

Innovation makes delicacies of odd food

FIGUERAS, Spain (AP) — Turnips and anchovy spines may not be everyone's idea of delicacies, but restaurateur Jaime Subiros delights in adding such humble fare to his special rendition of the cuisine of Catalonia, an area of Spain noted for fine dining.

Subiros' inventiveness and dedication to local fare, passed on to him from his father-in-law, Josep Mercader, has allowed him to maintain the star first awarded by Michelin, the French restaurant guide, to Mercader's Ampurdan restaurant in 1974.

The restaurant's mix of tradition and innovation has also built a loyal

clientele among vacationers on the highway connecting France, 16 miles to the north, and Spanish resort areas on the Mediterranean.

"We are now serving the third generation of people who pass by here on the way to their summer homes," Subiros says.

Subiros, 39, began working as a bellboy when he was 11, moved to the kitchen at 15, then spent three years in Barcelona's top restaurants before returning to the Ampurdan.

He frequently quotes Mercader, who opened the restaurant in 1961 in this green region of Catalonia called the Alt Ampurda where a strong culinary tradition always has

existed.

Figueras, a town of 30,000, has three Michelin one-star restaurants.

Nearby Barcelona, capital of Catalonia with some 2 million residents, has half a dozen.

"Mr. Mercader was a very innovative cook," Subiros says.

"How else could he have come up with the idea of frying anchovy bones as an appetizer?"

With the same anchovies, marinated in the Ampurdan kitchen, Mercader created an olive and anchovy pate, called garun, and stuffed eggplant and lamb dishes.

The turnips, black on the outside and white and tender on the inside,

are unique to the fields of nearby Campmany.

The restaurant often serves them roasted in the traditional manner, with duck or goose, or in salads, or with a delicate Roquefort cheese sauce.

Subiros says he has introduced seasonal menus, expanded the dessert selection and created a good number of his own dishes since his father-in-law's death in 1979.

But he insists the founder's ideas still guide the restaurant when it's time to come up with new recipes.

"The cuisine has evolved rather than changed," he says.

19th-century seaside inn still welcomes sailors

HONOLULU (AP) — The oldest hotel in Honolulu has a tradition richer than the Royal Hawaiian, a clientele more exclusive than the Kahala Hilton, and a lobby that leads into the Marine Firemen's Union hiring hall.

Rooms rent for \$12 a night and the occupancy rate is a steady 99.99 percent.

This is the Honolulu Seaman's Home, resort of the world's most experienced travelers, founded in 1855 during the heyday of whaling and still housing only seamen and seamen of all nations who are between ships.

Deckhand John Palmer of Oakland, Calif., occupies a one-room suite on the fourth floor. He's been there since Christmas, when he broke his knee in a mooring accident on board an inter-island cruise ship.

"Sailors are different, like cowboys," he says. "If you do it long enough, you feel more comfortable on ships, not on the beach. There aren't many seamen anymore. People look at it like penal servitude."

One reason seamen feel comfortable at the Seaman's Home is that its manager, Herbert Wong, is a former seaman himself.

"I used to make ships going to China and the South Pacific," he says. "That's why they picked me. They wanted somebody who can handle sailors."

"People who go to sea are different. They lead lonely lives and they live away from home."

There is another thing that makes the Seaman's Home different from other hotels. It was

founded because strong drink and lewd women figured heavily in the recreation of whalemens on shore in 1855.

As a result, the Seaman's Home is the only hotel in Honolulu with the following house rules:

"No intoxicating liquors shall be drunk on the premises; no women of lewd character be admitted; no gambling allowed nor any other disorder tolerated."

Wong admitted that keeping sailors away from women and liquor is more difficult than house-breaking pets.

"How do you stop a seaman from having a few beers?" he says. "We don't search them down. Women? Well, I'm a seaman myself. I close my eyes."

Female sailors cause no more or less trouble than men, he says.

"Wong treats us decently," Palmer says. "This may look like a YMCA but it isn't. We're all the same kind. In the hall or in the head (toilet), people say hello."

In 1855, when it was on Bethel Street, the Seaman's Home had accommodations for 50 and lodging cost \$5 a week for seamen, \$6 for officers, who ate at separate tables.

Today there are only 23 rooms, now located at the foot of Richard Street. The toilets are down the hall and the furniture looks as if it had come from a Salvation Army thrift shop. But there's nothing like it in Honolulu for \$12 a night.

"Sailors usually come here to stay when they're down and out," Wong says. "When they've got plenty of money, they're in Waikiki somewhere having a ball."

Reconstruction brings schoolday memories to life

SALADO (AP) — Memories of Salado College bring a smile to the face of 86-year-old J.R. Holland.

As a child, he used to play near the school with his Salado cousins, and as a teen-ager he attended school plays there.

That was more than 70 years ago, but he says he can still recall the tolling of the school's bell.

Holland, of Temple, is happy to know that someone is doing something to preserve the left-over limestone ruins from the single building that was Salado College more than a century ago. The structure was built between 1859 and 1860, and fell to a fire some six decades later.

The Salado Historical Society, with permission from the Salado College-Robertson Colony Foundation, is conducting and financing the preservation project, says Patricia Barton, president of the Salado Historical Society.

"The society began its first phase of preservation in December and hopes that ultimately the area will be opened as a park," Barton said. "However, we have no immediate plans to do that."

The first attempt at saving the school's crumbling ruins will cost the historical society \$15,000, Barton said. The project was made possible by the society's annual historic homes tours, which began in 1981.

Salado College was founded in 1859, after Col. E.S.C. Robertson donated 100 acres of land to be sold in lots to provide funding to establish a college and create a town.

The college initially offered graduates two degree choices and also taught courses to elementary school children.

Records indicate the winter of 1859-1860 was severe, but the school opened its doors on Feb. 20, 1860, with teachers occupying tents. About 60 students enrolled at the school for the first term.

"Salado College was the reason many of the original families came to Salado," Barton said. "They were very interested in educating their children and they had very high standards."

"The college is really behind the founding of the town of Salado."

The two-story structure remained open throughout the Civil War. In 1890, Thomas Arnold High School occupied the Salado College buildings under an agreement with the college board of trustees.

Two major fires burned the structure in 1901 and 1902, but Salado residents rebuilt the L-shaped structure.

"It was a great example of a struggling community trying to rebuild itself," said Dr. Douglas B. Willingham, chairman of the historical society.

The work of preserving a structure such as Salado College is not an easy task, according to Jim Sharp, a Killeen mason contracted to complete the first phase.

Sharp and two other men are using sand and lime mortar to help preserve the standing limestone. Sections of the long walls still stand, portions of them 35 feet high, Sharp said.

"This is very slow, hard and tedious work," said Sharp, who has been a mason for 40 years. "Some of the stones out there probably weigh 120 to 130 pounds and it could be a little dangerous if one of the stones fell."

But Sharp says the hard work is worth it and the project has made him become interested in Salado history.

"I know a lot more about Salado's history now than when I started this thing," Sharp said. "This is going to be a beautiful sight when it's all done."

To people such as Holland who saw the structure in the early 1900s and have recently visited the ruins, Sharp's excitement is easy to understand.

"I hadn't been out there for many years, but it brought back many good memories," Holland said. "My family lived a couple of miles down Salado Creek in Armstrong."

"But I still remember hearing that big (school) bell ring."

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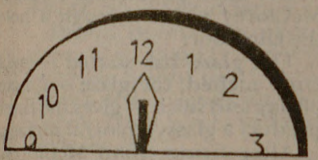


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