the soil and the environment find their own balance." The Els Escurçons wine offers notes of red currant, and in the mouth it stirs up images of the land it comes from—herbs, menthol, pine and a







tremendous freshness from its tartness and mineral flavors. Camí Pesseroles is the wine that Sara describes as “post-phylloxera”, and is based on Cariñena grapes. From her experience, this variety has almost no varietal characteristics of its own. “If the soil is good, it absorbs it. Cariñena is the best detector of good soils, whereas Garnacha can deceive you with its varietal features.” The wine comes mostly from grapes grown on slaty soil and the minerals make their presence felt over the fruit, giving it a freshness and a lasting sensation in the mouth. Clos Martinet reflects the third Priorat period, when her father came here and planted varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah with the idea of combining them with the

local varieties. But in fact the percentage of imported grapes has been reduced in Clos Martinet to give greater presence to the local ones. Clos Martinet 2008 affords ripe fruit on the nose but is very spicy, with clear accents of clove and hints of menthol. It too reflects the mineral soil and the pleasant coldness typical of slate.

A love of Cariñena was also inherited by her brother, Adrià Pérez, now in charge of the family project at Cims de Porrera. Adrià, with the support of his cousin Marc (both of them firm advocates of the local varieties) offers two different lines in his winery. On the one hand, he is continuing the project set up by his father and sister in the 1990s by maintaining not only Solanes but also the classic Cims de



Porrera, based on Cariñena grapes from very old vines grown locally. This is a serious, elegant wine with a long finish and full of minerals, reminiscent of charcoal and chalk. He tells me, “Cariñena is the best catalyst for the minerals in the soil.” Alongside these classics, Adrià and Marc have launched a personal project, Les Cousins, a more light-hearted wine with a fresher image. Adrià cannot help smiling when he refers to his childhood, the inspiration behind these wines. In them, he works with the two leading local varieties, recognizing the minerals that are the expression of Priorat but searching for more fruit and a simpler, rounder result.

## Stay-at-home adventurers

In spite of hard times in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (DOCa Priorat in a nutshell, page 26), there were some local growers and winemakers that decided





Cristian Francès, Trio Infernal

to stick it out and continue working the land they had inherited. One example is the Sangenis i Vaqué winery, the coming together of two families with a history of over 300 years making wine. They enjoyed the good years at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>

century, endured the collapse at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup>, and had no alternative but to produce bulk wines until, in 1995, they decided to start bottling their own wines. That initial experiment, an unaged wine, was the first time a wine was actually bottled

in Porrera. In 1997, they started to use oak barrels to age their wine that came from 80-year-old vines growing on the slopes around this traditional winemaking town.

With the 2000 vintage, they received the backing they needed to move forward. English wine writer John Radford described their Clos Monlleó as the best Spanish wine in his book *The New Spain*. Great advocates of Garnacha Tinta and Cariñena, Pere Sangenis and his daughter Maria together with Conxita Vaqué and her younger daughter manage the winery and acknowledge that you need to wait with these wines. "It's very important to give them time in the bottle so that the tannins become more finished and all the aromas are released." Today the 2004 and 2005 vintages are on the market, but I am especially curious about 2000. And I'm in luck because they have been tasting one with an importer and there's a bottle open. A rich aroma of plain chocolate leads on to a subtle succession of very ripe fruit, menthol, toast. In the mouth it is very elegant, fine, fresh, very complex, again with notes of toast, black pepper

## DOCa Priorat in a nutshell

**1194:** Carthusian monks arrive from Provence (France), establishing the Priorato de Scala Dei and bringing winemaking culture with them. This was to become the foundation for the district's economic life for centuries.

**1865:** Phylloxera attacks in France lead to a boom in the Priorat wine trade.

**1893:** Phylloxera arrives in Priorat, putting an end to its prosperity. Over the following decades, the district becomes impoverished and depopulated.

**1950:** The DO Priorato is established.

**Late 1980s.** The "Priorat magnificos" arrive: René Barbier, Carles Pastrana (Clos de l'Obac), Josep Lluís Pérez, Álvaro Palacios (L'Ermita) and Daphne Glorian (Clos Erasmus). They make their first wine, together, in 1992. Their shared philosophy

is based on profound respect for the landscape and the local people, and the hope that they will be able to restore a territory in which quality wines can be made. This principle became the backbone of the DOCa Priorat. In fact, the Designation enforces a rule covering the planting of vineyards to ensure the surroundings are taken into account.

**Today** the DOCa Priorat has 94 wineries and 1,928 ha (4,763 acres) of vineyard (of which only 81 grow white varieties). In 2011 about 5,500 tons of grapes were harvested. The latest project, named Vi de Vila, aims to differentiate between the products of each of the villages that belong to the Designation.

**www.doqpriorat.org:** Regulatory Council, DOCa Priorat (Catalan, English, French, Spanish)



and perhaps dewy autumn leaves, with delicate minerals reminiscent of graphite. Undoubtedly a great wine. The story is similar with Salvador Burgos, who was born in Poboleda. He stayed on in the country and, with the Priorat revival, was able to gradually build up a position that allowed him, in the early 1990s, to purchase his own estate, Mas Sinén. Salvador is another great fan of organic principles in farming (and ecological principles in his life). The first thing we did was to taste the water from the spring that supplies the winery. "Tasting this water is the best way of understanding what we mean by minerals in wine." The original estate grew almond trees, but he was determined to focus on vines so he planted Garnacha and Cariñena as well as some Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Merlot. From these vineyards, now 15 to 20 years old, he produces Mas Sinén Negre, a bright red wine with excellent structure and herbal aromas, reminiscent of the thyme that grows freely on the estate. From the plots he inherited from his father, which are now 60 years old, he

makes Mas Sinén Costers, a very characteristic Priorat in which the mineral notes stand out over the ripe fruit and spices, creating that impression of coldness that stems from the licorella. As we taste the wines, Leonard Cohen sings in the background. The seriousness and gentle complexity of Cohen creates exactly the right atmosphere for this wine.

Pedro Rovira and his daughter Marta, enologist, of Viticultors Mas d'en Gil



So how did these winemakers, having been held back throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, manage to reach a position in which they could invest in their own small projects? The answer lies in investments made in the late 1980s. The origin and philosophy of the Vall Llach winery, created by Catalanian songwriter Lluís Llach, helps explain how the recovery happened. In 1985, Lluís Llach inherited farmland from his mother, who was from Porrera. This village was where he had spent carefree summer holidays as a child. The land had been all but abandoned but, after floods in 1994, he converted it into vineyards. At the same time, he decided to collaborate with local growers in the recovery of the oldest hillside vineyards known as *costers*, a task that was already being carried out by Josep Lluís Pérez with the Porrera cooperative farmers. They both felt that the local growers had to reap the benefits of the old Cariñena and Garnacha vineyards, so they started to pay for the grapes at prices that previously would have been unthinkable.

These characteristic *costers* are vase-



Adrià Pérez of Cims de Porrera, and Sara Pérez of Mas Martinet



shaped vineyards planted on hillsides, some of which have as much as a 70% slope. They are described as “heroic vine-growing” by Salustià Alvarez, who is now the manager at Vall Llach, after having worked with it since 2002, and President of the DOCa Priorat Regulatory Council until late 2011. He has an almost endless supply of information about the area. Originally from Porrera, he remembers how, in the 1960s and 70s, the village square was full of people at 7 am as they gathered to travel to work outside the area. Then Priorat took off at the end of the 1980s, when a number of “worldwise” producers started to produce high-quality wines. And, especially important for him, “Their projects were honest, with wines from here and owned by them, that is, wines with identity. This meant that productions were small because of the region’s rugged landscape and the age of its vineyards.” In the company of Salustià I visited a hillside vineyard that is now owned 50% by the winery and 50% by the grower, who was thus



involved in the project. “This, too, helps make it an honest project,” says Salustià. Mas de la Rosa is one of those impressive vineyards. The plants are mostly very old Cariñena, growing on hard, slaty soil on steep slopes, on which I would have thought it was impossible to work. Mechanization is out of the question. Everything has to be done by hand in order to pick just half a kilo (1.1 lb) per plant. “To make one bottle of Vall Llach, we need seven plants,” he explains, giving a clear idea of the vineyard’s yield. The 2006 vintage of Vall Llach is a very personal, complex wine. On the nose it is very mineral, with hints of graphite and charcoal, and behind them comes ripe fruit, prunes. This is a wine that opens up as it breathes. In the mouth, it is rounded, with a touch of spice, and it gradually releases some fantastic

notes of black licorice. Its marked acidity, in combination with the cold sensation that comes from the slate and obvious tannins, makes this a very fresh but powerful wine with a slightly bitter aftertaste. At the start of the interview, Salustià had promised that I would find Priorat “seductive”, and this wine could certainly win over any lover of wines with personality.

## Whites make their appearance

Slightly to the north of Porrera, at the foothills of the Montsant mountain range, is Conreria de Scala Dei, founded in 1997. Jordi Huguet explained that they are determined not only to sell wine, but also to sell Priorat by encouraging people to visit the area, so they are planning on





setting up a small hotel next to the winery. Today, they are producing 25% of the DO's whites, mostly from Garnacha Blanca, a variety which, as I was able to see for myself, clearly has a great aromatic capacity and plenty of body with just the right amount of acidity. In reds, *Iugiter Selección Viñas Viejas*, their top-range wine made from 80-year-old vines, is very intense on the nose, where toast and wood take precedence over the fruity notes which appear later in the mouth.

The southern part of Priorat looks easier to work, with gentler slopes and some small low-lying areas. But this is only the first impression of an outsider, and a wrong one. The slate rock is just 20 cm (7.8 in) down and is "the hardest and oldest of the district's *licorella*." These are the words of Marta Rovira, manager of

the Mas d'en Gil estate in Bellmunt de Priorat. The Rovira-Carbonell family comes from the Penedès winemaking region close to Barcelona. "In Priorat, we wanted an estate that had both history and represented the local biodiversity." And they found it six years ago at Mas d'en Gil, which has been growing vines for over 300 years, and where vines cover 30% of the land. There are also areas of woodland, as well as almond, hazelnut and ancient olive trees in production. Because of its location, close to the sea and on a plain, it is one of the few spots that receives the Mediterranean breezes, which bring coolness and ventilation to the vineyards. One of this winery's best-known wines is a white, unusual for Priorat, from a vineyard soil that combines slate and sand with pebbles, and Macabeo vines over 60

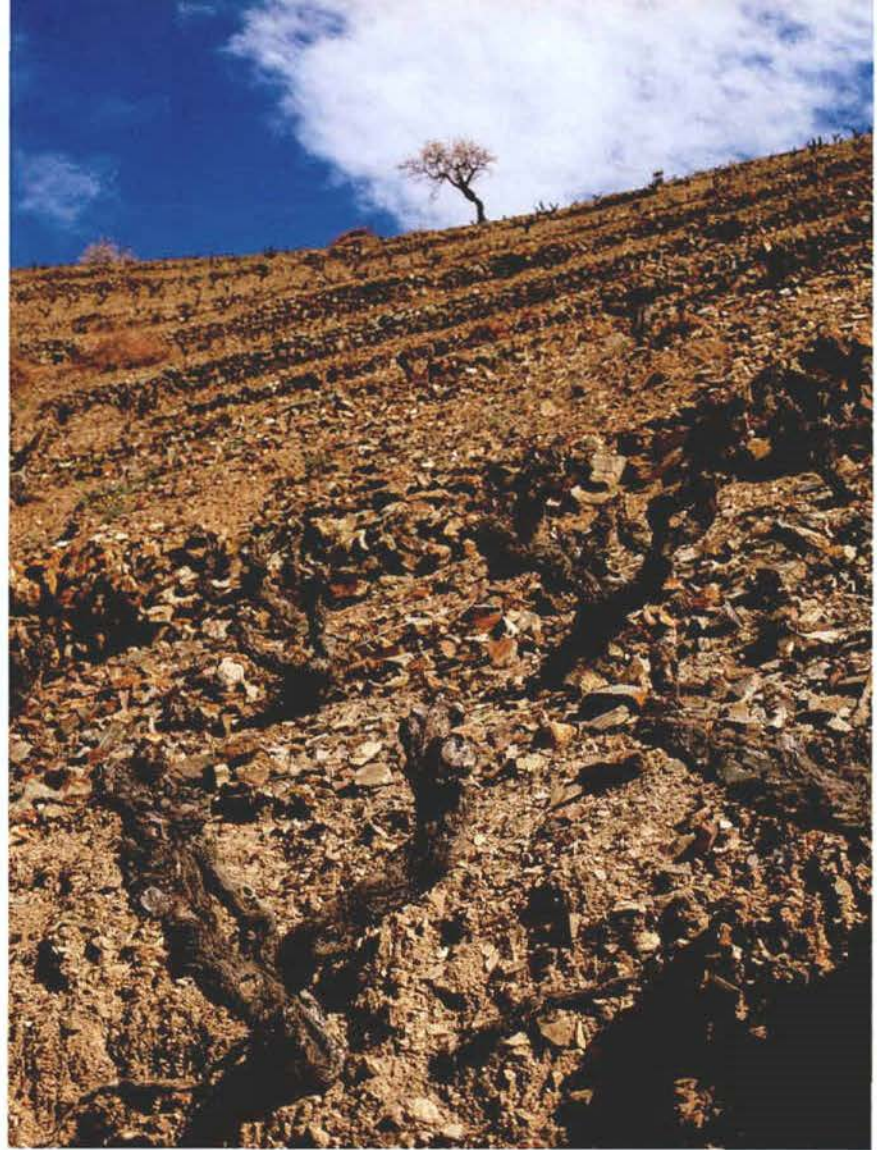
years old, as well as Garnacha Blanca. The *Coma Alta* wine expresses ripe fruit and spice and is very flavorful, fresh and long in the mouth. In reds, they are working on a blend of varieties including Garnacha Negra, Garnacha Peluda, Cariñena and Cabernet Sauvignon (even in some cases Syrah and Merlot). *Clos Fontá*, the red they make from the oldest plots, is a wine with mature, flavorful tannins that is very reminiscent of ripe black fruit and figs and offers a sweet chocolate aroma complemented unexpectedly by touches of menthol.

## Definite identity

At the end of the 1990s, another person to set up operations in the southern part of Priorat was Miguel Pérez, a doctor and researcher in the world of wine, who explains "I came because the land was not easy, which was precisely what I liked. When things are tough, great progress is possible." The local vine-growers, in this case in Bellmunt del Priorat, helped him until he was able to make



