

# Sandy Conquering the World

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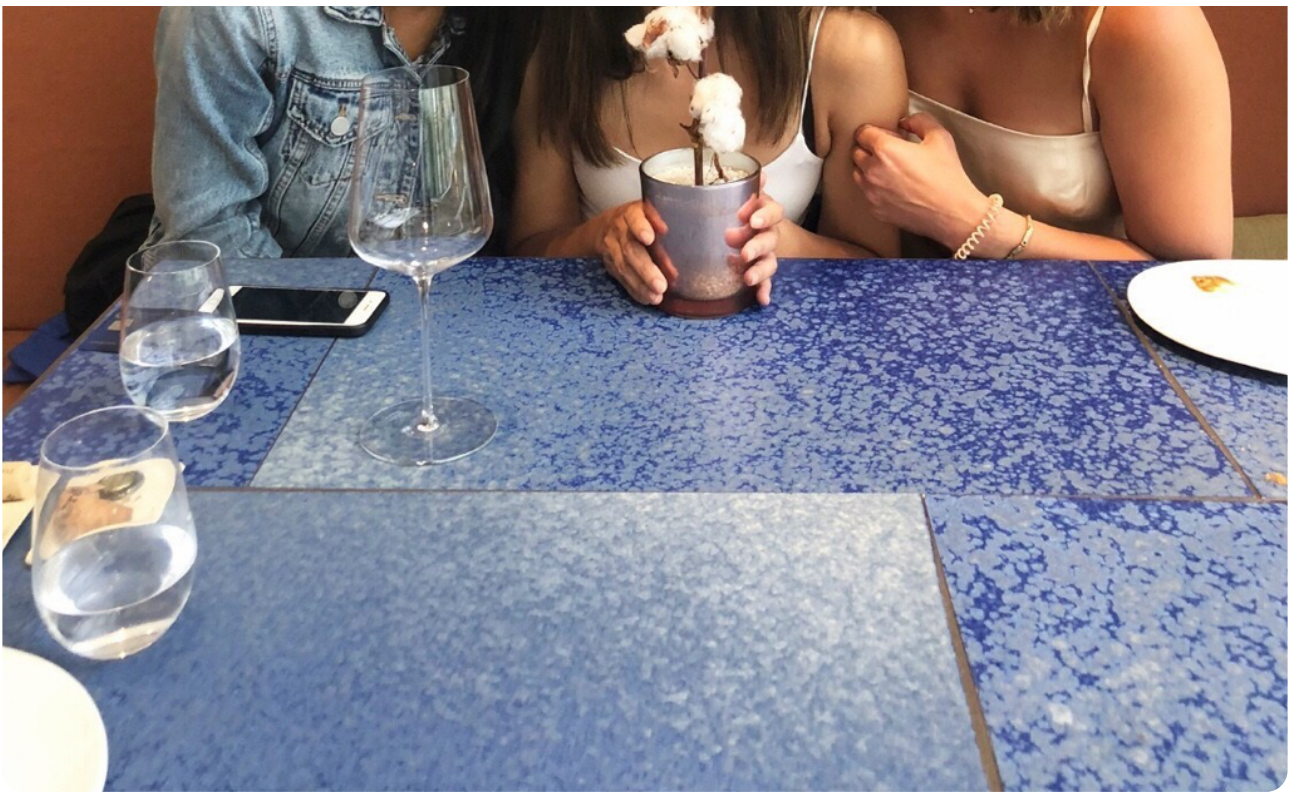
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## THE TIME I ATE AT A MICHELIN 2-STAR RESTAURANT FOR FREE

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## FOOD

August 13, 2019

by *sandycheeks*

# In June of 2019, I backpacked Europe alone and visited 9 different cities.

More significantly, it was the first time I ate at a Michelin 2-Star Restaurant. I had long dreamed of the moment where I'd finally be able to indulge in the most gluttonous of gluttonous food thoughtfully curated by the best chefs in the entire world.

It was what jumped out of the screen that inevitably propelled me into a love affair with food- from delicious Italian plates prepared by a rat moonlighting as a human chef to the adventures of Anthony Bourdain to food bloggers and Netflix food series, I was, in a nutshell- *hungry*.

# Disfrutar Barcelona is a **Michelin 2-Star Restaurant** and ranked the 9th best restaurant in the world.

“Disfrutar” means to enjoy. In fact, it’s enjoyed by so many that it’s always booked months in advance and ridiculously hard to snag a table there. Knowing this, my cousin Ashley said she’d pay for me if I was somehow, JUST SOMEHOW, able to get a reservation there. Therefore I had nothing to lose.

So I went for it.

After calling and emailing for a table just a month before I would arrive in Barcelona, the hostess unclimatically put me on a waitlist.

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“Well, maybe it just wasn’t meant to be”

– *I thought.*

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Until the week of, I received a call from an international number.

