

Ground floor



THE STORY OF THIS BUILDING

The *palacio* Alegría (less palatial than a palace, a *palacio* was roughly equivalent to a mansion house or country house) is a magnificent building dating from 1733, located in the area of Guernica unscathed by the bombing raid that destroyed much of the town in 1937, during the Spanish Civil War. In fact, the story of the building goes much further back in time and is indissolubly linked to the memory of the Basque lands, *Euskal Herria*.

The *casa-torre*, or house tower:

Dating from the early 16th century, the original building was a defensive tower typical of the on-off wars between the *oñacino* and *gamboino* factions that laid the mediaeval Basque region to waste. Related by marriage to the Butron-Múgica family, head of the *oñacinos* in Vizcaya, the Iburguen clan was a local family of nobles whose rank and status are clear from the fact that they played host to Ferdinand, the Catholic King, when he came to Guernica to swear the *Fueros* or Charter Laws in 1476. A member of the family, Iñigo Urtiz de Iburguen, helped to write the *Fuero Nuevo* (New Charter) of Vizcaya in 1526.

***Tronera*, or embrasure (opening in a wall):**

This is the only remaining vestige of the military features of the original building. The *tronera* was so called because it was an opening for *truenos*, thunderclaps, as certain pieces of artillery were then known.

Fiore:

In 1718 a social revolt known as the Matxinada broke out in defiance of Philip V's attempt to move the Basque customs houses on the banks of the Ebro north to the Basque coast, which meant that the goods coming into ports became more expensive. The Urdaibai zone, including Guernica, was particularly sensitive to these changes. The rioters burnt the Alegría tower, furniture and other belongings. Once the revolt had been put down, the house was rebuilt.

Baroque *palacio* (central model):

The new building was a Baroque *palacio* of a sort popular in the Basque Country, by that time more adapted to residential and urban tastes: cube-shaped, with an elegant front façade, generous windows and other less defensive features. From the 19th century, the titled owners, the Condes (Count and Countess) of Montefuerte, gave their name to the house. The symmetry of the façade was broken slightly in the early 20th century, when the owners added the coat of arms of their first surname, Allendesalazar, from another house in Guernica known as the *Casa Pintada* or Painted House.

The old gardens behind the *palacio* give the place a calm, verdant, peaceable air. Inside, the way the rooms and living areas were distributed is clearly appreciable: the ground floor features an entrance for carriages, plus stables, bodegas and pantries; the first floor is what was referred to as the *piso noble* or function suite, with the family quarters, drawing and reception rooms, study, library and chapel. The amply arched gallery on the second floor provided the ladies with plenty of light and heat as they went about their needlework and talked. Under an unusually structured wooden roof, the loft housed the lumber rooms.

Guernica today (vertical model):

Although the *Juntas* or Assembly of Vizcaya (Biscay) had long met in Guernica, it was not legally founded as a *villa*, or borough, with new rights and obligations, until 1366. Its relatively tranquil history of centuries was rudely shattered by the 1937 bombing during the Spanish Civil War. Just a few years later, Guernica had been rebuilt and became a flourishing industrial centre. Today it leans heavily to the services sector, with tourism taking pride of place.

Like the *Alegría palacio*, the Tree of Guernica, the hermitage that stood on the site of the present *Casa de Juntas*, or Assembly building, and the convent of Santa Clara, were all outside the walls of the mediaeval borough. These buildings comprise a monumental complex of great historical value, together with the former gardens of the *palacio*, which, besides reproducing a number of the region's eco-systems, also house sculptures by the late Eduardo Chillida and Henry Moore.

PREHISTORY

PALAEOLITHIC ART

Several caves in the Basque Country contain spectacular examples of Palaeolithic art and in 2008, Santimamiñe, Altxerri and Ekain were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The artwork was painted or carved onto both mobile pieces (such as small stone slabs and pebbles, bones and antlers) and immobile features (cave walls and outdoor stone blocks) and depicted animals such as horses, bison, deer and reindeer and, occasionally, fish, birds, snakes, etc. Apart for a few hand prints, human figures are rare. There are also a large number of geometric shapes, dot sequences, lines and other marks with no specific shape.