The Sangenis i Vaqué family

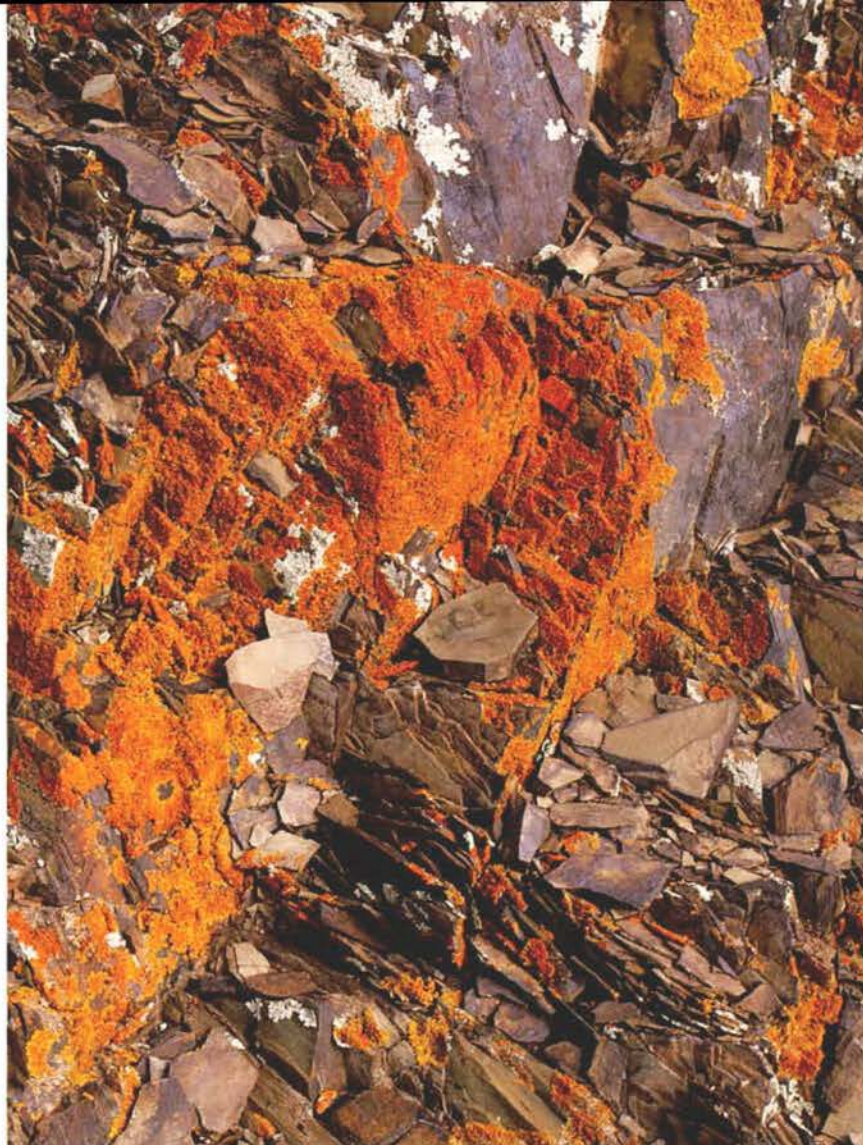


the vines on his estate productive. Today, it is enologist Toni Coca who helps him make his fantastic Clos Galena from Garnacha and Cariñena with additional Syrah and Cabernet. Alongside the richness of the Garnacha is the local distinguishing mark of minerals plus some pleasant touches of menthol in the mouth. A simpler but still generous wine, Formiga, has recently been launched, targeting younger buyers and offering slightly greater warmth on the palate. But in Priorat, you inevitably end up again at the sloping vineyards, of which there are many in the Torroja area. Here I visited two small wineries set up by foreign investors who came in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Trio Infernal was a gamble by three French wine producers from the Rhône area who were keen to share a project in Spain. It was René Barbier who pointed them to Priorat, and they took his

advice in 2002. Cristian Francés, who was born in Torroja and who is responsible for the day-to-day running of things, drove me up to the vineyards in his 4x4, the only way of getting around here, and he does it with astonishing *sang-froid*. Meanwhile, I hardly dare look out over the steep *drop* that our narrow track borders. From these plots, in which there is a combination of different orientations, they obtain the Garnacha, Cariñena and Syrah that make up their wines. Together with Pep Aguilar and Patri Morillo (Spanish collaborators on this project), we tasted several samples of aged wines which bring together all the characteristics of this district. While the Cariñena is fresher and openly reminiscent of thyme and scrub, the Garnacha is much richer, with greater fruitiness. The Syrah, with floral touches and more

sharpness, will be used to make an exclusive monovarietal wine, mainly for restaurant use. Another of the small, foreign-owned wineries in Torroja is Terroir al Limit. It was set up in 2003 by Dominik Huber, from Germany, who formed a partnership with a South African and a Catalanian. He is a great proponent of ecological balance, probably as a result of his prior experience at Mas Martinet and Cims de Porrera. He works biodynamically, trusting nature and the countryside, and fermentation of his musts is always started with native yeasts. Clearly he neither needs nor wants anything from outside his own terroir. His wines are a pure reflection of their environment. We tasted directly from the old vats in which the wine is made. The Garnacha is glorious, with a warm aroma of strawberry jam, followed by a very fresh palate, with





Albert Costa and Salustia Alvarez of Celler Vall Llach



acidity and flowery touches. And the Cariñena is very mineral and spicy, with the typical coldness of this variety when grown on the Priorat slate.

These wineries with a more traditional structure contrast with the next two on my tour. Both Trossos del Priorat in the south and Ferrer Bobet in Porrera have invested more in visual aspects, with more modern wineries that aim to attract attention. At Ferrer Bobet, set up by Sergi Ferrer-Salat and Raúl Bobet (the latter is technical manager at Bodegas Torres), the tasting room is impressive, with a huge window overlooking the surrounding peaks. Having started operation in 2002, for the time being they are using Cariñena and Garnacha grapes from vines 30- to 100-years-old and bought from small local growers because their own vineyard, planted

on small terraces and following organic principles, is not yet producing top-quality grapes. The two wines they have on the market, Ferrer Bobet Vinyes Velles and Selección Especial, are based on these old Cariñena stocks, although the former also contains 30% Garnacha. Though oak is clearly present, they are characterized by acidity, which makes them very fresh wines. The former reveals plenty of red fruit on the nose, and Selección receives its freshness more from its mineral content than from its tartness, which is better integrated in the wine. This simpler line has also been adopted at Trossos del Priorat, which follows the same strategy as Ferrer Bobet of buying grapes while waiting for their own vineyards, planted in 2004, to grow. Their consultant enologist Toni Coca (who also collaborates with Mas Sinén and

Domini de la Cartoixa) is basically searching for elegance and very mature tannins. The result can be tasted in Lomon 2011 (tasted from the barrel), with its outstanding fruitiness and richness.

So, altogether, the DOCa Priorat is a joy for the senses. The perseverance of the local producers (both winemakers and vine-growers) has enabled them to preserve their ancient winemaking culture, their varieties and their landscapes, and this results in very personal wines. Tasting them transports us to their place of origin even if we have never been there. But, as most of these winemakers insisted, and as I saw for myself, "Priorat is a place that deserves to be visited."

*Almudena Martin Rueda is an editorial co-coordinator of Spain Gourmetour.*







Reviving

# VERDEJO

Ask any wine-lover about the Verdejo whites and they will talk about a fresh, light wine with fragrant, sometimes surprising aromas. But today the most ambitious winemakers of the Rueda Designation of Origin, in the northern half of the Castilian plain along the banks of the Duero River, are working on more concentrated wines that bear witness to their terroir. And some of their creations have already joined the ranks of Spain's best whites.




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**TEXT**

 AMAYA CERVERA/©ICEX
 

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**TRANSLATION**

 JENNY MCDONALD/©ICEX
 

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**PHOTOS**

 JUAN MANUEL SANZ/©ICEX
 

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Didier Belondrade from France tasted his first Verdejo wine back in 1993. "I found it an elegant, interesting wine, with finesse. I liked that slight touch of bitterness in the mouth without any sweetness." A few months later he traveled to the region it came from and discovered the stony soils in the DO Rueda. "It reminded me of the Rhône," he admits. "And it was a relatively cheap area because back then no-one was talking about Spanish whites." Today, Belondrade is one of the most widely-respected wineries in the DO and produces 80,000 bottles of a fermented, cask-aged white wine that is deep, has a persistent elegance and ages well in the bottle. About 30% is exported. No-one else in Rueda achieves such volumes in the top-quality league. The DO Rueda was created in 1980 and was the first Designation of Origin in Castile-Leon. Its vineyards span the alluvial terraces formed by the Duero and its tributaries where three provinces come together: Valladolid, Segovia and Ávila. In

fact, it is sandwiched between two famous regions for red wines: DO Ribera del Duero and DO Toro (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 84). And it shares with them the rugged Castilian landscape characterized by harsh winters, with frost always on the prowl, and beneficial differences between day and nighttime temperatures during the period when the grapes are ripening. Although since 2008 the DO has officially covered red and rosé wines, what makes it stand out from its neighbors and other winemaking regions in the same part of Spain (such as DO Cigales and Tierra del Vino de Zamora) is its unmistakable characteristic as a producer of whites. The very suitable climate, appropriate soils and a variety that is well-adapted to the land make this area an excellent source of great white wines. The Verdejo variety has been grown here for centuries, but it was overtaken by easier-to-grow, more productive varieties such as Palomino and Viura. Its

rebirth began in the 1960s and it reached its prime in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Eulogio Calleja, enologist at Bodegas Naia, one of the DO's leading firms and exporters, talks about a "golden triangle" extending from Tordesillas on the Duero towards Rueda and the towns of Serrada and La Seca, all of them in the province of Valladolid. This is an area of characteristically stony and sandy ground, with shallow soils on top of a layer of compact, water-retaining clay, providing the terroir that is home to some of the greatest Verdejo wines from the DO Rueda.

La Seca, for example, grows more than 30% of the Verdejo vineyards and is one of the main locations of old stocks, with over 500 ha (1,235 acres) still planted in vase shape. One of the most famous vineyards in the area is Martinsancho, dating from before the phylloxera invasion, which served as the source for recovering Verdejo. Its owner, Ángel Rodríguez Vidal, is clear about the







Camino Ventosa, Belondrade

priorities: "What matters most is the terroir and the amount of grapes." Back in the 1970s, he used cuttings from the old vineyard to plant a new Martinsancho, and he now transfers its grapes to bottles bearing this name on their labels. This is a young white, mostly sold outside Spain, that is made like most Verdejo wines from this area today (cold maceration, low-temperature fermentation and some time on the lees in stainless steel). It is a pretty representative Verdejo, with aromas of fennel and white fruit; it is balanced and fresh, and has sufficient volume and that characteristic touch of bitterness.

## Pre-phylloxera vines still in use

Another historical spot for Verdejo that is especially relevant lies away from the river, to the southeast of the Designation, within the province of Segovia. This area, which includes, among others, the town of Nieva, is at a higher altitude (above 800 m / 2,624 ft) and is characterized by very sandy soil, which helped it escape the attack by phylloxera (here between 1909 and 1922). In fact, one of the jewels of the DO are the almost 200 ha (494 acres) of ungrafted Verdejo vines, some of them pre-phylloxera and some planted later, this planting method having been common practice up to the 1940s. In the 1990s, Viñedos de Nieva, today under the control of the Martúe group from Toledo (Castile-



La Mancha, in the south of the Castilian plain), launched Blanco Nieva Pie Franco, the DO's first Verdejo, which gave voice in the bottle to these vines growing from their own roots.

Many of the grapes from old vineyards, which often end up diluted in fairly large-scale productions, have been rescued in recent years to stand on their own in white wines with a marked personality. The great cooperative of La Seca, Agrícola Castellana, has created Cuatro Rayas Viñedos Centenarios from grapes grown on the oldest of its Segovian vineyards. This is an unaged white wine that is worked on its lees in stainless steel for several months. It offers fine notes of aniseed and fennel on the nose and is lively and smooth in the mouth.

Much more ambitious and focusing almost exclusively on pre-phylloxera vineyards growing ungrafted Verdejo vines is Ossian Vides y Vinos, also located in Nieva and under the guidance of local vine-grower Ismael Gozalo, together with Javier Zaccagnini, former manager of the DO Ribera del Duero and partner of Mariano García (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 75) in the outstanding Aalto winery in the DO Ribera del Duero. Their excellent whites take the character of the local terroir to the extreme, achieving plenty of volume in the mouth and a marked mineral flavor, sometimes with saline touches. In their most spectacular products, Ossian and the very small-scale





A church in Rueda

Capitel, in which grapes from two slatey vineyards are used, they work with large-format wood and always with native yeasts. Both are very different in style to wines from the rest of the region, especially considering that, at the request of their authors, they are sold with the back label of *Vino de la Tierra de Castilla y León*.

Bodegas y Viñedos Shaya, a more recent creation, also uses old vines, in this case from the nearby town of Aldeanueva del Codonal (the name comes from *codón*, a local term for pebble). The winery belongs to the Gil family's group from the DO Jumilla (Murcia, southeast Spain) and makes two whites, Shaya and Shaya Habis, the latter with wood. Its philosophy follows this same principle of carefully-contained aromas and super smoothness in the mouth, which seems to be the distinguishing features of wines from this remote corner of the DO Rueda.

But these are not the only producers to see Verdejo from this point of view. Eulogio Calleja focuses on the structure offered by this variety, as if it were "a red grape without the color", and considers it more characteristic in the mouth than on the nose. So, in his vineyards, he searches for the origin of the "Segovian clone", which he believes is the key to this variety's profile. His spectacular Naiades, of which 10,000 to 25,000 bottles are made depending on the vintage, comes from grapes grown on very old, vase-shaped vines in different parts



of the Designation, around Tordesillas and Matapozuelos (Valladolid), in Segovia, and in some pre-phylloxera sandy lands in Madrigal de las Altas Torres (Ávila), birthplace of Isabel the Catholic Monarch (Queen of Castile, 1451-1504) and the main growing area for Verdejo in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

## Beyond technology

Most of today's Rueda wines follow a similar pattern of light, aromatic wines at very affordable prices produced with refrigeration and technology. They start out as very clear must and ferment at a very low temperature prior to clarification. According to César Muñoz, one of the best-known experts on the Castile-Leon reds, "Verdejo is a very malleable variety that can be used in more ways than you might expect and takes very well to the wood." In his work at Montebaco, one of the many labels within the DO Ribera del Duero, which has now expanded its range of reds to include a Rueda, he favors more mature grapes and leaves them longer on the lees. As part of his personal project, Selección César Muñoz, he is making Alter Enos with grapes from a 75-year-old vineyard beyond the limits of the DO Rueda. In this case, the emphasis is on the barrel to achieve structure and volume in the mouth, and the label is sold as a *Vino de la Tierra de Castilla y León*. The best Ruedas are undoubtedly highlighting concentration. So, although most of the leading





Belondrade vineyard

## Verdejo, a successful grape variety that is taking off

Over the last few years, the DO Rueda has seemed to be immune to the crisis. The outstanding success of its fragrant, very affordable Verdejo whites has led to unprecedented growth in this area. While, at the start of the decade, the variety was grown on about 3,000 ha (7,413 acres), in 2011 it was harvested from 10,000 ha (24,710 acres). So it is no surprise that practically all the large Spanish wine groups have decided to include a Rueda in their product ranges. It is the most popular white wine for Spanish consumers, with only DO Ca Rioja, DO Ribera del Duero and DO Valdepeñas exceeding it in popularity.

But Verdejo is also crossing frontiers. The neighboring regions in which it was grown in small amounts are now showing interest in it and launching Verdejo wines on the market—cases in point are DO Tierra de León and Tierra del Vino de Zamora. The variety has also been authorized in the Cigales, Arribes and Toro DOs, and of course also under the broader scope of Vino de la Tierra de Castilla y León. With the 2011 vintage, the DO Cigales, which is especially well-known for its rosés and recently also for its reds, has now authorized whites and has started out with a Verdejo wine, although to date it has only 40 ha (98.8 acres) registered under this variety.

Verdejo is also grown in the southern part of the Castilian plain, in the DO La Mancha, the largest wine-growing region on the planet where the variety was authorized in the early 2000s, and in DO Valdepeñas, DO Almansa and DO Manchuela. In this huge area there are already over 3,200 ha (7,907 acres) under Verdejo, 1,700 (4,200) of them in the DO La Mancha alone.

Even the DO Ca Rioja included Verdejo in the list of new white varieties authorized for planting within its production area in 2007. Clearly this white grape is setting trends. But will these areas find the right combination of climate, soils and terroir that nature provides in the DO Rueda?



wineries are working with both traditional vase-shaped and espaliered vineyards (and insist that both can produce quality grapes), there is a group of enthusiasts of vase-shaped cultivation. According to Luis Hurtado de Amézaga, technical manager at Vinos de los Herederos del Marqués de Riscal, “The creeping nature of Verdejo means that the bunches are protected from sunlight, the plant retains moisture better and the must is more aromatic and holds its acidity well. The bunches may be practically on the ground, but the tough skin prevents the grapes from rotting.” Eulogio Calleja adds, “Most of the old vase-shaped vines are planted on very suitable, dry-farmed land so they are used to not having much water, and their tendency to delay the cycle means that less acidity is lost, making the resulting wines better-balanced and more structured.” With espaliered vines, on the other hand, many growers prefer to harvest by hand so that selection is more rigorous at the actual plant.

Something they all agree on is that vineyard yield is a key determinant for quality. The limit allowed for Verdejo by the Regulatory Council is 8,000 kilos per ha (2.47 acres) in vase-shaped plantations and 10,000 for espaliers. In the opinion of Jesús Yuste, a researcher at the Agricultural Technology Institute of Castile-Leon who led the work on clonal selection in Verdejo and has published a book on how to prune





Vineyards in La Seca

it, "In well-managed vineyards, with good pruning of the green shoots, you can get 8,000 kilos of high quality, but in the top-range wines the yield limitation should be greater because concentration is essential."

The example of *Protos*, one of the most interesting projects by a firm based in the DO Ribera del Duero and one of the few from there to have built a winery in the DO Rueda, falls somewhere in the middle. For its young Verdejo of which 750,000 bottles are produced, they work with vineyards with an average age of 18 years and yields of less than 8,000 kilos per hectare. But for *Protos Verdejo Fermentado en Barrica*, of which only 5,000 bottles are made, they harvest the grapes by hand, then select only the best, achieving a yield of 5,500 to 7,000 kilos per hectare. Belondrade works below 5,000 kilos per hectare, José Pariente and Bodegas Naia at an average of 6,000 kilos for their young Verdejo wines. This is also the figure for Palacio de Bornos, the first in this area to produce a barrel-fermented wine. But they set especially demanding standards for their Palacio de Bornos *Vendimia Seleccionada*, a more concentrated wine which comes from a vineyard about 70 years old and is only made in the best years. Production from the really old



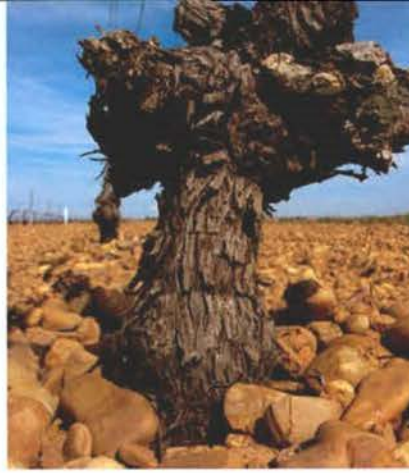
vineyards that remain in the area is truly low. And in the universe of the Ossian pre-*phylloxera* vines, to talk about yields is absurd considering the impoverished soils in the Nieva area and the solemn centenarian vines growing there.

