

HISTORICAL-ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM

CASA MUSEO - MIJAS

This museum is located at the Plaza de la Libertad and has been open since May 1995. The building was used as the headquarters of the Town Hall from 1912 to 1986, the date on which the municipal offices passed to a new building in Plaza Virgen de la Peña.

It is a building with three floors, of which, the third is intended for internal rooms, while the ground floor and first floor host all the exhibition rooms. After discontinuing as the headquarters of the Town Hall, it was remodelled to become the actual Historical-Ethnological Museum of Mijas.

The main entrance of the building stands out for its façade, on either sides are two large representations of Hercules, the work of Th. Porres, in 1916. He was a French sculptor who was in Mijas managing some marble quarries and in gratitude to the City Council of the time for the facilities given to carry out his mission gave the municipality this sculptural work.

The central patio is one of the highlights of the museum, typical of an Andalusian village house, full of plants with flowers that bloom all year long, producing pleasant, delicate aromas..



SALA SIERRA – MOUNTAIN HALL

The Lime

There are three basic colours in Mijas: mountain green, sea blue and the white of lime; since the origins of the village, these three have formed part of its natural decoration, and here we will talk about the white of lime.

Lime is obtained by heating limestone to over 820 degrees, which expels the carbonic acid and moisture. The method used for centuries and is still employed is the lime kiln, known in Mijas as *calera*. As an historical reference, there is a document in the Historical Archives of the Province, dated 1528 in which a resident of Mijas applies to the Mayor for a permit to cut wood in order to make the lime kiln.

Until the beginning of the 80's many people were employed in this task, and even now there are many lime kilns still to be found in the countryside and in the mountains, now in disuse, that show the importance of this activity throughout the whole of the municipal district.

Financial activity was based on the sale of lime for construction and whitewashing the houses; it was usually sold by the lime-makers themselves, not only in Mijas but also in the neighbouring villages, in earlier times transporting it on donkeys, and later on in small lorries.



La Miel ***The Honey***



We find references of honey production in Mijas in the 15th century, and it is assumed that in previous centuries the Arabs also produced honey; proof of this is that "after the reconquest of Málaga, the Castellians obtained a substantial booty of candles, some of considerable size" (honey, apart from its use as a sweetener, was especially used for making soap and wax).

"From 1493 to 1496, some 100 beehives were donated in Malaga, that were established mainly in the *Sierra of Mijas*". The beehives of the time were situated in the mountains, far from the cultivated fields, as they could cause damage, especially to the vines.

In the 16th century there is also record of honey being produced in this village. There is also mention of this from the 17th century also, in the Historical Archives of the Province of Malaga. Again, in the 19th century, *P. Madoz* in his Dictionary, speaks of honey production in Mijas, that continues to be produced until present times, and is very popular amongst the inhabitants of the village.

The bee-keepers who currently work in the production of honey are young people from Mijas who combine this activity with other work, and have maintained the quality that has always characterised the honey of this village; the location of the beehives in natural spaces, with a great many native wild flowers and an almost "home-made" production with no views to making it a commercial business, have lead this product to be considered as being "natural".

The Wax

The wax produced by the bees inside the hive, as it comes out of the comb (virgin wax) is given the name of *cerón*; after a process in which it is heated in a boiler with water to make it liquid and, after putting it into baskets and compressing it, the yellow wax is obtained. This already refined wax is used for making candles, for waxing furniture, etc.

There was a chandlery in Mijas until the 60's, where the process of refining wax was carried out, and then it was taken to Málaga and Andújar to be made into candles.

The deep-rooted tradition of making honey and the large number of beehives distributed around the mountains and countryside of Mijas brought about the creation of this chandlery that was not only supplied with wax from the beehives of Mijas but also from the nearby villages of Monda, Coín, Alhaurín and Benalmádena.



