



DISFRUTAR – BARCELONA

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When Jose and I make our bi-yearly trip to Spain, it's a no brainer that we head straight for the home city, Madrid. This past time however, when we heard about the opening of Disfrutar, the new restaurant from Oriol Castro, Eduard Xatruch and Mateu Casanas, we decided we had to make a detour and meet in Barcelona. Best decision ever!

I am sure that I don't need to give too much of a backstory on the glorious

trifecta of chef talent behind Disfrutar. They are all pretty damn famous, thanks to their pure and utter devotion to El Bulli (together they have accumulated more than 45 years of experience at El Bulli, including long hours at El Bulli Taller and the innovation lab).

There are many chefs that can put El Bulli on their resume; they learned various techniques and can make an spherification, air baguettes, nitros, trampatojos... but only a few can say they stayed at El Bulli from the beginning to its last day on July 30, 2011. These three talented chefs were a part of the creative core team that innovated endlessly and ultimately through these heavily documented experiments, changed the way we understand food today. If you haven't seen the El Bulli movie "El Bulli: Cooking in Progress", I highly suggest checking it out. It will give you an intimate look into these chefs and the rigorous creative processes that they were a part of. On a side note, while I appreciated the overall content of the film, I felt bit too much like a fly on the wall witnessing the story slowly chugging along. In my opinion it could have used a bit more narration and structure. Regardless it is worth checking out on netflix... here is the [trailer](#).



FRAPPE OF PASSION FRUIT WITH RUM AND COFFEE

This is not the first restaurant for these famous chefs, back in 2012 they opened **Compartir** (“to share”) a casual and affordable tapas restaurant in

Cadaques. That being said Compartir is a vastly different concept from that of Disfrutar where you can expect dishes that are a bit more inspired by the El Bulli days. So if you are like us and never got a chance to make it to the motherland, El Bulli, here is your chance to get a taste of what you might have missed.

I was super pumped to dive into this creative cuisine but sadly due to terrible weather conditions my flight was delayed 2 hours making me 2 hours late for lunch. *(sometimes Jose itineraries are a bit tight leaving little time for error... we are working on this)*. As I watched for my bag on the conveyor belt at the Barcelona baggage claim, I was texting with a happy Josecito who was raving about the meal that I was missing. Boy was I Pissed! I was convinced that I had missed this glorious opportunity. I grabbed my bag hailed a cab, spoke enough spanish to get me to the restaurant, which by that time was pretty much closed and preparing for dinner. I sat my mopey self down at the table with Jose and our friend Alexandra and the next thing I know out came an abbreviated version of the menu that they had just had. I was shocked. The thoughtful and caring staff and chefs quickly transformed my frown into a smile in seconds. I will never forget this level of hospitality. For the next 45 minutes or so of my meal, Jose and Alexandra reminisced as each dish arrived and patiently waited with a smile for my reaction. This is something that you can't help doing because each dish is a mini adventure and carefully evokes a reaction in the diner one that you want to relive through someone else.

Apologies, I tend to get excited and ramble...enough chatter let's get onto

the food!



PESTO FILLED TRANSPARENT RAVIOLI WITH PARMESAN BROTH

For those of you lucky enough to go to El Bulli, this will most likely look familiar. The perfect edible package contained pine nuts, Parmesan and basil leaves, which when dipped into the Parmesan dipping sauce, created the perfect pesto flavor. It was hard not to love how this bite transformed from one state to its melted one once dipped and placed in your mouth.



LEFT: TOMATO 'POLVORÓN' WITH OIL CAVIAR RIGHT: SMOKED IDIAZÁBAL CHEESE BISCUIT WITH APPLE

The meal continued with an Artiach, a spin off on a typical spanish galleta which reminded Jose of his youth, but this time made with Idiazabala

cheese, apple and an impossible egg yolk texture: crispy.



DISFRUTA DE LA ACEITUNA

Like the ravioli this olive was a signature dish at el Bulli, and is a perfect demonstration of the spherification technique. The outer layer made from cocoa butter bursts allowing the flavorful liquid of olive and the second of citrus to flood your mouth.



LEFT: SEAFOOD AND AVOCADO MERENGUE SANDWICH RIGHT: CRISPY EGG YOLK WITH MUSHROOM GELATIN



PARMESAN PATTY WITH TOMATOES AND BASIL



MARINATED MACKEREL WITH CAULIFLOWER TABOULÉ AND MUSHROOMS



MACARONI A LA CARBONARA

Ok, words cannot describe how incredible this dish was!! The thoughtfulness and ingenuity that went into its creation is just mind

blowing. As one can imagine this is not your nonna's famous macaroni, but at the same time you could be convinced it was once the flavors hit your lips. The clear macaroni is constructed out of gelatine that is molded by a tool that the chefs designed specifically for dish. (see tool below) What was inspiring to me was the effortless level of passion and dedication that Oriol, Eduard and Mateu bring to Disfrutar. By the time we were walking out the kitchen was empty except for Oriol and Eduard who were busy making more of the "macaroni".