Moreover, Ossian is one of the few wineries that has been working from the start with native yeasts. Belondrade joined it a few years ago, although Didier acknowledges that this method makes things complicated because constant laboratory monitoring is required, and the yeasts may vary from year to year. At *Marqués de Riscal*, they use natural yeasts in their two top-range whites, *Finca Montico* (made in stainless steel with plenty of time on the lees) and *Limousin* (cask-aged). Luis Hurtado de Amézaga stresses that "The varietal profile is purer and more original, but fermentation is more difficult because the native yeast population does not always survive the low temperatures." They have been working on selecting a native yeast that would withstand cold fermentation and the result was first applied with the 2011 vintage.

### Yeasts, barrels, vats, eggs...

Yeasts are a matter of importance in the DO Rueda. In recent years, it has become clear that they have a great influence on the aromatic style of wines, leading to especially powerful, exotic wines that come





Old vine in DO Rueda

closer to the character of Sauvignon Blanc. Didier Belondrade claims that straw and bitter notes are characteristic of the variety, while Luis Hurtado de Amézaga believes "The Verdejo aroma should be reminiscent of fennel and white blossom and should have a grassy touch to it."

Telmo Rodríguez, one of Spain's most internationally-renowned enologists who has projects in many different parts of the world, goes even further and claims: "The variety profile is an absurdity. The great wines do not smell of their variety. Our idea is to focus on the ground, on the places that allow Verdejo to best express the terroir." After a little more than ten years since his arrival in the area to make a white with a good price/quality ratio (Basa, annual production of 50,000 crates, 80% for export), he has now launched his first top-range Verdejo. El Transistor reflects a patchwork of vineyards having a very specific profile with grapes that are vinified in a multitude of containers: barrels of different ages and formats, vats (large wooden tanks), stainless steel, even concrete eggs. The result in the glass is harmonious, complex and elegant. And the concept undoubtedly gives food for thought.

The Verdejo wines that are most highly appreciated today use the barrel fermentation formula, but almost all of them are now looking for a more subtle presence of oak.



At the Marqués de Riscal winery, the aging period for Limousin has been cut back to about six months in 600 and 800 liter barrels. Clearly the classic Bordeaux 225 liter barrel is being ousted by larger sizes. Today Belondrade uses only 300 liter barrels, and firms such as Ossian and José Pariente combine several sizes, going to up 500 liters. "In the future, quality won't necessarily be given by the barrels, but I like a touch of wood in Verdejo wines," says Eulogio Calleja. He remembers that whites here used to be fermented in wooden tanks and he is currently working with large wooden containers. Naia, his youngest white, which always contained a small percentage of barrel wine, today contains 20% of Verdejo from wooden barrels.

And the story goes on. José Pariente and Ossian are experimenting with fermentation in egg-shaped, concrete tanks holding up to 1,600 liters. The sample I was invited to taste at Ossian seemed to me to offer great purity and to be very respectful of the terroir and the variety. Marivi Pariente, owner of the José Pariente winery, will be going even further and this year is to launch a new wine made using this method. It is to be called José Pariente Cuvée Especial, and only 3,000 bottles will be produced. One of her favorite vineyards has been chosen for the occasion, a vase-shaped vineyard planted 35 years





Belondrade vineyard



ago in La Seca. So clearly there are still plenty of options for working with the Verdejo variety and at least a handful of wineries with drive and energy.

The real test will be to see how such wines mature in the bottle. Telmo Rodríguez says, "A wine only becomes good when it matures and loses its varietal character. It should be able to age in the bottle for five to seven years." Many of the Verdejo wines mentioned in this article pass the test with flying colors three and even four years later, but for most of them it is too early to tell. I have had some excellent experiences with six- and seven-year-old bottles of Palacio de Bornos Vendimia Seleccionada. Didier Belondrade, who can pride himself with a longer history than his

colleagues in the DO, does not mince his words, "I insist that a Belondrade can last for up to eight years, especially in a large format." The vertical tasting held in Madrid three years ago to commemorate his winery's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary proved him right, affording a very promising credential for the best of the Spanish Verdejo wines.

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Spain has cultivated rice for well over a thousand years—in fact, ever since it was introduced by the Arabs (711-1492). It naturally follows that rice, more versatile than any other staple, has been a constant in traditional Spanish cuisine. Use some garlic, tomatoes and any vegetable or legume available, and the result is a delightful poor man's dish; use lobster or shrimp and it can rival anything on a king's table. *Paella!* many a reader will immediately volunteer. Paella is still Spain's best-known dish, yet rice and chefs have come a long way over the past two decades. In its traditional and newly experimented applications, rice has been and continues to be a great source of inspiration. Rice makes chefs shine... and vice versa!

**Author**

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**Photos**

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# RICE

and Shine

Bahía



Balilla x Sollana



Close to 900,000 tons of rice are grown per year in Spain in some eight areas. Our focus here, however, will be on the three areas holding a certificate of origin, namely Protected Designation of Origin (PDO): Calasparra (Murcia), Valencia, and Delta del Ebro (Tarragona-Catalonia), all in eastern Spain, in order from south to north. Although there is no substantial difference, each of these areas grows the varieties best adapted to soil

## Websites

### PDO Calasparra

[www.docalasparras.com](http://www.docalasparras.com)  
(English, Spanish)

### PDO Arroz de Valencia

[www.arrozdevalencia.org](http://www.arrozdevalencia.org)  
(English, Spanish)

### PDO Arroz del Delta del Ebro

[www.do-deltadelebre.com](http://www.do-deltadelebre.com)  
(Catalan, Spanish)

and climate. Yet less than 20% of all rice produced has PDO protection, as this covers only the traditional varieties and implies fully guaranteed homogeneity and quality of each PDO-numbered package. Rice is deeply steeped in tradition, but it is also a source of new inspiration. When it comes to preparation, a traditional rice dish in any of its versions is necessarily based on local, seasonal and readily available ingredients, from both a practical and gastronomic standpoint. This also applies to a more innovative approach, as ingredients and culinary procedures have taken on an increasingly creative edge. In Spain, rice is rarely served as an accompaniment but, rather, constitutes an integral part of the dish and has an important role in the organoleptic quality of the end result.

## Pioneering quality

As early as 1986, Calasparra rice was the first cereal grain to obtain

PDO certification in Spain.

Calasparra is situated inland in the northwestern part of Murcia, in southeast Spain. The landscape is rugged, with haphazardly strewn pine-covered rock outcroppings, which at dusk and dawn become shrouded in a bluish veil melting together into an almost oriental picture. Who would ever expect this place to also be home to a vast expanse of rice fields? Yet the fields of the valley watered by the Segura and Mundo Rivers (for many centuries and as a result of the cool, pure mountain water and natural circulation system) produce widely recognized top-quality rice. "Only harvesting is becoming mechanized. The watering system and other agricultural methods have remained practically unchanged since the Arab era," explains Nati Aznar, a well-known food historian, whose comprehensive study *Rice in Spain: History, Agriculture and Gastronomy* is about to be published.

While all rice produced in the PDO



Semi-whole grain Balilla x Sollana



Whole grain Balilla x Sollana



areas is of the species *Oryza sativa* L. and subspecies *Japonica*, they grow a number of different cultivars, although the prized Bomba is common to all three. There is little doubt that Bomba is the star of Spanish rice. Its pearly core denotes a considerable content of starch, which confers it a highly absorptive quality; however, as a result of its hardness and special structure, it does not break easily and, thus, does not become mushy. Bomba is also a more delicate variety with a smaller yield and a more brittle plant structure requiring careful handling. This is why it costs twice as much or more than other types of round rice. And this is also a reason for the frequent use of Balilla x Sollana, the other PDO Calasparra variety selected especially to render a stronger plant with a higher yield. Its grains look similar to Bomba and also offer excellent absorption, but are less resistant to stickiness and require a watchful or experienced eye so as

not to be overcooked. While Bomba is only produced as white rice, José Ruiz, director of the main cooperative Virgen de la Esperanza, explains that, in response to market demands, they are increasingly commercializing biological light brown and whole grain Balilla x Sollana, mostly for export. "Exports of all types of Calasparra rice have increased considerably over the past year and a half," says Ruiz, and that includes all five continents (imagine Japanese *makis* made with Calasparra Bomba!). Invited by Dutch delicatessen wholesaler Vanilla Venture, Ruiz and a small team of cooks recently gave three days of demonstrations in The Netherlands, attended by over 90 chefs. The Murcian Institute for Agricultural and Food Research and Development (IMIDA) and the University of Murcia are conducting studies to produce a *crianza*, or aged rice, intended to improve some of its culinary properties. In Calasparra, at the end of the

pretty Calle Mayor, you will find Hospedería Constitución, where chef Manuela de Paco delights clients with Murcia's most traditional rice dishes (never called paella here, but simply rice, or *arroz*): *arroz con pollo*, *arroz con conejo y caracoles*, and *arroz viudo*. In this historically poor area, rice with a bit of chicken was the most ubiquitous, rabbit and snails was reserved for Sundays, and the simplest, "widowed rice", was actually made with only garlic, dried round *ñora* peppers, *pimentón* (a type of Spanish paprika) and white beans. They are all equally delicious, meaning that they are full of flavor yet light, not in the least because the layer of rice is delightfully thin and the rice is done to perfection. For a more innovative take on rice in this area, a visit to El Olivar restaurant in nearby Moratalla is a must. Firo Vázquez, chef-owner and one of Murcia's few food gurus, is an expert in (among other things)





creatively reinterpreting traditional rice dishes: slightly nutty light brown rice and vegetables topped with thinly-grated broiled slivers of cured Murcia cheese, or his savory rice with rabbit and wild mushrooms. Whatever dish you fancy, save some room for dessert. Vázquez serves Spain's archetypical *arroz con leche*, a very light rice pudding, stuffed into tiny fried honey-drizzled pastries. For a few minutes you'll be transported into *One Thousand and One Nights*.

## And the real paella is ....

Look for the *Paella Valenciana Tradicional con DOP Arroz de Valencia* seal. Ingredients for this regulated paella may vary with location and season, yet ten ingredients should be common to all of them: olive oil, chicken, rabbit, fresh ripe tomatoes, *ferraura* and *garrafó* (local flat green beans and large flat white beans, respectively), water, salt, saffron and, of course, PDO Valencia rice. There are a number of accepted regional and seasonal variations, such as duck in L'Albufera area, PDO artichokes from Benicarló, *tavella* (another typical bean variety), *vaquetas* (mountain snails), *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain), garlic, and fresh rosemary. You will most likely not have access to citrus wood to build a fire, but that shouldn't keep you from trying.



Bahía



Balilla x Sollana



Semi-whole grain Balilla x Sollana



Whole grain Balilla x Sollana



Bomba

In view of the overall success, local firm Probicasa has jumped on the bandwagon and launched a handy product consisting of two cans, one containing the basic ingredients and broth and a smaller one with the corresponding 150 g (5.29 oz) of Calasparra rice. It only requires a flat pan, additional water, some salt to taste, and 20 minutes of your time. You can fool anyone!

## Paella Valenciana and much more

We are now heading some 250 km (155 mi) northeast of the Mediterranean shore. As opposed to Calasparra, here, after miles and miles of the eminent Valencia orange orchards, the landscape flows naturally into the wetlands of L'Albufera, a nature reserve just south of the capital city of Valencia, where the famous rice from Valencia is grown and which is widely recognized as the cradle of paella. There is little doubt that paella Valenciana is the paradigmatic Spanish dish. The fact that it has often been misused both here and abroad and has not always lived up to expectations is no secret. This is why a group of concerned chefs and restaurant owners from the region of Valencia, headed by





Rafael Vidal, owner of the legendary Restaurante Levante (in Benisanó) and backed by such gastronomic celebrities as Adrià, Arzak, Ruscaldeda and Subijana, took the initiative to regulate this emblematic dish and to apply for the corresponding quality certificate to be registered under the auspices of PDO Arroz de Valencia. It is expected to be granted in 2012. Now anyone who wants to put paella Valenciana on their menu will have to comply with a number of requisites (see insert, p. 46).

Santos Ruiz, manager of the PDO Arroz de Valencia Regulatory Council in Sueca (home to the annual International Paella Contest), is clear: "We only grow tradition-related varieties." Besides Bomba, PDO Arroz de Valencia protects two other prevalent varieties: the very similar *Bahia* and *Senia*, which also offer a higher yield and are thus less expensive, but are also less resistant to overcooking. However, thanks to ongoing research, a newly variety called *Albufera* was recently incorporated. It offers the creaminess of the *Bahia* and *Senia*, but with a resistance similar to that of Bomba. It has already created addiction among a number of chefs.



Gleva



Montsianell



Senia



Tebre

Yet, according to Ruiz, the increase in the use of Bomba has been phenomenal in both the domestic and restaurant channels. "There are more and more foodies who, unlike many home cooks, are less concerned about price," he explains, and "Chefs, especially in larger-scale operations, are even less concerned about price, so Bomba is their best bet for a good result." This also applies to exports. The production of whole grain rice here is anecdotal. Says Ruiz: "It's just not part of the tradition." What is a tradition is to have paella at Malvarosa, the gorgeous beach in Valencia's port area, which is lined





with some 20 lively beach restaurants, perhaps after a visit to the nearby rice museum. Next to the posh Las Arenas Hotel is La Rosa, one of the original eateries, dating back to 1925. In an open kitchen on a huge charcoal-fuelled cast-iron stove, Julio Saura prepares his widely-varying paellas, which are finished off with a two-minute flash in the oven, and several versions of hearty *arroz caldoso* (soupy rice) and *arroz meloso* (brothy rice). Of course, here the emphasis is entirely on fish, which comes in directly from the auction (*lonja*), just a stone's throw away and well worth a visit at 5 in the afternoon, when

boats enter the harbor to drop off their precious loads. Today Valencia is an exciting eclectic city that should be on any Spain-lover's itinerary. It successfully combines tradition with up-to-date technology, architecture, and culture, and a delightful and varied gastronomy. A place not to be missed is Riff, a small and pleasant one-Michelin-star restaurant, run by chef Bernd Knöller. You guessed it, Knöller is German. Trained in the Black Forest and Italy, he came to Valencia almost 20 years ago for a visit and decided to stay. "I don't have Valencian roots, so I had to work especially hard," he explains.

"But this cuisine has grown on me; 95% of my ingredients are from here." Rice has a strong presence on the menu. After crispy Bomba and seaweed chips, Knöller seduces you with seemingly simple but clearly complex dishes such as brothy Albufera rice with Delta oysters; the traditional *arroz "brut"* (dirty rice) done his way, with a gradual incorporation of extra virgin olive oil from Gaudiel and dusted with powder of dehydrated cuttlefish intestine; rice and vegetables with transparent fresh Ibérico bacon; and fowl rice with shavings of black truffle from Sarrión. As said, not to be missed!

Tebre



Senia







## Belonging to the land

Some 200 km (124 mi) further up north, in the province of Tarragona, where Spain's largest river, the Ebro, releases its generous flow into the Mediterranean, we find the Delta del Ebro and its homonymous nature reserve, yet another ecosystem surviving thanks to rice culture. "Rice fields are essential to the conservation and survival of these wetlands," says Ignasi Ripoll, who heads an experimental ecological rice farm for SEO/Birdlife (the Spanish association for ornithology) named

Riet Vell, partly financed with the sale of organic rice. PDO Arroz del Delta del Ebro also protects a number of varieties (Bahia, Bomba, Fonsa, Gleva, Montsianell, Senia and Tebre). Teresa Moya, secretary of the PDO's Regulatory Council, says that besides the cherished Bomba, on the market we will find the excellent yet lower priced 100% Gleva Extra, mainly produced on the left bank of the Ebro River and commercialized by Arrossaires del Delta, and 100% Montsianell Extra, produced on the right bank and commercialized by Càmara Arrocerà del Montsià. As regards the growing

consumption of rice and its derivatives, Moya stresses one of its relevant characteristics: As opposed to other cereals, rice is gluten-free. Angelina Sancho, the young and highly motivated export manager of Arrossaires, notes that some 17% of their production is exported, primarily to Eastern Europe and the Middle East. And Spanish rice is going even more global: she is preparing for a trade mission to West Africa.