The palma



The "*palma*" or the fan-shaped leaf of the fan palm, is cut from the plant between June and September; once harvested, the leaves are laid out in the sun for approximately four weeks – two weeks on each side – so that they dry out. The effect of the sun changes their colour and they turn yellowish. They are then cut and formed into bundles. When they are to be used, they are placed in hot water to soften them and then strips or strands are taken off to make the braids. To work the braids, they are made wet once again, normally by being covered with a damp cloth, so that they become flexible again.

Making the braids is similar as for esparto grass; once finished, the braids are sewn together along the edges with the palm needle, shaping the object as required, working on the flat for wicker mats and "*reores*" (round mats) and spirally for baskets or panniers.

Esparto Grass

Esparto is a wild plant that grows spontaneously in the dry mountainous areas of central and southern Spain and North Africa.

From an historical point of view, the use of *esparto* goes back at least, to the Eneolithic period, which is evidenced by items found from this period (sandals, baskets, ropes) coming from archaeological sites. In the Bat Cave, in Albuñol (Granada) the skeletons found there (2,500 B.C.) were attired with clothes, hats, bags and shoes made of *esparto* grass.

The work

First the braids are plaited, this work normally being done by the woman, sitting on a low chair and with a bunch of *esparto* on the ground, previously moistened, from where small sections are taken to add to the work that she holds in her mouth while she does the plaiting with her hands.

There are different kinds of braids, and according to the number of strands and the use to which they will be put, to make panniers and large baskets, the braids are usually of 15 strands, and for small items, 13 strands are used.

Once the braid is made, it is sewn along its edges with *esparto* thread, giving it the shape required by the object being made (rounded for circular mats, circular "fans" for reviving the fire, baskets for pressing grapes; in strips forming a rectangle for mats and carpets, and spirally for large and smaller baskets,...)



Tools

The mace or pounder, as mentioned above, the needle for sewing the braids, scissors for cutting or trimming the *esparto* that sticks out irregularly from the weaving, and a leather thimble for pushing the needle during the sewing.





Marble quarrying in the Sierra of Mijas goes back to Roman times; from then until the present day it has been an almost continuous activity throughout all periods of the history of the town, to the extent that the open wounds caused to our *sierra* are going to be difficult to cure.

The Roman Era

The most complete and in-depth studies of this period have been carried out by the historian and archaeologist *María Luisa Loza Azuaga* and *José Beltrán Fortes*, from Mijas, who, in the absence of literary references and archaeological remains, have based their studies on objects possibly made from marble from the *Sierra of Mijas* and comparing them with the material existing nowadays in the quarries still being operated or recently abandoned in the *Sierra of Mijas*. These analyses carried out in the Provincial Archaeological Museum of Málaga demonstrate that the white marble of Mijas was effectively used for creating many of the sculptures and constructions of the Roman era.

Important conclusions that are gathered from studying the work of these authors, "The working of white marble from the *Sierra of Mijas* in the Roman period", are as follows:

1- The objects analysed and dated as being from the 1st century A.D. correspond to quarries in the area of Mijas, it is therefore ascertained that marble working in that century was limited to the Mijas quarries, and later - in the 2nd century A.D. - this work was carried out in the northern section of the *Sierra of Mijas*, in the quarries of Coín and Alhaurín.

2- What is common to all these quarries located in the Sierra of Mijas is that they are well communicated with the urban centres of the area, and therefore there were good opportunities for transporting the material, with the limitations of the period, naturally.

3- The marble was transported along roads that no longer exist and coincided with the courses of the rivers or natural elements of the terrain. The marble travelled from the Sierra of Mijas to the coast "crossing the series of low hills that descended until reaching the coast, or following the course of the River Fuengirola, until the Roman town of *Suel*. This stood at the mouth of the river, and would have played an important role in the operation of the quarry and commercialising the marble."

4- Near to the quarries there would have been workshops where the first work was carried out on the material quarried. These authors have sited the workshops in the nearby town of *Suel*, or at least in the surrounding area.