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“Dear Ms. Sandy. We are happy to inform you that we have your reservation at Disfrutar for 3 people on May 24, 2019.”

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“FUCK YEA ASHLEY IS PAYING FOR MY FOOD” was my initial reaction. As someone who was about to embark on a month long trip to Europe and backpack like a poor person, I felt like I had just won the lottery! But I

calmly and professionally replied in the utmost professional manner, as you should with any fancy Michelin Star Restaurant.

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“OH good day Mam! Why yes, I am in fact available at that day and time to indulge in your delectable courses and finest wines at Disfrutar”

- *I said on the line, pretending I was donning a top hat and a Louis Vuitton Monocle.*

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“Cool! We look forward to having you here”

- *The hostess casually replied.*

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## The element of *surprise*.

The day finally came and Ashley, Forum and I didn't know what to expect. We walked up and down the streets of Barcelona in the rain looking for an upscale Michelin 2-Star restaurant.

And there began the first scene of surprise. We walk into walls and ceilings made of ceramic connected by wrought iron. We walk past the kitchen which is visible to everyone.





Interior of Disfrutar

## The Environment Where I Ate at a Michelin 2-Star Restaurant.

I'd been in plenty more cheeky places but was feeling at ease in this one. No staff looking down their noses. Other people had their phones out and were snapping photos of their food! Finally, I sit down at a table in a large bright white open room with tons of natural light pouring in. The decor is simple with neutral tones.



Main dining room

Mediterranean cuisine with a twist.

**Razor clams. Langostinos. Gazpacho. Olive. Pasta. Beluga Caviar. Just to name a few.**

Some dishes are simple and taste brilliant. Others are complex, visually stunning and made me scratch my head, wondering how it was all done.

We opt for the 25 course menu but upgrade to the 30 course “Disfrutar Classic” menu about 7 dishes in. When I started writing this piece, I thought about elaborating on every single one of the 30 courses but I’ll save you the yawns and just cut to a few highlights.

Surprised is an understatement.

Our 30 course meal begins with lychee and roses with gin on top of a clear sphere filled with black grains. It's a beautiful presentation of delightful fresh flavors that set the stage for what would follow.



Lychee and roses with gin at Disfrutar Barcelona

A few minutes later, the waiter returns with a wooden box resembling a fairytale storybook. I open the box and see a walnut candy with mango and tonka beans resting on a bed of salt crystals.





Walnut candy with mango and tonka beans

The walnut candy looks hard so when Ashley and I place the candy in our mouths, we are REALLY surprised. We are surprised that the walnut candy is in fact soft and oozes onto our tongues. The flavors are nutty and not overly sweet. It is so good. Ashley asks the waiter for another one.

Often times, there were two or three waiters who delivered our plates and set them down in unison and with poise in a synchronized choreography.





*Idiazabal cheese Mille-feuille.*

*Frozen passion fruit ladyfinger with rum.*

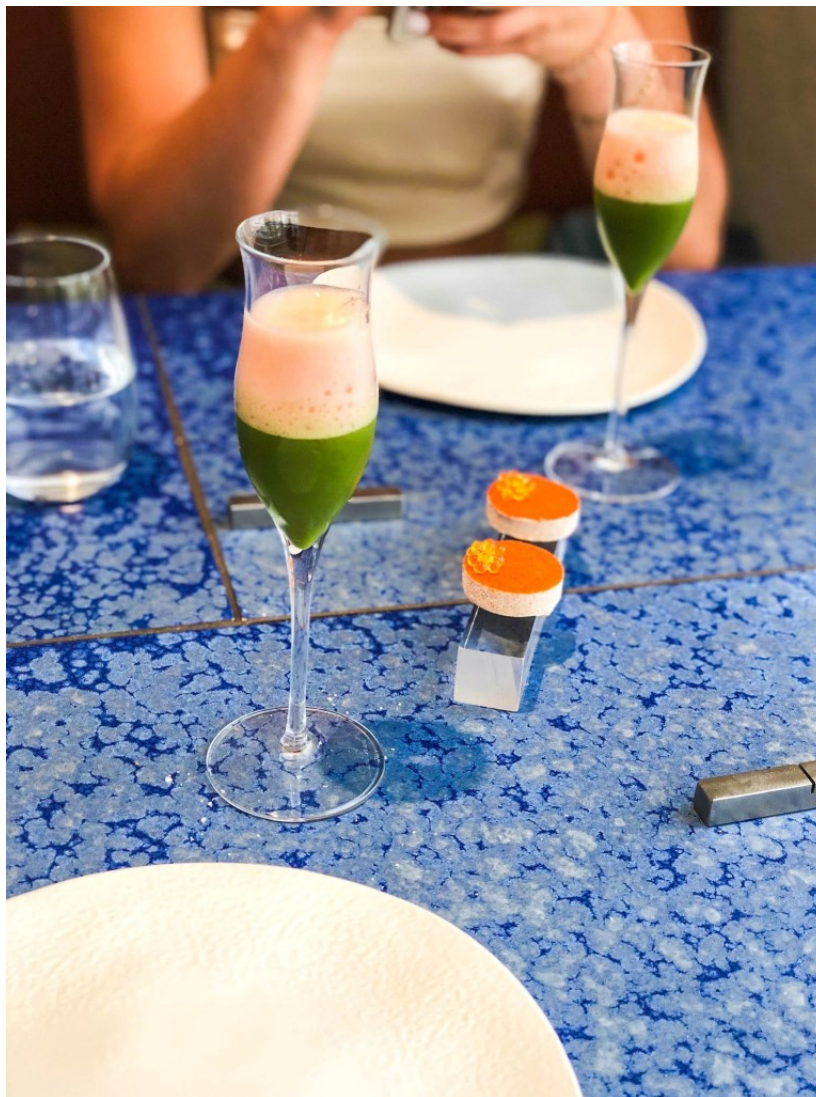
*Homemade cider smoked in front of us with a small torch.*