PALAEOLITHIC ART IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY (images and pieces)

The artists of the Palaeolithic era were skilled in sculpting, painting and carving. They mostly used flint tools to shape and engrave the pieces, enabling them to make strokes of different width and depth. For painting, they used iron minerals to create different reddish tones and charcoal or manganese oxide for black. The result is a very limited colour palette.

Using these techniques alone or in combination, they made figures (especially animals) consisting of an outline, shaded in to represent fur and muscles. The level of realistic details (nose and mouth, eye with tear gland, hooves, etc.) and number of anatomical parts depicted varies from piece to piece.

- Amongst the earliest works in the region are carvings of a bear on the wall at Venta Laperra and a horse on a spear from Isturitz.



- The Basque Country boasts some of the oldest artwork in the world, created by the first groups of Homo sapiens to arrive in Europe some 40,000 years ago. These include the red paintings in the upper gallery of the Altxerri cave and several pieces of mobiliary (or portable) art from the Isturitz cave.
- The period around 15,000 years ago saw a massive upsurge in artistic expression in Europe. Most of the principal cave decorations date from this time. Some (including Erberua, Altxerri, Ekain and Santimamiñe) feature dozens of wall carvings and paintings while at other sites (e.g. Isturitz), hundreds of bone and stone pieces have been found.

GEOLOGICAL ERAS (models)

The surface of the Earth is constantly being changed as a result of internal stresses and strains. Life on the planet has constantly been renewed and transformed to adapt to the changing environment. But these developments take place at their own pace. Our Earth is 4.6 billion years old, but for the first 4 billion there was no life on the planet and the first humans did not emerge until after 4,598,000,000 years.

The two million years of human presence are no more than a footnote in the development of life on the planet. The first human remains found in the Basque Country date from a time long after the emergence of our species in Africa; and the two thousand years we call the Current Era account for scarcely one hundredth of the total length of human presence in the territory we now call the Basque Country.

HABITAT AND SETTLEMENT

For centuries, the rural house was a social, economic, religious, fiscal and occasionally political unit. Even today, to a great extent, such houses are a big factor in the perceived identity of the families occupying them.

The church's role in shaping the rural landscape (models of churches)

In a country where everything that has a name exists, the house is what gives the family its name. Most Basque surnames originated this way.

From the 8th century, documents speak of villages grouped about a church to give a sense of community. Most of these rural places have survived to the present day, their churches changing over time to adapt to new requirements and situations. In the 16th century, the construction industry underwent a minor revolution, with a particularly striking solution being found for a good number of churches, involving the addition of sophisticated wooden roofs that imitated stone vaulting.

Popular architecture (models of *caseríos*, or farmsteads)

The Basque *caserío*, or farmstead, emerged in the late 15th century. Basically it is home, wine press, workshop, stable, barn and straw loft all in one. This variety of uses is reflected in the architecture: the *caserío* is a kind of box, an enormous, compact container that can be used to house or store virtually anything. Although *caseríos* do tend to vary from region to region, and differ depending on when they were built, the materials used in construction, how rich the owner was and the main use to which it was put, a constant feature is the high quality of the actual building.

CARTOGRAPHY

Geography and cartography were originally military sciences. The situation of the Basque lands, *Euskal Herria*, between two states frequently in conflict meant a steady stream of maps and illustrations was produced.

Transport by land and sea, the betrothals of princes and princesses from Castile and France, the control of goods passing through and conflicts about land and property also encouraged the creation of maps, plans and drawings of *Euskal Herria*.

Navigational instruments (showcase)

Instruments used in navigation aided mariners to establish their position, measure direction and distance, calculate speed, measure the depth of the waters, interpret maps accurately and observe meteorological phenomena.

The 14th century saw some major developments in deep-sea navigation in Atlantic and Mediterranean Europe, stimulated by the spread of navigational instruments and the appearance of schools of map-making. A new era of discoveries was beginning, one in which the Basques played a decisive part.