SALA EL CAMPO – COUNTRYSIDE HALL

Farming implements



The hand-held tools that were used to work the fields of Mijas have hardly changed over the centuries, and those that are exhibited in this room have almost the same characteristics as those that were used by the Muslim population and later by the Christians who came to repopulate these lands. From studying the inventories made by residents of the village in the 16th century we learn that the work tools were few and simple, amongst others they used:

-The **plough**, until recently two types were used in Mijas: the Roman plough and the one known as "*orejeras*", the function of which is to turn the earth over to one side and the other of the furrow. The older ploughs were made from holm oak, without mouldboards; in some cases some wooden runners were attached to perform the same function. The share was conical in shape and nailed to the end of the plough.

-The **mattock** and the hoe, very similar tools, the mattock has a blade that is longer than its width, and the hoe is quadrangular. The former is used for breaking up hard ground, and the hoe is used to dig and move soil that has been ploughed up and softened. The mattock can be a pick, or blunt, depending on whether it has a pointed end or is broad-bladed. The pick enabled it to penetrate even very hard, stony ground.

-The **spade**, of wood or iron, was used for moving ripe grain from one heap to another, and to "winnow the grain".

-The **pitchfork**, with prongs made of wood or iron. This was used to stack the ripe grain or turn over the heaps of grain.

-The **rastrilleja**, a kind of rake that consists of a crosspiece armed with wooden or iron spikes, set like teeth, and a long handle, that served to gather up the grass, straw, brushwood or dead leaves, and to spread materials; it was also used in the task of separating the grain from the straw.

-The **sickle**, for reaping the ripe grain and grasses.

-**Almocafre**, a small hoe for weeding and clearing the earth of weed, and for transplanting small plants.

-The **axe** for cutting trees and chopping firewood.

-The **billhook**, an implement with a curved iron blade and a short handle, that served as a substitute for the axe.

-**Manure** was used as a fertiliser, coming from the livestock grazing on the fallow land once the harvest had been brought in; later on, the stubble was burnt, which provided a layer of organic matter that could be taken advantage of, and finally, in Autumn, the fallow ground was ploughed.

The grapevine in Mijas

From the first decade of the 20th century, vines began to be replanted in the lowlands near the coast and Fuengirola and the hills closer to the village were left for pasture or cereals. It gradually began acquiring more importance as an agricultural product to the extent that at harvest-time, it absorbed not only the manpower of the village, but also required more men to come from the eastern part of the province of Málaga for grape-picking in Mijas.

Production of raisins

Miguel Escalona Vega, a living witness of this and other activities related with the countryside, has told us of the process for producing raisins and other details related with the grapes:

Firstly the *verdeo* grapes are harvested, grapes that are picked to be sold as fruit for eating at the table.

The bunches of grapes destined for raisins are picked later, when they have already matured to the right degree for drying in the *paseros* (raisin drying racks). They are cut with a knife, placed in cane or wicker baskets and transported to the press houses where the drying racks are located. Once here, the grapes are hung, starting at the lower end or foot of the pasero until the head, or upper end, is reached. Now the "raisining" process begins; the duration of this process depends on the intensity of the heat, humidity in the atmosphere and the wind. The farmer's experience decides how long the raisins are to be exposed to the sun on the side on which they were laid, and when he considers they are finished on that side, the grapes are turned over. This operation is called "turning the raisin"; from the time when they are placed on the drying rack, between ten and fifteen days will have passed. There are still a further seven or eight days until the raisins finish their *cochura* ("cooking"). The best time for collecting them is again decided by the farmer's experience. If they are collected in too early, they still have too much juice and they will spoil, and if left too long, they will be too dry.



Once collected they are taken to the press house for cleaning and packing. The cleaning was usually performed by the women, the packing for sale was carried out in three ways: *catite* or *racimal* (in bunches), *guarrito* (moulded into fancy shapes) and loose or chopped. The better quality raisins are left for packaging in *catite* (10 kg box of raisins in bunches), other bunches are put into moulds for the *guarritos* and the rest are chopped and screened and classified according to size. Miguel recalls the seven grades of quality: *reviso*, *medio reviso*, *corriente*, *menudo*, *escombro* and *cochaque*. Nowadays these terms have been reduced to three: extra, first and second grade.

