

# Cognoscenti

## magazine

Because life is short

EL CORREGIDOR  
ALMAGRO, SPAIN

In the center of the elegant old town of Almagro, Spain, lies **El Corregidor**, a restaurant offering an excellent menu in a most charming setting. Opened in 1986, the facility sprawls over 2 floors.

In summer, meals are served in an outdoor courtyard located amidst climbing vines and wooden window frames; on cooler days, diners are seated in an upstairs area, which is covered by a glass ceiling in reds, yellows and greens. At night, the many windows and skylight reflect the light and lend the whole place a warm, expansive feeling.

**Cognoscenti Magazine** editors were eager to sample Almagro's active theatre life—the town boasts an open-air theatre unique in Spain, as well as other venues. We returned to *El Corregidor* for dinner on each of two nights.

The menu offered a dozen entrees and twice that number of main dishes, including fresh fish, meats and game. For starters, we had an *Ensalada Templada con Chipirones y Gambas*, a lettuce salad with calamari and shrimp, lightly warmed and neatly spiced, plus an *Ensalada de Perdiz en Escabeche*, or partridge salad, served cold—the tender, marinated meat had taken on the flavors of pickled gherkins, onions and olives.

We were impressed by the partridge and chose it as part of our main dish on a subsequent night. The free-range bird (*Perdiz de Tiro estofada*) was served with julienned vegetables in a densely reduced carrot and tomato sauce. Our seafood choice was *Lomo de*

*Merluza con Tinta de Chipirones y Aceite de Azafrán* (hake in squid ink), which was just past translucent, and was enhanced by hints of anise. We also enjoyed *Medallón de Cierva con jugo de Grosellas y caramelo de Vino Tinto*, deer medallions that were pink in the center and almost pâté-like in tender consistency.

The house dessert, *Tarta de manzana caliente con helado de canela*, or apple tart with nutmeg, was set in a light, flaky pastry, with the all-too-common Spanish custard (happily) missing. This delight is worth ordering at the beginning of the meal, because it takes at least 20 minutes to prepare, as the service staff will surely advise you.

On both nights—the first as a test, the second as a



Deer medallions

triumphant encore—we drank a bottle of *Quercus* 1999 (La Mancha), which was redolent with cherry and black currant. The fruit lay purplish in the glass, yielding to red near the rim, and the abundant presence of tannins suggested the wine could easily last another 6 or 7 years.

After dinner, Juan José Garzón López, who operates the restaurant along with Mr. Garcia Elvira, produced a cherry-based *Aguardiente de Cereza* from Valle del Jerte. Poured from an iced bottle into small iced glasses, the firewater, reminiscent of kirsch, delivered a strong one-two punch—first the cherries, and then the potent fire of the 84 proof alcohol!



The cellar

At meal's end, Mr. Garzón López kindly escorted *Cognoscenti* editors down a staircase into an underground cave where the restaurant's impressive wine collection is held in naturally chilled storage.

Well-fed and happy, we wandered the town after dinner and caught a street theatre-version of the classic *Don Quixote*. Almagro is one of these gems—brimming with culture and fine food, yet utterly free of pretension. Recommended.

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

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