Just a few kilometers from here lies Mas Prades, a typical whitewashed building recently refurbished into a small hotel and restaurant, where chef Marc Curto is in charge of the

Gleva



Montsianell







kitchen. He is especially interested in retrieving old recipes and giving them new life through different textures and presentations. Proof of this is his delicious brothy rice with *galeras* (a local type of crayfish) and locally-grown artichokes, and his timbale of *baldana* (rice-stuffed blood sausage). Obviously Curto is a staunch believer in the relevance of the Slow Food concept and has, of course, applied for membership. "We have the sea, the river, mountains, orchards and vegetable gardens right here, so why look anywhere else?" he says. Ana and her brother Luis run Granja Luisiana, a duck farm supplying

Marc with duck and foie; one of Marc's associates supplies fish and shellfish, especially the famous Delta *ostrón* (a gnarly-shaped but delicious local oyster); he gets freshly-smoked local eel from the firm Roset; and the traditional *baldana*, made fresh every Thursday, comes from Del Paulo, the family's butcher. They are the new generation which continues to belong to the land, yet their possibilities to stay in business and grow have increased considerably thanks to the internet. Facebook, Twitter, blogs, you name it: they are all proficiently using social media to boost business.

Right where the rice fields meet the Mediterranean lies L'Ampolla, the so-called "Door to the Delta". Although it is very popular with tourists, it is still a fishing village and daily fresh catches supply the local restaurants, like Restaurante Sol. Here, on the first floor, overlooking the silvery sea with the Delta shoreline in the distance, Mari Tere runs the front room and her daughter Teima, as her mother and grandmother did before, has taken over the kitchen. Among their traditional dishes such as the fabulous *arroz negro* (black rice made with fish ink), she prepares *arrosesjat* to perfection, a typical fisherman's dish made onboard. It consists of

## Facts and figures

The challenge for probably any home or professional cook is to use the correct proportion of rice/liquid. Whatever the intended end result: dry (like *paella*), brothy (*meloso*), soupy (*caldoso*), oven-baked (*al horno*), or crusty (*con costra*), its quality depends on the right equation between the desired absorption of flavors and final consistency. Not an easy task, especially when Santos Ruiz, an accomplished cook and consultant himself, points out (or rather, warns) that water reacts differently according to geological height, climate,

atmospheric pressure, the specific heat source (wood, gas, oven, etc.) and intensity used, the type of recipient, its separation from the heat source, and the type of rice. Some of these factors you cannot control and others you can, even to your benefit.

Here are some basic indications:

- *Bomba*: approx. 3 parts warm liquid (water or broth) to one part rice, with a cooking time of approximately 20 minutes
- All other varieties mentioned: approx.

2.5 parts warm liquid to one part rice, with a cooking time of 17/18 minutes

- It is generally recommended that once removed from its heat source, rice should be allowed to stand for 2 to 5 minutes, depending on its final consistency.
- Needless to say that rice kernels, especially of the *Japonica* varieties, swell to twice and even thrice their original size during the process, so the initial layer of rice should be very thin. "Each kernel needs its space to soak up the flavors," says Teima from Restaurante Sol.





first boiling a piece of any type of fish together with potatoes, which is then drizzled with a subtle *picada* of roasted almonds, garlic, olive oil, pimentón and a drop of vinegar; meanwhile, the broth is used to prepare the rice. The term *arrosesjat* means lightly frying the rice in a simple *sofrito* of onion, garlic and saffron until it takes on a golden color. Then the broth is added. You will hardly be able to wait for that golden paella to be put on your table.

### Your turn now

Owing to the fact that Spain, over the past two decades, has gained and

consolidated a leading position on the world's gastronomic hit list, wholesalers and retailers specialized in Spanish food products can now be found in most major metropolitan areas worldwide, generally with their businesses online and with a wide range of specialties, including different varieties of Spanish rice (often presented in pretty cloth sacks). But as much as you may "shine" in your preparation of an excellent arroz, nothing is quite the same as coming to Spain to see and taste for yourself. There's no better time to come than in May, when the flooded fields mirror the bright blue skies, and in

June, when markets are chockfull with tender greens and other fresh products. So from now on whenever you think "paella", also think "arroz".

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Visit our website [www.foodsfromspain.com](http://www.foodsfromspain.com), in whose Products & Recipes section you'll find comprehensive information about Spanish products and routes about Spanish rice.

Bomba









José Luis  
Ungidos\*

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The wines were chosen by  
Julio Biosca, maitre d' and  
sommelier at Julio  
Restaurant

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

# BAKED RICE

(*Arroz al horno*)

In old farmhouses in this part of Spain, the oven used to be lit just once a week and used non-stop to make bread, roasts, rice, and cakes, and even preserves, using the latent heat as the oven cooled down. There is no single recipe for baked rice. Recipes vary depending on where in the Valencia province they come from. In some places, a beaten egg is added towards the end of the cooking process to make what is known as *arroz en costra*, rice with a crust.

## SERVES 10

**For the stock:** 1.5 kg / 3 lb 5 oz pork ribs; 4 pigs' trotters; 2 pig's ears; 400 g / 14 oz turnips; 300 g / 10 1/2 oz chickpeas (soaked overnight).

**For the garnish:** 3 onion-flavored butifarra sausages; 700 g / 1 1/2 lb pork ribs; 10 pigs' trotters; bay leaf; pepper; salt.

**For the rice:** 2 l / 8 1/2 cup olive oil; 1 head garlic; 250 g / 9 oz potatoes, sliced; 200 g / 7 oz tomatoes, sliced; 250 g / 9 oz turnips, cut in pieces; 900 g / 2 lb Balilla x Sollana rice, from PDO Calasparra.

## Stock

Tie the chickpeas in a net, then place in a pan with all the ingredients. Cover with water, bring to a boil and simmer gently for 90 minutes. Strain and set aside. Also set aside the chickpeas.

## Garnish

Cut the butifarra sausage into slices and set aside. Pack the pork ribs in vacuum packs and cook at 65°C / 149°F for 14 hours. Remove from the pack, bone and set aside. Cook the pigs' trotters with the bay leaf, pepper and salt. Bone, and transfer to a rectangular mold.

## Rice sofrito

Pour the olive oil into an earthenware dish and fry the garlic, potato, turnip and tomato. Remove the ingredients, then gently fry the rice. When well coated with oil, return the other ingredients to the pan, including the cooked chickpeas. Then add twice the amount of stock as rice and bake in

the oven at 185°C / 365°F for 23 minutes. After 15 minutes in the oven, add the pork ribs, trotters and lightly grilled butifarra sausage slices.

## To serve

Serve the baked rice in the earthenware dish in which it was cooked. For individual servings or small portions, small cast iron pans can be used.

## Cooking time

15 hours 20 minutes

## Preparation time

20 minutes

## Recommended wine

Finca Terrerazo 2009, by Bodega Mustiguillo (Vino de la Tierra El Terrerazo). The winemaker, Toni Sarrión, brings out the great qualities of the Bobal variety in this wine. The result is powerful and structured. After 18 months in French oak, it offers fleshy, smooth tannins and an elegant, balanced finish.







# Rice with artichoke stalks or SOUPY RICE

(*Arròz amb penques o arroz caldoso*)

In inland Valencia, farmhouse diets in winter were based on the products of the pig slaughter and homegrown vegetables. This typical recipe for soupy rice combines pork with artichoke stalks.

## SERVES 10

**For the stock:** 150 g / 2/3 cups extra virgin olive oil; 150 g / 5 1/2 oz pork fillet or rib; 125 g / 4 1/2 oz peppery milk-cap (*Lactarius piperatus*) mushrooms; 15 saffron threads; 25 g / 1 oz tomato flour; 75 g / 3 oz dried tomato; 300 g / 10 1/2 oz turnip; 600 g / 1 lb 5 oz artichoke stalks; 225 g / 8 oz pigs' trotters; 550 g / 1 lb 4 oz white beans (soaked overnight). This makes about 7 l / 29 1/2 cups of stock.

**Others:** 700 g / 1 1/2 lb pork ribs; 700 g / 1 1/2 lb pork dewlap; 10 pigs' trotters; Maldon salt; 700 g / 1 1/2 lb Senia rice, from PDO Arroz de Valencia; bay leaf; pepper; salt.

**When serving:** 70 g / 2 1/2 oz red pine (*Lactarius deliosus*) mushrooms; 20 g / 1 oz dried tomato; 4 saffron threads; 75 g / 3 oz turnip, diced; 125 g / 4 1/2 oz artichoke stalks, diced; salt.

## Tomato flour

Blanch tomatoes, peel and dry the skin at 70°C / 158°F. When completely dehydrated, crush to a powder.

## Dried tomato

Take the peeled tomatoes used to make the tomato flour. Cut the flesh into quarters and dehydrate at 70°C / 158°F on non-stick paper.

## Stock

Fry the pork fillet or ribs in the olive oil until golden brown, then remove from the heat. Place the pork in a pan and add the mushrooms, saffron, tomato flour, dried tomato, turnip, artichoke stems, pigs' trotters and beans (in a net). Cover with water, bring to a boil and simmer over low heat to make sure the stock remains clear. Strain and set aside.

## Pre-cooked rice

For each l / 4 1/4 cups of stock, add 125 g / 4 1/2 oz of rice and precook for 8 minutes. Strain and cool the rice as fast as possible. Transfer the rice to an airtight container and set aside for a maximum of 48 hours.

## Pigs' trotters

Cook the pigs' trotters with the bay leaf, pepper and salt. Bone and place in a rectangular mold. Cut into 10 pieces and set aside.

## Pork ribs and dewlap

Place the ribs and dewlap in vacuum packs and cook at 65°C / 149°F for 14 hours. Remove, bone and cut the rind off the dewlap. Cut 10 pieces of rib and 10 of dewlap. Set aside.

## Rice

Sauté the mushrooms, dried tomato and saffron threads, then add some of the stock and bring to a boil. Add the turnip and pieces of artichoke stalk and bring to a boil again. Add the rice and boil for 4

minutes, adding boiling stock occasionally (as with risotto) to make a soupy rice. Salt to taste.

## To serve

Serve the rice in a soup dish and top each dish with a piece of trotter, dewlap and rib and sprinkle with a little Maldon salt.

## Cooking time

17 hours

## Preparation time

45 minutes

## Recommended wine

Uno 2009 (DO Valencia), by the Rafael Cambra winery. This red wine, made from Monastrell grapes and aged for 14 months, combines to perfection the characteristics of the grapes, the terroir and the Mediterranean climate. Its color, structure and flavor result in both strength and fruitiness, making it the ideal companion for this soupy rice.



# DRY RICE

## with fish and shellfish

(*Arroz seco de pescado y mariscos*)

Two classic dishes from the Valencia region are *arròs del senyoret* (rice cooked with boned and shelled fish and shellfish) and *arroz a banda* (rice cooked with a medley of fish). We have taken our inspiration from these two traditional recipes to create a dish with a modern touch, such as squid ink ice cream.

### SERVES 10

**For the stock:** extra virgin olive oil; 2 onions; 4 carrots; 2 leeks; 3 kg / 6 1/2 lb mixed fish; 4 l / 17 cup water.

**For the sofrito:** 1.5 l / 6 1/2 cup olive oil; 3 cloves garlic, grated; 75 g / 3 oz ñora pepper; 50 g / 2 oz red *pimentón* (a type of Spanish paprika); 10 saffron threads; 350 g / 12 oz grated tomato.

**For the squid and cuttlefish ink ice cream:** 1 onion; 1 green pepper; 1 clove garlic; 300 g / 10 1/2 oz squid and cuttlefish trimmings; squid and cuttlefish ink to taste (the ice cream should be totally black); 1.5 l / 6 1/2 cup red wine; 1.5 l / 6 1/2 cup cuttlefish and squid stock.

**For the rice:** 250 g / 9 oz extra virgin olive oil; 250 g / 9 oz fresh cuttlefish, diced; 250 g / 9 oz fresh squid tentacles, diced; 150 g / 5 1/2 oz shrimp tails, peeled; 150 g / 5 1/2 oz Mediterranean mussels, shelled; 900 g / 2 lb Bomba rice, from PDO Arroz del Delta del Ebro.

**Others:** 250 g / 9 oz fresh squid rolled up to be cut into thin strips like tagliarini; 10 red shrimp; rock salt.

### Stock

Sauté the vegetables until golden. Add the mixed fish and cover with water. Simmer lightly for about 20 minutes. Strain and set aside.

### Sofrito

Heat the oil and gently fry the garlic, then add the chopped ñora pepper, pimentón and threads of saffron. Cook for 2 minutes over very gentle heat and add the grated tomato. Cook for 15 minutes over low heat.

### Cuttlefish and squid ink ice cream

Brunoise the onion and green pepper. Gently sauté the onion, pepper and garlic, add the cuttlefish and squid trimmings, deglaze with red wine and reduce to boil off as much alcohol as possible. Add cuttlefish and squid stock to cover. Simmer gently for about 20 minutes, then add the ink, skimming constantly. Salt to taste and transfer to Pacojet containers. When frozen, blend until creamy.

### Rice

Sauté the fresh cuttlefish and squid tentacles. Add the rice and cook over medium heat. Add the sofrito and the boiling stock (1 part rice to 2 parts stock), stir for the first 5 minutes, then leave to cook for another 15 minutes without stirring. At minute 18 add the shrimp tails and mussels.

To cook the red shrimp, place on the hot grill on a layer of rock salt. (A medium-sized shrimp will take about 4 minutes on each side to cook).

### To serve

Transfer the rice to a rectangular mold, leaving it loose, without pressing. Top with squid strips and the shrimp and, just before serving, the ink ice cream. Decorate with a little tomato flour.

### Preparation time

1 hour 15 minutes

### Recommended wine

Trio Infernal N° 0/3 2010 (DOCa Priorat), by Comber Fischer Gerin. This interesting white wine, made from Garnacha Blanca and Macabeo grapes grown on vines over 40 years old, is intensely aromatic. In the mouth, it indicates a perfect combination of ageing—12 months in French oak—with mineral touches from a slatey soil. This warm, Mediterranean wine makes a great partner for this fish dish.











# The Welcome Return of **Traditional Spanish Bread**

Bread may be the staff of life in Spain, but it hasn't always been valued as a fine food—until now. Really good bread is on the rise, says Paul Richardson.



## Upper **CRUST**





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TEXT  
PAUL RICHARDSON/©ICEX

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PHOTOS  
AMADOR TORIL/©ICEX

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Pages 58-59, from top to bottom and left to right: bread from Alfacar, bread from Valladolid (*lechuguino*), bread from Neda, bread from Alfacar (*rosca, barra pequeña and hogaza*), bread from Cea, *pa de pagès català* (peasant bread) and *pa moreno de blat xeixa* (brown bread made with *xeixa* flour).



Bread from Neda (previous page).  
*Pa moreno de blat xeixa* (right).

Bread is the cornerstone of the Western diet. For centuries, in the popular consciousness, “bread” has meant practically the same thing as “food”. Hardly surprising, since bread, plus a little of something else, was essentially what the population lived on.

Bread’s centrality in Spanish culture is evident even in the Spanish language. Dozens of sayings, expressions, and rhymes feature bread in some way or other, revealing its privileged place in popular culture. More than 150 bread-based sayings have been counted, throwing a fascinating light on the idiosyncrasies of Spanish food and life.

The importance of bread in the history of Spanish eating is also reflected in its use as an ingredient in the national cuisine. Cooking with bread represents almost a culinary subgenre in itself: consider the hearty soups and stews employing day-old bread (*gazpacho*, a cold soup made with tomato, sweet bell pepper, cucumber and bread, and flavored with garlic and vinegar, is the most obvious example, with *sopes mallorquines*, a vegetable soup poured over thinly sliced dry bread, and the pan-Spanish *sopa de ajo*, garlic soup, not far behind); *migas* (crumbling day-old bread, moistened with water and then gently simmered with oil or lard and a variety of sweet or savory accompaniments), which are hugely popular in much of rural Spain; and the use of bread as a

thickener for sauces, especially in Catalan cuisine, to say nothing of bread-based desserts like *torrijas* (bread soaked in milk, dipped in egg and fried in olive oil, then sweetened with sugar or honey and often spiced with cinnamon). Visitors often comment on the visibility of bread on Spanish tables and bar-tops and the common sight of diners clutching a piece of bread in one hand while eating with the other. In this, as in other aspects of Spanish food, however, appearances can be deceiving. Spain has had an awkward relationship with bread. Once upon a time Spain was one of Europe’s greediest consumers: in 1964, annual consumption was 134 kg (295.4 lb) per head of population. By 2009, that figure had fallen to 40 kg (88 lb) per person per year, making Spain the least enthusiastic bread consumer in the EU. The reasoning behind this is a complex question having to do with changing lifestyles and the common (if erroneous) perception that bread is fattening. Where for centuries, eating large quantities of bread was, in part, a dietary compensation for the lack of other foodstuffs, nowadays bread is more often seen simply as a vehicle for other, more appetizing and luxurious ingredients. Bread has, then, lost its pole position in the national food culture. At the same time, the gastronomic quality of the product has tended to decline. Much of the bread consumed today is an

industrial product, highly processed, with little interest in terms of flavor or texture. (The advent of pre-cooked bread, sold frozen, has enabled “fresh baked” bread to be sold in establishments with no experience of baking, like convenience stores and gas stations). At the same time, however, traditional varieties have clung to life and the number of “speciality breads” in a myriad shapes and sizes has grown exponentially. Bread in Spain has lost its humble status: it has moved up in the world, and seems determined to make a success of itself in the privileged world of gourmet food.