XVI-XIX Centuries

The first mention of wine-making in Mijas goes back to the 16th century, after the Reconquest by Castille and coinciding with the boom in vine-growing following the Muslim era. From the documents consulted, the amount of production cannot be exactly ascertained, but this appears to have been high, from the existence of documents that provide evidence of numerous sales of wine that the residents of Mijas make to those of Benalmádena, which explains that with its wine production, not only did it supply the village, but there was a surplus that was sold to the neighbouring village. From these documents it also learned that there were many villagers owning vineyards, obtaining good grape harvests that they transformed into wine to be sold, and others who, with smaller vineyards, made wine for their own consumption.

The years to which reference is made in these documents are 1529 and 1530. In 1529 it says there is a sale of wine to the villagers of Benalmádena and another sale here of eight arrobas (a unit of liquid measure) at sixty *maravedíes* (an old Spanish coin) per *arroba* and thirteen *arrobas* of “*torrentes*” wine and a further six *arrobas* at the same price. In 1530 there was a sale of fourteen *arrobas* of wine and sixty *arrobas* of grape juice at forty *maravedíes* per *arroba*.



Another later mention that shows how wine production continues in Mijas although to a lesser extent, is dated almost at the end of the 17th century, between the years 1675 and 1680 and where, in *Actas Capitulares* (historical administrative documents) dated 1676 it mentions the taxes levied on food products and a reduction in the price of the *arroba* of wine to 4 and 5 *reales*. The commercial crisis suffered in Málaga during that period had a negative effect on the town, and from the same *Actas Capitulares* we also learn that wine production in Mijas decreased, as an innkeeper of the town, *Alonso Martín Valdivia*, attempted to buy wine in Antequera to use in his tavern.

Two centuries later (19th C), there is also record of wine production and this is seen to continue in Mijas, having begun in the 16th century and continued until the 19th. The reference comes from the pen of *P. Madoz* in his Geographical, Statistical and Historical Dictionary of Spain and its overseas possessions, published in 1850, where in the section for Mijas and specifically mentioning production, he makes reference to wine being the product made in Mijas.

Wine-Making

The method used since ancient times has been that of treading and pressing the grapes, a process that throughout history has been evolving with the incorporation of new machinery. In this winery we can see the equipment known as the “crusher” that is used for crushing and destemming the grapes and replaces the work of treading them that used to be done in the

traditional wine-press. The press that is on exhibition, called a basket press, is also later than the type used in the older presses, which were made of wood and called screw presses. These were later replaced by iron, and in both types esparto baskets were used to collect the pomace of the crushed grapes.

Traditional Method

After the grapes were picked, they were laid in the sun in the *paseros* (drying racks) for several days and when well toasted, they were transferred to the wine-press where the men wearing footwear made of esparto grass, "*espadrilles*" made of hemp or esparto, with soles that were 3 or 4 cm thick, would tread the grapes. Once the mass of crushed grapes had become pulpy, the baskets were filled and the press was loaded until the last load of grapes on top of the last basket had the press filled to brimming. From this point the pressing started, to squeeze out all of the must, this fell to the trough at the base of the press and from there to the vat, from where it was then transferred to the barrels.

The Malaga wine-press

The wine press is not only the place where the grapes are compressed, but also the name given to the building or buildings that make up the press house of the vineyard.

The *lagar* (understood as being the place where the "treading" takes place) is made up of a floor of thick stone slabs laid well together and roughened so that the treaders do not slip; around these stone slabs runs a small stone ledge at a height of some forty or fifty centimetres, to prevent the fruit or the must spilling out. It has one or several outlets so that the must can drip into the vessels or vats of wine.



