

Keys to success in an example of inter-competitor cooperation:

The Case of the “Big Seven” Basque Chefs



In collaboration with



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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Juan Mari Arzak, Pedro Subijana, Karlos Arguiñano, Hilario Arbelaitz, Martín Berasategui, Andoni Luis Aduriz and Eneko Atxa for their help in preparing this case study and to Pedro J. Moreno and José Luis Galiana for providing photographic material.

Published by: Innobasque - 2011
Basque Innovation Agency
Parque Tecnológico de Bizkaia
Laida Bidea, 203
48170 - Zamudio
www.casosinnobasque.com

ISBN: 978-84-96543-43-0



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The contents of this publication have been drawn up with the approval of Juan Mari Arzak, Pedro Subijana, Karlos Arguiñano, Hilario Arbelaitz, Martín Berasategui, Andoni Luis Aduriz and Eneko Atxa.

Publication and layout: PMP Management Factory
E-mail: pmp@pmp.es
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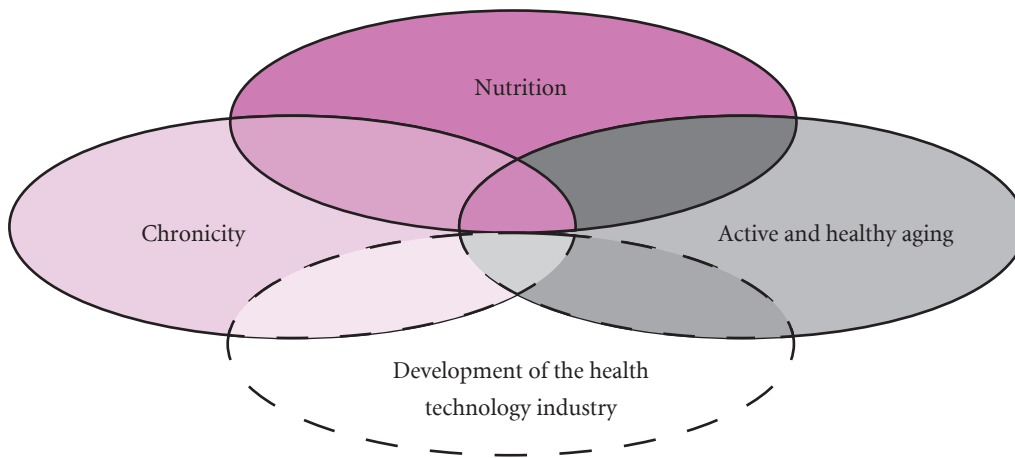
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Foreword

This case study of cooperation between our great chefs forms part of the dynamic of Innobasque’s Sociedad Efisaludable^[1].

The purpose of the society is to extend lifespans and life quality, generate economic value in its surroundings and contribute to the sustainability of the health system by addressing four working fields: healthy eating, active and healthy aging, chronicity and development of the health technology industry.

These four inter-related areas enable us to multiply the effect of our actions and the results we obtain by addressing different aspects of health viewed as a single system^[2]. In this regard they could be said to be like four dishes, combining to form an extraordinary meal.



The case of the top chefs relates the two areas that are apparently most distant, nutrition and health technology. It is the element that binds^[3] the four, making them into a single whole.

The results achieved by our chefs, in terms of their individual and collective success and their international projection of the image of the Basque Country comprise a goal to which other industries in the region should aspire. It is therefore our plan to apply the keys to this successful inter-competitor cooperation to development of the health technology industry. At the same time, we want to fulfil one of the aims that have been established for the food area: to make use of the country’s gastronomy-related assets.

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1. Sociedad Efisaludable: <http://www.innobasque.com/home.aspx?tabid=807>.

2. System: a complex whole; a set of connected things or parts; an organized body of material or immaterial things (Oxford English Dictionary).

3. Bind: fasten or hold together as a single mass (Oxford English Dictionary). In gastronomy: give greater consistency to a sauce or cream; add a binding element to a preparation to thicken it; cause (ingredients) to cohere using another ingredient.

Introduction

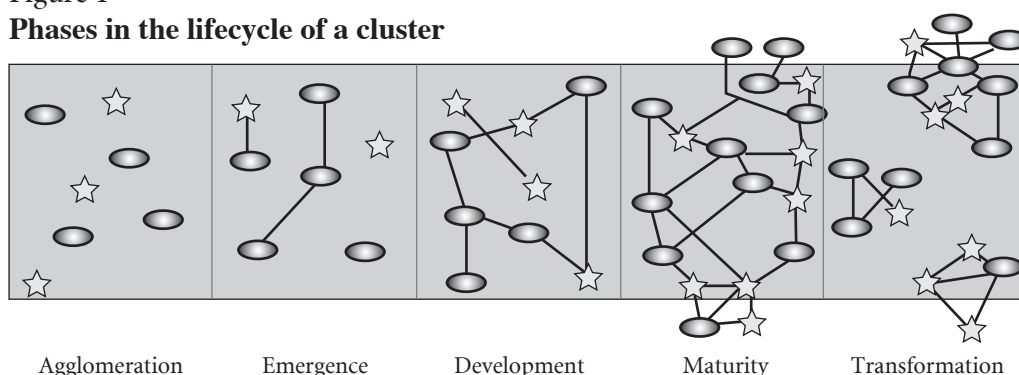
The Basque Country is now internationally famed for its cuisine, its great chefs and its famous restaurants. This reputation, which has had an enormously positive impact on the region’s image, is largely due to the efforts of an initial group of chefs—and others who came in their wake—in bringing innovation to their work and in disseminating Basque culture through their cuisine.

Analysing the relationship between these great Basque chefs and their setting, we can identify a ‘*cluster*’, that is to say, “a geographic concentration of inter-connected businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions in a particular field that compete but also co-operate” (Porter, 1998: 199). In the dynamic of relations between the agents in a *cluster* there arises what is called “*co-opetition*”, a term coined in 1993 by John «Ray» Noorda to refer to the fusion of competition and cooperation or cooperative competition. *Co-Opetition*, therefore, means maintaining a competitive relationship between companies from the same industry while at the same time, creating networks of collaboration revolving around these competing firms that extend to very diverse agents. The purpose is to capitalise on the advantages of competition and collaboration, on the premise that out of this collaboration it is possible to draw competitive advantages for all members of the network. We shall see this process at work in the network of great Basque chefs in the following pages.

Obviously, the chefs do not introduce themselves as members of a ‘*cluster*’, nor do they explicitly refer to the *co-opetition* operating between them; however in the academic sphere and in preparing this case study, we consider their work to be an outstanding example of the two concepts. In this study, we want to determine the origin, development and scope of what we call *the Basque Nouvelle Cuisine Cluster*^[4], and to try to draw conclusions that may be of use in other areas to which these relationship dynamics apply.

In this study, we shall examine the development phases all clusters undergo (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Phases in the lifecycle of a cluster



4. We consider the term *Basque Nouvelle Cuisine Cluster* suitably reflects the origin and initial steps taken by this group. Nonetheless, as time has passed, we have seen the phenomenon grow beyond what was initially called *Basque Nouvelle Cuisine* to encompass the development of *Basque Haute Cuisine*, thanks to continuous research and innovation on the part of the great Basque chefs.

