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Firo Vázquez

Innovation in the Countryside

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Firo Vázquez is one of the best-known names in the culinary world in the Autonomous Community of Murcia. His restaurant, El Olivar de Moratalla, is a necessary port of call for travelers in this part of south-east Spain who are looking for traditional food with modern touches.

Born in Béjar (Salamanca, Castile-León) in 1959, Vázquez pays tribute in his menus to the Castilian-Leonese dishes he learnt from his mother and aunts, as well as to the Murcian recipes that he has devoted so many hours of study and research to. Firo Vázquez is a staunch supporter of extra virgin olive oil made from the Cuquillo variety, a native of Moratalla and genetically related to the Lechín variety from Granada or Jaén, both of which are close to this Murcian town.

This support goes to the extent of producing his own olive oil, through his company Aceites de Moratalla S.L. Moreover, he is a member of the Official Olive Oil Tasting Panel for the Region of Murcia and chairs the Association of Friends of Virgin Olive Oil. Clearly, this product is an essential element in this chef's culinary vision.

Pork from the Murcian chato pig breed is another top-quality, though rare, product that Vázquez gives pride of place to in many of his recipes. He has done some unusual research in collaboration with the Food Technology Department of the **University of Murcia**. One result was his Edible Restaurant Menu, containing non-primary aromas and flavors of the dishes offered on the menu. Also his "Edible Quixote", a very personal work, led him to be the first chef invited to talk at the **Instituto Cervantes** in Alcalá de Henares, London, Lyon and Beijing.

At Madrid Fusión 2011, Spanish chef Firo Vázquez presented an interesting line of research developed jointly with University of Murcia and going one step beyond his famous edible papers. This particular research project introduces a key concept: Elaborina®, a food preparation made using a dish that has already been cooked. For example, potato omelet flour can be obtained from a potato omelet, mixed with other starches and used for making various dishes. So, it is possible to make potato omelet sponge cakes.

The aim is to expand the frontiers of cooking and get unexpected results from traditional recipes. Successful experiments have already been carried out on the preparation of this kind of flour, Elaborina®, using dishes such as stuffed Piquillo peppers, Asturias bean stew (fabada) and seafood paella. These types of Elaborina® have similar uses to flour: for making bread rolls, buns, dough, batter for making "churros", brioche, sponges and the like. Elaborina® behaves in the same way as flour, but the end product captures the aromas and flavors of the original dish from which the Elaborina® was made.

One of the most surprising things is that Elaborina® preserves most of the nutrients of the foods used to make it, so it could also have medical as well as culinary applications.

Books

Caminando entre Oliveras (2009)

Firo Vázquez y la cocina del Olivar de Moratalla (Planeta, 2007)

Awards

2008 Best Cook Book, Gourmand Worlds Cook Book Awards



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