

# Disfrutar

THE EL BULLI ALUMNI STRIKE AGAIN WITH A TASTING MENU TO REMEMBER. BY TARA STEVENS.

PHOTOS BY YAN PEKAR

**S**trolling up Villarroel, you could be forgiven for missing Disfrutar. It's a blink-and-you'll-miss-it kind of place, but keep your eyes peeled because this is likely to be the most exciting meal you'll eat this year.

The interior, by the brilliant Equipo Creativo, at first made me think of a modern-day Western saloon with a long, sage green bar at the entry and tiled stalls enclosing a small dining area. Keep going though, and you come to a large open-plan kitchen, effervescent with brilliant chefs doing their thing. Eventually you'll reach a cavernous, glazed dining room, with two-storey high ceilings, an elaborate feature wall and curiously comfortable cut-out

April 2012. Alumni of El Bulli with a sterling reputation to boot, the boys are now shuttling between the two ventures, ensuring that there's always at least one of them present. And frankly, wow, what a show.

We began with a cheek puckering passion fruit *granita*, spiked with rum and topped with coffee beans, freshly ground from a pepper mill, that sent streaks of acidity scuppering wildly across the tastebuds. Then, a light-as-air beetroot puff, as delicate as the finest crystal, served sunken in an elegant glass bowl of black sesame seeds. You swirl the seeds and the puffs

*kimchee* mayonnaise and crammed into an apple-flavoured meringue—is dreamy.

By now, my pal and I were staring goggle-eyed at each other proclaiming it a marvel. Had it stopped then, it still would have felt like a bargain, but we were only half way through. The rice taco with tomato, Parmesan and basil, was deceptive in its simplicity, punchy and refreshing, it primed us for more. Turns out that mackerel with porcini and cauliflower couscous is a match made in heaven. Who knew? And Disfrutar's version of *macarrones a la carbonara*—translucent tubes turned opaque in

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rise up magically like hot pink truffles. Oh yes, I thought, smacking my lips as the puffs exploded into smithereens, this is going to be fun.

Next came a little quartet of snacks: sweet, pea-sized nuggets of hazelnut and elderberry; magnificently sticky, yet with the texture of dust, *polverones* of tomato with *arbequina* 'caviar'; delicate transparent ravioli stuffed with the individual components of pesto (basil leaves and pinenuts) dipped in a serum of Parmesan; and the prettiest *spherico* olives I've ever seen, one green and grassy, the other black and dusky with bitter orange.

A frozen *Idiazábal* biscuit arrived shortly after, with a delicate apple and celery jus prepping the palette for a tempura egg yolk, which sat astride a shell filled with a mushroomy-truffle gelee. OMG! Seriously, I nearly cried. It was one of those died-and-gone-to-heaven moments. And their riff on the classic American lobster roll—crab tasting lushly of ocean that's been tumbled with a little homemade

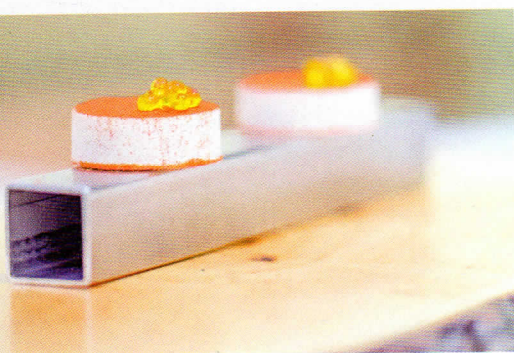
a foam of eggs and bacon, literally 'cooked' at the table—becomes an extraordinarily soothing, yet light, comfort food. Mussels and peas were a plump and yielding amalgamation of sea and garden, whilst the *nawajas* blanketed in a smooth truffle and foie cream, served with a salad of crunchy oyster leaves and topped with a lemony foam, was the best use of foie I've ever seen.

A 'mandarin' stuffed into a mandarin with rose-infused jelly at the bottom, and a thimble-sized cheesecake topped with cherry ice-cream and served in a raspberry cone, made a refreshing finish, but the best was yet to come. Two perfect chocolate chillies—one green (with mint), one red (with chilli)—garnished with olive oil and sea salt, as all good *meriendas* should be. By now it was nearly 5pm. We'd been there for four hours, and as I said my thank yous and goodbyes, I admit, I shed a tear or two. If the art of seduction could be boiled down to a tasting menu, this would surely be it. ■

## MORE INFO.

Villarroel 163, Hospital Clínic. Tel. 93 348 68 96.  
en.disfrutarbarcelona.com. Open Tues-Sat  
1pm-3pm, 8pm-10pm. Disfrutar menu €68,  
Festival menu €98 including IVA  
(not including drinks).

★★★★★



dining chairs in subtle shades of chalk, mustard and olive. And beyond that again, there's a decked terrace with retractable shades and vertical gardens creeping their way towards the sun. It's quite the tardis, but I was here as a fan of the chefs—Mateu Casañas, Oriol Castro and Eduard Xatruch—who opened the much-lauded Compartir in Cadaqués in