Source: Anderson et al., 2004: 29.

The Basque Nouvelle Cuisine Cluster could currently be identified as standing at the late Development stage, or even at the beginning of the Maturity phase with major development foreseen for the future. This is the outcome of over thirty-five years of collaboration, which we shall now examine in greater detail, using information provided by the founders of the Basque Culinary Center (BCC): Juan Mari Arzak, Pedro Subijana, Karlos Arguiñano, Hilario Arbelaitz, Martín Berasategui, Andoni Luis Aduriz and Eneko Atxa. The BCC is one of the most recent, tangible and ambitious results of the **cluster; of all the group's the BCC may be the one that has** the most positive impact on the future of Basque gastronomy. The various chefs all offered to tell their story from their own individual perspective, mostly by way of a one-on-one interview and where possible, comparing and contrasting the information compiled by the authors. The authors have coordinated and fused the information provided in these different perspectives to create the integrated view presented here.

1. The origins: the history of the formation of the Basque Chefs group

The foundations of the collaboration between the Basque chefs can be found in a social and cultural phenomenon associated with the culinary tradition and other specific features of Basque society in general. However, it was originally limited to the province of Gipuzkoa, particularly the area around San Sebastian (Donostialdea), from whence most of the famed chefs who began it came. It is to a great extent as a result of this collaboration that many Basque chefs, and their restaurants, have now become international reference points, making the Basque Country a pole of attraction and winning the highest national and international plaudits in the world of cuisine⁵.

The first landmark in this collaboration movement between Basque chefs came in 1976, when a round table discussion was held in Madrid between chefs from different areas (the meeting was organised by the then fledgling *Club del Gourmet* magazine, at the time the only specialist trade magazine in the industry). Amongst those attending the meeting were Juan Mari Arzak and Pedro Subijana. They were infused with the ideas of Paul Bocuse and the *Nouvelle Cuisine* and felt that what the French chefs were doing could easily be reproduced and even improved upon in the Basque Country. The two got in touch other chefs from the area and formed the “Gang of Twelve” of what came to be known as *Basque Nouvelle Cuisine* — Juan Mari Arzak, Pedro Subijana, Ricardo Idiáquez, María Jesús Fombellida, Pedro Gómez, Manuel Iza and Jesús Mangas, Patxi Kintana, José Juan Castillo, Karlos Arguiñano, Ramón Roteta, Xabier Zapirain and Luis Irizar.

The group has no *raison d'être* other than the simple personal commitment of its members, who were all convinced that while gastronomy was a highly important facet of any nation's cultural heritage, this was especially true in the Basque Country and that for this reason it was worthwhile conserving, improving upon, developing and disseminating it.

5. In 2011, the province of Gipuzkoa has seventeen *Michelin stars*, making it the region with the most distinctions of this type per capita in the world.

Neither at the outset nor in subsequent years was there any formal agreement binding the group together. Their collaboration did not follow any previously defined or planned strategy. It basically consisted then, as it does today, of a moral and personal commitment to achieving recognition for Basque cuisine and protecting it as part of the cultural heritage of Euskadi (the Basque Country).

One might say that they were visionaries. They managed to associate the image of the Basque Country so closely with gastronomy that today it is one of the essential pillars on which Basque tourist branding is based, with such outstanding results (2010 was the best year ever for tourism in Euskadi). The tourist campaign presented at the International Tourism Fair (Fitur) held in Madrid on 20 January, 2010, under the slogan: “Euskadi, saboréala” [The Basque Country. Savour it] was based precisely on the play between “enjoying the gastronomy” on the one hand and “tasting, enjoying and experiencing the country” on the other. None of this would have made any sense if the chefs had not positioned Basque cuisine where it is today^[6].

The social and political context of the period also goes some way to explaining the drive, excitement and sense of commitment of these young chefs, with their boundless energy and willingness to work hard: following the end of the Francoist dictatorship, there was a collective enthusiasm to contribute to change, with each person doing their bit for the cause. Politically, socially and even economically, they were turbulent years but as the chefs themselves say, “that’s what made it exciting”. To quote Pedro Subijana: “Without realising we were doing it, we forgot to view each other as competitors. And I say “without realising” because from the outset we thought we had to do other things that we needed to pool something. We took it for granted that it was the absolutely logical and normal thing to do, that we had to share things”.

The Basque Country is now internationally recognised for its gastronomy, its great chefs and its famous restaurants

6. The campaign was presented before an audience of six hundred people from the world of culture, sport and politics in the Madrid Stock Exchange on the day of the San Sebastian *tamborrada* festival. As guests entered the building they were given a guard of honour comprising groups of traditional characters from the *fiesta*, with *tamboreros*, or drummers (wearing the uniform of a corps from a Napoleonic-Era army), people dressed as chefs and water carriers.



As Juan Mari Arzak explains, the group set out three pillars of action they considered essential for spreading the values of Basque cuisine:

- a) Recovering old dishes and recipes from Basque cuisine, updating them and analysing the reasons why they had gone out of fashion.
- b) Preparing more modern recipes with authenticity and above all with quality and care, and at the same time improving on them. This was to be achieved through constant innovation. At this early stage, they even drew the outlines for a number of features of what we might now term “healthy eating” and “eco-food”.
- c) Publicising Basque cuisine throughout the world (the ancestral, modern classic and “*nouveau*” versions).

At that early stage, this last area of action seemed quite utopian. However, as the years went by, it became the most important goal for the Basque chefs. In this regard, it is important to note that they consider that their success was due more to what they called *Nouvelle Cuisine* than to traditional dishes. As Juan Mari Arzak puts it: “We now stand at the vanguard of world cuisine, thanks to modern dishes, not the classic cuisine. However, it is important to bear in mind that modern and classic cuisine are one and the same. It has evolved but by putting down roots: there has been a cultural exchange with other peoples... Basque nouvelle cuisine is *cuisine d’auteur*, it is the cuisine of research, development and the *avant-garde* and at the same time, it is *Basque* cuisine, always with Basque genes and roots, made to our taste”. Pedro Subijana gives one of the reasons for this Basque nature of Basque Nouvelle Cuisine, “it is made from the things you can buy in our markets, from the seasonal products”. Hilario Arbelaitz agrees: “we made some mistakes too. For example we tried to imi-



tate what they were doing in France with sauces based on cream and butter; people here didn't like that and they still don't”.

Every two or four weeks, depending on the time of year and their own circumstances, the early members of the group would take it in turns to organise a dinner in their respective restaurants. Each chef would make one part of the menu, meet the costs of the raw materials used and invite four or five people from among their friends and contacts. As far as possible they would try to pick people who were in a position to spread the word to very different social levels inside and outside the Basque Country. At the end of each meal, there would be a discussion on gastronomy and its nexus with Basque culture. The meals were attended by journalists from the general media and trade journals alike, who began to disseminate the notions of Basque cuisine.