Nautical charts and maps (drawers)

Nautical charts, known as Portolan charts between the 13th and 17th centuries, are essential tools in navigation and have their own resources for representing the sea and the coastline, including the exaggeration of river estuaries, gulfs, ports and promontories, their real size being distorted to offer navigators more practical information.

In the 16th century, the Basque coast was thoroughly described and mapped, largely owing to the strategic position of the Basque ports between northern Europe and Castile to the south.



Cartography schools

From the 18th century, progress in cartographical science led to maps with increasingly accurate details of contours and the relative positions of geographical and man-made features. Maps also became much clearer, offering much more information more easily interpreted at first sight. Despite all the technical and formal changes, however, the aesthetical value of maps was retained, far beyond being mere supports for graphic information.

First floor



NAFARROA

Nafarroa was an influential mediaeval Kingdom formed around the Aritza family in the early 9th century. From the 10th century, the kingdom began to expand under the Jimena dynasty, either by conquest or by marriage alliances, advancing south at the expense of the Arabs.

The Kingdom of Nafarroa was at its largest between 1004 and 1035, when Sancho III *el Mayor* (the Great) dominated much of the northern coast of Spain and the western Pyrenees. When his domains were divided between his heirs, the Kingdoms of Castile and Aragon came into being, a development that would subsequently have major political import.

From the late 11th century, the Kingdom's evolution was marked by conflicts with the Aragonese and the Castilians, who closed off its southern flank. Further, the territories of Araba, Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia and La Rioja, all part of the Kingdom of Nafarroa until the 12th century, eventually passed to the Crown of Castile. These developments, together with the installation of French dynasties on the throne, inevitably switched the thrust of Navarrese policy north of the Pyrenees.

During the 14th century the Beaumont and Agramont clans of nobles weakened the monarch's power through their disputes, a situation Ferdinand, the Catholic King, took advantage of in 1512 to annex the Spanish part of the Kingdom of Nafarroa into the Crown of Castile, leaving Baja Nafarroa (Lower, or French, Navarre) under the dominion of the Foix dynasty.

After the conquest, Nafarroa maintained its *foral*, or charter, regime, as embodied by the *Derecho de Sobrecarta*, which gave the *Cortes* or parliament the power to refuse to apply any royal decrees or papal bulls contrary to the General *Fuero* or Charter Law of Nafarroa.

Nafarroa was divided into six *Merindades* or districts, each governed by a *merino*, a nobleman with jurisdiction there. The *Merindad* had some powers, including setting weights and measures, compliance with royal rights and legal claims in criminal



cases. The noble *merino* was entrusted with the task of maintaining public order, collecting a number of taxes and keeping a watch on local fairs and shows.

The six *Merindades* were: *Merindad de las Montañas* (or Pamplona), *Merindad de Estella*, *Merindad de Sangüesa*, *Merindad de la Ribera* (along the banks of the river Ebro), *Merindad de Olite*, and *Merindad de Ultrapuertos* (or *Behe Nafarroa*—Lower Navarre, on the northern, French side of the Pyrenees).



IPARRALDEA

Iparralde, as the French Basque lands are known, includes Lapurdi, Zuberoa and Behe Nafarroa (Lower Navarre), which took shape in the 14th century.

From the Middle Ages on, territorial relations in Iparralde oscillated between Charlemagne's kingdom and the Kingdom of Pamplona, with which the Gascon nobility had family links. In the late Middle Ages Iparralde, now consolidated as the Duchy of Aquitaine, became involved in the political conflicts between England, France, Castile and Navarre. In the mid-12th century, the area's links to Richard the Lionheart's England marked the beginning of its institutional organization.

Lapurdi was organized in a *Biltzar* or assembly of *juntas*, held in Uztaritz. Zuberoa had a similar system, with another *Biltzar*, known as a *Silbiet*, which met in Lextarre (Maule). And Behe Nafarroa was organized as the *Merindad de Ultrapuertos*, ("the regions beyond the mountain passes") one of the Crown of Navarra's six such regions. This state of affairs lasted until 1512, when the peninsular part of the old Kingdom was conquered by Castile. Split from the rest, Behe Nafarroa continued as a separate kingdom until 1572. From the 16th century the General Estates were set up and each *comarca* (district) had its own district organization and representatives.