SALA MOLINOS DE ACEITE **/OIL MILLS HALL** **The oil in Mijas**

Historical information

There are no archaeological remains in Mijas that bear witness to the processing of oil in the centuries before the Muslim era, but we have to assume the existence of a Roman style olive press used for this purpose. On the other hand, there are bibliographical references that mention an oil mill in which the olives picked on these lands were crushed during the Muslim era of Mijas (7th to 15th century). In the Land Distribution of Mijas there is a reference to an Arabic mill:

It was from this mill that our Muslim ancestors obtained the *Al-zayt* (the juice of the olive) and after the Christian domination, as described in the Land Distribution, this mill was taken over by the Town Council who, aware that oil was an essential commodity and there should be no shortage, controlled sales, and awarded the "*Estanco del Aceite*" [a type of oil concession] in public auction, to the person who would assume the commitment of providing this product and at affordable prices." The leases ran for one year, and there are records of these leases for the years 1528 and 1529.

We have verbal testimony from the 20th century that relates the existence of as many as 7 mills, some of which were in operation until the 60's.

Ethnographic information

The oil-making process begins with the harvesting of the olives. This is hard work, done manually in the open air - during the cold season - from November to February. In smaller olive groves, the work is carried out by the family itself (grandparents, parents, children...). In larger areas, the work is done by daily labourers. Since ancient times this work has been carried out by the women.

The most wide-spread method is known as "beating the olive" and consists of striking the branches of the olive tree with a wooden stick made of carob, olive or cane so that the olives fall on the canvas laid out at the foot of the trees. Beating the olive is not just hitting branches, but it requires a special technique so that neither the fruit nor the tree is damaged and its productivity is not reduced.

Once the olives had been harvested, they were taken to the mill on mules and emptied into the barns, small storage areas where they were kept until the crushing process started; before passing to the stone roller, the olives had to be washed, and any unwanted objects removed: earth, pebbles, leaves, twigs, weeds...; once clean, they passed to the chute, and then to the stone, they lay on top of the base stone slab and were crushed by the stone rollers. The resulting paste was collected in large baskets made of esparto grass, and then, by pressing, the oil was obtained. This oil flowed along a trough that went around the press and ended up in the large earthenware pot, or vat, situated beneath the ground, and there it was left to rest so that the impurities (vegetable water) sank to the bottom and the clear oil was carefully removed so that it did not mix with the liquid at the bottom.

Then, the *orujo* or *mastrujo* (the solid residue, or pomace, of the olive, the skin, pulp and stones) was pressed once again, this time with the aid of hot water. This second pressing gave a mixture of oil and water that again ran into the vat, the oil floated on the top and was removed using metal ladles. This oil was of inferior quality to that from the first pressing.

The olive

Apart from using it to obtain oil, the consumption of marinated olives was, and continues to be very widespread in Mijas. The task of "splitting" them and making the dressing normally fell to the women and children of the house for family consumption, although there were, and still are, some families who sell the product in small quantities to others in the village.

There are two traditional methods for preparing them. One is to split the olives on a bench or table with the help of a wooden mallet; once split, they are put into an earthenware container with water, which is changed until the olives "taste sweet and are ready to dress". The other method consists of not splitting them and submerging them in caustic soda for 24 hours (100 gr. of soda dissolved in water for every 50 kilos of olives), then they are moved to a container with clean water, and two days later are ready for dressing.

The marinade

In Roman times, marinades were habitual, and there is record of aromatic herbs, such as fennel, and others, being used in preparing them.

In Mijas, fennel is still an ingredient in the most widely used recipe for marinating olives, apart from other native plants found in the countryside and mountains, such as thyme, rosemary and "*pimiento colorao*" (dried red pepper cut into little pieces), salt and lemon.

Farm work required for the olive trees

XVI Century

In documents of the Historical Archives of the Province of Málaga, dated from the beginning of the 16th century and with reference to Mijas, there are notes of the tasks that the farmworkers of the period carried out in the olive groves:

"Around February, once the olives were harvested, the earth was ploughed, and then again in summer, to aerate the soil, digging by hand where the plough would not fit. Other tasks performed were watering the trees, tidying or pruning them after the picking, and "removing or raising stone walls around them so that everything is done well in the eyes of the farmworkers". Harvesting takes place between November and February".