*Gazpacho sandwich with scented vinegar garnish.*

*Deconstructed ceviche.*

*Crispy egg yolk with warm mushroom gelatin inside the egg. A tiny red hen is at the center of the plate and a tiny ladder rests on the egg shell stand.*

*Tomato polvoron and arquebina Caviaroli.* Although this drink and dish were a little too pungent for me, I do admire the bold approach to the traditional shortbread common in Andalusia. Despite this, I was still surprised by its light and soft texture. The olive oil caviar was also a brilliant touch.



Tomato polvoron and arquebina caviaroli

What could be so extraordinary  
about an olive?



The greatest olive on earth!

Just one olive. I bite into the light green olive and instead of a firm shell with a seed in the center, it immediately explodes! I was shocked and demanded to know how it was done! Our waiter later tells me the the olive shell is made of cocoa butter and injected with olive juice- a process called spherification. Ashley asks the waiter for another one.

The waiter presents our next course table side. He slowly begins to scrape off the mound of salt to reveal razor clams with seaweed. They had been cured in this salt, then heated in the oven, and cooled overnight in the fridge. It is so soft, fresh and tasty.





Salt cured razor clams

He returns with two black pans of translucent macaroni pasta with whipped cream made of truffle and carbonara sauce with cheese. After that, the waiter returns with black celeriac (root vegetable similar to celery). Its texture was so soft and tender, that I never would have known it was celery!



## A never ending journey of surprise, creativity, and artistic expression.

We found ourselves laughing each time, marveling dish after dish and unashamed of not following the Michelin Star etiquette. The manager and servers laughed too. Whether they were laughing at us or with us, I'm not sure. We didn't care because we were having a grand time. I never thought the time I ate at a Michelin 2-Star restaurant would be this fun!



“Panchino” filled with beluga caviar

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“Wait. Did he say this was beluga caviar? What’s beluga again?”

– Ashley asks.

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*Hare consommé with armagnac.*

*Suquet langoustine with cappucino.*

*Hare and foie gras bonbon.*

*Multi spherical satin of corn and foie.*



*Hare laksa.*



*Hare consommé with  
armagnac*



*Multi spherical satin of  
corn and foie.*

## Is this what I think it is?

I take my first bite and then my second bite, and I still thought it was a tender steak. I later learned that it was squab (pigeon)- sous vide. Who knew you could transform an everyday bird on the street into something so flavorful and wonderful? The three of us were just in shock. When would the surprises stop?



Pibil squash

## And then desserts began.

Pandan. A common ingredient in Vietnamese and Southeast Asian desserts. This one was an outlier- I was surprised this was on the menu!



Pandan

Next up to bat, a red and green pepper resting on top of the same clear sphere filled with black grains that we saw earlier. Now that I think about it, I'm SURPRISED that they reused this. Did they just get tired and lazy of coming up with more ways to surprise me?





Red and green “peppers”

The peppers were soft and filled with chocolate fused in oil and salt. The combination of the soft jelly texture and sweet and slightly salty flavors blended well with the crisp piece of toast.

*Tarta with Lagavulin whisky.*

*Cheesecake cornet.*

*Coffee Swiss roll.*

*Cocoa and mint cotton for the final act.*



We applauded and said bravo!

What a ride! If we weren't so full and if we hadn't ordered wine, we would've asked for an encore.

Ashley's pockets were emptier after Disfrutar but our palates and gastronomic experience left fuller and more satisfied than ever.

I was hungry for more of the artistic flavor that I had entrusted the chefs to both visually and physically delight me with. Considering the quality and amount of food we got, it was worth it.

# I left feeling blessed that the first time I ate at a Michelin 2-Star Restaurant was incredible.

Grateful I am able to share my experience and appreciation for culture.  
And my fascination and appreciation for food became stronger than ever.

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