A number of the chefs we interviewed paid particular tribute to Karlos Arguiñano's contribution to projecting Basque cuisine on the national and international stage, especially his media outreach and the important guests he attracted — then as now. They all acknowledge his personality, his media charisma and his hard work and are particularly grateful for his contribution.

The chefs are also well aware of the immense contribution made by Luis Irizar to the cause of Basque cuisine and cooperation among the chefs. They see him as a great master, who was generous with his advice and a visionary in many of his recommendations. Hilario Arbelaitz says that Irizar “never wanted to be a protagonist but he was always respected and admired by the founders and of course by all of us. He never looked for any personal gain for himself, only for others”.

Over the first few years, the group's activities gradually spread: at irregular intervals they participated in events beyond the confines of their restaurants. An important boost came when Juan Mari Arzak was asked by a Madrid restaurant to organise a gastronomy week. He suggested that they might like to attend the event as a group. The suggestion was unanimously accepted and all the members went, closing down their restaurants for the week for this opportunity to publicise Basque gastronomy and its cultural values beyond the frontiers of Euskadi. The post-meal discussions were reflected in the press and were to have a major media impact. For these and other events, each chef prepared one dish, but they agreed never to say whose was whose, so that any approbation —or criticism— would be shared by them all equally. Although it involved a lot of work, they enjoyed very intense experiences as a group, even at a personal and emotional level, while at the same time helping to publicise the work of Basque restaurateurs as a whole, rather than any one specific chef.

As time went by, the group as such broke up and its fortnightly and monthly meetings came to an end, but the professional and personal relationship between the members remained active and they still meet up from time to time to support causes that have a large media and/or social impact, but there is always a cultural agenda. In one particularly major event, they fed over one thousand people as part of a campaign of support for the magazine *ARGIA*, which at the time was the only Basque-language periodical. Their entirely unpaid contribution was a further reflection of their commitment to promoting, publicising and developing Basque culture

The collaboration began between the chefs from Gipuzkoa and more specifically, from the San Sebastian area

The union is the result of a moral and personal commitment to the objective of achieving the recognition of Basque cuisine and culture

and its language as its maximum expression, although some of them were not actually Basque speakers.

As we have already seen, the group's actions were not planned and did not form part of a strategy intended to benefit their individual businesses financially through the recognition that participation at those events might bring them. The aim was entirely cultural, although over the years all have benefitted—from the founders of the group to today's young chefs—from that collective effort. As Pedro Subijana recalls, "It was not a strategy. Looking back I think we have seen the result of all that... When we were in Madrid, at one of those meetings with people, someone actually asked us straight out, who's in charge of your marketing? I swear to God it was the first time I had ever heard the word «marketing»!".

2. Current situation: from Basque “nouvelle cuisine” to Basque “haute cuisine”

The almost unplanned achievements of that initial group of chefs are now unanimous recognised. Andoni Luis Aduriz is convinced that the collaboration between the Basque chefs was fundamentally important in popularising them outside the Basque Country and raising the profile of younger generations. As he says, “If I weren't in this high-quality competitive environment, we wouldn't have had the capacity to attract a culinary audience from around the world that we have all benefitted from... I've taken advantage of that environment; if the others weren't there, I wouldn't have been able to do it on my own. I wouldn't be up there among the best restaurants in the world if they weren't there... I seized the opportunity, but if that substratum, that foundation weren't there, we wouldn't have grown, there would be nothing we could do. I'm sure there are plenty of really talented people all over the world, but they don't have that context... They have the talent and they have the capacity, but people don't come to them, and if you don't have the public, you don't have the resources. And if you don't have the resources, you can't invest; and if you can't invest, you can't improve the quality; if you can't improve the quality, you don't have the resources to do research with; if you've no resources to do research with, you can't present or show that you've got talent; if you don't have talent, you can't go to conferences; if you don't go to conferences, you don't get covered in the press and if you don't get covered in the press, people don't know about you. We basked in the light of others' fame, until we were able to grow and add our own little bit of light”.

Eneko Atxa, who is even younger, shares Aduriz's impressions of the legacy they have received. He discusses the contribution the new generations need to make to this whole exciting phenomenon: “We're so lucky to have been born where we were.... I think we're lucky because there's a part that we inherited fully-formed, not just in the world of gastronomy. In a period before I was born, there was a social movement when things were more difficult... Those generations really were revolutionaries and innovators, in the sense that they knew how to give value to something that was completely discredited—for example the most basic products and the local culture—and they knew how to turn something basic and so much part of what we were, beyond the folksy notions, into an art or an identifying feature. I'd call it an



identifying feature... It's our responsibility to keep on bringing value to everything that's been achieved so far and to continue adding to it, over and over again... I think a new generation has to look at the world through new eyes, in a different way. I think we need to adapt to the needs of today's society and I think we have to turn things around, constantly looking to adapt to new needs... It's not a question of 'hijacking global trends' or trends that exist elsewhere, but of using things that are being done in the world as tools for improving our own”.

In tandem with the chefs' work in disseminating Basque cuisine and culture, the support and impetus that has been given to the tourist industry by different tiers of government (municipal and provincial authorities, the Basque Government, etc.) especially over the last fifteen years, has also been decisive in promoting and projecting the phenomenon of Basque cuisine around the world. Particularly important have been some of the poles-of-traction projects, such as the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum. Andoni Luis Aduriz says that “in hard and fast terms, last year 94% of our a-la-carte customers came from outside the Basque Country.

Of that 94%, half came from outside Spain. This year, the figure will be even greater”. For his part, Juan Mari Arzak says that “the Guggenheim brought us a lot. The year it opened, I had 20% more customers”. For overseas customers, the distance between Bilbao (the location of the Guggenheim) and the restaurants is not seen as being particularly large.

Given the proven importance of creating a powerful focus of tourist and culinary appeal for the region and for their profession, in March 2009, seven Basque

Today, gastronomy is one of the essential axes of the Basque Country's tourist positioning strategy

chefs (Juan Mari Arzak, Pedro Subijana, Karlos Arguiñano, Hilario Arbelaitz, Martín Berasategui, Andoni Luis Aduriz and Eneko Atxa) teamed up with the University of Mondragón to create the **Basque Culinary Center Fundazioa**, to continue disseminating Basque cuisine among new generations. The foundation stated aim was “training and research, innovation and transfer of knowledge and technology in different areas of culinary sciences, generating processes of collaborative research between universities, technology centres, companies and public bodies to develop a network capable of generating and transferring knowledge. The foundation’s aims include generating high level knowledge and training qualified professionals, generating sustainable development in culinary culture, food education and food trends, and promoting research and knowledge transfer among those working in *haute cuisine* and the business and knowledge sectors, related directly and indirectly to culinary sciences (food technologies, nutrition, functional nutrition, publishing, the agrifood industry, equipment, etc.), in turn encouraging synergies between them” (*Official State Gazette*, Royal Decree 1640/2009, of 30 October 2009).

A few months later, in October 2009, they received major public backing from the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, which was to prove central for erecting the building and developing the project. The ministry’s decision to support the Basque Culinary Center (or BCC) was grounded on its public, social and economic interest as well as the economic and social impact it would have on culinary and food culture and on developing the food and restaurant business, which makes a major contribution to Spanish GDP, and creating a focus of attraction for high-quality tourism. In 2010 this support was ratified and extended by the Basque Government.

