

Cognoscenti magazine

Because life is short

CAN BOIX DE PERAMOLA
PERAMOLA, SPAIN

Can Boix de Peramola is a luxury resort that is superbly situated at the mouth of a gorgeous red-rock mountain canyon in the Alt Urgell region of Catalonia.

When ancestors of current owner and chef Joan Pallarès first purchased the property in 1763, they could hardly have been thinking about the tourist potential of the locale; now, however, some 9 generations later, Can Boix de Peramola attracts an international clientele. Guests come here for tranquility, for the luxury facilities, and for the renowned meals



Baked kid from the kitchen of Joan Pallarès



Tall pines and fresh air at Can Boix de Peramola

served at the hotel's restaurant.

There are a wealth of features and amenities that set this hotel property apart from its peers: a sumptuous breakfast buffet (with several kinds of freshly-

squeezed juices), extensive lawns and gardens, tennis, ping-pong, a pool large enough to swim laps in, and a sauna and solarium. Rooms feature four channels of piped music, full-length mirrors, spacious work desks, and hydro massage baths.

In an exclusive interview with **Cognoscenti Magazine** editors, Mr. Pallarès emphasized his belief that “a hotel should offer more than just a room.” He believes in offering grand hotel luxury while limiting the number of rooms to only a dozen. His hospitality school training in Spain has been complemented by work stays in France, England, and Switzerland, and he stays tuned into what’s in fashion, and therefore in demand, at all times.

“People spend many of their happiest moments around a table,” he explained—and his fine restau-

rant, with its staff of 10 in the kitchen, produces a lot of happy moments.



Owner and Chef Joan Pallarès

In his cuisine, Mr. Pallarès draws on the rich gastronomic traditions of Alt Urgell. When *Cognoscenti Magazine* editors visited in late May of 2002, the expansive heavy spring rains had yielded a veritable cornucopia of mountain produce. In that evening's tasting menu, Mr. Pallarès was featuring fresh wild produce such as thyme, mushrooms, edible flower blossoms and wild berries.

His approach to cooking is to start with local ingredients—lamb, potato, chicken, and the wild bounty of the forest such as truffles and mushrooms—but to update traditional regional sauces, which are typically heavy and lard-based, by using olive oil and thereby keeping them light. He imaginatively combines local ingredients in novel ways, as we learned when we arrived at the dining room, a pretty place with etched glass panels and large floral displays.

In the *Salade tiède de lotte avec vinaigrette au curry et riz sauvage croustillant*, or warmed anglerfish salad with vinaigrette and wild rice, we were delighted to discover the flavors of curry and mango adding contrast and complexity.

In the desert *Fruits rouges avec sabayon de café irlandais et glace au noix de coco*, for instance, wild blackberries, blueberries, raspberries and strawberries were served literally swimming in creamed Irish coffee, with coconut ice cream served on the side. All three flavors complemented each other beautifully.

Tourists seeking thrills of the sporting variety will find a gamut of activities in or near this mountain resort, such as mountain biking, trout fishing, horse riding, canyon exploration, rafting, canoeing, paragliding, and even ballooning. We took a lovely walk along a canyon wall that led to an abandoned 10th century church, dramatically situated at the top of a cliff. Can Boix de Peramola will even serve lunch “in inaccessible places up in the mountains for guests who want to spend a day in the open air.” A half-dozen hikes are possible right from the hotel.

This article was written by contributing editors to *Cognoscenti Magazine*.

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