RAZOR CLAMS MEUNIERE WITH FENNEL



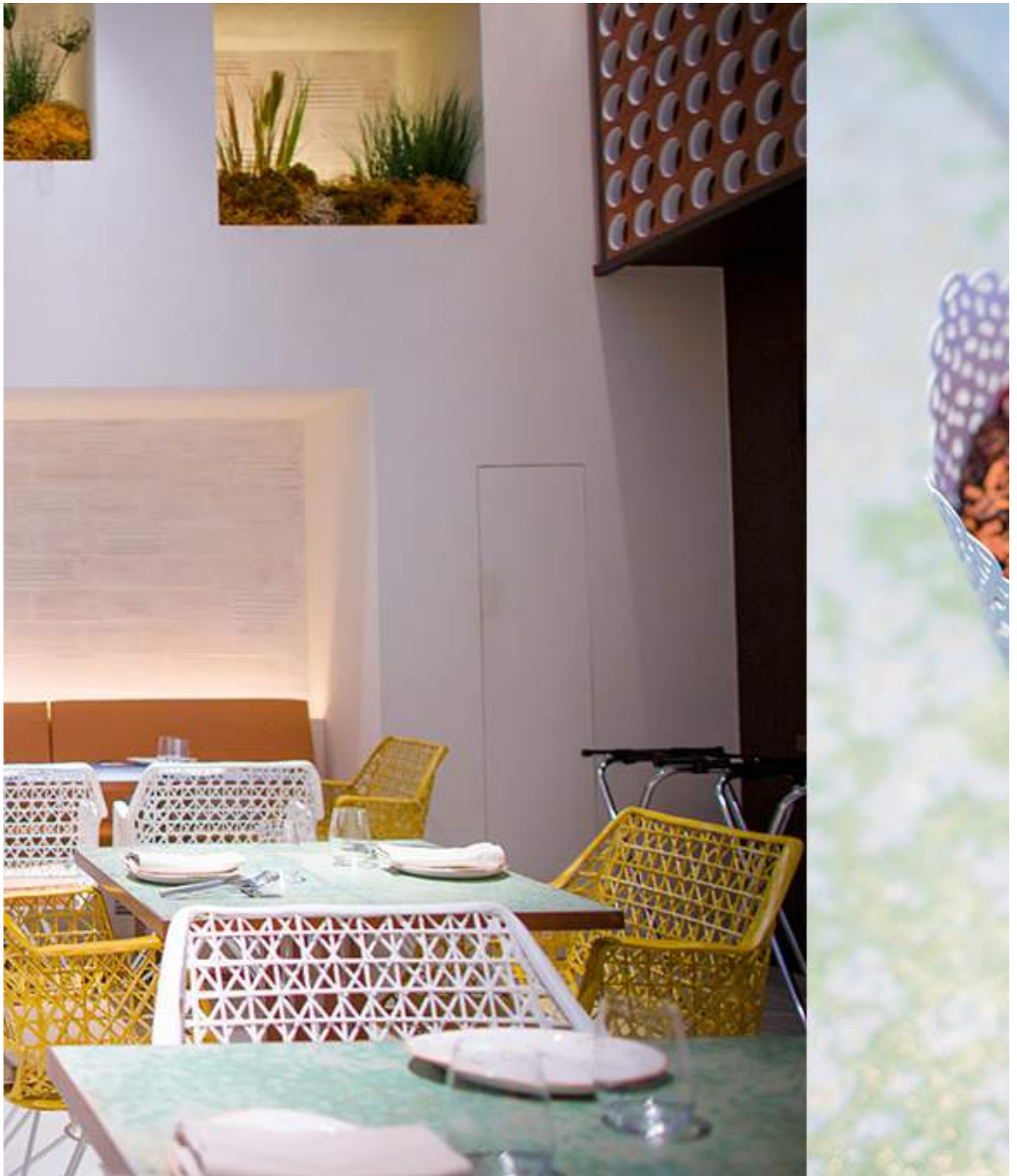
RED MULLET WITH PORK JOWLS AND AUBERGINE GNOCCHI



MONKFISH SSAM A LA ROMANA



DUCK BREAST WITH APPLE



CHEESCAKE CORNET



CHOCOLATE PEPPERS, OIL AND SALT

Oh you know just some peppers for dessert... This was one of the final courses and it was one of my favorites. What appeared as perfectly sculpted

“chillies” served as a clever delivery mechanism for a decadent chocolate cream. One can not go wrong with combining dark chocolate olive oil and salt!!



Even though there are many similarities do not be fooled, Disfrutar doesn't pretend to be El Bulli.

Like other art movements, after the "revolution" caused by El Bulli, in Spain we are in the saturation point of this style. Chefs are returning to a more simplistic state and one with a strong focus on nature and techniques that get back to the rawness of cooking: fire, maturation, faisandage, fermentation. Disfrutar is driven by the techniques developed back at Cala Monjoui, and continues to elevate and push the envelope without losing its Mediterranean sense of place.

This cerebral kind of food can be tricky and is often times is too clever for its own good. It places the diner in precarious place – one of slight discomfort, yet brimming curiosity. The end state of these kinds of dishes tends to be AH HA moment for the diner but rarely does that moment follow with that a state of euphoria that happens when something tastes DAMN good. All of the dishes played with my mind but also left me sincerely happy, in my opinion a true sign of a successful and memorable meal only achieved when chefs cook straight from their heart.

At the end of the day Disfrutar means to have fun and there is no doubt that these three chefs deliver on this promise.

If this kind of food and experience resonates for you do not miss Disfrutar!

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