The path has not been an easy one; government recognition and support came only after the chefs had single-handedly forged and consolidated the image of Basque cuisine. Things have changed, however, and to judge from their remarks, all the chefs hold out great expectations for the new project: “the BCC is a country-building project” (Andoni Luis Aduriz); “the BCC is going to be tremendous” (Martín Berasategui); “the Basque Culinary Center is going to put Donosti, the Basque Country, Spain and gastronomy on the map”; “I think it has the same potential as the Guggenheim:” (Pedro Subijana); “it will be a really great ambassador for our culture in general” (Eneko Atxa); “I hope it helps cultivate an interest in gastronomy and especially in Basque gastronomy and in this type of businesses among young people... Otherwise, there will be no one to take over from us... Today’s young people, our children, don’t want to get involved because it looks like very hard work. With the creation of the BCC they might start to see it as an interesting, valuable, profession” (Hilario Arbelaitz); “We think that it’s going to contribute to raising the image of the chef — studying cooking will be like studying medicine, and to achieve that we want a really good school” (Juan Mari Arzak).

Their idea is that training at the BCC should include more than just cooking. They want to pass on the values of Basque culture that have done so much to create the cuisine and its milieu. The centre will train not just great chefs, but people who will be capable of moving into positions that do not even exist at present and for which there is a growing demand, such as chefs with training in R&D for food firms. It will offer an education in cooking, values and company management, since many



of the future chefs will be employers. As Aduriz puts it: “The range of possibilities is actually vast. And we know that we have to create very flexible people, with a very targeted knowledge that will allow them to understand that flexibility and cope with the necessary uncertainty. Above all we know that the key to the whole thing lies in values. In other words, values have worked, do work and will work. Technologies will change, networks will change. That’s why we lay a lot of stress on the question of values”.

Nearly all of the chefs identify those values of sharing that are so much a part of Basque culture as being essential to collaboration. Martín Berasategui, for example, remembers how things worked when he was small and helped his mother and his aunt out in the Bodegón Alejandro; whenever they ran out of anything, they’d send him round to other restaurants in the Old Quarter of San Sebastian to get some more. Equally, people would come from other restaurants to ask for things they needed. “I come from a younger generation than the men at the top, but I always saw that cooperation at work in the Old Quarter of San Sebastian in the 1960s and 1970s”. Eneko Atxa says “Basques are cooperative. This phenomenon is very typical of this country”.

Even the social phenomenon of the close-knit lifelong group of friends, the “*cua-drilla*”, which is such an essential part of Basque culture, may reflect that sense of collaboration which comes so naturally to people from here. The chefs hold regular meetings and meet at gastronomy conferences and forums, which means that there is constant ongoing contact between them; they talk frequently, either in person or on the phone. Sometimes if one of them is out of some product, for whatever reason, they call whoever’s nearest to hand and ask them for help. Arzak, for example, says he might ring Pedro Subijana and say “Hey Pedro, I’m out of elvers; any chance you could let me have some? And of course he’ll give me some if he has any”.

Each of them brings their own particular vision and concerns to the BCC and tries to reflect the discuss any needs he sees. Then between them all, they try to give

For all of them, Luis Irizar was a great master, generous with his advice and a visionary in many of his recommendations

shape to the project. “Belonging to the BCC group has increased or capacity for self-criticism. That’s very impacting in any industry, but particularly this one”, says Eneko Atxa, who also thinks the prospects for the group are good “(...) like any group of friends, where some are better than others, but they’re all part of the same group. So the future looks good”. When we asked the chefs if there were any “disagreements” in the group’s collaborative work, they were initially reluctant to answer. When we insisted, however, they acknowledged that like any group of friends or people of any sort (including even the happiest marriages in the world), it’s only natural and even healthy for there to be some differences and disputes. They all praised the very positive reconciliatory and always impartial role played in these inevitable conflicts by Pedro Subijana, who they all consider to be not only a great chef but a tremendous person. And in all cases, they all say unhesitatingly, the respect, friendship and mutual benefit between them are always capable of overcoming the inevitable tensions that arise among people with talent, character and circumstances like themselves.

This search quest for the mutual benefit of the group has borne important fruit. Although “top chef”-type *rankings* have tended to increase the rivalry between them and have even on occasions created tension, they all consider the high ratio of Michelin stars as a cause of collective pride. Furthermore, they recognise that this ratio has a very positive impact on the industry as a whole and on each of their individual businesses. As Martín Berasategui says, “There’s nowhere else in the world where two children of the same city have two Michelin stars. But here, in a city with less than 200,000 inhabitants (San Sebastian), we have three sons of the city with *three* Michelin stars. I think that’s great [...]. I think the more of us there are with three stars, the better for everyone”, but he also adds, in clear allusion to the problem of competitiveness over *rankings*, that “the cuisine gets a bit spoiled by the rankings; there used not to be as much competitiveness”.

Collaboration also means helping out when they have someone who wants to go and work in another’s kitchen. On occasions it is the great chefs themselves who turn up at their peers’ establishments, notebook in hand, but it is also very common for young chefs working at different restaurants to take advantage of the friendship between their bosses and swap places for a stint. This phenomenon is not unique to the Basque Country, but happens all over the world. Most chefs have “interns” or *stagiaires* from all over the world who come to their restaurants to spend some time learning the trade, but the number of applicants tends to far outstrip vacancies, and it is therefore easier to get in on the recommendation of another chef. At the end of their time, they become ambassadors of the image and culinary culture of the Basque Country in their countries of origin.

Seeing the achievements of older chefs has enabled some other, less-well-known, young chefs to understand the importance of being united and as a result they have set up the Sukatalde group^[7]. As Pedro Subijana puts it, “the young people have joined the business at a time when the way has been laid for them; but at the same time, they have the disadvantage that we are going through a very deep crisis and they’re suffering as a result. Some of them have even had to close”. However, they are also optimistic about the prospects: “Each difficulty is an opportunity. And there will be many difficulties, so there will be many opportunities too” (Eneko Atxa).

7. An association of young chefs from Gipuzkoa who have decided to join forces to gain a deeper understanding of their profession, to co-operate in meeting common goals and to develop, promote and participate in activities and events in which they convey their working philosophy, their culinary proposals and promote their companies and the province of Gipuzkoa as a whole (www.sukatalde.com).



Finally, there is a clear idea in the industry that strength lies in unity. Eneko Atxa expresses the idea clearly when he says: “The better things go for all of us, the better for the whole group. In the end, what you’re trying to do is create a circle, a tool for attracting more people, a larger public... I think we should all concede that the better things go for us all, the better we’re going to be able to transmit, through the universal language of gastronomy, not only the essence of our gastronomy but also the essence of our culture from that diversity we possess; each of us has a completely different project, but in the end they all come together or coexist under the umbrella of a culture, a way of doing things, a way of living, and our shared products; creating wealth in our surroundings, always trying to support what we have at home... The main challenge for the sector is to continue to act as a reference point. We’ve achieved a lot, but we have to keep it up”.

