

# INC Restaurant Review

By Lynne Friedman

## Al-Zahra

(Restaurant in the Islamic Cultural Center on the M-30)  
Salvador de Madariaga, 4  
Metro: B° Concepcion  
Reservations: 91-404-3150; 91-326-2610

I live in the area of the Mosque and have been hearing favorable reviews about this restaurant from my neighbors for a long time. Since I am an ethnic food lover in a family of more traditional eaters, I decided I would try the restaurant as soon as I was able to find an adventurous friend to go with on the weekend. Al-Zahra is open daily for A La Carte dining, but their buffet is served on weekends and holidays.

It's down on the second basement level, without windows, but the lighted Arabesque arches and domed ceiling cavities for the colored glass light fixtures make for a very cozy atmosphere. It quickly filled up. The buffet is open from 2 to 4:30 pm.; reservations are recommended.

The first course is an all-you-can-eat buffet of about 20 colorful and exotic vegetable dishes, nicely served up in large, flat platters. I don't know the names of but a few of these, such as Hummos (chickpea, garlic, olive oil and lemon spread with sesame paste seasoning) and Betinjan (similar to Hummos, but with eggplant instead of chickpeas). Something similar to Spanish *pisto* (stewed zucchini and tomatoes with spices) and a carrot and grain paste were among the other delicious choices. Arabic food is accompanied by slabs of Pita bread, already warmed in baskets on the table when you get back from the buffet, as well as your order of drinks. No alcoholic beverages are served within the Mosque, according to Islamic custom.

The waiter had already taken our order for the main course, also included in the Prix Fixe of €14. My friend opted for a lamb and vegetable couscous, a copious bowl with a chunk of lean mutton and boiled garden products, which she couldn't finish. And I tried something that sounded like a terrine of meat with dried fruits, but turned out to be a small, flat cake of chopped meat and nuts with raisins and spices in a thin pastry leaf, quite solid and tasty.

Dessert was not included, but the mint tea was. To accompany this, we just *had* to choose some Arabic delicacies from the dessert table, charged by the piece at €0,75. White chocolate-surrounded mounds of almonds, phyllo dough filled with nutmeats and steeped in honey, almond or coconut cookies were included in the selection.

I was pleasantly surprised at the high quality and low price of this Arabic buffet and I'm looking for adventurous friends to go back as soon as I walk it all off!



## Off the Shelf: New Books on Spain in English

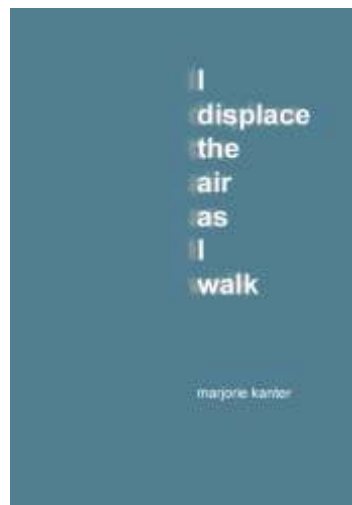
### I DISPLACE THE AIR AS I WALK

Marjorie Kanter's work is fresh, ironic and impregnated with a subtle humor and sensitivity. Her free style of writing captures events and personal experiences of real life in different cultural and geographical environments.

She plays with words, grammar, mixes languages, and uses other techniques to give the right tone to her short literary pieces. Reading this book is a unique experience.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1943, M. Kanter currently divides her time between

Madrid and Tarifa, Spain. Her writings are culled from her journals of the past eighteen years during which time she has lived and travelled in Madrid, southern Spain, the Dominican Republic, Morocco and the United States. Previously published work includes "El Enano" en Mucho Cuento and "The Skirt" in The Barcelona Review. To read a small selection from the book plus The Skirt published in The Barcelona Review go to: <http://www.elasunto.com/mkd.htm>



### ESPAÑA BRITANNIA

España Britannia reveals how much more there is to Anglo-Spanish history than the Armada and Gibraltar. Britain and Spain, two ancient kingdoms on the western seaboard of Europe, both once great imperial powers, share a long and colourful history. Over the centuries their royalty, seafarers, soldiers, politicians and merchants have crossed paths, often as allies, sometimes as enemies. España Britannia brings together for the first time in a single book many fascinating strands which have linked these two nations over the last eight hundred years.

Alistair Ward was born in Guildford, England, in 1965. He was educated at Christ's Hospital, Horsham and Aston University in Birmingham. In September 1992, he travelled to the Spanish Basque country to take up an English teaching post at an academy in Irún. One day the director of the academy mentioned that the Duke of Wellington had once passed through the area. The comment triggered an interest in the fascinating shared history of Britain and Spain. After a year in Irún he moved to another language academy in Murcia in the southeast of the country. In 1996, having returned to live in England, he started work on España Britannia, not realising that it would take seven years to complete. He lives in Windsor with his wife Susie and two daughters, Isabella and Amelia.

