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## Disfrutar: catalan legacy in motion

August 25, 2017 | hungryitalianintown



The tiles at the entrance as an homage to Mirò, the warmth of the clay to surround the kitchen, the 'breeze of the wind' in the wooden composition of the fishermen of Cadaques in the dining room, the 'crackling' of the bubbles of a glass of Cava Grand Reserva 'Imperial' in the silence of a white terrace in the Eixample neighborhood of Barcelona...



We move the first steps at Disfrutar, the revelation restaurant of the year according to the 50 bests, 'playground' of Eduard Xatruch, Oriol Castro and Mateu Casañas.

While El Bulli was revolutionizing gastronomy, changing the way people eat, playing with consistencies, shapes, flavors, and ultimately customer senses, Eduard, Oriol and Mateu, for more than 16 years, were in the kitchen leading the team created by the genius of Ferran Adrià.

In 2014, after having left the El Bulli Foundation and opened Compartir (modern, not creative cuisine), the three decided to start Disfrutar with the goal of making customers 'enjoy'.

Once the 33 courses menu starts, it becomes clear that the experience is conceived to be a playful game for the palate, for once less assisted by eyes - left to enjoy the beauty of the dishes - and nose, not always able to provide hints on the flavors hidden in the alternative shapes and consistencies.

So, the rum-based welcome cocktail with mint and passion fruit is served in the shape of an impalpable frozen biscuit, rose petals hold pearls of gin and rose water, dehydrated beetroots 'magically' appear from the 'soil' contained in a vase, nitrogen-sparkled apple cider accompanies a crispy biscuit of fried Parmesan foam filled with Idiazabal cheese cream, cocoa butter shaped olives crack under the teeth exploding in mandarin flower and bloody orange splashes, a liquid caprese is drank from a flute shaped dish while biting a dehydrated biscuit of polvorón tomato topped with arbequina oil caviar.



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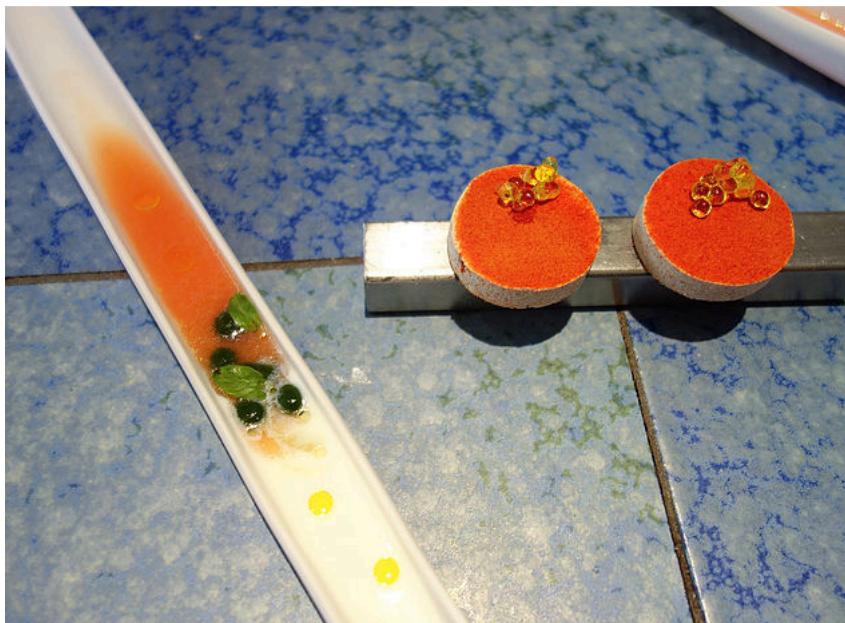
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Sé el primero de tus amigos en indicar que le gusta esto.