## Use your loaf

Attitudes are changing. After decades in which it was generally undervalued, bread is at last making a comeback, this time as a gourmet product with rich gastronomic potential. To give one example of this trend at its highest level, the influential food conference Madrid Fusión has for the last two years (2011 and 2012) reserved a section of its program for bread—notably as a basic element of the restaurant experience. The consensus at this year’s event seemed to be that restaurants in Spain are at last waking up to the possibilities offered by artisan bread, and chefs increasingly choose either to make their own bread or depend on the services of a trusted master baker.



Bread from Valladolid (*lechuguino*)

Peasant bread



Bread from Cea

Chefs Oriol Rovira of Els Casals (1 Michelin star), Jordi Roca of El Celler de Can Roca (3 Michelin stars) and star baker Anna Bellsolà (Baluard Barceloneta Bakery), all agreed that breads offered in restaurants could and should be much more carefully matched with the menu in question, for every dish has its corresponding bread variety. A year earlier, the conference hosted a fascinating workshop held by Daniel Jordà, who belongs to the third generation of a family of bakers based in Barcelona since 1927. Jordà, a leading light in Spain's incipient bread revolution, says his mission is to "bring about a new focus in the baking sector, getting rid of the tedious, boring and irrelevant image that bread has acquired in the last few years and giving back its dignity and quality." At his bakery, La Trinidad, Jordà is bringing back traditional recipes for long-fermented sourdough breads as well as introducing innovations like olive breads and original *panes de autor* (signature breads) featuring unusual combinations like white chocolate and strawberry, wasabi, melon, and Ibérico products. Before we look to the future, however, we need to rediscover the roots. In terms of traditional breads, there is no doubt that Spain possesses a wide variety. And regional characteristics in bread can still be discerned, if we look hard enough. Castile (central Spain) is, historically, the heartland of *candeal*

bread. The term refers to the variety of wheat also called *candeal*, which has a low moisture content and less gluten than usual. The dough for *candeal* bread was commonly stretched and folded (a technique called *refinado* in Spanish) instead of kneaded and only allowed to rise once, producing a dense, compact loaf with a thick, golden crust. *Candeal* bread was, and is, highly appreciated above all in the provinces of Zamora and Valladolid, where it originated, but is also found in Extremadura, Andalusia and Castile-La Mancha. (Madridtienemiga, a fascinating breadmakers' blog, recommends the traditional *pan candeal* still made by La Mari at her bakery in the town of Ruidera, in central-southern Spain, close to the beautiful freshwater lagoons of Ruidera.) Other traditional breads of the *candeal* type are the *bollo sevillano*, the *telera* of Córdoba, and the famous *panes de Valladolid* (breads from Valladolid). The latter have a distinguished history. Made since the 9<sup>th</sup> century, they were much enjoyed by the Emperor Charles I of Spain and V of Germany (1500-1558), who took the recipe with him from Valladolid (northwest Spain) to his monastic retreat in La Vera (southwest Spain). The best known of these classic Valladolid *candeal* breads is the *lechuguino*, so called in reference to the concentric circles sometimes traced on its crust, giving it the appearance of a flower or lettuce. The loaf is round,

flat, with four or five raised edges forming a square or pentagon around its surface, and has a matte, smooth, golden crust. *Lechuguino* has, as yet, no official protection as a traditional product, which is not true of another important Spanish *candeal* bread, the *Pan de Cruz de Ciudad Real*. This exceptional bread was only the second in Spain to receive (in 2009) the coveted Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) *Pan de Cruz de Ciudad Real*. Its roots lie in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the area around Almagro and Manzanares (both cities in central-southern Spain) was dominated by the religious and military order of Calatrava (founded in 1158). In those days, and until relatively recently, the province of Ciudad Real was a major producer of cereals including *candeal* wheat, and the *Pan de Cruz* has a close historical relationship with Manchego cuisine. The *migas*, *tostas* (a single slice of bread with one or more food items on top) and *picatostes* (slices of bread from loaves fried with lard or olive oil and usually sweetened with granules of refined sugar on the outside) are all ideally made with it, and the *Guiso de las Bodas de Camacho*, a dish inspired by the wedding scene in Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (the novel written by Miguel de Cervantes in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century), classically includes rounds of fried *Pan de Cruz* as part of its rich melange of chicken, onion, egg yolks and white wine.





Bread from Valladolid (*lechuguino*)

Shaped in a compact, rounded loaf, the Pan de Cruz de Ciudad Real is immediately recognizable by the cross-shaped incision across its rounded exterior and the mark of a C (deriving from the Order of Calatrava) pricked onto its base. Cut into the chestnut-colored crust, and the crumb is dense, soft and consistent, with no holes, this compactness of texture being explained in part by the low humidity of the air in this part of La Mancha. According to the Regulatory Council of the PGI, an unopened loaf of Pan de Cruz should keep in good condition for up to a week.

Francisco Tejero, a bakery consultant based in Madrid (and crowned world champion of artisan bread in Paris in 1992) says this bread variety was once hugely popular, then declined during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and is now once again highly valued by the gourmets of Ciudad Real.

## Against the grain

Raising one's appreciation of traditional breads often follows a particular personal learning curve. I myself have a clear memory of the first time I realized there was more to Spanish bread than the ubiquitous *barra de pan* (the standard long white loaf found in shops and supermarkets). I was driving through Galicia, in the northwest of the country, when I stumbled on a place with a reputation for some of the most delicious "craft" breads in Spain. I screeched to a halt at the first bakery I came to in the municipality of San Cristóbal de Cea and snapped up a loaf, nibbling almost half of it before I got to Orense. The fame of the *pan de Cea* (which has been made in something like its current form for the last 700 years in Carballiño county) precedes its distinction as the first Spanish bread to receive the PGI, five years before the Pan de Cruz de Ciudad Real. In shape, Cea bread is bulbous and

slightly elongated, with a thick, dark, chewy crust, often bearing a deep cut which opens wide in the oven giving the loaf a characteristically disjointed aspect. Like many of the world's best breads, pan de Cea is made using mother dough (*masa madre*), implying that fermentation is set in motion not by fresh yeast but by using dough from a previous batch, creating a continuum that stretches back for years, if not generations. Some other good breads, it might be argued, are easier to find in Galicia than in any other part of Spain, and Galician people are fussier than most about the standard of their daily loaf. Notable breads found in this region include the *bola* (Santiago de Compostela and La Coruña), *bola de Porriño* (Pontevedra), *cornecho* (Santiago de Compostela), *pan de Ousá* (Lugo) and *pan de Carballo* (La Coruña), not forgetting the extraordinary *borona* or *broa*, a dense maize bread of great antiquity and an object of





Bread from Neda

great affection among older Galicians. Even among this generally promising panorama, however, there are especially high points. A close relative of Cea, though distant as the crow flies, is Neda. This small town in the northern province of La Coruña is, like Cea, an unabashed flag-waver for the culture of good bread. Though Neda bread cannot boast PGI status, it has long been the focus of an exaltation, the Galician term for a gastronomic fiesta in homage to a valued local product. Since 1989 the Festa do Pan takes place on the first Sunday in September, with feasts and tastings of the famous bread as well as the local *empanadas* (dough filled with meat, fish or vegetables and oven baked) and *panes de huevo* (sponge

cake). The town recently inaugurated the Ruta del Pan de Neda (Neda Bread Route), an itinerary taking in the old flour mills on the Beelle River (historical focus of bread production in the town), a guided visit to one of the town's 20 bakeries, and a tasting of local breads and *empanadas*. An important stop on the tour is the Centro de Actividades Motus, located in a restored stone-grinding watermill on the banks of the river, one of 20-odd mills, some of which were still functioning until 1950. This old stone building is now an interactive museum where visitors learn about the arts of maize and wheat cultivation, flour milling and traditional breadmaking. As for the bread itself, like all proper Galician breads, this one is made from a

mixture of strong flour and flour made from varieties of local cereals (wheat and/or rye, though the addition of rye is preferable for its deep, toasty flavor), with plenty of humidity in the dough to ensure its open, chewy texture and deliciously crisp, crunchy crust.

Regional specialties in traditional baking can provide some of the nicest surprises in any gastronomic tour of Spain, especially in the south, in Andalusia. The *mollete*, a soft, flat wheat flour bun from the town of Antequera (Málaga) is now found over a wide area of Andalusia and beyond, making it a popular choice for everything from breakfast *pan tumaca* (toasted country bread rubbed with garlic and ripe tomato and dressed with a pinch of salt and extra virgin olive

## Websites

### Pan de Alfacar

[www.pandealfacar.es](http://www.pandealfacar.es) (Spanish)

### Pan de Cea

[www.pandecoa.org](http://www.pandecoa.org)  
(Galician, Spanish)

### Pan de Cruz de Ciudad Real

[www.turismocastillalamancha.com/restaurantes/denominaciones-de-origen/igp-pan-de-cruz/](http://www.turismocastillalamancha.com/restaurantes/denominaciones-de-origen/igp-pan-de-cruz/)  
(Chinese, English, French, Spanish)

### Pa de Pagès Català (peasant bread)

[www20.gencat.cat/docs/DAR/DE\\_Departament/DE03\\_Normativa/DE03\\_05\\_Infornacio\\_publica/2010/Documents/Fitxers\\_estatics/2010\\_plec\\_condicions\\_igp\\_pa\\_pages\\_cas.pdf](http://www20.gencat.cat/docs/DAR/DE_Departament/DE03_Normativa/DE03_05_Infornacio_publica/2010/Documents/Fitxers_estatics/2010_plec_condicions_igp_pa_pages_cas.pdf) (Spanish)

### Pan de Valladolid

[www.pandevalladolid.es](http://www.pandevalladolid.es)  
(English, Spanish)



- 1 Bread from Neda
- 2 PGI Pan de Cea
- 3 Bread from Valladolid
- 4 Peasant bread
- 5 PGI Pan de Cruz de Ciudad Real
- 6 Black bread made from xexoa flour
- 7 Bread from Alfacar





Bread from Cea

oil) to the best of all possible ham *bocadillos* (sub sandwiches). The Andalusians love their typical breads, and none more so than Pan de Alfacar, hailing from the small town of Alfacar, outside Granada. For centuries, at least since the Arab era (711-1492) and possibly earlier, the town has been a byword in the province of Granada for the exceptional quality of its bread, which is a mother dough type using wheat flour and local water from the springs in the village (this water being often cited as the key factor). With no less than 60 bakeries in Alfacar and neighboring Viznar, local bread is very much a going concern—especially since Alfacar bread was singled out last year as

the latest Spanish bread to be a candidate for PGI. The Pan de Alfacar logo now appears in the windows of all good bakeries in Granada and the bread is offered on the tables of the city's most prestigious restaurants and tapas bars. But the best place to buy Alfacar bread, many Granadinos will tell you, is the little kiosk in Granada's Plaza Mariana Pineda. Join the queue of locals eager for their Alfacar loaves, crisp *regañas* (very thin, flat, crunchy rectangular crackers) and *saladillas*, an oil-rich flatbread reminiscent of Italian *focaccia*, sprinkled with salt flakes and practically addictive, and also one of Granada's best inventions.

## Dark and handsome?

Spanish attitudes to bread are largely determined by the recent history of the country. Historically, white bread, made from fine wheat flour from which the bran had been removed, was the food of the well-off urban classes. The bread of the rural poor was generally darker, denser, and sometimes made from rye, especially in non-wheat-growing areas. The result was that eaters of dark bread came to despise it and long for the fine texture and mild flavor of white bread. As soon as white bread became widely available, the chewy and strong-flavored dark breads of the past naturally fell out of favor. In my adopted village in Extremadura, anything other than the soft-centered modern-style white breads (often made with Canadian flour treated with whitening agents, anticaking agents and other "improvers") is disparaged by my neighbors as "bread only good enough for dogs". Meanwhile a sea change is underway. The organic movement in Spain champions local grain varieties, whole meal flours and the return to cereals like rye, spelt and buckwheat. City-dwellers moving into the country, constituting what is known as the "neo-rural" movement, have begun to demand denser, darker breads, rejecting the pappy white *barras* popular with rural locals. The wheel has therefore









Cruz de Ciudad Real bread

come full circle. Artisan breadmakers are springing up both in the major cities and in the rural context, providing mother dough, sourdough and rye breads to a new generation of Spanish bread consumers. Real-bread initiatives are popping up in the most surprising places: I recently discovered the fabulous Pa Moreno de Blat Xeixa (a product of the Ark of Taste of the Slow Food movement, *Spain Gourmetour* No. 82), a bread from Majorca made with the ancient local wheat variety *xeixa* by Tomeu Morro and Biancamaria Riso in their artisan bakery outside Pollença (Majorca, in the Mediterranean Sea). Among the cities, Barcelona (Catalonia, northeast Spain) leads the way. Barcelona-Reykjavik, founded by an Icelander and a Catalan, has built up a loyal following in the trendy neighborhoods of the city center with its fabulous sourdough breads in the Scandinavian style, while baker Anna Bellsolà has found success with the wood-fired oven and stone-ground organic flours she uses in her new-wave Baluard Barceloneta Bakery. Meantime, old-fashioned Barcelona *flequers* (bakeries, in Catalan) like Turris (presided over by star baker Xavier Barriga), Fortino, Forn Boix and the aforementioned La Trinidad have consolidated their range of

rustic and multigrain breads, adding such novelties like olive and maize bread, organic and whole meal breads, cocas and muffins to keep up with increasing demand. While on the subject of Catalonia, it would be a shame to conclude this brief overview of traditional Spanish breads without mentioning Pa de Pagès Català. The name, meaning "peasant bread" sounds vague, but the bread in question is highly distinctive: it's a big brown wheel of a loaf, of the shape generally known in Spain as *hogaza* (mass of bread which is shaped into a rounded form and baked in one piece). The flour used is wheat, the crust is hard and crunchy, the interior compact yet relatively moist, with a pronounced toasty flavor and an agreeable acidity on the palate. For years it seemed an anomaly that such a well-loved and keenly-consumed bread as Pa de Pagès (toasted over a wood fire and rubbed with olive oil and tomato it is nothing short of sensational) was not recognized as a traditional bread variety worth protecting. Bakers all over Catalonia have been pressing for such recognition for years. And last year, finally, the good news was announced: it had applied for the PGI on behalf of the Pa de Pagès Català. All being well, this classic bread will soon enjoy the protection it deserves, putting it up there with Cea, Pan de Cruz de

Ciudad Real and surely Alfacar. The message is clear: dull Spanish bread has had an easy ride for much too long. Fine traditional breads are back, and they're looking for a slice of the action.

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

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José Luis  
Ungidos\*

Photos recipes  
Toya Legido/©ICEX  
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Traslation  
Jenny McDonald/©ICEX

The wines were chosen by  
Julio Biosca, maitre d' and  
sommelier at Julio  
Restaurant

# CEA BREAD TORRIJA

and white chocolate with meringue  
ice cream and cocoa soup

*(Torrija de Pan de Cea y chocolate blanco con helado de leche  
merengada y sopa de cacao)*

Bread from Cea (Galicia, in northwest Spain) is the rustic bread that many Spanish children remember from their infancy. That includes me. Quite a few kilometers eastwards, in Cantabria, where I grew up, we received bread from Cea, and when any was left over, it was made into *torrijas* (sweet milk-soaked bread fritters), as in many other parts of the country. Considering that the north of Spain in general was a traditional source of dairy products, such fritters were a common occurrence. I have updated this traditional recipe by sweetening the bread with white chocolate and accompanying it with meringue-flavored ice cream. The cocoa soup adds a refreshing touch.

## SERVES 10

**For the torrija:** 1 loaf of Cea bread (0.5 kg / 1 lb 2 oz); 400 g / 14 oz white chocolate; 1/2 l / 2 1/6 cups mineral water; 8 g / 1/4 oz gelatin sheets; 100 g / 3 1/2 oz sugar to caramelize.

