

Above: In between giving possionate performances of flamenco, Carmen likes to indulge in her other pass cooking! She was incredibly impressed by the plate of tapas presented to her personally by the Al Hambra chef, Alfa

VIVA ESPAÑA!

CARMEN CANTERO

FOR THE FLAMENCO DANCER WHO LOVES SPANISH FOOD AL HAMBRA WAS THE PERFECT SPOT FOR LUNCH



he setting on the terrace at Al Hambra couldn't have been more perfect for our encounter with flamenco dancer Carmen Cantero who was in Dubai last week to perform at the Madinat Theatre.

Spanish music played in the background and a plate of tasty looking tapas awaited us in the centre of the table. The sound of Carmen chatting to Chef Alfonso in their native longue almost made us feel like we'd been transported to a bidega in downtown Seville – although the Burj Al Arab in the background was a bit of a give away to our real location.

It turns out that the dancer and chef have a lot in common: they are both from Madrid and they share a passion for food and cooking. Before Carmen dived in to her plate of piella, we asked her a few questions about dancing, dining and Dubai.

How old were you when you started dancing flamenco?

I started dancing for fun when I was very young, but it was just a hobby. I clidn't turn professional until 10 years ago when I created the Carmen Cantoro Dance Company.

Where is the company based?

How often do you travel with the company?

It depends what our commitments are. At the moment, part of the company is in India and part of the company is here in Dubai.

How many dancers do you have in the company now?

The core company is made up of 20 dancers but we can add to that or reduce that number whenever we want because most professional dancers work for more than one company.

When you are away from Madrid what do you miss the most?

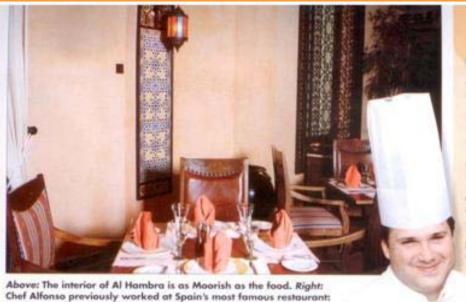
I love travelling so much that when I'm away don't really miss anything. It just highlights on thing – I love living in Madrid and would never want to live anywhere else.

When you travel is there one thing you never leave home without?

My toothbrush (laughs)

Which is your favourite city to visit in the world?

Paris is the capital of the world as far as Enconcerned. Singapore, Tokyo and New York an great, but Paris is the best, London is fastastic too, but it is too cold for me.



What do you enjoy most about travelling?

I love meeting new people and experiencing new cultures, but most of all I love going to traditional markets and seeing all the local produce: fish, meat, fruit and vegetables. I love cooking so the food markets really excite me.

So you are a bit of a chef in your spare time?

Yes. I love cooking for my friends, it makes me happy to know that they are going to enjoy the food.

Typically, what kind of food do you prepare?

spanish food has its traditions. Spain at the moment.

What's the toughest thing to get the hang of when you are learning

Co-ordinating your whole hody

I smally cook Spanish dishesbut it's always evolving and growing, that keeps it interesting. Cordong is really fashionable in

flamenco?



Cod Brandada: Mw cod with milk and com oil and bake

Ham Croquettas:

Roll ham in bechamel souce and comfoles: and deep by

Garlic Prawns:

Sauté prawns with alive oil and green chill.

Grilled Melon:

Grill shoes of melon for a few minutes then serve with crispy chorizo

Piquillo pepper:

Coat peppers in alive oil and then deep by

Seafood kebab:

Alternate pieces of salmon, prown and pepper, coat in olive oil and golf.

Strawberry Gazpacho:

Blend together tomatoes, strawberies red peppers, onions and cucumber with 1 cup canned tomoto juice and 1/2 aug aliver all. Add 3 lightly beaten eggs, pepper to taste and leish dill





to the rhythm, getting your arms and legs moving together is really difficult. But the hardest thing is learning to dance on your trees in elevated shoes.

Is this visit to Dubai part of a tour?

Ed love to do a tour of the whole of the Middle East, but for now we re just here in Dubai, Ed like to bring Antonio Marques here too. Unuruge his company and he's one of the best performers in the whole of Spain.

Do you have any unusual superstitions about performing?

No, nothing. There is a superstition that it's had lack to have yellow on stage on your opening night, but I don't believe in anything like that.

You sound very confident, but do you ever get any nerves before you go on stage?

Sometimes if rehearsals or something else hasn't been going smoothly, I get nervous, but normally, no

Is this your first time to Dubai?

I have been twice before. I really love it.

Do you have to eat any special diet to stay in shape?

I cut anything, but I try to avoid junk food.

Have you ever had any celebrities in the audience when you've performed?

Many times. I have danced for all the longs and queens in Europe as well as Imelda Marcos and Franco, obviously. I don't say it very often, but



Above: Carmen – who is friends with flamenco hunk Joaquín Cortés – says

Joaquin Cortés is very famous now, what do you think of him as a dancer?

fie's a friend of mine. Lots of my dancers have also danced with him. He's so famous now he doesn't need his ewo company, he just travels with a missican and when he needs someone is dance with, he just gives one of the girls a call. I think a's a shaime that he doesn't perform more traditional flamency. He dances a very modern style now, but he was classically trained. This type of traditional flamency is dying and a would be great if, with his international reputation, he could help keep it alive.

What style of flamenco do you donce?
A link of exercising.

Does this show have a specific theme?

Usually my shows have a theme or a story. For example, hast year for the centenary of Don Quante, we danced his story. But I didn't think that would work in Dubai, so we did anatches of many different shows and stories instead.

How long does it take to put together a show like this?

It depends, if the dancers already know the moves it takes a few months, but it they have to learn the choreography from scratch it takes much longer.

What are your ambitions for the future?

My only ambition is to see flamenco danced in every corner of the world.