In this regard, the industry also includes *pintxo* (tapas) bars and other restaurants. Some great chefs even hand out information on them in their restaurants, encouraging their clients to visit them.

And the support does not only come from the chefs. There are other collaborators to whom we shall now turn our attention.

3. Collaboration between Basque chefs and other agents: the extended value generation network

The network of collaboration created around the group of Basque “top chefs” transcends the limits of the industry, extending to relationships with suppliers

They all hold out great hopes for the Basque Culinary Center

— producers of foodstuffs and other products, kitchen and dining room material, financial resources, decoration services, consultancy, legal and research firms.

Special mention should be given to the co-operation with the producers of foodstuffs, which takes the form of buying produce at a fair price that will adequately compensate them for their hard work and improvements in quality through constant collaboration to get the very best out of this link in the chain. The basis of the relationship lies in the search for mutual benefit, since the chefs design their recipes after listening to the producers to see what they can offer. “We don’t start the recipe with the cooking. Cooking the recipe starts when we pick up the phone and call our producer and arrange to meet them the next day. The next day, you go round, have a chat with them and they explain the advantages of the products they’re going to have over the whole season. After listening to them, we set to designing”. The relationship with these suppliers is so strong that, although they are not on the staff of the restaurant, “they’re part of the family, they are part of the team. That’s important, it’s fundamental” (Eneko Atxa).

In the same way, because the chefs consider it to be so important to disseminate Basque culture and its roots, they team up to defend local products, such as Idiazabal cheese, anchovies from Getaria, beans, honey, peppers, etc. They work with the local producers at fairs, promoting the products in the best way they can. Martín Berasategui has a cooking programme on television and he tells us that “if it is anchovy season, we might do anchovy dishes on the programme... The fishermen from Getaria have been out of work for years and people have got used to getting their anchovies elsewhere at much lower prices. The day we were with them, anchovies were selling at a little over a euro a kilo. That doesn’t even cover the cost of the petrol. I told them to make up a calendar of seasonal products for me: anchovy, mackerel and so on... so I could do recipes on the programme at those particular times, but I need their help, because the only thing I know about is cooking, and if I’m not sure of something, I’m afraid of saying anything in case I put my foot in it”.

Normally, each chef hires his own suppliers of local produce, which tend to be small outfits working at an almost artisan level to get the best possible quality. However, for certain items some chefs may share their sources, creating synergies, and in that way they all benefit from pooled information on the best supply points. As Hilario Arbelaitz says, “This is what happens with several of the Gipuzkoan chefs and the supplier of seasonal artichoke and asparagus, who brings them from Tudela, directly from the farm, twice a week. And it’s the same with the suppliers of mushrooms and cheese... because they’re specialists. In the case of fish, peas or broad beans, we might coincide on the market somewhere, but each of us has his own suppliers. For instance, we do course our oysters and clams from the same supplier. Juan Mari asked me who I bought them from, because he liked the ones I had here and I told him; there’s no problem with that. In the same way, I asked Martín about sweetbreads, which you can’t get here, and if he’s getting them in from France, he tells me or. And for example, I once mentioned that I had gas heaters out on the terrace and now he’s got them and he’s delighted with them”.

Sometimes, the relationship is so close that the suppliers given them customised items: Martín Berasategui, for example, asked a cutlery manufacturer to make him a fork that would stay cold for tasting a certain dish. Others might go to technology centres or universities to tap into knowledge from other specialities. Andoni Luis Aduriz, for example, got in touch with Azti Tecnalia. The result was the incorporation of some hugely innovating formulas in the cuisine for Aduriz, while Azti was able to present their results at scientific conferences. Within this same line of collaboration, they are working on developing new products for subsequent marketing. Other collaborating organisations include the University of the Basque Country, and the universities of Deusto, Mondragón and Granada, companies such as Ibermática, etc.

The collaboration between two such different fields has not always gone smoothly. As Andoni Luis Aduriz told us: “It takes a lot of work to get the collaboration off the ground, because we come from very different worlds and we don’t know how to build bridges between them. With a great deal of patience and generosity on their part and I suppose a lot of good will and determination on ours, we finally managed to build those bridges and gradually got into joint projects. We started out on a very creative basis; they proposed three projects on which we would work; and we proposed another three. So I could propose whatever bit of lunacy I wanted; for example, I want to make an edible bubble, and with the rheologists^[8], who were the ones who worked on gels, we went to work on the surface tension of the fluids. And it went even further... I saw a party at a disco with golden bubbles and I imagined them tasting of champagne... We never managed to do it, but along the way we learnt a lot and both of us have benefitted, because a scientist would never have gone up that road, but without them, we probably wouldn’t have approached it either”.

Their idea is that training at the BCC should go beyond mere cooking

8. Scientists studying the physical principles governing the movement of fluids.



There's nowhere else in the world where two children of the same city have two Michelin stars. But in San Sebastian we have three sons of the city with three Michelin stars each

With the universities they collaborate not only on research projects (especially with chemists from different specialities at the University of the Basque Country), but also by giving classes at Basque cuisine schools at home and abroad. They also lecture on innovation to people from different business areas, such as at the University of Deusto's Innovandis project.

Of course, most of them also have their own kitchen laboratories, where they experiment on their products and ask for their clients' collaboration even before the dishes hit the dining room. Juan Mari Arzak, for example, has a test bench of ideas which he tries out first at home and then among his regular customers. He places great store by their opinions and has abandoned quite a few dishes that did not meet his diners' approval.

When it comes to sharing experiences and knowledge, some of the chefs' "test benches" and laboratories are open to anyone who comes to their restaurants. Pedro Subijana's kitchen classroom (which he calls his R&D laboratory) is one example. It is proof of Subijana's generous spirit, because there is a potential risk of his ideas being leaked. However, anyone allowed into the kitchen is treated as one of the household and given complete freedom to learn, even from the innovation process.

In some cases there has also been notable support from financial institutions. In Martín Berasategui's case, the Kutxa savings bank granted him a very important loan when he was just 30; "without it, I wouldn't have been able to do this". In effect, setting up a restaurant on the scale of those of the great Basque chefs is a very costly exercise. In some cases, the restaurant was already owned by the family, or the chef has managed to find a sleeping partner to put up the capital, but otherwise it is essential to find financing (as in any other industry).

In this extended network of collaboration, the restaurant's internal public are also important. Most Basque chefs have an important team who take charge of the dining room, the kitchen when they're away, as well as the image, administrative and legal aspects. This allows them to spend more time on what they really like doing, cooking, and also to publicise Basque cuisine abroad, since they can delegate the work during their absence. Hilario Arbelaitz is the only one of the seven who is the only *chef de cuisine* in his restaurant, which makes it difficult for him to attend certain group events unless they are held on Wednesdays — when the restaurant closes. Despite this and despite the enormous personal effort involved in working on his one day off, he says "I have been to all the conferences once, just once. I tell them I won't be back because... I can't! I'm the only *chef de cuisine* at the Zuberoa and I can't travel round the place all the time; I only keep up the annual meeting at the congress in San Sebastian".