GIPUZKOA

Gipuzkoa entered the annals of history in 1025, when the lord “senior Garsia Azenariz de Ipuscua” and his lady, *doña Galga*, gifted the monastery of San Salvador de Olazábal to the one at San Juan de la Peña. The donated monastery, near San Sebastián de Hernani and San Pedro de Ariceta (Bergara), were landmarks for the area’s inhabitants. However, it wasn’t long before the province underwent a major transformation brought about by the foundation of 25 *villas*, or boroughs, which covered virtually the entire territory (the *señorío* or domain of Oñate was annexed in 1846), as the rural areas came under the protection of the *villas*.

San Sebastián was the first of these boroughs to be founded, in 1199, principally to give the adjacent, land-bound Kingdom of Navarre a seaport. Hondarribia came next. In 1200, after conquering the territory, Castile continued the policy of founding boroughs both along the coast (places like Getaria, Zarautz and Mutriku) and in the valley of the Oria, including *villas* such as Tolosa and Ordizia.

Political and social instability in the 14th century, principally the wars between opposing clans, meant that newer boroughs such as Azpeitia, Azkoitia and Eibar were fortified, a move that closed them off from the surrounding areas, largely dominated by the clans’ roving bands of warriors.

After the banishment of the Parientes Mayores (literally, the Elders or Forefathers, the name given to a group of leading landlords), Gipuzkoa began to be organized as a territory through a series of regulations called the Cuadernos de Ordenanzas de Hermandad, originally drafted in 1375. Representatives from the villas, or boroughs, met twice a year at the Juntas Generales, a kind of General Assembly. The Diputación (today roughly equivalent to a Provincial Council) was first set up in the 16th century to act between meetings of the Juntas.

ARABA

The province of Araba, which extended south from the spur of Mount Gorbea, was the object of political manoeuvring by the Astur kings to the west, who attempted to dominate the territory through marriages or conquest. When it came fully under Asturian influence in the 9th century, members of the Araba aristocracy married their Astur counterparts.

On the southern edge of the province of Araba was La Rioja, the pathway for military expeditions sent by the Cordoba emirs until the early 10th century, when King of Pamplona Sancho Garcés I established his ascendancy over the region. From then on, and during much of the 11th and 12th centuries, the territory of Araba was politically part of the domains of the monarchy in Pamplona, until it was delivered into the hands of Alfonso VII, king of Castile, in 1199.

At this time a good number of *villas*, or boroughs, were founded with special charters of privileges and exemptions for their inhabitants. Villages not assigned to these boroughs continued in the power of the lords, who created what was known as the *Cofradía* (or Guild) of Arriaga, which lasted until 1332, when the lands in question passed to the Crown of Castile.

To defend themselves from the feudal lords, impose order on the countryside and free themselves from the threat of marauders, villages and boroughs grouped together in larger organizations, known as the *Cuadrillas de Hermandad*, which eventually led, in 1463 to the *Hermandad General* of Araba, an institution that helped to define the territorial extension of the province. At the head of the *Hermandad* was an executive judge, the *Diputado General* (or Sheriff), a post documented as early as 1476. Meetings of all representatives from the *Cuadrillas* were known as the *Juntas Generales*, or General Assembly.

BIZKAIA

The name of Bizkaia (Biscay) was used for the first time in the Chronicle of Alfonso III, written in the late 9th century, to define the land between the rivers Nerbioi and Deba. Other districts gradually became associated with the original nucleus through family ties with the Lords of Bizkaia: in 1211, the area around Durango, known as the *Durangesado*, became part of Bizkaia, subsequently followed by the *Encarterri* district (both maintaining their own *Juntas*, or General Assembly), Orduña, in the 15th century, and, finally, Orozco in the 18th century.