SALA LA PANADERÍA – BAKERY HALL ***Bread in Mijas***

Ethnological Information

In Mijas there are two distinct sectors where the bread-making process takes place: the urban districts (*Las Lagunas, La Cala and Mijas*) and the rural areas. In the first, the traditional method of bread-making continues with the help of new industrialised or semi-industrialised techniques; these are usually family businesses that provide bread for the village, there is only one bakery that still uses a wood-fired oven. In the country, there are still families that make their own bread every 8 or 10 days as one of the domestic chores, using very simple equipment and a small wood-fired oven.



Bread-making

Bread-making in a traditional bakery

The baker's work starts at dawn, first the dough is made in an earthenware bowl or a kneading trough, kneading it with the fists and with a piece of dough from the day before that serves as a natural leavening agent (yeast or sourdough); then large pieces of dough are cut and passed to the dough mixer until the dough is sufficiently refined. The dough then goes to the bench, where the pieces

are worked. They are placed on boards and covered with a cloth (*masera*) so that the dough can ferment for 30 minutes or an hour, depending on the weight of the piece and the room temperature. Before putting the bread in the oven, several cuts are made and the surface is pricked with a pricker (a piece of wood with pins) or a fork, so that it can bake better and not form holes (or not rise).

While the dough is being kneaded, the oven is heated with wood collected in the mountains or the countryside.

When the roof of the oven turns whitish, this indicates that it has reached the ideal temperature for baking the bread. At this point, using the oven rake, the embers are brought to the door of the oven, and then, with the help of the *barreor* (a piece of wet cloth or sackcloth on the end of a stick) the floor of the oven is cleaned.

After this, the pieces of dough are introduced using a wooden shovel and placed in rows, with a lamp being used to illuminate the oven.

After baking, the bread is taken out and placed on boards to cool, and then it is ready to be sold.

The traditional Mijas bread was loaves of one kilo and a half kilo. Now, and for many years, other types are made, such as rolls, *rosclas* (round buns) and *abarditas*. They continue with the tradition of making *hornazos* for Lent (a bun with a hard-boiled egg in the middle and some pattern made with the same dough. In addition to wheat bread, there was a time when it was only made with corn flour, other times with a blend of corn and wheat flour (known as *mestizo* bread because of the mix) and bread made of wheat mixed with rye.

"Mijas bread" is a product that has become well known in and outside of the village, it has always been reputed to be bread that is made very well, and even today it maintains the same quality that years ago made it worthy of such prestige and many visitors to the village ask for it.



Sala Carmen Escalona Hall



Also in the Country Room, "the threshing floor" is exhibited, a larger scaled work that is a point of reference and comment for all visitors to the Museum.

A Mijas potter with her own very personal style who gives her pieces of work a life of their own. In the room where her work is exhibited, we can view the ancient trades of Mijas through ceramic plaques such as "the saddler", "the beehives", "the olive", etc...



SALA LA VIVIENDA TRADICIONAL – TRADITIONAL HOUSE HALL

The traditional house in the countryside around Mijas

The rural house in Mijas follows all the requirements of popular architecture: it is a house adapted to the climate and its surrounding terrain (orientated to the south, small windows to combat the high temperatures of the area, and whitewashed walls as white protects from the direct action of the sun), built without the intervention of architects, self-constructed using natural materials obtained from the surrounding area (stone, mud and lime). For its construction, the owner would especially be guided by the use, the customs and local traditions, predominated by common sense, the economy of means and the absence of comfort. As in other, more ancient periods in history, there is a perfect relationship between man and the environment: the land provides the raw materials and man provides the action for transforming it, the labour.

