

WILL WANDER FOR FOOD

MY FOOD AND TRAVEL JOURNEY

— EATING OUT, TRAVEL —

The Disfrutar Especial Tasting Menu – Barcelona, Spain

JUNE 19, 2018



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Disfrutar means “enjoy” in Spanish, and true to its name, the lunch experience here was one of the more enjoyable meals I’ve had. With a delightful combo of whimsical table-side presentations, our extra cheerful server, and a zen dining space, there was much to love about Disfrutar. I found myself smiling and feeling especially carefree during a leisurely 4.5 hour meal.

Created by three former elBulli chefs, Disfrutar offers Mediterranean-inspired tasting menus with modern techniques. We opted for the longest menu – the 30 course “Disfrutar” menu, which featured a combo of their classic and current dishes, plus some menu exclusives. When asked about dietary preferences, my husband mentioned he wasn’t a big fan of foie and sea cucumber, and they seamlessly substituted these ingredients for his courses, while keeping the same quality.

The wine list was surprisingly affordable, with glasses starting around €6. In lieu of the wine pairing (around €90 I believe), we chose to share a bottle of white wine and order red and dessert wines by the glass. The red wine by the glass they poured for us was a 1947 magnum of Garnacha for just €6.50 a glass! It was pleasantly drinkable too, even given the age.

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The menu kicked off with a few flavor-packed bites, two of which were alcoholic. The frozen foam ladyfinger was especially delicate and burst immediately with rum and mint liquid filling. The beet meringues were initially hidden in a bowl and rose out of the “soil” after sifting. What appeared to be a pale raspberry was actually frozen lychee, and the presentation was lovely with gin dew drops on rose petals.



Frozen passionfruit foam ladyfinger with rum,
mint

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Beetroot yogurt meringue. Frozen lychee shaped like raspberry, gin dew drops, served on rose petals

Next was one my favorites – a Chinese-style soft bread filled with a generous amount of beluga caviar and crème fraîche.



A french press filled with bubbling liquid was put on the table in anticipation of an upcoming course. Then out came a box that revealed a mango slice seasoned with tonka bean and whiskey, next to triangular pod filled with a salty, walnut paste.



For the last 10 minutes, the apple cider had been carbonating via dry ice in the french press. Our server torched some wood table-side and caught the smoke in glasses. The cider was then poured into the glasses. While the presentation was memorable, the cider itself was barely carbonated and very mild in taste.



Tablesides presentation of smoked instant apple cider

The Idiazábal mille-feuille was a stronger course, with a delightful contrast of

parmesan puff pastry and Idiazábal foam filing.



Idiazábal mille-feuille, parmesan puff pastry,
idiazábal foam filling

Next was an artsy interpretation of the classic San Sebastian pintxo – the Gilda. This was one of the larger courses, but I couldn't resist filling up on the satisfying combo of anchovy, guindilla pepper, and olive with a surprising addition of passionfruit. I'm usually not big on anchovies and mackerel, but this won me over.



Disfrutar "Gilda"

The next two courses were in the good, but

not as memorable camp. The airy gazpacho meringue sandwich was paired with the smell of bright sherry vinegar in an accompanying wine glass. This was followed by tender baby almonds in a frothy broth with more nutty flavors.



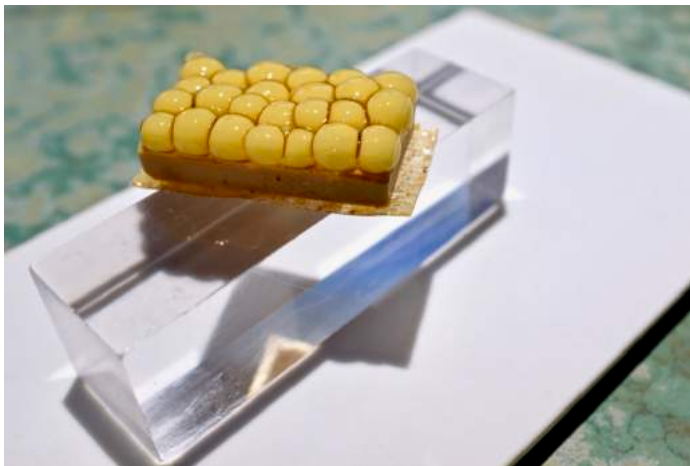
Super tender almonds in vinaigrette

After these came two of my favorites – both in flavor and presentation. The crispy egg yolk course sat on the cutest egg stand with a chicken figurine. Biting the fried dough revealed a perfectly runny yolk center. Inside the egg shell was a mushroom gelatin that absolutely worked

with the yolk poured in.



The multi-spherical tatin of foie gras and corn had these kernel shaped circles that were actually liquid-filled. The little bursts of sweet corn liquid went well with the foie gras base. My husband's course had avocado instead of foie, and I liked that one even better!



Multi spherical tatin of foie gras and corn shaped like corn

The deconstructed ceviche was probably the weakest course for me. Cold carrot and aji sorbet served in monkfish liver cream didn't harmonize for me, even with my love

of the zesty leche de tigre.