Although legend has it that the *Señorío*, or Domain, was instituted by *Jaun Zuria*, a foreigner elected by the people of Bizkaia in the 9th century to lead the defence of the territory in exchange for hills, orchards and other assets, the truth is that the first known Lord of Bizkaia was Iñigo López, who lived for much of the 11th century. López was a vassal of García, King of Navarre and, later, of the King of Castile, Alfonso VI. He founded the noble family of Haro, which, except for a brief gap in the mid-12th century, governed the *Señorío* until, through legitimate succession in the mid-14th century, the Lordship fell to the Lara clan, and shortly afterwards to the Trastámara family, one of whose members, the *infante*, or prince, don Juan, would be crowned King of Castile as Juan I, bringing the *Señorío* into the Kingdom of Castile. Despite this change, the *Señorío* retained its institutions and its *fueros*, or charter laws, and the Kings of Castile, then also Lords of Bizkaia, were obliged to swear to respect the local laws. The earliest draft of the Charter Law dates from 1452. This was modified in 1526 under the name *Fuero Nuevo*, or New Charter Law. Representatives from the boroughs and *anteiglesias*—local areas similar to parishes into which the *Señorío* was divided—met at the *Juntas Generales* (General Assembly) held in Gernika.



BASQUES AROUND THE WORLD

With their homeland providing a passing place for travellers and goods between the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of continental Europe, the Basques, clearly motivated by the proximity of the sea and their own businesslike spirit, have for centuries moved with remarkable freedom about the face of the earth. Classical writings record the presence of the Basques in different parts of the Roman Empire. Trade and fishing took many around the world, as merchants to northern Europe and Seville and as cod fishermen and whale hunters to the waters off Terranova and Iceland.

They also had a role to play in the shaping of the modern state, as soldiers, clerks or jurists at the courts of the Austrias and in the Church. The Basques featured prominently in the discovery and exploration of the New World, dealing on an equal footing with the European powers of the time, although always at the service of the Church, the Crown of Castile or the King of France. They were conquistadors in Mexico and Peru, corsairs in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, missionaries in southeast Asia and sailors in the Pacific.

The list of Basques who made a name for themselves in the outside world is endless: from Juan Sebastián Elcano, the first man to sail around the world, to Catalina de Erauso, the nun lieutenant who fought, disguised as a man, in the Spanish army.

What is known as the Diaspora, the dispersion of the Basques, began in the 19th century: thousands of Basques in search of a new, better life, fleeing from poverty and wars, or just looking for new experiences in other continents. Today, those Basque emigrants and their descendants are indissolubly linked to the countries they moved to, and have thrown up many leading personalities in politics, the economy and society in general. Full integration in the new country does not, however, mean the loss of their origins, the Basque language and traditions, as is clear from the number of *Euskal Etxeak* (Basque Houses), pelota courts (known as *frontones* and *trinquetes*) scattered around the world. The result of this symbiosis



between older values and the process of adaptation to the new is the identification of the Basques with strength, hard work, tenacity at times bordering on stubbornness, noblesse (the word of a Basque is synonym for worthy of trust) and the entrepreneurial spirit.

THE ABOLITION OF CHARTER LAW

The long, drawn-out and difficult battle between the forces of liberalism and the Ancien Régime lasted nearly a century in *Euskal Herria*, the land of the Basques. Beginning with the French Revolution, the conflict ended after the Second Carlist War, with the abolition of the *Fueros*, or Charter Laws. However, the *Fuero* Charter regimes had come under attack previously from the absolute Bourbon monarchies in France and Spain alike, being targeted from political and academic perspectives. The French Revolution also brought about the definitive abolition of the *foral* charter system in Iparralde, the French Basque lands. The process of abolition in the other territories took off in the 19th century.

Salic Law, brought to Spain by the Bourbon dynasty, barred women from reigning. In 1830, Ferdinand VII proclaimed the Pragmatic Sanction abolishing the Law and re-establishing traditional Castilian rights of succession, thus enabling his first-born, a girl, to reign. However, in 1833, when Ferdinand fell ill, the royal entourage managed to get the Pragmatic revoked. When Ferdinand recovered, he applied it again before his death, thereby assuring the throne for his daughter Isabella. But the king's brother, Carlos María Isidro, refused to accept the Pragmatic and when Ferdinand died on 29 September 1833, the first Carlist War between absolutists and liberals broke out.