**For the cocoa soup:** 125 g / 4 1/2 oz sugar; 75 g / 3 oz cocoa; 3.5 l / 15 cups water; 1.5 l / 6 1/2 cup milk.

## For the meringue ice cream:

1 l / 4 1/4 cup milk; 150 g / 5 1/2 oz egg yolks; 150 g / 5 1/2 oz egg whites; 150 g / 5 1/2 oz sugar; 50 g / 2 oz glucose; 40 g / 1 1/2 oz stabilizer; 2 lemon rinds; 2 cinnamon sticks; ground cinnamon.

## Torrija

Cut the bread into slices 4 cm / 1 1/2 in thick and remove the crusts. Heat the water together with the chocolate. When it comes to a boil, remove from the heat and add the previously soaked sheets of gelatin. Strain, pour onto the bread and leave to soak. The torrija can be caramelized in two ways: the first is by covering the top with sugar and heating with a blowtorch until it turns golden, and the second is by making a light caramel in a frying pan and dipping the torrija into it. In either case, the caramel should not be dark brown.

## Cocoa soup

Mix the sugar with the cocoa. Heat the milk and water and when the mixture reaches boiling point, add the sugar and cocoa. Reduce until it starts to become denser, then strain and set aside.

## Meringue ice cream

Boil the milk with the glucose, cinnamon and lemon rinds and leave to infuse. Mix the sugar with the stabilizer and the egg yolks, then add this mixture to the milk. Heat to 85°C / 185°F, then strain and leave to cool. When the milk is almost cold (about 30°C / 86°F), mix with the beaten egg whites. Transfer to the ice cream maker.

## To serve

Serve a little cocoa soup over the bottom of the dish, place the torrija in the center and serve with the meringue ice cream. Sprinkle with a little ground cinnamon.

## Preparation time

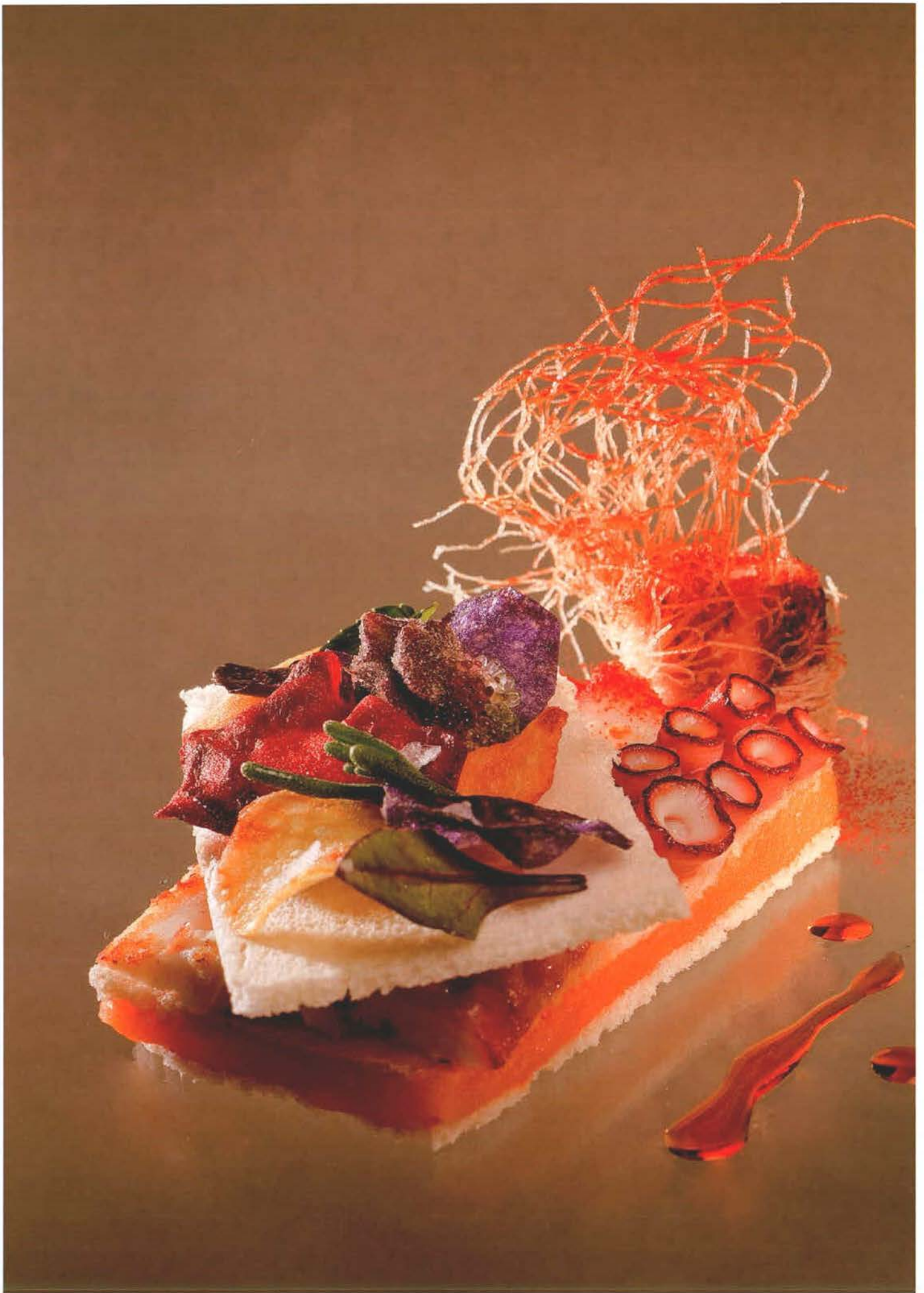
25 minutes

## Recommended wine

Casta Diva Reserva Real, by Bodegas Gutiérrez de la Vega. Moscatel de Alejandria is the variety in this sweet but fresh tasting wine. The magnificent intensity of the aromas blend to perfection with this updated torrija.

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







# CRUZ BREAD MILLEFEUILLE,

octopus, baked potato with Pimentón de la Vera oil and crisp and aromatic snacks

*(Milhojas de pan de cruz, pulpo, patata asada con aceite de Pimentón de la Vera y snacks crujientes y aromáticos)*

The Pan de Cruz from the province of Ciudad Real has a compact texture, can be sliced thinly and is excellent toasted. It is ideal for upgrading one of our restaurant's recipes from 2006, twice-cooked octopus with baked potato and Pimentón de la Vera oil, giving it a new look with different textures, aromas and flavors. Served in mini-portions, it takes on a new life as finger food.

## SERVES 10

1 octopus weighing 2.5 kg / 5 lb 10 oz; 1 Pan de Cruz de Ciudad Real weighing 115-135 g / 4-4 1/2 oz; 100 g / 3 1/2 oz kataifi pasta.

### For the Pimentón de la Vera oil:

1.5 l / 6 1/2 cup olive oil; 3 cloves garlic, grated; 75 g / 3 oz sweet Pimentón de la Vera (a type of Spanish paprika).

### For the baked potato purée:

1.5 kg / 3 lb 5 oz potatoes; Pimentón de la Vera oil.

### For the crisp snacks:

potato; purple potato; cassava; beetroot; plantain; lotus flower root; olive oil.

### For the aromatic snacks:

beetroot leaf; pansies; common ice plant; calendula petals.

Place the octopus on a perforated tray and bake in a steam oven at 100°C / 212°F for about 80 minutes (the timing will depend on the oven, so test with a needle). Cut off the tips of the tentacles and set aside. Using an electric slicer, cut the Pan de Cruz de Ciudad Real into half-centimeter (0.19 in) slices and toast in the oven at 185°C / 365°F. Just before serving, wrap the tentacle tips in kataifi pasta and fry at 185°C / 365°F until the pasta is golden brown.

## Pimentón de la Vera oil

Gently fry the garlic in oil ensuring the temperature does not go beyond 150°C / 302°F, then lower to 60°C / 140°F and add the sweet Pimentón de la Vera. Mix to dilute as much as possible, then leave to stand and decant the oil into a container, leaving behind any undissolved pimentón.

## Baked potato purée

Wrap the potatoes in foil and bake in a dry oven at 185°C / 365°F until well-cooked (the timing will depend on size). Peel and mash in a bowl. Add the Pimentón de la Vera oil to color the potato and season with salt.

## Crisp and aromatic snacks

Use the different vegetables to add contrasting color and texture. For the crisp snacks, slice the vegetables very thin using an electric slicer, then fry in oil at 185°C / 365°F.

## To serve

Start with a slice of toasted Pan de Cruz and cover with a layer of baked potato purée. Add another slice of toast, then a slice of octopus and top with a final slice of toast. Decorate the top with the crisp and aromatic snacks. Place the deep-fried tentacles in kataifi pasta to one side and sprinkle with a little pimentón.

## Cooking time

80 minutes

## Preparation time

20 minutes

## Recommended wine

Sanclodio 2010 (DO Ribeiro), by Bodegas Sanclodio. This very pleasant wine, made from Treixadura, Godello and other local grape varieties, is the creation of José Luis Cuerda, a well-known Spanish film director and producer. In combination with this dish, its simple yet varied aromas and flavors afford a complex result.



Julio Restaurant originated as a personal project of Julio Biosca's. That was what persuaded José Luis Ungidos to take on the role of *chef de cuisine* when he was offered it. Less than five years of steady, unostentatious achievement later, it boasts a Michelin star. Julio Restaurant owes its success to a style of cuisine that is rooted in local tradition, that showcases quality produce, and uses such simple, traditional approaches as long, slow cooking in its ongoing quest for textures and flavors. Unconventional juxtapositions of these sometimes verge on risky, yet the sincerity, directness and depth of commitment that underlie this whole venture have earned the little town of Fontanars dels Alforins (Valencia, eastern Spain) a place on the gastronomic map.





José Luis  
Ungidos

Text  
Almudena Muyo/©ICEX

Translation  
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Photos  
Tomás Zarza/©ICEX  
and Toya Legido/©ICEX



for the

# A TASTING ORIGINAL





It's so quiet! On arriving in Fontanars dels Alforins, all you can hear is a sougling of pine branches and a rattling of poplar leaves, and even these seem muffled. There's certain logic to a whispered conversation between trees and breeze, but I can't quite fathom the whistling that seems to punctuate the rustling of leaves and branches. I have the distinct feeling of having arrived at an oasis of peace and calm. An oasis whose population (of about a thousand) witnessed the transformation back in 2005 of the local bar, Casa Julio, which had been run by the Biosca Llin family since the 1950s: the business was effectively reinvented and divided into two. The prime mover behind this scheme was Julio Biosca (of the third generation of the family) with his sister, Pilar, and chef, José Luis Ungidos, as his principal allies. Under their guidance,

Julio Restaurant rose from the long-established Casa Julio site like a younger, innovative and more emancipated relative, going on to win a Michelin star yet coexisting in perfect harmony with the conventional local color approach adhered to in the bar beside it. There is just one wall between them—a physical division that differentiates one enterprise from the other—and both share the common purpose of celebrating Mediterranean cuisine, each in its own way. You need to have plenty of self-belief and courage, and to have thought things through thoroughly if you are planning to change and restructure a segment of your family's business—"a bar that's been there forever", as the locals put it—even though it's doing very nicely, thank you, to make room for a high-end restaurant in a small

town that isn't even near anywhere important. To carry this scheme forward while still remaining involved with what was there before is not an easy feat. Evolving, advancing without severing connections and respecting one's roots is always tricky: it calls for determination and, especially, boundless common sense. Julio seems to have managed it: he has created a very spacious, comfortable and welcoming restaurant, opting for a minimalist decor with lots of wood (the floors and part of the walls). Paintwork is white and cream, and windows are large, with blinds that let in the light but filter out the sun. The tables—kept to a few, about six or seven—are generously sized and placed with enough space between them to allow diners a degree of privacy while they eat.





## Teamwork

He then had to find the personnel to match. Julio persuaded José Luis Ungidos to take command of the kitchen. "We had met in Bilbao (northern Spain) when I was working as chef in Zortziko (one Michelin star)," explains Ungido. "Julio was there for about three months' training, and we got on well. He told me even then that he had a scheme to turn part of the family business into a top-flight restaurant. A few months later, when he heard that I was intending to leave Zortziko, he called me up right away; we talked and talked, and he convinced me."

A decision to seek fresh experience had led him first of all to consider returning to his native Cantabria or, if that were to prove impossible, to head for one of the big cities and try

his luck. "I realized that family ties and friendships could not be allowed to prevail over professional connections. That's why I opted to come to Fontanars, a town that I was constantly having to ask Julio to pinpoint for me on the map, and join this very personal project—Julio's project. Basically, it was so that I could work with him. In the course of the many conversations we'd had, I realized that he liked the same things that I liked and that he understood my cooking completely. I came to the conclusion that Julio, who has since become the restaurant's sommelier and maitre d', would be able to communicate the point of my cooking with complete accuracy, and that made me feel very much at ease. I knew that, as well as fulfilling his front-of-house role, he could help me improve my skills. And so it has turned out."

José Luis arrived about six months after the transformation and I gather from clues that he, too, was affected by the pervasive silence that struck me so forcibly on my arrival. His experience had clearly been tinged with melancholy: "Although I couldn't have been made to feel more welcome, and although I was thoroughly involved in things right from the start, I still remember feeling dreadfully lonely at night." He gradually got used to it. Meanwhile, he was enjoying completely free creative rein: "From the very first day, Julio made it clear that the kitchen was my responsibility and that the decisions to be made were mine. And he has stuck to that punctiliously. However, I personally like to discuss a new dish before adding it to the menu, so decisions aren't always made solely by me." This familiar







approach, combined with a need to know that those around him are comfortable, has surely been a key element in building a team that makes everything run like clockwork.

## First steps

José Luis Ungidos was born in Cantabria and he also did his training there and in Navarre, San Sebastián and Bilbao (all in northern Spain). It is astonishing, therefore, that he has found a way of expressing his culinary talent while adjusting to the tastes and traditions of an area so distant from his home patch and, even so, producing dishes in his own identifiable style. The fact that Casa Julio has always been known for serving good fish, despite its location in inland Valencia, must have worked in his favor. José Luis relates that "Julio's father used to set off for the nearby town of Fuente la Higuera, which was a stopping place for trucks en route to Madrid (central Spain) laden with fish bought at quayside auctions. He used to stock up on fresh fish bought from them. When that couldn't be done, he'd go to the market in Valencia or the quayside auction at Santa Pola to buy it; though not a long journey in terms of distance, it took a very long time because transport links were so poor in those days." This also explains the paradox that Ungidos discovered when he arrived at Fontanars: "People from Valencia and Alicante used to come here to eat prawns from Santa Pola!" With this precedent as an example, José Luis set about identifying the traits that characterize the local cuisine, going back to its roots with a view to devising a menu that was a composite of his ideas and the local

repertoire, with a nod in the direction of the traditional reputation established by the family business.

"When I arrived, I said to myself 'We're in Valencia, so part of the menu must be devoted to rice dishes.' I duly put a rice dish on the menu and cooked it in my usual way... I think it lasted four or five days. Everyone assured me that it was delicious, but when I tasted the rice dishes made by Pilar, Julio's mother, it was blindingly obvious that mine just wouldn't do. There were no two ways about it: I told them that either we removed my rice dish from the menu or I simply wouldn't cook. I just couldn't countenance a situation where the bar next door was serving up excellent rice dishes while the one on the restaurant menu didn't taste anywhere as good!"

Guided by Julio's mother, he determinedly set about mastering rice. One of the dishes he created in the process is *Arròs amb penques* (Rice with artichoke stalks, see recipe page 55), which has won itself a place on the restaurant's *Menú Clásico*. This

"soupy" (*caldoso* in Spanish) rice dish, very much in the local style, is made with artichoke stalks and other vegetables and served with crispy chunks of pig's trotter, pork cheek and ribs in the center of the plate. This accentuates the overall flavor of the dish and to some extent determines how you eat it: the meaty central element pulls together the other ingredients so that, in effect, the dish becomes a sticky rice experience rather than a soupy one. It is a good example of his overall *modus operandi*: he takes a classic dish and studies it with a view to developing it further, in both presentation and flavor.

## Up-to-the-minute and market-led

Admitting that he finds his own cooking very difficult to define, José Luis declares it to be "traditional cookery that is market- and product-led and given modern touches by the use of certain techniques." The aim is obvious: "We want people to come to







the restaurant, eat the food and retain a memory of its flavors.” Products and raw materials are prepared and put together in ways that make the most of their flavor. And how is that done? By sourcing their supplies from local farms. “We watch the produce growing and being harvested,” Ungidos assures me, and they’re also willing to go wherever necessary to get the very best, whether it’s to the quayside auction at Santa Pola (a regular pilgrimage destination) or to Granada (southern Spain) for sturgeon.

Our meal arrives and we see the theory in action from the first course on. The delicious *crema de calabaza* (creamed pumpkin/squash soup)—smooth, very subtly flavored and lovely on the palate—is made with pumpkin grown on unirrigated land by a farmer in the village, transformed by the chef’s skill and further enhanced by Julio’s resumé of the dish (which heightens anticipation), delivered at the table.

