



Interview

ALL PYRENES.

IRINA
Rybalchenko

@PeriodicAND



Black caviar is a product derived from sturgeon fish, which is undoubtedly one of the most refined delicacies on any festive table. Caviar is perfectly combined with any cocktails, such as vodka, champagne, wine, or cognac. Real gourmets prefer to taste caviar with a spoon – but not merely a tablespoon, but with small pearl spoon. There is also a long tradition of eating caviar from the hand. Its essence is to clench the hand into a fist, turn it so that the thumb is on top and put the caviar on the webbing between the index finger and thumb. Firstly, because many metals are not inert and when they encounter black caviar, a chemical reaction takes place that changes the flavour of the delicacy and adds a metallic taste. Secondly, this way of tasting caviar is heated to body temperature, which allows its flavour and aroma to be fully revealed. And finally, this method is a great dispenser, since you cannot put a lot of caviar on this part of the hand. Accordingly, eating this rather salty delicacy in its pure form and in small quantities will allow you to enjoy it fully.

Caviar can also accompany a wide variety of dishes – even ice cream, as revealed at a degustation organised in Andorra by Esturion de Sarrion.

Nikita Nebyylitsky, owner of the Esturion de Sarrion fish farm (Sarrion, Aragon, Spain), tells us how this product is produced and what makes it valuable.

–How and why did you come up with the idea to create a farm in Aragon?

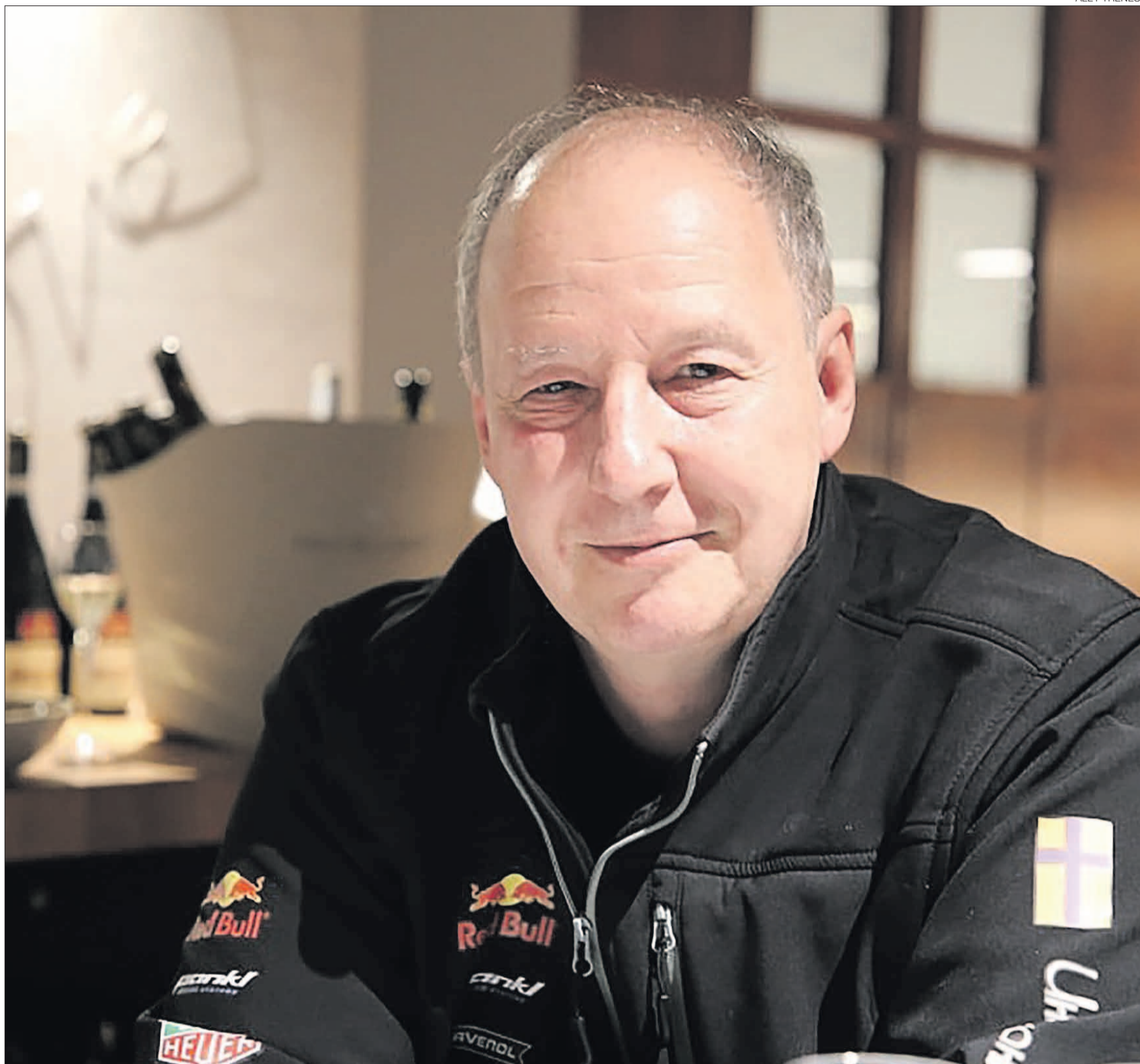
–Sarrion is a unique place, as there is a natural source of warm water. The water here is 20 degrees all year round, which is ideal for sturgeon farming.