In truth, the first Carlist War was an extension of a battle raging in different forms all over Europe, and was made particularly bitter in the Basque region by the additional question of the *foral* charter system. After the changes to this system made at the end of the War, Basque politicians, soldiers, jurists and historians were virtually unanimous in their defence of the *Fueros*, regardless of their political colours, and ceaselessly denied the identification of the *foral* Charter system with the defeated Carlists, an identification centralist liberals and Carlists alike were interested in making.



Carlism's second attempt, in 1872, was defeated when Alfonso XII came to the throne. The Law of 1876 that abolished the *Fueros* was a genuine political upheaval. So powerful was the hold of the Charter Laws that the transitional system of Economic Agreements of 1878 was eventually accepted as a tool of economic and social regulation between the Basque *Diputaciones* (Provincial Councils) and the State.

Second floor



EUSKAL HERRIA, THE BASQUE LANDS

Euskal Herria is proud of its traditions. It has somehow managed to preserve its language over millennia, turn its work routines into sports, maintain its ancestral rites and develop a superb cuisine that retains more than a touch of a by-gone world.

Love of one's homeland, strong attachment to a particular character and way of life, to a form of celebration: all of this is inextricably bound up with moments experienced year after year, with every tune played, every dance, every deep-rooted custom in towns and villages throughout the land.

BASQUE SPORTS

Basque sports emerged from daily work done on land and at sea. Fishermen, farm workers, woodcutters and shepherds compete to see who is the fastest or strongest, in challenges where bets heighten the tension and complete the fun.

Work is the source of today's regattas, trials of strength with oxen pulling huge stones, skittles, woodcutters, grass cutters, stone lifters and sheepdog trials.

Today, with the regattas, Basque *pelota* and *sokatira* (tug o' war) all governed by professional rules, these and other major sporting events attract big crowds, and inspire bets involving large sums of money. Different forms of *pelota*, played with the hand, a bat or a basket, are also very popular. Every town and village has its own *pelota* court, known locally as a *frontón*, a measure of just how much the local people appreciate and enjoy the sport.



MYTHS AND BELIEFS

The oldest myths and legends of the Basque lands have their origins in powerful beings that embodied nature. Mythological beings such as *Mari*, goddess of lightning and rain, *Sugaar*, the dragon, *Basajaun* and *Basandere*, lords of the forest, the *lamias* or sirens and *Tarttalo* the cyclops, were all linked to woods and caves and said to cause natural phenomena such as rain and sunsets.

With the arrival of Christianity, nature worship mixed with the new religion to profile a series of celebrations and rites marking the cycles of life. St. Michael overcame the dragon, St. Martin defeated the *basajaun*, Olentzero, the mythical coalman, comes down to the woods to celebrate Christmas, and on *San Juan* the summer solstice is celebrated around the fire.

DANCE

Developed from a variety of sources, Basque dances are a regular feature of local *fiestas*. Dance is in fact one of the best expressions of Basque tradition, largely because of the abundance and variety of dances, and the synchronization, order and discipline of the steps involved, which have long remain unchanged.

Special clothes and tools add a major symbolic touch to the movements of the *dantzari*, or dancers. Dance is a social, rural or even religious event that marks the turning of the seasons, agricultural cycles and the social changes that affect people's lives. From the Sunday afternoon *zortziko*, to the solemn *aurreku*, the *corpus* and the colourful *ezpatadantzak* of military origin, social dances, ritual dances, with sticks, rings or staffs: all of them partake of the symbolic force of tradition.

ZUBEROAKO PASTORALA (SOULETIN PASTORAL)

Originating in the Middle Ages, Souletin pastoral is a form of theatre combining recitation, song, music and dance. The structure is always the same: the actors, divided into two groups, blue and red (the good and the bad), recite their lines in verse as they walk, marking out the rhythm with a heavy stick called a *makila*. Between scenes, they dance *satanak*, adding songs and satiric verses.