Conferences are an important venues for networking with other local and international chefs. They are also an opportunity to build up the chef's prestige, and in the case of the Basque Country —because of the phenomenon covered by this case study— to publicise the region too. One particularly important example is the *Lo Mejor de la Gastronomía* show held each year in San Sebastian with sponsorship from *El Diario Vasco*. Martín Berasategui says it has become the world's leading conference and has been copied around the globe (in New York, Milan, etc.).



They go to other conferences whenever they can and also help organise other events, such as the San Sebastian *Gastrónomica*, which involves a lot of hard work and money. “You make contacts, you try to attract and convince people to come, you look after them, you invite them to eat... As a result, we spend a lot of money, not directly, but indirectly. We do it for the San Sebastian *Gastrónomica*, for the Basque Culinary Centre and for *Diálogos de Cocina*. I do it too because I’ve learnt from them (the chefs in the original group). And they’re very generous. When needs be, they know how to host things, and they know how to do it very well”, says Andoni Luis Aduriz.

Another instrument of collaboration working to defend shared interests is Euro-Toques, an international sectorial association, which sometimes lobbies on behalf of the industry. Andoni Luis Aduriz remembers one such occasion: “If there was a change in the European presidency and it went to a Norwegian, he might suddenly declare a ‘European zero tolerance on food risk; we don’t want any unpasteurised products’, because they live in a world like that... But that would mean getting rid of all the French cheeses, all the Idiazabal would be gone, cider would disappear. So that’s when you say: Hold on a second, zero tolerance of risk? Careful what you say... Sure, minimise the risk as much as possible. But don’t get rid of our heritage, which is hundreds of years old and which is what we’re interested in. It’s our cultural heritage, and cheese is just as important as a cathedral”.

4. Lessons in ‘co-opetition’ from the experience of the Basque Chefs

It is difficult to identify which factors have been most important in making the original group of chefs and newer members so successful. Nonetheless, we shall try to highlight the main reasons that may serve as an example for replicating the experience.

From the outset, the group has shared some very clear principles and **their ideals, values, sense of commitment and defence of Basque culture and gastronomy have superseded any personal disagreements**. They have tried to give priority not only to their own interests but also those of other people from their milieu with less public projection, such as local fishermen and arable and livestock farmers.

Without being aware of doing so —or rather without following a previously defined and planned strategy— they have **applied** a series of **concepts** that have become buzzwords in today’s business schools, such as **strategic vision**, the importance of **R&D**, marketing, cluster-based initiatives, *win-win strategies*, *co-opetition*, etc., always looking for ways to disseminate Basque cuisine as one of the region’s cultural values.

They undergo ongoing training using all the resources at their disposal (catering schools, books, conferences, meetings, peer learning, etc.). In this training process, their knowledge and assimilation of different cultures have contributed to their professional and creative development. Although some of them have not had formal training, they are aware that training is now essential.

These are also people with **emotional intelligence and very positive social skills**: extrovert, natural and friendly in character, with a lot of common sense and “*savoir être*” and an ease of manner with anyone, regardless of their social or economic status (Bruce Springsteen, the King of Spain or “the most introvert farmer”). These social skills may well have facilitated the good relationship between them from the outset and have also helped them build up a broad and valuable network of relations with other chefs, journalists, institutions, suppliers, customers, etc.

They have known how to **surround themselves with experts in subjects they were not familiar with** in order to concentrate their efforts on what they knew how to do best. This reflects a very healthy degree of humility, a factor which is particularly necessary for improving, advancing and innovating.

They enjoy their work and always have. In most cases, they did not follow a clear vocation for cooking, but having become involved, they took a passionate interest. As a result, they have fought to ensure that new generations do not have the problems some of them did when they told their families they wanted to be chefs.

They put their whole **hearts** into what they do and are **brave and daring, investing time and money** in achieving goals and dreams which might initially have seemed **utopian**, but have proved feasible in the long run. One such goal was the creation of the BCC which will contribute to **training** new generations in cooking and other values.

They work long hours and get little time off each week, with all the personal effort and family sacrifices that involves yet even in the little spare time they have, they **still “see the world through chef’s eyes”**, reading up on cuisine, thinking up new dishes and new ways of doing things. That means that even when they stop at a traffic light, they’re thinking about the bright colours and some possible link with a chocolate dessert; and when they’re having a filling made for their teeth, they’re wondering whether the method of drying the paste could be used for some dish. In other words, they’re constantly alert to everything that goes on around them, and they know the best ways of combining **tradition and innovation at all times**.

All the chefs interviewed also showed that **humility** we have already mentioned. This is evident in their personal dealings, in their remarks on the other chefs and in their own professional career; they believe that one can always learn new worthwhile things and that there are many different people who can teach you. However, this humility, which we see as a clearly positive facet to their personalities, is not at odds with their **strength of character**, so necessary for advancing a business of this kind, which on occasions has led to friction amongst them — although it has always been resolved for the common good.

Another important factor in the case of all the chefs has been the **presence of the family**, mostly working within the business itself. In cases where there was no family tradition in the business, family **support** for their chosen career was also key, especially after they had already begun to take off.

The chefs clearly see that they have achieved **individual and collective success thanks to the collaboration between them**. As Martín Berasategui says, it seems quite normal to have so many restaurants with Michelin stars, but that wasn’t the case thirty years ago: “People here take it for granted, but it’s not normal. When I started working in cooking, there were no Michelin stars here. There were lots of great chefs who would have been delighted with a Michelin star. This is a historical moment”. For Berasategui and Aduriz, the strong competitive environment forced them to make an even greater effort, but it also increased their chances of a presence on the national and international stage. As Andoni Luis Aduriz says, “they do me good and I do them good. But at the same time we work together, even though that might seem contradictory. We have managed to make that competitiveness generate a pole which really has more advantages than disadvantages. All of us together manage to attract people”.

One thing that the younger chefs highlight in particular is the **generosity** of their predecessors in passing on the legacy, the experience and the recommendations they have built up. The result is that once the young chefs established themselves, they tried to do the same for other younger ones, thus making the wheel bigger and bigger and bringing in more and more people. And it also works the other way round: the younger chefs have encouraged the older ones to get involved in research projects they consider important. This generosity can also be seen in their **openness and transparency**, both with their apprentices and with society at large.

Finally, to provide a more human dimension of the individuals who have made this phenomenon possible, we asked the chefs to give a brief description of their companions. Most declined, fearing that anything positive they might say about one

The network of collaboration created around the group of great Basque chefs transcends the boundaries of the industry

They are all great chefs; they respect each other and even profess a mutual admiration and friendship. This means that there is a great social capital, an essential factor for training and development the entire network of collaboration

individual might appear to reflect badly on the important role played by them all. The authors have come to the conclusion that they are all great chefs and among them all they respect each other, professing admiration and friendship. As a result, there is a great **social capital or networking**, an essential factor for the formation and development of the entire network of collaboration.