It all started when we first took Siberian (Yenisei) sturgeon eggs, obtained the fry from them, and placed them in warm running water. Today our farm is 10 years old.

It is important that the water must be flowing and well-filtered. Otherwise, both fish and eggs will have a characteristic ammonia smell.

–How much was the initial investment?

–These first fry cost us 2.5 million euros.



Nikita Nebyylitsky

Owner of the Esturion de Sarrion fish farm (Aragon)

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-How long does it take from the maturation of a fry to its transformation into a full-fledged sturgeon producing caviar?

-There is a parameter called degree days. It should take 26,000 degree days. If the water temperature is 10 degrees, it is 2,600 days, if it is 20 degrees, it is 1,300 days... But this is all in theory. In practice, the fish begins to spawn at 5-7 years.

1 kg of caviar is about 15,000 fry.

-What is the cost of production of black caviar?

-I would answer this way: for a farm to exist, it must produce caviar worth 2.5 million euros a year.

-How much does black caviar cost?

-From 1,200 to 1,600 euros per kg, depending on the type of caviar. Caviar can be obtained in two ways: you can kill the fish, or you can «feed» them and let them go on to spawn.

-How much caviar do you produce?

-About 6 tonnes a year.

-It turns out that the profit is about \$960,000 euros, so is the business is unprofitable?

-Not really. We sell a variety of fish snacks in addition to caviar. We have an online shop with about 16,000 customers all over Europe.

-How long can black caviar be stored?

-Five-minute caviar is the most expensive and cannot be stored at all. The average shelf life of caviar in a jar is between 6 and 9 months, provided



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the jar is sealed and in the fridge.

-How can you distinguish good-quality caviar from low-quality caviar?

-Definitely not by the colour (it can be different). The quality of caviar is determined by the size of the eggs and, of course, by the taste. Bad caviar is heavily salted.

In general, to get a quality product, you need a certain set of actions. Why is poached caviar of low quality? Because poachers wash caviar on the spot by hand. And it is impossible to wash it well on the spot manually. They also use sodium tetraborate (borax). Food borax is much more expensive than industrial borax. What kind they use is a good question - if it's industrial, consumption of such caviar can be fatal. They also sometimes mix natural and artificial types of caviar to reduce the cost of the



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final product.

-Are there a lot of competitors in your business?

-The fact is that black caviar is produced much less than the market demands. So it is not a question of competition. Among Europeans, by the way, Italians and Poles also produce good caviar.

-Why is caviar so highly valued? What are its most useful qualities?

-The taste of caviar has a special, unusually silky texture, and its shell can be so delicate that it is ready to dissolve in the mouth at the slightest touch.

Caviar also contains a whole complex of amino acids, vitamins, potassium, magnesium, and iron.

And finally, it is a natural product, pure protein, which does not make you gain weight. ≡