

## THEN & NOW

with Plácido Domingo

**P**lácido Domingo, the internationally acclaimed opera singer and conductor, was born in Madrid, Spain, and spent most of his childhood in Mexico. Possibly the best-known tenor in the world, Domingo is also a partner in Richard Sandoval Restaurants, including Zengo in New York, which features upscale Latin-Asian cuisine, a Saké and Shochu Lounge and La Biblioteca Tequila Library, with a list of 400 agave-based spirits.

### FAVORITE BEVERAGE WHEN I WAS 6:

Horchata, a soft drink made from Chufa [a bunch of grass with nut-like tubers aka tiger nut], which is very popular in Spain. I always remember when I left Spain one month before my 8th birthday that was the last drink I had, and also it was the first drink when I came back to Spain in 1965.

### FAVORITE BEVERAGE NOW:

Ribera del Duero red wine: Vega Sicilia, Pesquera, Protos, Alion—they are just perfect for my taste.

### FIRST WINE EXPERIENCE:

What I remember first was not wine but sidra—cider. We used to spend Christmas with a big family of Spanish friends, so it was probably Christmas Eve 1955, when I was 14.

### EPIPHANY WINE EXPERIENCE:

I remember being at a wine tasting party given in San Francisco for the whole cast of "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Pagliacci," and by the end of the party Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, the great director, and I were the only two still standing.

### FAVORITE DISH WHEN I WAS 6:

Paella, of course! My mother's and my aunt's; my

mother's sister was like a second mother to my sister and to me. Everyday I am in Valencia I eat paella—sometimes I skip a day, paying attention to my weight. It is still a tradition to eat it at my son's house in Los Angeles, when I have a free day.

### FAVORITE OR MOST MEMORABLE DISH NOW:

When I eat at my Pampano or Zengo restaurant I usually order the robalo [snook or sea bass, typically – eds.], which comes with a tortilla de maiz and frijoles refritos and a delicious red pepper and macerated onion sauce.

### FAVORITE MUSICAL ARTIST WHEN I WAS 13:

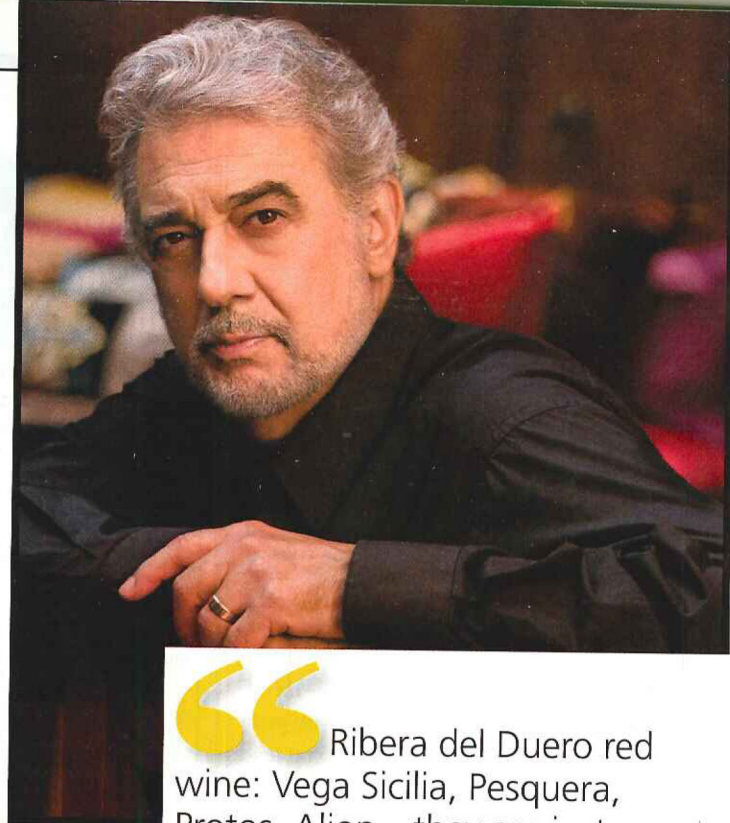
Jorge Negrete, the great Mexican popular singer and actor.

### FAVORITE MUSICAL ARTIST/GENRE NOW:

I am amazed by the gifted young Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel, who is now conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. I love many of the Latin singers for the light music: Luis Miguel, Alessandro Fernandez, Marc Anthony, Lucero Thalia and Christina Aguilera.

### FAVORITE TOY WHEN I WAS 6:

My bicycle and my soccer ball. I



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rode the bicycle and played soccer on the street of Ibiza 34, where I was born in Madrid.

### FAVORITE TOY/GADGET/TOOL NOW:

The ones I use the most are the cellphone and the airplane.

### POSTERS/DECORATIONS ON MY BEDROOM WALL WHEN I WAS 13:

Soccer players. Real Madrid from Spain—di Stefano, Gento, Santamaria, Suarez.

### FAVORITE PAINTING OR OTHER HOME DECORATION NOW:

"Los Musicos" by Rufino Tamayo and "La Niña del Rebozo" by Diego Rivera. I feel a simplicity and a very human feeling in La Niña del Rebozo, compared with all the big murals of Rivera. Tamayo's abstract musicians are kind of avant garde.

### WHAT I WANTED TO BE WHEN I GREW UP:

Either a soccer player or a bullfighter.

### WHAT I'D BE IF I WEREN'T AN OPERA SINGER:

I would want to have an important position either with FIFA (the international soccer commission) or with the international Olympics committee.

### IDEAL VACATION WHEN I WAS 12:

Acapulco.

### IDEAL VACATION NOW:

Acapulco.

### IF I HAD AN EMOTIONAL MELTDOWN WHEN I WAS 6, IT WAS MOST LIKELY OVER:

I cannot recall having a meltdown.

### IF I WAS ABLE TO RANT PUBLICLY ON A GIVEN SUBJECT TODAY, IT WOULD INVOLVE:

Injustice and abuse.

### WHAT WOULD MY 16-YEAR-OLD SELF THINK OF WHO I AM AND WHAT I'VE BECOME?

He would be very surprised. —MIKE DESIMONE AND JEFF JENSEN