Special mention must also go to the *Hamburguesa de sepia con chips de verdura* (Cuttlefish burger with vegetable chips). Part of the repertoire for the past seven years (plenty of time for fine-tuning), this dish is by now one of the restaurant’s established classics. Impeccably crunchy in texture and with a mild cuttlefish flavor, the “burger” is sandwiched between two buns that incorporate the cuttlefish ink, and served with freshly-made beetroot, purple potato, plantain and potato chips. This dish looks stunning and tastes as good as it looks. As one would hope in a part of the

country such as this, fresh fruit and vegetables of all kinds are supplied by the region’s farmers. The *Hervido de verduras al dente con caldo emulsionado con aceite de oliva virgen extra y citronela* (*Melissa officinalis*) (Al dente boiled vegetables in broth emulsified with extra virgin olive oil and lemon balm) is fabulous. The vegetables are cooked to perfection and the basic broth is mild, gaining in flavor in the mouth. This aromatic dish starts off modestly in the flavor stakes, builds up gradually and opens up on the palate where all its ingredients are identifiable, before being replaced by a pleasant, fresh, citrus aftertaste.

The restaurant buys its fish and seafood at quayside auction sales. Its version of *fideuá* (a traditional Spanish dish, similar to paella but made with noodles rather than rice) has become a classic: *Fideuá de calamares y marisco con gamba roja, y helado de calamar* (Squid and seafood fideuá with red prawns and squid ink ice cream) is made using fine noodles, and tastes intensely of the sea (thanks to the Santa Pola red prawns). The ice cream, used judiciously, contributes to a clever interplay of textures—gooey noodles, creamy ice cream, fleshy prawns—without in any way diluting or distracting from the overall flavor.

## Prime material rules

Prime material, or “product”, is accorded such importance at Julio Restaurant that it shapes the menu and governs any changes made to it

in the course of the year. The restaurant offers three menus: a gastronomic one, which showcases José Luis’ latest creations; a classic one, consisting of a selection of the restaurant’s signature dishes; and a short tasting menu, which provides a whistle-stop tour of its cuisine in general. All three are governed by what is available in the market at the moment and are consistently free of superficial frills and trendy products. Indeed, the repertoire at Julio Restaurant is a tribute to the products and foodways of its natural surroundings.

Making changes to the menu turns out to be quite a discursive business. By a stroke of luck, a new dish is about to be launched while I’m there, so I am able to take part in the decision-making process insofar as I get to taste it before its first appearance in the dining room. José Luis succinctly explains the work that has gone into it so far: “With spring on the way, we need to make a couple of changes to the gastronomic menu. We have some superb quality octopus at the moment (octopus is served regularly in the bar), so we’ve decided that the new dish should be octopus-based. Hot or cold? We’ve gone for cold, given the time of year when it will feature on the menu, and it will also make things easier for the kitchen staff. A cold octopus dish sounds complicated in theory, but then we thought of *salpicón* (seafood salad) and decided to go ahead. First we pressure cooked the octopus and retained the cooking liquid. That turned out to be very strongly flavored, which made us





rethink the concept of a cold dish and start to consider hot ones. I've always cooked octopus with potato and apple, so I added those to the ingredients we already had, plus broad beans, red pepper, land seaweed, the cooking liquid and the octopus."

Before making the final decision, José Luis and Julio have been considering the quantity and variety of vegetables that this dish will require, and have tested different options, given that, according to Julio: "José Luis includes a lot of greenery, which complicates things later when you need to match a wine with the dish." These are the moments when the symbiosis between the two of them really shows; each is prepared to make a concession in his area of responsibility to produce an end result—the perfect balance between food and wine—that is to the diner's benefit.

"We tried several options," continues Ungidos, "and decided to go for an octopus soup, with a sauté of broad beans, potatoes and apples, and a touch of red pepper and land seaweed. To appreciate the full beauty of this dish, our wine recommendation is a Sanclodio 2010 (DO Ribeiro), by Bodegas Sanclodio."

I now have the aforementioned octopus soup in front of me, well presented and pleasing to the eye. The broth that completes the dish is served at the table and brings with it an unmistakable whiff of the sea. Julio explains to me that the (Granny Smith) apple has been cooked at a low temperature, which causes its texture to become syrupy while retaining its characteristic acidity. It proves to be a nicely structured,

intriguing dish in which the broth provides continuity and accentuates the overall flavor. Meanwhile, each mouthful is subtly different from the one before—slightly more bitter, slightly more acidic, slightly saltier—as if its individual components are making their presence felt. Now all I need to do is compare and contrast this version with the definitive one they actually put on the menu.

## Restaurant with soul

A visit to Julio Restaurant leaves one with the feeling that it has "soul": a very definite personality whose traits derive from the fact that it is a personal project that is lent weight by its family background and backing. Though José Luis Ungidos joined the team as a newcomer, it now seems as if he's always been there, contributing his strengths and a new vitality in the form of an approach to cooking that is based on an appreciation of flavors. The team knows what it's doing and has tremendous faith in the project and a commitment to getting things right. This extends to both food and wine, and there is plenty of evidence of joined-up thinking between kitchen and dining room and vice versa, with impeccable service throughout. The plan at Julio Restaurant is to carry on growing, continuing their quest for textures and flavors while remaining true to the culinary traditions and natural environment of their chosen patch. With all this in mind, they have commissioned artisan pâtissier Francisco Mora to create a dish that encapsulates the restaurant's

philosophy. It is a chocolate dessert which reflects the changes wrought in the vineyards (characteristic of this area) and farmland by the passing of the seasons. We are served a whole set of different chocolates, representing a vine shoot in winter surrounded by earth and accompanied by a yoghurt mousse (a reference to the moon, which can be seen splendidly from Fontanars) to cleanse and refresh the palate after each mouthful.

And that's the story so far. There are further schemes afoot: they have just opened a hotel in the country, Santa Elena, one of whose purposes is to channel more customers to the restaurant.

*Almudena Muyo worked for more than twelve years as a journalist specializing in international trade before taking up her current post as editorial co-coordinator of Spain Gourmetour.*

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# A HARVEST

## of Salt from the Canaries

A volcanic landscape bathed by the clear waters of the Atlantic at the southernmost tip of the Canary Island of La Palma, all of it declared a World Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. This is the source of one of the Canaries' most enticing gourmet products: hand-harvested sea salt and *flor de sal* from Salinas de Fuencaliente





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TEXT  
RODRIGO GARCÍA FERNÁNDEZ/©ICEX

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TRANSLATION  
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As the plane flies towards the island of La Palma in the Canaries, travelers are enchanted as some of the island's main features appear: leafy banana plantations along the coast, narrow roads with little traffic, and small villages nestling on the mountain slopes. And, on landing, the main impression, strangely, is that life here is lived at a slower pace than elsewhere.

This island, the third largest in the Canary archipelago, has two very distinct faces. The north is inundated with shades of green, with lush vegetation watered by many springs. The south is unmistakably volcanic. From the top of the San Antonio and Teneguía volcanoes, the view is unique: to one side is the crater left behind by the latest eruptions and, to the other, the south coast and the infinity of the ocean, with the islands of El Hierro and La Gomera just before the eye reaches the smooth line of the horizon.

Starting out from these volcanoes and their interesting interpretation center, I took one of the trekking routes down to the Fuencaliente saltworks (*salinas* in Spanish) at the southernmost tip of the island. There I met Andrés Hernández, a young entrepreneur from La Palma who had no doubts about returning to the island to take charge of the family business after completing his studies in Business Administration and Management at the University of La Laguna in Tenerife. His enthusiasm and determination to achieve only the very best quality have allowed him to successfully sell sea salt and *flor de sal* in food stores in the



Canaries and to start exporting to the competitive markets of Germany and the UK.

### Third generation

The Fuencaliente saltworks date back to 1967, when our host's grandfather discovered the ideal conditions in this spot for producing salt. He had seen saltworks on other islands and sought the advice of experts before setting up a small business in this privileged location. His son Fernando followed in his footsteps, and Andrés is now the third generation to have fallen under the spell of this edible mineral. "I always knew my future would be determined by the saltworks," states this young islander. "We used to spend the summers in a small house actually inside the saltworks, and the sunsets and sunrises I experienced here must have left their mark," he tells us with a smile

that never leaves his lips. The "toll" he has had to pay has been tough decision-making, a lot of hard work making his artisan *flor de sal* known and a fight to break down the barriers that make exporting from an island expensive and logistically complicated. "We're only too aware of the problems, but the quality of our products—*flor de sal* and virgin sea salt, whose secrets lie in the soil, the water and the air that surround us—helps us resolve them all." Andrés knows what he is doing. He devotes his time to managing a company with up to 20 workers, exploring new markets and setting up marketing projects. But he is also perfectly capable of donning his rubber boots and overalls and getting into the ponds to skim off the *flor de sal* with a sort of sieve, ensuring the product is not damaged during harvesting. "You can never tell when the thin layer of salt crystals is going to form on the surface of the ponds. It depends on the moisture and the light during the last few days of the cycle. So if the layer forms on the weekend and the workers are not expected until Monday, then it's up to me to collect the *flor de sal*."

### Canary island salt

So how is this exquisite condiment, *flor de sal*, formed (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 76)? It takes just three ingredients from nature: sunlight, relative moisture in the air and wind. What makes things more complicated is getting them in the right proportions. Plenty of hours of sunlight are needed, with low levels





of moisture and just a gentle sea breeze to produce irregular flor de sal crystals on the surface of the ponds. This process is very different to that of common sea salt, which is formed by evaporating the water and precipitating the salt to the bottom of the pan.

Once this layer has formed, the flor de sal is collected and packed by hand. The artisan nature of this gourmet product is shared by another, also made at the Fuencaliente saltworks, namely, Teneguía sea salt. After being collected, this fine salt is milled, dried and packed without any sort of chemical processing to ensure that its organoleptic and mineral qualities are not altered.

The artisan production and natural origin of these two products are two of their main distinguishing characteristics. There is only one other similar saltworks in the Canaries (at Janubio, on the island of Lanzarote), but its production and sales are well below those of Fuencaliente. Andrés mentions a key fact reflecting the huge effort he is making to keep this small-scale process in operation. "In the middle of the last century, there were over 50 similar saltworks in the Canaries. Today, there are just two, and we are the only ones really looking towards the future and working on exports."



## Hand harvesting

Andrés tells me his business belongs to the European Federation of Producers of Hand-Harvested Sea Salt, an international network that aims to preserve this type of traditional operation. He also explains that it was only towards the end of 2011 that the Spanish Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs passed regulations for the sale of traditionally-produced, hand-harvested sea salt having a sodium chloride content below the figure under previous legislation. "All this is helping us and giving us energy to defend our virgin sea salt and flor de sal in Spanish and European markets."

As we visit the saltworks, protected since 1994 as a Site of Scientific Interest with its wetlands rich in flora and fauna, Andrés describes the projects he is currently working on. "In early 2012, we began to build an interpretation center for the saltworks where visitors can learn about this ecosystem, its value as a natural process and the sustainable cultivation of sea salt and flor de sal. We will also have a restaurant offering Canary cuisine and focusing on foods and wines from La Palma and from the other islands." All of this amounts to an ambitious project, considering that the company has a staff of just





seven, including, as Andrés confides to us, “three who have been with us for over 20 years. They’re like part of the family.”

Today travelers and trekkers in the south of the island can reach the Fuencaliente saltworks on foot, enter the area of the ponds and hear in situ about the process of producing the virgin sea salt and flor de sal. And, of course, the products are available for them to buy. In fact, these direct sales to German, French and British travelers are “the first link in the company’s export chain”, according to its manager. “These tourists are the people that take our products back home, where they then serve as opinion leaders and product advisors.”

Sustainable, ecological, top-quality production is what Salinas de Fuencaliente has to offer, meeting the needs of demanding markets such as Germany, where they have a distributor, Herbaria, which sells its products in a chain of organic food stores that extends all over the country. One of the company’s strategies for attracting customers (and keeping them) in Germany is to encourage visits to the saltworks. “We have managed to acquire some faithful customers in Germany by organizing personalized visits here so that they can see for themselves how the whole process is done by hand and, at the same time, appreciate our unique cultural, natural and ethnographic landscape.”

## A gourmet touch

The flor de sal grown and manually harvested in these saltworks is on offer in many restaurants in La Palma and the other Canary Islands, some of which are part of the revolution in Canary cuisine. One example is Humboldt restaurant in the Valle de la Orotava in Tenerife, led by a great advocate of the islands’ produce, Pedro Rodríguez Dios (*Spain Gourmetour* No. 81). One of his interesting creations is *Sorbete de mango con yogur de cabra, virutas de almendra palmera y pimientas del mundo* (Mango sorbet with goats’ milk yoghurt, La Palma almond flakes and peppers), which includes, among other Canary products, flor de sal from Salinas de Fuencaliente. The chef describes his dish as follows: “It represents part of the essence of the Canaries, with spicy, balsamic, sweet and milky touches. It’s an essentially Canary dish because it includes the magnificent almonds grown on the island of La Palma, and we bring out their flavor by combining them with the Salinas de Fuencaliente flor de sal. And the Canary Islands are among Spain’s main producers of goats’ milk, so the leading role in this dish is shared by goats’ milk yoghurt.” After a history of about 50 years, Salinas de Fuencaliente has been able to preserve a traditional, ecological activity while introducing a gourmet

product on the commercial circuit. Things have not been easy for Andrés and his family, least of all when the nearby Teneguía volcano erupted in 1971, spurting out lava which all but reached the lighthouse at the edge of the saltworks. But today they have a promising future, marked by the entrepreneurial zeal of Andrés and his intention to take this 100% La Palma product to all lovers of good food.

*Rodrigo García Fernández is a journalist and editorial coordinator of the ICEX gastronomy portal, [www.foodsfromspain.com](http://www.foodsfromspain.com).*

## Salinas de Fuencaliente

**Workforce:** 7 people

**Annual production:** 600 tons of salt, of which 5 are flor de sal and the rest virgin sea salt

**Surface area:**  
35,000 square meters  
(376,736 square feet)

**Export quota:** 15%

**Main export markets:** Austria, Germany and the United Kingdom

**Products:** Teneguía virgin sea salt and Fuencaliente saltworks flor de sal

**Contact details:**  
Maldonado, 10  
38700 Santa Cruz de La Palma  
Canary Islands  
Tel. (+34) 922 411 523  
Fax (+34) 922 696 002  
[www.salinasdefuencaliente.com](http://www.salinasdefuencaliente.com)



# MEXICO



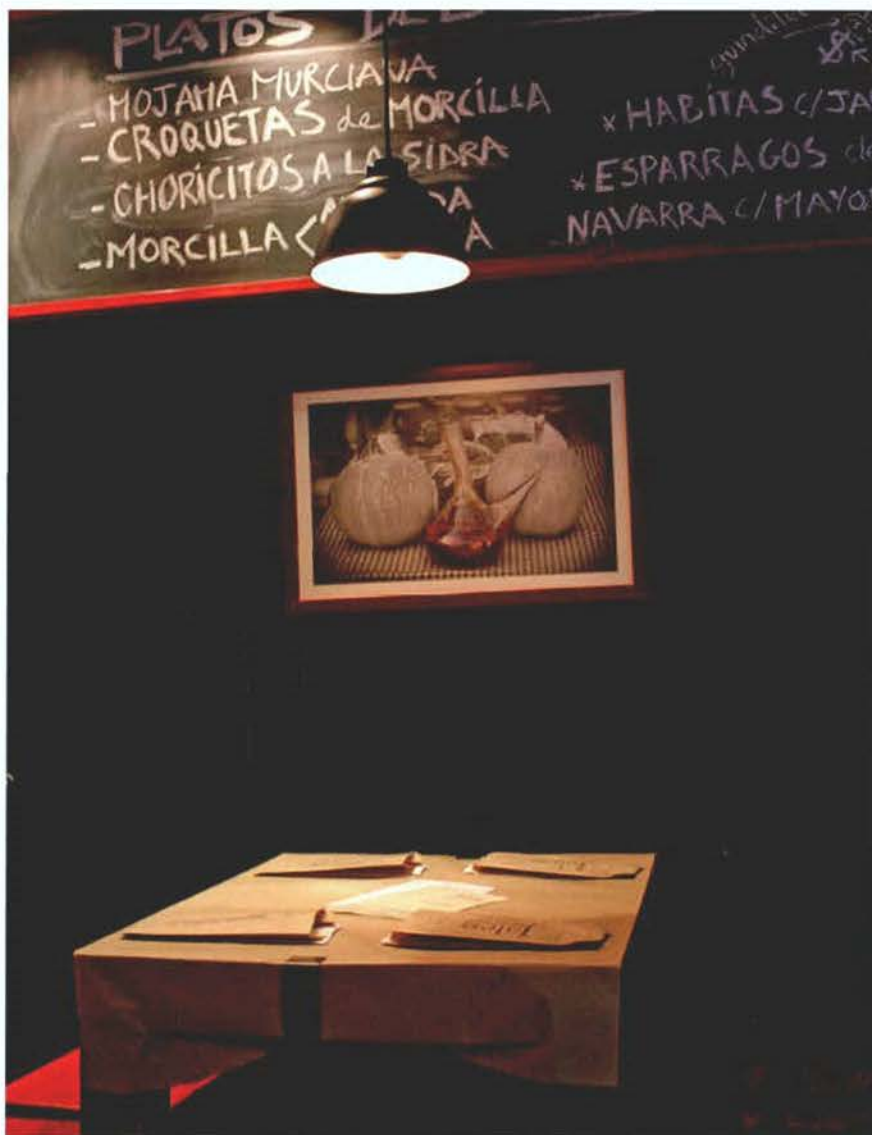
## Have a Spanish Break

Photos  
Jaleo

Text  
Rodolfo Gerschman/©ICEX

Traslationt  
Hawys Pritchard/©ICEX

Rodolfo  
Gerschman  
from Mexico  
City



Emilio Castelar Park in Mexico City's well-to-do Polanco quarter is skirted by a street of the same name whose great sweep of café terraces, around four in the afternoon, presents a scene worthy of Madrid or Barcelona. Mexicans like to have lunch between 2 and 3 pm and, having eaten, segue into the venerable custom of relaxed post-prandial conversation and people-watching known as the *sobremesa*. The custom seems to thrive particularly among the regulars at Jaleo, a little tapas and pintxo restaurant whose paper tablecloths are hand-emblazoned with the house logo by a waiter armed with a giant rubber stamp, which he wields with enviable verve.