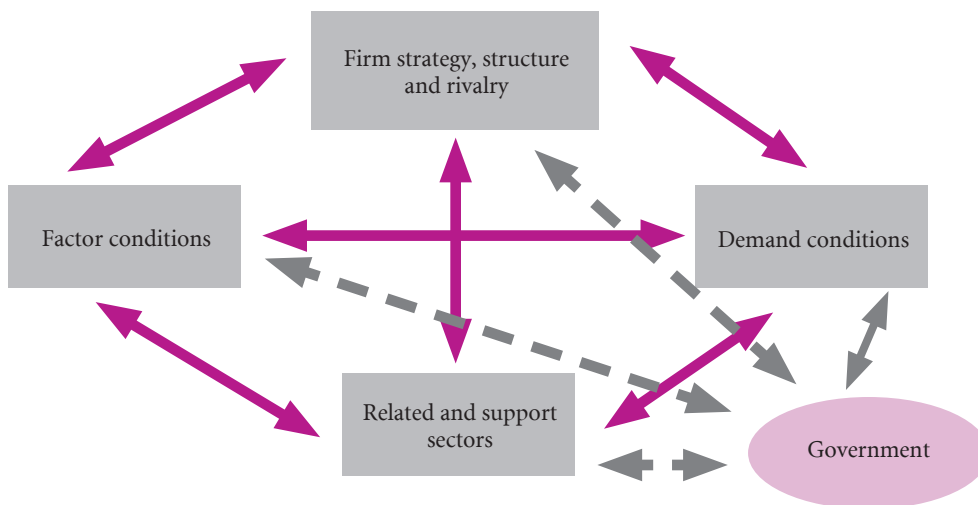
And even though they preferred not to profile their colleagues, we think it is important to highlight some of the essential characteristics of each one, based on the impressions we have drawn from the interviews, in order to illustrate their principal contributions to the *cluster*. Subijana is perhaps the member of the group who enjoys most respect from his peers, both as a person and a chef ; Arguiñano has done most to spread Basque cuisine; Arzak was the first to gain three Michelin stars and is the mirror in which they all see themselves reflected; Martín Berasategui is the one with the best restaurants in the world and the greatest business capacity and vision; Hilario Arbelaitz is apparently the shyest and least ambitious, but is nonetheless a great chef and very faithful to his own beliefs; Andoni Luis Aduriz has taken off in a big way and given his relative youth and ambition still has great potential to advance even further; and finally Eneko Atxa is the one for whom they all have great expectations, although he has already come a long way, thanks to his special talent and innovative drive and he is someone who several of the others describe as a “very decent bloke”.

Educational notes

1. Many *clusters* like this one have arisen spontaneously and been shaped gradually over time. The triggers for this formation may vary greatly. One explanation for this widely-studied phenomenon is that proposed by Michael Porter (1990) through what he calls the “diamond of competitive advantage” (Figure 2). Porter explains that when a favourable environment is created in a particular location, it generates an accumulative process with firms tending to set up where there are already other similar ones, thus developing the phenomenon. We believe this is the underlying explanation for the formation of the Basque Nouvelle Cuisine Cluster and its development.

Figure 2

The diamond of competitive advantage



Source: Porter, 1990.

2. Using Porter’s model (the diamond of competitive advantage), what are the reasons for the origin of the Basque Nouvelle Cuisine cluster? Do you think all the original reasons would be equally important today? What, in your opinion, are the factors that have determined the success of the Basque cuisine cluster?
3. Four phases have been identified in the dynamic of developing a *cluster* (Anderson et al., pp. 74-82): Building social capital and creating trust, developing strategic linkages, defining a strategy and a mission and performing the *cluster action*. What phase do you think the Basque cuisine cluster is at now?
4. The case study illustrates the development of the *cluster* over more than thirty-five years of “collaboration in competition” between the great Basque chefs, which would place the cluster currently in the late development or early maturity phase; how might it have been possible to advance faster towards consolidation of the *cluster*?

5. Look for information on the origins and development of the Silicon Valley *cluster* and establish any parallels you find between this paradigmatic model and the Basque cuisine *cluster*.
6. Identify the network of agents participating in the Basque cuisine *cluster*, including any new agents that might possibly come to form part of it.
7. Look for theoretical information on *co-opetition* and reflect on the circumstances and ingredients that have been of particular importance in the Basque cuisine industry (either because they tie in very closely with theories on the phenomenon of *co-opetition*, or because they are “original” and authentic to this industry).
8. Compare the number of Michelin stars in Paris and New York with those in the Basque Country and specifically, in Gipuzkoa. Calculate the number of stars per capita. Is there anything you can say about the results?
9. If you wanted to transfer this cluster’s success to another industry such as the health or tourism industries, what would be the minimum requirements for success? Ideally, who would the members of the extended collaboration network have to be?
10. For the hypothetical example of a health or tourism cluster (whichever you choose), identify and explain specific actions that might create the *cluster* and the those that might help consolidate it, taking into account the actions that serve to build social capital and create trust, develop strategic linkages, define a strategy and a mission and perform the *cluster action*.
11. In the current context, do you think that the great Basque chefs’ establishments use a relational marketing approach? Give reasons for your answer based on the two dimensions that define this approach.
12. Suggest an action that these restaurants could carry out to further develop a relational marketing approach.
13. The specific problems of marketing services related to characteristics of intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and expiry, impose certain guidelines when it comes to improving trading figures. To what extent are these guidelines followed by the restaurants of the chefs interviewed in this case study? Identify a possible area of improvement in this area.
14. Do you consider the work of these chefs to be positive for the image of the Basque Country and for tourism in the region? Do you think more could have done? By whom? How?
15. Considering that this is a physically small region with little capacity to accommodate mass tourism, the decision has been taken to market the Basque Country as a quality destination and thus prioritise attracting tourists with high purchasing power and high per capita spending. The idea is for tourism to generate important revenue for the area, even if the number of tourists coming is not particularly large. In view of this, do you consider the decision to use gastronomy as one of the axes of tourist positioning in the Basque Country to be the right one?

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Biographies



Juan Mari Arzak

(San Sebastian 1942)

Training: Madrid Catering School. Completed his training at the family restaurant and in various placements in restaurants throughout Europe.

Began solo career: always as part of the family tradition and the family business. He took over the family restaurant, initially run by his parents, after years of shared work with his mother. The last great refurbishment of the Restaurante Arzak, which he now runs with his daughter Elena, came in 2006.

Other activities: Arzak Instruction (advice on the restaurant business), Laboratorio Arzak (day-to-day research kitchen), Arzak Bocados (*catering service* with Arzak recipes).

Awards: numerous prizes and awards. Key landmarks in his career include:

- National Gastronomy Prize for best chef in 1974.
- First *Michelin star* in 1974.
- Second *Michelin star* in 1977.
- Third *Michelin star* in 1989.
- Grand Prix de l'Art de la Cuisine, from the Académie Internationale de la Gastronomie as best chef in Europe, 1992.
- International Eckart Witzigmann Prize, 2010.



Pedro Subijana

(San Sebastian 1948)

Training: following a year studying at the Madrid Catering School, he was the first (and for the first year the only) student at the Zarautz Catering School run by Luis Irizar.