Souletin pastoral is a throwback to the religious plays performed throughout Europe, and has somehow survived in Zuberoa (Soule) to the present day. Today the pastoral illustrates the lives of Basque personalities. Every year, whole villages become involved, with locals having the responsibility and privilege of preparing this complex show in which dozens of actors take part.

ACADEMIC MUSIC

Academic music has coexisted with popular music in the Basque lands ever since the monasteries appeared. During the Baroque, the cathedrals of Baiona (Bayonne) and Gasteiz (Vitoria) and the sanctuary of Arantzazu reformed their choirs and chapels, adding string and wind instruments to accompany the organ, and were actively involved in the creation of music that mirrored the way music and musical styles evolved in Europe.

The leading Basque composers were all born in the 19th century. From the precociously young Juan Crisóstomo Arriaga to Hilarión Eslava, with his method of scales, young Basque students like Pablo Sarasate went to the Paris or Berlin conservatoires. Near the turn of the century, a new generation of artists appeared, with musicians of the stature of Jesús Guridi, Jose María Usandizaga, Aita Donostia and Pablo Sorozábal. A major figure in the previous generation was Maurice Ravel, author of the immensely popular Bolero.



POPULAR MUSIC

Popular music, the kind of music that strays from academic standards and finds its inspiration in tradition, has been transmitted uninterruptedly down to the present day. The oldest songs and the earliest *txistularis* (whistle players) can be traced back to the Middle Ages, and although the tunes have been lost, the lyrics survive. The most popular instrument is undoubtedly the *txistu*, or whistle, accompanied by a small drum, and town and village councils frequently recruit whistle and drum players to enliven institutional fiestas. A variation of the *txistu* exists in the Pyrenees called the *txirula*, which is usually accompanied by a sort of kettledrum known as an *atabal*. In the southern part of the province of Araba and in Nafarroa, *gaitas* (bagpipes) and the oboe-like *dulzaina* are popular.

Fashioned from a cow's horn, the *alboka* was played in relatively few areas, usually accompanied by a tambourine, which today is associated with the *trikitixa*, a diatonic accordion that has had great success since its introduction in the 19th century. The percussive instrument called the *txalaparta* may have originated in the playful atmosphere of people working together, for instance when pressing apples for cider.

EUSKARA. THE BASQUE LANGUAGE

Euskara is the language of the Basques, who call the Basque lands *Euskal Herria*, which, literally, means the people of the Basque language. Native Basque language speakers call themselves *euskaldunak*, people who “possess” the Basque language, thus distinguishing the inhabitants of a particular region solely by the language they speak.

This age-old language does not belong to any of the world’s other language families. It is the oldest in Europe, has survived the arrival and dominion of Latin and of time itself. The varieties or dialects of Basque are spoken today by more than a million people.

Largely oral in nature, the first texts written in Basque are little more than isolated words on Roman gravestones or mediaeval documents. However, from the 16th century on, literary works in Basque began to appear, accompanied by a growing number of language and grammatical studies. The language has its own academy, *Euskaltzaindia*, founded in 1918, which works to preserve *euskera*, the language of the Basques.



CUISINE

Traditional Basque cuisine is based on fresh produce from sea and land, some local and others originating elsewhere but now perfectly familiar in *Euskal Herria*, where over time they have developed their own characteristics. At fairs and markets people display the best local produce, taking immense care over the quality of each ingredient.

A whole culture of *txoko* and gastronomic societies has grown up around Basque cuisine, with groups of friends getting together to cook and eat a wide range of traditional dishes accompanied by wine, cider or the young white wine known as *txakoli*, grown in the coastal areas.

A number of *cofradía*, or guilds, work to publicize and encourage consumption of certain products (for instance, cider, kidney beans or cheese). But today Basque cuisine owes its high reputation above all to a group of chefs who reinvented traditional cooking in what is known as the new Basque cuisine, launching new dishes that combined a heady mixture of creativity and experiment.