Jaleo is doing well. Today, all 24 places on the outdoor terrace are occupied at *sobremesa* time and the indoor restaurant is also full to capacity. The customers behave as they would in a bar (Jaleo doesn't have one, incidentally), getting up from their tables to greet friends and chatting for a while before returning to carry on eating. During the time I spent talking to Jaleo's Spanish chef, Pedro Martín, and his business partner, Catalan-born Coia Solà, various habitués came up to offer their compliments and hold forth about tapas and allied subjects.

A native of La Palma in the Canary Islands, Pedro Martín has been in Mexico for six years now. His CV includes experience in Madrid (El Cenador de Salvador and the Silken





Puerta América Hotel's in-house restaurant, Lágrimas Negras) and in San Sebastián, where he worked with Martín Berasategui and, later, at Arzak. The move to Mexico came out of the blue: it happened at a time when Juan Mari Arzak was involved in an advisory capacity with Tezka (his Basque restaurant in Mexico City), whose chefs Bruno Oteiza and Mikel Alonso were about to leave to set up a restaurant of their own.

His solution was to send Pedro to take over Tezka, which he made very much his own with a distinctive style of cuisine clearly inspired by his Canary Island origins. Not long after, he and Coia (who is from Catalonia, though she has been in Mexico for ten years now) made the decision to go into business together. Her original career choice, banking, had turned out to be a mistake, as had a Scandinavian restaurant venture. Meeting Pedro enabled her to reassess the way forward and to confess (including to herself) how much she liked the idea of running a tapas bar.

The partners set up Jaleo with the full knowledge that Mexico City was a veritable elephant's graveyard of failed tapas bars. "Mexicans love *tacos* (wheat or corn flatbreads rolled round a filling)," explains Pedro. "Given the choice of a taco at 15 pesos or a tapa at 50, there'd be no contest." The key to Jaleo's success has been the food it offers its customers. "Ours is a chef-centered

business," he declares emphatically, "and the whole objective has always been to showcase our cuisine." And customers got the point that this was food of a whole different category. The locale itself can claim some of the credit: "Jaleo is small, noisy and crowded, and people like it that way. It's all part of its appeal." Getting the ingredients right is one their key principles. "We never stint on the products we use, or on sourcing them, from no matter how far afield." Many (such as albacore tuna from Ensenada) are Mexican, while others (canned *bonito del norte*, salt cod, baby broad beans and asparagus from Navarre, piquillo peppers...) are brought in from Spain. The US is also an acknowledged source: *patatas bravas* (chunks of fried potato dressed with a piquant tomato sauce) made with Idaho potatoes are quite different from any other kind. The wine list, made up entirely of Spanish wines, is as fresh in its approach as everything else. Brief but well-chosen, it features the products of 15 DOs among its selection of 40 wines, ten of which are available by the glass.

"It was heavy going at first trying to get people to understand what our food was all about," admits Pedro. "We kept getting asked for basic things like *croquetas*. But both our approach and our customers' taste have developed since then. Our dishes originate from all over Spain: for example, our version of *papas a la importancia* (egg and flour-dipped potato slices fried and then

cooked further in an onion-based sauce) has its sauce enriched with *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain) and is served with clams rather than the Castilian original's traditional cockles, which aren't available here. We also do *ajoblanco*, the Andalusian chilled soup made by emulsifying blanched almonds with garlic, olive oil and a slosh of sherry vinegar, which we serve with grapes and figs. Then there's the less specifically regional *pintxo de lomo de cerdo blanco*, a skewer of top-quality pork loin that has been vacuum marinated with sweet and hot pimentón, olive oil and raw garlic." At the moment, Jaleo's tiny kitchen produces a repertoire of over 70 different dishes-in-miniature, each of which Pedro Martín describes with mouthwatering enthusiasm. Meanwhile, as dish after dish appears on the table before us, the food proves to have an eloquence all its own.

#### Jaleo Bar de Tapas

Emilio Castelar 121, local 1  
Polanco, Chapultepec, 11560  
Mexico DF  
Mexico  
www.jaleo.mx

*Rodolfo Gerschman, who originally hails from Mexico, is the editor of Gula and Catadores magazines and writes a wine column in Buena Mesa, the weekly food and wine supplement of Reforma newspaper.*



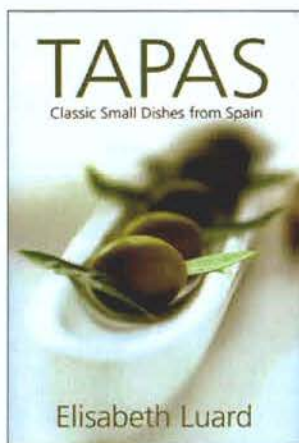
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# LASTING IMPRESSIONS



## MoVida Cocina

by Frank Camorra, Richard Cornish. English. The dynamic duo comprising Australian food writer Richard Cornish and Spanish restaurant entrepreneur and chef Frank Camorra cannot be stopped. The franchise has won over Australians, and this text, their third cookbook, further puts a spotlight on the dishes and people behind the successful brand. Camorra shares all the special tricks and techniques he uses at MoVida and discusses his trajectory, from the first venture on Hosier Lane to his latest restaurant, Pulpo. The 70 recipes are organized into sections including everything from breakfast, sub sandwiches and salads to rices and desserts. These include Chorizo-filled fried potato bombs with spicy sauce, Soupy rice with lamb ribs and peas, and Slow-cooked egg with broad beans, Ibérico ham and truffle. In short, the book shows how MoVida has secured a place for tapas on Australia's culinary scene. (Murdoch Books Pty Ltd, [www.murdochbooks.com.au](http://www.murdochbooks.com.au)).



## Tapas. Small Classic Dishes from Spain

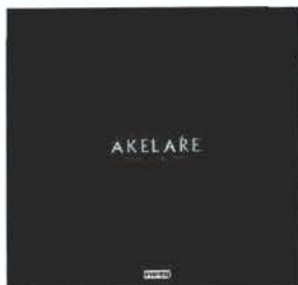
(Pequeños platos clásicos de España) by Elisabeth Luard. English. Luard is a distinguished food writer, broadcaster and journalist and, let's face it, a woman with excellent taste. This text features tapas, which she describes as "beautifully simple, tantalizingly delicious and easy to prepare." Her recipes are organized into several chapters: basics; salads and cold dishes; vegetables; fish, prawns, shrimp and shellfish; meat; chicken and game; and croquettes, pasties and pies. Each section begins with an introduction to the food group, followed by to-the-point recipes. Highlights include tripe and chili with chickpeas, artichoke omelet, beetroot salad, pork medallions with lemon and marjoram, tuna croquettes, and cinnamon-spiced oxtail soup. It also includes countless tips on how to organize your tapas extravaganza, depending on the season, on the special food needs of your guests, and much more. (Grub Street, [www.grubstreet.co.uk](http://www.grubstreet.co.uk)).



## El Willy. Three Years in China

(Tres años en China) by Willy and Nasi. English. Willy Trullas Moreno is a native Spanish chef making waves on China's gastronomy scene. He is the man behind el Willy, one of Shanghai's hippest restaurants, and a bar called el Cóctel, another venture in Hong Kong. This truly unique book is divided into two parts. In the first part, entitled "The Sexy Chef", Willy gives the back story, documented with personal photos, much like a scrapbook or a diary. It is a very fun read. In the second part, "The Sexy Recipes", Willy dishes on the dishes that have made him famous, such as grilled Manila clams with garlic and chili and Catalan-style cod with tomato, onion and olives. This is truly one sexy cookbook which brings food and fun together on every single page. (el Willy Ltd., [www.el-willy.com](http://www.el-willy.com)).

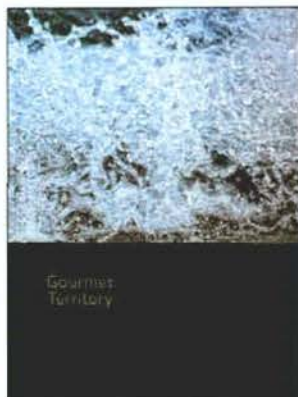




## Akelarre

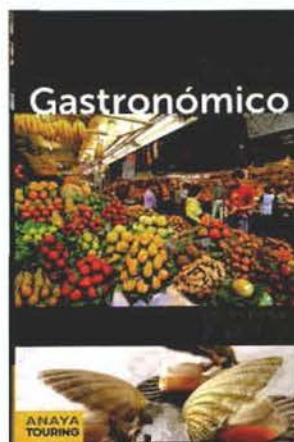
by Pedro Subijana. English, Euskara, Spanish. This is top chef Pedro Subijana's new book about his restaurant Akelarre, which boasts 3 Michelin stars and has been referred to as "a temple of international gastronomy". The book brings to life the magic that is Akelarre, focusing on its most distinguishing features, excellence and innovation. This highly visual text pays homage to Akelarre's most outstanding dishes over the last decade, such as Charcoal-grilled lamb with wine sediment; Boned lamb's tail with cauliflower, leek, carrot and beetroot macaroni; Peach flower; Edible aromas of port; and Liquid fruit ravioli with apple soup. It also includes a DVD with a master class on special cooking techniques, from one of the founding fathers of New Basque Cuisine himself, which you can watch from the comfort of your own home.

(Editorial Everest, [www.everest.es](http://www.everest.es)).



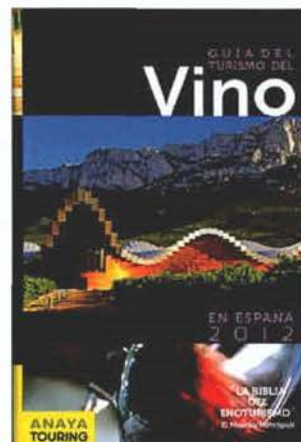
## Rías Baixas. Territorio gastronómico

(Rías Baixas. Gourmet Territory) by Manuel Gago and Jorge Guitián. English, Spanish. Come on a journey through Rías Baixas (Galicia, northwest Spain), "where sea and land merge in a sinuous dance, creating a unique habitat." The 26 recipes (and their photos) contributed by the chefs, including Xosé T. Cannas (Pepe Vieira restaurant, in Poio), Pablo Romero (Allo e Aceite, in Pontevedra), Antonio Botana (Pandemonium, in Cambados) to name but a few, are truly spectacular: Confit of salt cod with green onion and creamed cauliflower; Galician-style octopus with a crispy San Simón cheese biscuit; or Cockles on a bed of Devon crab sousing sauce and an emulsion of fresh asparagus. All in all a delicious look at Galicia and its cuisine. Not for nothing did this text receive the "Best in the World" Gourmand Cookbook Award in the "Best Local Cuisine" category. (Pontevedra Provincial Council, [www.depontevedra.es](http://www.depontevedra.es)).



## Guía del turismo gastronómico en España, 2012

(2012 Gastronomy Tourism Guide to Spain). Various authors. Spanish. What better guide to Spain than one that maps out the country's best gastronomic itineraries? This boasts more than 50 routes nationwide, complete with up-to-date maps. The introduction provides an overview of the country's gastronomic landscape. Then the guide is broken into regions, each of which features several suggestions. In Andalusia, routes include olive oil, ham, and monastery sweets. The Canary Islands have a cheese route, as does Asturias, which also has a cider route. Black truffles and ham can be followed in Aragón, roast suckling pig in Castile-Leon, cherries in Extremadura, and strawberries in Madrid. Each route starts with an introduction to the food, followed by extensive detail of the related sights, specialized restaurants and shops, restaurants and hotels. (Grupo Anaya, S.A., [www.anayatouring.com](http://www.anayatouring.com)).

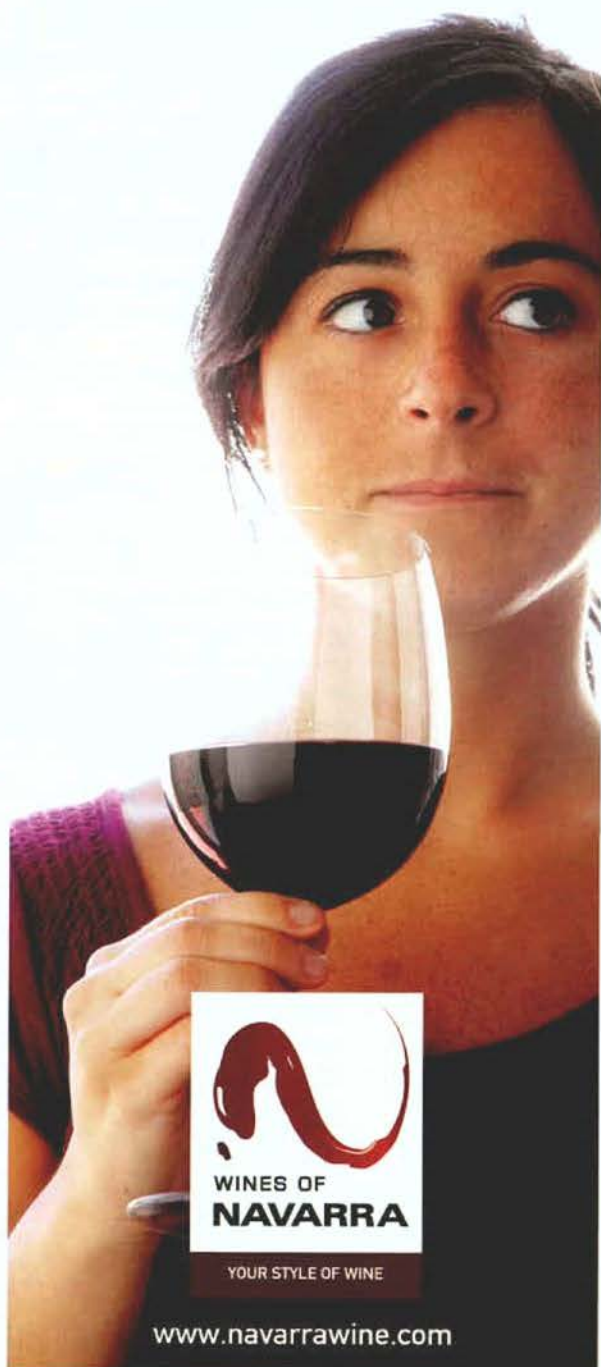


## Guía del turismo del vino en España, 2012

(2012 Wine Tourism Guide to Spain). Various authors. Spanish. This text, dubbed the "wine tourism bible", now in its 8<sup>th</sup> edition, is the best way to discover the country's countless gems in the world of wine. Organized by Spanish region, with data on all the DOs, the most commonly used grapes, wine production methods, and much more, this text will take you to any of the hundreds of beautiful and less well-known places around the nation (and, of course, famous sites too), and show you some of the most breathtaking wine landscapes you've ever seen. The book comes with complete information about hotels, restaurants, wineries, specialized stores and current maps, and the introduction includes wine vocabulary and details about wine tastings, wine and health, and wine fairs and festivals. (Grupo Anaya, S.A., [www.anayatouring.com](http://www.anayatouring.com)).



I don't know  
why I like it,  
but I like it.



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