Began solo career: in 1975, with the Restaurante Akelarre.

Other activities: Subijana has a great vocation for teaching and has given courses in gastronomy at various American and European institutions, as well as in companies and training schools in Spain. For several years he has also presented a television programme on Basque television (Euskal Telebista) entitled *La Cocina de Pedro Subijana* and has authored numerous books on Basque cuisine, its recipes and its history. At the Restaurant Akelarre he has installed a Cooking Classroom and he works on R&D with AZTI.

Awards:

- First *Michelin star* in 1978.
- National Gastronomy Prize for best chef in 1979.
- Club Gourmets prize for best chef in Spain in 1982.
- Second *Michelin star* in 1983.
- Best chef at Lo Mejor de la Gastronomía in 1999.
- Alimentos de España Prize, 2001.
- Third *Michelin star* in 2006.
- Appointed president of Euro-Toques International in 2003 and currently president of the association's Spanish branch.



Karlos Arguiñano

(Beasain, Gipuzkoa, 1948)

Training: Zarautz Catering School run by Luis Irizar.

Began solo career: in 1978 with the Hotel Restaurante Karlos Arguiñano in Zarautz.

Other activities:

Since 1990 he has been a TV chef and presenter on various different television channels. He began in ETB, and subsequently moved to TVE and Telecinco. He is currently working on Antena 3 and on the Internet with www.hogarutil.com.

His success has extended beyond national borders, with programmes on Canal 7 and Canal 13 in Argentina, and he has worked in countries such as the US, Venezuela, Cuba, Mexico, Sweden, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and France, giving cooking classes and courses, sitting on gastronomy juries, giving lectures and taking part in round-table discussions and talks.

His other business initiatives include the Cooking Academy, Aiala; Bainet, the TV producer; Bodega de Txakolina K5 Argiñano; Argiñano Racing (a motorcycle racing team); Asegarce (Pelota courts/players), etc.

Awards:

- Prize for tourist promotion of the Basque Country 1992. Tourism Department of the Basque Government.
- Gold TP as «TV Personality of the Year» from the magazine *Teleprograma* in 1992.
- Special jury prize from the National Academy of Gastronomy in 1992 for his dissemination of cuisine through the television programme *El menú de cada día*.
- Ondas Award in the category of national television programmes, 1993.
- Silver Medal of Merit for Tourism from the Spanish Ministry of Trade and Tourism for his work in defending and disseminating Spanish gastronomy in 1996.
- Silver Cap at the Seventeenth National Conference of *Cuisine d'Auteur*, Vitoria-Gasteiz, April 2011.



Hilario Arbelaitz

(Oiartzun, Gipuzkoa, 1952)

Training: At his mother's stove and self-educated, apart from a fortnight at El Restaurante de Ainhoa, where he came into contact with French cuisine and discovered that “another cuisine is possible”.

Began solo career: he has run the Zuberoa in Oiartzun since 1970. He has always worked with his mother and two brothers in the family restaurant, originally a farmhouse and bar. Over the years it has gradually been transformed, in successive stages, into the beautiful restaurant it is today (a building over six hundred years old).

Other activities: he is a partner in the Restaurante Miramón Arbelaitz, run on his own by his younger brother, and is a consultant to the Restaurante el Bodegón in Madrid.

Awards:

- First *Michelin star* in 1987.
- National Gastronomy Prize for best chef in 1991.
- Second *Michelin star*, which he has held for sixteen years, in 1992.
- Euskadi Prize, 1993.
- VII Cauldron of Don Calixto, 2007.
- Más Gastronomía prize 2008 for best restaurant.
- The Campsa Guide awards him three suns.



Martín Berasategui

(San Sebastian 1960)

Training: family (involved in the world of cooking from the age of 15 with his mother and his aunt in the Bodegón Alejandro, a family restaurant), he completed his training with stays in France.

Began solo career: with his wife Oneka, he took over the running of the Bodegón Alejandro in 1981 and opened the restaurant in Lasarte-Urte in 1993.

Currently: Lasarte and Lodi restaurants (Hotel Condes de Barcelona); Restaurante MB (Abama Spa & Resort, Tenerife); Restaurante Martín (Shanghai); Restaurante Santo by Martín Berasategui (Hotel Eme Cathedral, Seville) and in the Hotel Dómine Bilbao (Silken Group).

Other activities: founded the Martín Berasategui Group in 1996 and ran it until it was wound up in 2009. Now a consultant and runs a range of other businesses.

Awards:

- First *Michelin star* in 1986.
- Currently one of the chefs with most *Michelin stars* in the world. He has seven stars: three in Martín Berasategui, Lasarte-Urte; two in the Lasarte in Barcelona, one in the Restaurante MB at the Hotel Abama in Tenerife and another in the Santo, in the Hotel EME Cathedral, Seville.
- Gold Drum of San Sebastian in 2005.
- Gold Sun and Silver Sun for best Latin American advertising in 2010.



Andoni Luis Aduriz

(San Sebastian 1971)

Training: San Sebastian Catering School. After completing his studies, he joined the team that included the majority of the recognised great Basque chefs and Ferrán Adriá.

Began solo career: in 1998, with the Restaurante Mugaritz.

Other activities: passionate about research, creativity and knowledge, he has participated in numerous projects with agents from the Basque Network of Science and Technology, as well as other national and international collaborators, he has travelled as a speaker to numerous national and international conferences and has co-authored several books on the world of gastronomy and its proposals for innovation.

Awards:

- National Gastronomy Prize in 2002.
- Euskadi Gastronomy Prize for best restaurateur, 2003.
- Second *Michelin star* in 2005.
- Cándido Prize for culinary innovation in 2006.
- Medal of Honour for Merit, 2008, awarded by the Peruvian Congress for his contribution to the dissemination of Peruvian gastronomy and cuisine, at the III International Gastronomy Summit Meeting in Lima.
- In April 2011, Mugaritz was listed as the world's third best restaurant by *Restaurant Magazine*, and was ranked among the world's top ten for the sixth year running.



Eneko Atxa

(Amorebieta, Bizkaia, 1977)

Training: Leioa Catering School, complemented with a stay in Japan. Also worked at the Restaurante Martín Berasategui.

Began solo career: in 2005, with the Restaurante Azurmendi in Larrabetzu (Bizkaia).

Other activities: since 2006, has developed a research collaboration project with the University of the Basque Country, specifically, with the Department of Analytic Chemistry, run by Prof. Juan Manuel Madariaga. He has also conducted an R&D project with Neiker-Tecnalia since 2010, and an R&D project on Food and Health with Galdakao Hospital.

Awards:

- First *Michelin star* in 2007.
- Second *Michelin star* in 2010 (first chef from Biscay province to win two stars).
- Spanish Champion in the category of Cuisine d’Auteur for young chefs, in 2000.
- Named Best Chef of the Year by the French gourmet club, *Fourchettes* in 2004.
- Euskadi Prize for best chef of the year, 2007.
- Chef L’Avenir, awarded by the International Academy of Gastronomy in 2009.
- Most Beautiful Dish, awarded by Lo Mejor de la Gastronomía in 2010.



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