With regard to its shape and size, it is generally small, of one storey although with a loft or a room beneath the eaves, used as a drying place, a granary, a pantry or even a bedroom. It has a double pitch roof with rounded clay tiles or flat tiles, beneath which canes and mud support the tiles, windows are of



wood, protected with grilles and perhaps the most characteristic exterior feature is the whiteness of the walls, produced by layer upon layer of whitewash originating in the deep-rooted desire for cleanliness in the families that lived in it, and also for the reason already indicated above in reference to protection against the sun's rays, and a further reason, for hygiene, as the lime acts as a microbicide against epidemics (a frequent saying was "lime kills off everything").

A further protection against the high temperatures and the sun was the traditional covered porch in front of the main entrance to the house, formed by a grape vine planted with the double objective of growing grapes and obtaining shade, created by vegetable fibres supported on wooden beams which were placed on top of masonry columns. Under this cover there was usually a masonry ledge that also served as a bench, and the floor of the entrance was usually paved. As an interior floor covering, they used *mazarí* (rustic clay tiles, reddish in colour, measuring 30 x 30 cm).

The internal distribution consisted of kitchen and bedrooms, with the kitchen occupying the largest area and used also as the living room at meal-times and for rest. In some houses the kitchen was a separate room, independent from the rest of the living area, but adjacent to it. Another item worth noting is that the bread oven was built as a separate construction for supplying the family's bread. In the old houses there was no running water or electricity, nor, of course, any bathrooms. To make up for these deficiencies, water was taken from the well, transported in pitchers and stored in large earthenware jars or in the pitchers themselves, placed in the traditional wooden stands that were embedded into the wall; illumination was by means of oil lamps; the family had to go outside to perform their bodily needs, either to the barn or in the open air and personal hygiene was taken care of using an earthenware pot or a basin.

As for the life of the inhabitants of the house, they were self-sufficient and depended on re-utilising and recycling everything: bread was made as described above; the vegetable garden provided green vegetables and pulses; when a pig was killed, they made use of every part of it: there were sausage-meats, meat and lard for a long time; milk came from the few goats or cows that were kept; soap was made with left-over oil; pieces of broken pottery were joined together and anything that broke was "recomposed" or "fixed".

The Choza (Cottage)

This is another kind of house used in Mijas, in many cases it was the forerunner of the traditional houses themselves, that started life as cottages, and would be extended, whenever the family occupying it had the means, until becoming what could be considered to be a house. It could be said that this is the lower rung of the various forms of living accommodation known in Mijas, lived in by the more humble families, apart from the few cases of families that were living in caves.

As an historical detail, towards the end of the 19th century, a report that was drawn up in 1899 recorded 119 cottages in the country areas around Mijas, inhabited by day labourers, out of a total of 400 units considered as living accommodation. Nowadays there are the remains of some of these in the rural area of *Entreríos* and people who remember life in them and the characteristics of their special form of construction.

The rural oven

Built adjoining the house itself, sharing one of its walls, or somewhere very close, it has been the inseparable companion of the majority of rural houses. From the photos it is seen that they come in different types and with different kinds of construction, depending on whether they are joined to the house or not, and also that none of them follows a set model, but that each was built to be adapted to the house to which it belonged and according to the personal taste and skill of the person building it.

The rural oven did not have a large capacity, it consisted of a vaulted structure of clay and stones; in the front part, at approximately one metre from the ground, was the door, that was covered with a piece of wood lined with a sheet of metal, or the metal sheet alone; this kind of door had no hinge in the older ovens, and was fastened in place with a stick reaching from the door itself to the ground. At the back of the oven was a hole that served as an air inlet to keep the fire going; once the oven was lit and heated, this hole was covered with some kind of greenery, grass or weeds, preventing oxygen from entering, and therefore maintaining a constant temperature for cooking.



As mentioned in the text referring to the Traditional Village Bakery , bread was baked by the family in these rural ovens every 8 or 10 days, as one more domestic chore, using very simple equipment, kneading the dough by hand in an earthenware pot with natural ingredients. Nowadays, when we refer to bread baked in a wood-fired oven in the traditional style, we say "this bread gets better from one day to the next", amongst other reasons because it improves as the days pass and even, once hard, after 5 or 6

days, it was put to good use in soup. As for the size of the loaves, the most customary was to make large loaves, of a kilo or more.

