



**BLAST FROM THE PAST:**  
Rhubarb offers great value

wannabe young things who don't know how to use cutlery go for the sandwiches. This is an indication of how flexible the man in white is.

On the one hand he can cook superbly, extracting maximum flavours from the most ordinary ingredients, on the other, he is providing the new generation of diners with something they understand: breakfast in a sandwich, or Caesar salad in a sandwich, or just about anything you might otherwise have with a knife and fork, neatly lodged between two slices of white or wheaten or stuffed inside a floury tortilla. I'm sure if you asked for a soup-of-the-day sandwich he'd make it work.

The night menu (Thursday, Friday and Saturdays only) is more grown up and while it might be fun to order a pan-fried-seabass-with-citrus-salad-and-sautéed-potatoes sandwich, you won't find a sliced pan anywhere near the place after 6pm.

The starters list a decent range of soup, salads, smoked salmon and risotto but it's the mains that make the place special.

If you were a visitor to Belfast, this would

**THE BILL**

Sausages and mash	£5.50
Chicken pie	£5.95
Bottle water X 2	£2.30
Coffee X 2	£3.50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£17.25</b>

be the place you'd be delighted and thrilled to have discovered — because you can eat quality for next to nothing.

Mains starting at £8.50 include pork and honey sausages on mash with caramelised onion gravy, roast salmon with sautéed potatoes, spinach and wild mushrooms, Portavogie scallops, slow-cooked roast beef and so on. It's exactly what you'd be looking for as an intelligent tourist or as a local in search of robust and fresh sustenance.

Rhubarb personifies the food we like in this country — fresh-faced, ruddy-cheeked, stick-yer-fork-in-and-smile grub, which is as enjoyable as it is good for you. Just like it used to be, in the sad old, bad old pre-economic boom times, really.

**THE DRINKS CABINET**

BY SAM WYLIE-HARRIS

Meet the new wave of Spanish conquistadors

A 'new wave' of northern Spanish wines are making headlines in a country said to have the most land under vine in the world. As conditions become increasingly dry, it's perhaps not surprising to see that traditional vineyard owners in Spain are moving from southern regions.

Somontano, at the foothills of the Pyrenees, is one of Spain's most exciting up-and-coming wine growing areas, and the Olvena Bodegas Winery has won me over with their latest offerings.

Savour the elegant Gewurztraminer 2007 (£13.75 at stratfordwine.co.uk) with delicate aromas of lychees and rose petals. Or enjoy a triple bill that packs a fruity punch, Coupage Tempranillo/Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot 2006 (£6.49 at stratfordwine.co.uk).

For many of us, Spain only signals one thing — a nice bottle of Rioja. But in the last decade, Spanish wines have become increasingly diverse and popular, attracting high-end investors and domestic drinkers alike.

With climate change forcing wine makers to venture farther north — some experts predict the majority of Catalonia's more southerly wine-producing regions will become unviable within 40 or 70 years — it's worth experimenting with vintages from the Galicia region of north-west Spain, known for its highly aromatic and crisp white wines from the Albarinos vines of Rias Baixas.

For a special occasion, try the zesty peachiness of Lagar de Fornelos, Larag de Cervera,



**Olvena Gewurztraminer; Olvena Coupage Tempranillo/Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot; and Larag de Cervera Albarino**

Albarino (£14.25 at laymont-shaw.co.uk).

Or for guilty-pleasure drinking, enjoy the powerful and aromatic Azumbre Verdego Rueda (RRP£7.95, independents). It's full-flavoured with hints of white fruit and herbs.

Or why not experiment with the wines of Catalunya, in the north-east of Spain.

If you want, try an old favourite of mine, seek out the brilliant Torres winery, who produce Vina Sol Esmerelda 2008 Catalunya (RRP £6.99). Its unusual blend of 85% Moscatel and 15%

Gewurztraminer gives it an extra zip, and it's best served very chilled.



**BEST BUY**  
Branken Hill wines take their name from the Branken Hill estate in Marlborough where the best of New Zealand's premium quality grapes are grown. Their 2008 Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc is a classic, balancing stone-fruit, gooseberries and capsicum. Aromatic with a tantalising zest, buy now and enjoy up until 2011. [unitedwines.co.uk](http://unitedwines.co.uk)

**LIQUID NEWS**

Hot off the vine press, 2009 is set to be a vintage year for investors, thanks mostly to the Chinese. Flush with cash, Chinese buyers are acquiring an expensive taste for claret, with Chateaux Lafite and Latour proving to be their favourite takeaways. As alternatives, I suggest Chateau Reysson 2005 Cru Bourgeois Superieur (a steal at £9.99 from Tesco) or Chateau Belgrave 2004 Grand Cru Classe Haut Medoc (RRP £22, independents) as two that might be worth investing in.

Enjoy a taste of New Orleans

in your own backyard. Southern Comfort is launching a delicious new product. Mix up your outdoor bar this summer with Southern Comfort, Lemonade & Lime, perfectly mixed and ready to enjoy straight from the can. A single can, £1.59, and a four-pack, £5.99, both available from Sainsbury and Tesco.

Italy's No 1 wine brand Tavernello has launched in the UK. Enjoyed by Italian families for more than 25 years, it's the ideal everyday drinking wine with pasta. The 750ml Tetra-Pak brand has two variants — Trebbiano Pinot Bianco and Sangiovese — and is available in Tesco for £3.99.