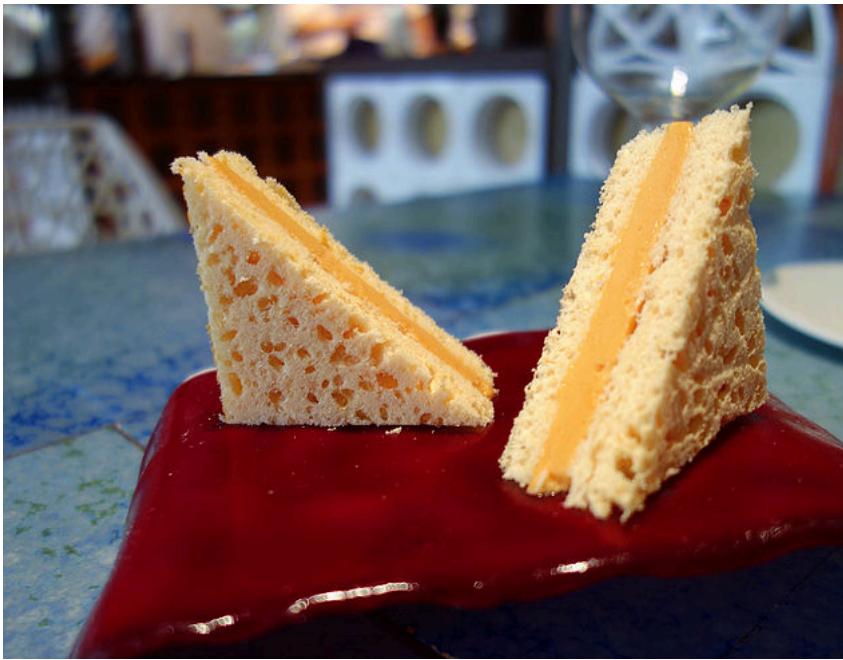


If you consider all of this enough to trick your mind, here comes probably the biggest challenge for an Italian: **carbonara**! The dish does not contain any pasta at all, but penne-shaped jamon consommé served with a foam of egg and parmesan. Far from the traditional version made with guanciale and pecorino, this dish still carries on an authentic flavor and texture.



People may misunderstand molecular cuisine, may consider it material for lab, a way to alter and falsify flavors, but the reality is that the cuisine of Eduard, Oriol and Mateu starts with the ingredients - the attention to tradition is even stronger here than somewhere else - and extract the very essence of them:

- the **taste of tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers** is frozen in a 'tramezzino-shaped' gazpacho meringue: probably the strongest dish in taste. While melting in your mouth, the meringue releases all the intensity of the Spanish tradition and ingredients. A sherry vinegar to smell adds an additional sour note;



- the **perfume of tangerine flowers** is offered in 2 versions: the traditional one with flowers placed in a glass and a less conventional one with an essence tick liquid served inside 2 layers of 'ostia', a super thin bread slice used for Eucharist ceremony;



- the **nutty taste of walnuts** is served in a fried sugar coating balanced with a mango slice showered with a smoky whiskey and tonka bean sprinkles.



Other dishes, less contaminated by 'scientific' interventions but still enriched by a great execution, show the ability of the chefs to enhance selected ingredients always having taste as polar star of the culinary journey:

- **Caviar** – Caviar is the filling, together with garlic butter, of pancino, a fried ball of dough – the taste is at the same time punchy and delicate, the fried dough is fragrant, not oily, and perfectly melts with the caviar, absorbing the liquid of the popping eggs;



- **Egg and mushrooms** – A bite to a fried egg yolk is the first step of this dish. The next one is to pour the remaining content into an egg shelf containing a mushroom gelatin. Do not worry about making a mess while biting the egg yolk! I did and it was a beautiful pleasure. To complete the dish, while keeping the same texture, porcini dumplings (in a fully transparent/gelatin dough) to be gently poured in a mushroom vinegar;



- Seafood: **Razor clam and sea cucumber** – In the first dish, razor clam is cooked at low temperature (55 degrees) under salt and garnished with seaweed. This technique manages to give proper meaning to a very simple and humble ingredient. In the second one, sea cucumber is cut in noodles shape and served in a fish stock containing saffron and aioli: right texture and taste even if on the edge of saltiness.



- Meat: **hare, foie gras and pigeon** – The common characteristic of the meat dishes is the choice of strong and wild flavors, intense, sometimes (positively) overwhelming but overall well balanced. So, the hare is served in several combinations that vary from tarragon, drink of consommé, Armagnac and orange skin, soba soup with ginger to blini filled with liver; the foie gras is spherified, together with corn on a sweet 'tatin style' base; the pigeon is served in a more simple style but with its omnipresent peculiar taste.



The desserts are equally generous in taste, interesting in shape and devoted to a refreshing ending: mango ice cream with mango 'drops'; cone of wild berries cheesecake; pistachio in different shapes – foam, sponge, tempura -; decomposed whisky cake with bites of egg yolk, caramelized almond, cream and a 'Lagavulen 16 hand wash' – the drops of whisky on your hands are one of the best (and human in realization) ideas you could bring back home from the meal...



All in all, a wonderful and enthusiastic experience. An experience that opens mind and food horizons across dozens of ingredients and techniques. An experience that is as well a cheerful, challenging and rewarding play for the senses. A restaurant that probably deserves more than one star after 5 years from the opening and that probably still suffers the critiques and mistrust that made Ferran Adria to 'pause' the El Bulli experience.



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