

Discus Fish in Spain

Pascua's discus fish in Spain at PecesDisco.com.

By Tony Silva

Aquarium stores overseas tend to be very different from aquarium stores we visit or patronize here in the United States. In Japan, the aquariums will be meticulously planted; each leaf on every aquatic plant will invariably appear to be perfectly manicured. In other parts of Asia, the emphasis is on fishes that are red or gold — colors that in Chinese culture represent wealth and vitality. In Colombia, stores tend to be localized all in one neighborhood. It is possible with enough time to visit every store in a given city by going to the correct neighborhood. And in Europe many stores specialize. I recently visited a discus fish breeder whose business sells only discus fish and supplies needed by the discus aquarist. [Click image to enlarge](#)

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I was first introduced to Juan Carlos Pascua over the phone about two years ago. We have spoken intermittently over the phone since then. Recently on a business trip to Spain I decided to visit his aquarium store in Madrid (for directions go to www.pecesdisco.com).

The aquarium store has marvelously painted frescoes of discus; the images are large and cover the door and sides of the building. No one could mistake this store for anything but an aquarium store; if they have knowledge of tropical fishes, they would have no doubt realizing that the store deals with the “king” of aquarium fish.

Juan Carlos was born in 1976. Since birth, he has been infatuated with animals. His first aquarium left him in awe, however lack of space prevented him from acquiring an aquarium until 1997. His love for discus fish was immediate — their gracefulness when swimming, beauty and the alleged reputation for being difficult to breed were the attraction. The fishkeeping hobby grew and eventually he opened the aquarium store.

The aquarium store is divided into a retail section at the front and a fish hatchery in the back. The fish aquariums contain fish youngsters of all ages and breeding pairs of fish. I spent an afternoon looking and photographing the extremely high-quality discus. During my visit I asked questions. These and the answers follow:

Question: How do you see the discus hobby in the future?

Answer: Years ago, no one could have imagined a red covered albino or a discus with a spotted face. The future has much to offer. Imagine an albino Heckel or a discus that is rainbow-colored? Demand for quality fish is increasing; most aquarists are not prepared to settle for inferior fish whose color and shape is poor. In Spain most aquarists demand — and are prepared to pay — for the best. The quality of the fish will have to continue to improve if discus are to remain a coveted fish.

Q: What motivated you to open your aquarium store? [Click image to enlarge](#)

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A: I was tired of visiting aquarium stores that offered only the ordinary — not the high-quality fish I was seeking. The prices were also not in line with the quality. Not uncommonly, the fish cost a great deal of money but they were treated with hormones, in poor condition and would live only a month. In my search for superior discus, I have visited the Discus Championship in Duisburg, Germany, as well as breeders in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. In my store you can buy a discus from approximately \$15 to approximately \$750. I offer a broad selection not only in terms of price but also in terms of source: I have imported tank-raised and wild discus and those that I have bred on site. I strive for quality. I have exceptional fish that I have bred. They have been shipped throughout Europe and to Latin America. Indeed, in Latin America they are referred to as the “Pascua strain.”

Q: As a discus breeder, what do you feel has been your most significant finding?

A: Every fish is different. Strains often differ from one another in their requirements. Some are hardier than others.

Q: What makes you different from other aquarists?

A: I have patience and perseverance. My hatchery demands 365 days, 24 hours a day, of work. Not everyone is as committed. I have seen many others start a hatchery believing that they can cut corners. Eventually they fail. There are no shortcuts. Finally, I owe much of my success to friends and family (especially my wife Gloria) who have been inspirational and supportive.

Any aquarists visiting Madrid are urged to contact Juan Carlos (info@pecesdisco.com) and to visit his hatchery. It was clear from my visit why his fish have won in international competitions. Juan Carlos is truly enamored with his fish and his fish show the devotion.