



## Not just the rain in Spain...

If you think of “Spain”, various images conjure up in one’s mind such as the elegant Flamenco dancers, the excitement of the bull run, mouthwatering Paella dishes, tempting Ibiza Parties or the fever of the Spanish football fans. However, not many of us are aware of an ancient art that originates from this historic part of the globe.

Bailén, to be exact. (And for those interested in history – it was also here on 19th July 1808 that Francisco Castaños and the Spanish defeated the great Napoleonic army for the first time during the battle of the Peninsular War.)

Bailén lies in northeastern Andalucía, 315 kilometers due south of Madrid. The road leading into the village from the



north is over rough terrain covered with deep reddish and purple soils.

These soils are an ideal type of clay that allows for easy modelling and high resistance. No surprise then that Bailén has a large industrial activity of ceramics, along with wine, hospitality and the development of an olive oil industry.

Here the locals grow olive trees which are not only used for food and oil, but are important in pottery manufacture as well. Olive tree branches are the traditional fuel used in the kilns for baking ceramic wares. As the olive trees need pruning periodically to bear larger and better fruit, the trimmings are used. Dead trees are also cut up for fuel.

According to the inhabitants of Bailén, the making of household pottery has been going on for countless generations and



it is believed that pottery has been made there since Roman times.

The town of Bailén owes the possibility of its special industry to the fact that it is built on top of its raw material. The owner of each factory also owns his own cliff or cantera de burro nearby. During the working season (April to September), the potters work in the factory all day operating a wheel, or supervising the work of his junior employees. Young apprentice boys does odd jobs around the shop such as cleaning, carrying, hauling fuel, stacking pots, and other unskilled labor, until he has familiarized himself with all the processes used in the manufacture of the wares. He also goes to the clay bank where he digs out the clay and sees to its transportation to the shop. Later, he is assigned to a specific maestro in the shop whom he prepares the clay, does the



When the weather is damp, the pots are dried in the rear of the fire box of the kiln while a small fire of olive branches burns at the opening.

The biggest part of the ceramics they manufacture is destined for the gardening sector – pots of different sizes, amphoras, jars, etc. Finishes ranging from terracotta to glaze, providing different colors and textures to each model. In addition, they also produce domestic turrets, lebrillos, plates and other pieces whose special enamel is certified for food use.

Most of the pottery goes to Madrid, Seville, and throughout the Andalusian area to such cities as Cordoba, Granada and others where peddlers spend from 12 to 15 months at a time on the road selling their merchandise. But just as you think.. oi!..what a lovely story – there is a happy ending after all..

Yes, as destiny would have it, less than 40 of these (bigger than life) exclusive antique Spanish pots have made their way to our African continent (intact nogal) and is available from Adri Neuper at IN EEDEN DESIGN CONCEPTS. [dw](#)

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wedging, hands his teacher materials, and takes away the finished products. He is also taught to apply the simple decoration that goes on some of the basins and to stack the green ware in the kiln.

When the apprentice boy is about 19 years old he begins to learn to use the pottery wheel.

He is also permitted to make handles and spouts for pots and gradually the smaller and simpler complete vessels. By the time he has completed his apprentice period, the young man has learned how to make all the various shapes without supervision and with adequate rapidity. He may now call himself a maestro.

The most common method of wedging is rolling and kneading. The clay is rocked back and forth, folded over on itself and kneaded carefully to smooth out all the small lumps and remove the air bubbles. Nothing is added to the clay for temper.

Ideally, the vessels should dry in the sun for 24 hours. If they dry too rapidly they may crack or break during firing.