The village house

In planning terms, Mijas is considered as a white village whose streets follow the Arabic layout, and this, together with its location on the side of a mountain at an altitude of 428 metres above sea level, greatly influences how the houses are constructed, as they have to be adapted to the rugged terrain. With regard to the materials used, these do not differ from the rural house (stone, mud and lime). They used to be of one or two storeys, the upper floor being of less height, and the roof of clay tiles.

The *patio* is a heritage from the Muslim era, and was the central focal point of the house; here there would be a well that covered the water requirements of the family living in the house, and often a grapevine that served to give shade, and many flowerpots with flowering plants. Sometimes there was also a space within the grounds of the house that was used as a vegetable garden, or even space for fruit trees that made the family self-sufficient. The working animals had their space in the yard, that used to be at the rear of the house, and for this reason the entrance (the doorway or hallway) was paved as far as the *patio*, so that the animals would not ruin the floor, which in the older houses was made of clay tiles and in later times, of cement.

In two-storey houses, the kitchen was on the ground floor and the bedrooms on the upper. The kitchen was where all the decoration was centred; here the kitchen dresser was built, or cabinets, and these were filled with copper or brass utensils, serving dishes and pottery. Witness to this is the text of *Juan Valera*, quoted by *Azorín* in "*El paisaje de España visto por los españoles*" (Landscape of Spain through the eyes of the Spaniards):

"However poor the locals may be, the house is kept gleaming, the floors appear to be burnished as if rubbed with a cloth. If the housewife is of a certain standing, the glassware and crockery will be displayed in two or three kitchen dressers, and in symmetrical rows, the walls of the kitchens are adorned with large pots, pans and other utensils of brass or copper, where one's face can be seen as if in a mirror".



The same as for the rural houses, the most striking element of the exterior was the whitewashed walls. The reasons for so much whiteness on the walls are the same as those put forward in the text referring to the rural house (the housewife's love of cleanliness and protection against the sun). The whole house would be whitewashed once a year, at the beginning of summer when there was no more likelihood of rain, and periodically, any excuse was a good one for giving a "*bajerita*" or extra coat of whitewash (for Corpus Christi, the day of the Virgin de la Peña,...). This tradition is

still maintained and is so deep-rooted amongst the women of Mijas that there is criticism if someone forgets and does not keep the façade clean. Years ago, the tradition was to "*sacar el filo*" (do the edging) between the floor and the foot of the wall with a mixture of cement and water, and with a very steady hand of the housewife who would do it.

SALA EL TOPO DE MIJAS – THE MOLE OF MIJAS HALL

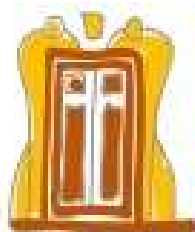
The Mole of Mijas

Manuel Cortés was the last Republican mayor of Mijas; after leaving the village to fight, and returning in 1939, he was forced to go into hiding in his own house for a period of 30 years. Years of silence and sacrifice for having fought for freedom and against fascism.



This room is intended as a tribute not only to *Manuel Cortés* but to all those men who did not have the opportunity to defend their ideas because their words were silenced by force for the sake of others that lacked any social content but had great psychological effects. The life of this man and of others that went through a similar ordeal is contained in the book by *Jesús Torbado* and *Manuel Leguineche* "The Moles".

In this room we have recreated the bedroom in which he spent most of his life hidden away, and for this we have made use of the book mentioned and of oral testimonials from his family. Access to the room is through a wardrobe that in his house hid the small room where he led his life; there is room for a bed, a small table and on this are books and bullfighting magazines of the period and plenty of "rolling tobacco".



MUSEO HISTÓRICO
ETNOLOGICO DE MIJAS