Ceviche deconstruction

Next up was razor clams presented tableside in salt. The razor clams were perfectly cooked and accented nicely with assorted seaweeds.



Next was a signature dish of Macaroni carbonara. This wasn't typical macaroni though, the see-through pasta was made from iberico ham gelatin and came out in a skillet with cubes of iberico and cheese. The carbonara sauce was truffle foam squeezed out of an iSi canister. As the server mixed the foam, the macaroni took on color and became opaque! Topped off with generous grated parmesan, this was a

winner.



Macaroni carbonara – transparent iberico gelatin
macaroni, ham and cheese cubes, truffle foam
carbonara, grated parmesan



Macaroni carbonara – transparent iberico gelatin
macaroni, ham and cheese cubes, truffle foam
carbonara, grated parmesan

Next was a play on the polvorón, an airy Spanish almond dessert that crumbles and sticks to your teeth. This savory version tasted like fresh tomato though, and contrasted nicely with olive oil “caviar” and a glass of “liquid salad”.



Tomato “polvorón”, arbequina oil caviar. Served with glass of liquid salad.

We got quite different dishes for the next course, as my husband didn’t want sea cucumber. I was served the sea cucumber noodles, made in the popular “a la gallena” style typically applied to octopus with olive oil and paprika. He got a perfectly cooked hake with green peas. Both strong dishes that highlighted the fresh seafood.



Sea cucumber “a la gallega”



Hake in brine, with peas and green sauce.
Substitute for the sea cucumber course

Suquet is a Catalan seafood stew that inspired this two part course of langoustine and potato. The bright parsley foam and garlic saffron aioli contrasted nicely with the hearty gnocchi and suquet sauce. The “cappuccino” had a layer of potato foam on top of suquet bisque.



Langoustine in “suquet”, gnocchi, parsley foam.
Cappuccino “suquet”, potato foam.

Then came a few courses with hare as an ingredient. The cold hare juice didn’t sound appealing but worked in a unique way with the orange zest and tarragon. The dark bon bon disc had a creamy foie and hare

filling. My husband received a liquid popcorn bon bon instead of the foie.



Laksa is a noodle soup usually made with a coconut and curry base, commonly found in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore. Disfrutar's version hit the flavors nicely, while putting a modern twist with the bold hare broth and unique shell presentation.



Laksa, hare, coconut milk, kefir lime

Squab is not my favorite meat by any means, but the Pibil-style squab here was probably the best pigeon I had in Europe (and I had a lot of pigeon on tasting menus). The corn spheres and baby corn added some sweetness to the achiote sauce, and the pickled onions gave a nice pop.



Pibil squab

Now my favorite part of every meal – the dessert! They started strong with a pandan, coconut, and mango dish, accompanied by a large pandan leaf for show. My favorite was the black sesame cornet – a cute little cone filled with black sesame ice cream.

The “Tarta al whiskey” course was also notable as they sprayed Lagavulin whiskey directly onto your palms to inhale prior to tasting the deconstructed hazelnut and vanilla flavors.



“Tarta al whiskey” – Lagavulin whiskey sprayed into hands, custard, hazelnut, vanilla creme with yuzu



Coffee swiss roll, meringue, coffee, hazelnut

The final bite was cocoa mint cotton candy presented on an actual cotton plant. Our server joked that people have accidentally eaten the cotton part!



Post meal, we had the option to enjoy coffee or tea in the covered outdoor courtyard. True to local culture, we were leisurely left outside with no rush to pay.

This was probably our only “issue” with the service. No one came out to check in after our coffees were delivered, and while it was nice to not be rushed, we finally had to go back inside to flag a server down for the check. Not a big deal though.

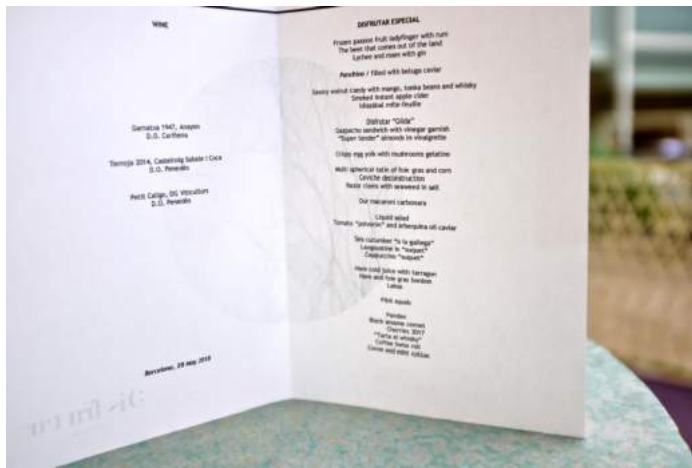


Post meal outdoor seating



Espresso

Considering what we paid (€225/pp) for a full tasting menu and a good amount of wine, Disfrutar was one of the better value two Michelin star meals I’ve experienced. With the creative food and welcoming service, I predict three stars not too far in their future!



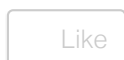
Disfrutar Especial Menu (€185) and Wine selections



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