

Coco Cami

Friday, 18 November 2016

Dinner and an interview with Nacho and friends at Ibérica...

This week I had the opportunity to attend the Nacho and Friends dinner at Ibérica restaurant in Manchester and to interview Nacho and friends. Nacho Manzano is the three Michelin starred group executive chef for Ibérica Restaurants and he also runs the award winning Casa Marcial restaurant in Spain. He had invited his friends and fellow chefs to collaborate with him for the very special evening, Oriol Castro, Eduard Xatruch and Mateu Casañas of the restaurants Compartir and the Michelin starred Disfrutar in Spain (recently awarded best new European restaurant 2016). They met and trained at elBulli, widely regarded to have been one of the best restaurants in the world with chef Ferran Adrià at the helm.

I sat down to interview the chefs before dinner, and they had plenty of interesting things to say.



Firstly my interview with Oriol Castro and Mateu Casañas, chef-patrons of Compartir in Cadaqués and Disfrutar in Barcelona:

Did the molecular gastronomy at elBulli rub off on to your style of cuisine, do you find inspiration in molecular gastronomy now or have you taken a different direction?

We try to work with different products, to find various techniques and concepts and create a wide range of plates. We work with salt, oil, tuna, meat...many different products to help us to develop different creations...the name we would give this is not molecular cuisine but maybe 'techno-emotional' to explain and define this style. The most important thing that we find in this style of cooking is that it is vital to find something different, to create new things and to add value in the kitchen. That is important to us, to add value. Nowadays, we continue working with the same objective, to find different techniques and to innovate...at Compartir we create this in a more casual, informal and dynamic way for the guests.

Would it be fair to say that you are inventing your own style?

Yes, at Compartir we try to make plates that the guests can share and to do something different in comparison to the other restaurants in the region. Disfrutar it is a different concept, we try to find new ideas and techniques to be a little creative. They are two restaurants with different styles and objectives but they share the same philosophy right from the staff and the waiters through to the chefs.



Beetroot and fruit salad with Ajoblanco sorbet.

Your dishes are very creative, where do you find your inspiration?

We only have one secret, that we work every day in the kitchen. We work with the products, with the staff and with the team. You need to work every day to find new things, you cannot wait and look to the sky to find results ... all you can do is work hard.

You have won several awards, are awards important to you?

Yes, they are important. The highest recognition is a Michelin Star and when you have the first Michelin Star you have the result you have been working for and maybe then you can feel more relaxed and that you are on a good path. We also won the 'best new restaurant in Europe 2016' and it feels good to be recognised for what we are building and for our passion to work and to cook. That makes us feel more relaxed, it feels good to gain recognition and win awards but the most important people are the restaurant guests, they are the ones who come to the restaurant every day. The press and media in our area say that we are the best restaurant in Barcelona, and all these things are important because then people know that when they go to the restaurant they are eating and choosing the best. So yes, it is important to be recognised.



Natural clams with parsley juice and seaweed emulsion.



Sardine with monkfish liver and salt marsh herbs.

Do you have a signature dish which sums up your restaurant?

Yes, at Disfrutar, we have a dessert which is a whiskey cake. It is a recipe we have created, to be served in an interactive style...when the waiters go the table to serve the dessert they take whiskey, hazelnut candy and vanilla cream to the table then the waiter pours a tiny amount of whiskey in to the guests hands, they rub their hands together and inhale the whiskey scent on their hands before they start to eat the dessert. The dessert is designed to create an ambient and sensual experience...it is a dessert for the senses - taste, smell and

vision but also an emotional experience.



Crispy egg yolk with mushroom jelly.

What are your future plans?

We do not have future plans, our most important plan is to keep Compartir in its place, to change the offering a little bit and to work really hard every day to keep our label. If we can achieve even more than great, but to remain where we are now is important. We like to go step by step quietly, not quickly.

Was it difficult to design the menu for this evening?

When Nacho called us, we talked to him to understand the concept of Ibérica restaurants and we understood what we would find here and we tried to mix a little of the Ibérica idea with Mediterranean culture and to find things which would mix well. A combined menu inspired by both Ibérica and Compartir is the result, rather than two separate styles.

Do you find any inspiration in British cuisine?

Yes, for example we use smoked products and earlier on when we talked about the signature dish of Disfrutar I mentioned smoked whiskey, which we do not make in Spain so we source that from Scotland.



Ibérico red tuna.



Tongue with lentil mole sauce, caramel coated onion, pickle gel and marshland herbs.

Interview with Nacho Manzano:

Does travel inspire your dishes?

Not immediately, but later on when I recall things from the back of my mind, that is when inspiration comes from my travels.

Why do you think Spain has so many successful restaurants?

Due to the heritage and the patrimony of the country, the local cuisine of each area is really powerful. The local produce is very good and varied and there was a movement decades ago

from a few chefs who worked hard in an avant-garde way, which is still the case now. Despite the financial crisis a few years ago, a lot of restaurants are still there and they continue working and looking forward to different ideas and new things.

Is history and heritage important to your inspiration, does tradition play a part in your cuisine?

Yes certainly, at Casa Marcial the location of the restaurant is important to my inspiration, the personality of the surrounding terrain inspires me... all around me there are the mountains and the house where I was born and where I still sleep ... so yes the terrain and history gives me plenty of inspiration.



Cheesecake with raspberry sorbet.



Celery panna cotta with fennel slush, apple soup and seaweed.

So that concluded my interview with these amazing chefs. After the interview and some champagne, we took our seats for the meal itself, which was incredible with so many stunning flavour pairings, elaborate presentation and quality ingredients. It was a privilege to interview Oriol, Mateu and Nacho and to gain an insight in to their success. Their passion for their profession was truly inspirational and their success is proportionate to how hard they work and how much effort goes in to the development and creation of each of their dishes.

Ibérica
14-15 The Avenue
Spinningfields
Manchester
M3 3HF

<http://www.ibericarestaurants.com/>

Compartir Restaurant
Riera de Sant Vicenç,
s/n, 17488 Cadaqués,
Girona,
Spain

<http://en.compartircadaques.com/>

I hope you found this interview interesting and which of these dishes would you like to try?

As always I cannot wait to hear your thoughts and thank you so much for reading this post.

Until next time

Camille

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Coco Cami at 08:56

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Such a lovely post!☺

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Violette Daily 19 November 2016 at 06:09

Looks so delicious!

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Kangkan Rabha 19 November 2016 at 10:17

Awesome post, & happy weekend. :)

www.thequirkyminimal.com

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Benita James 19 November 2016 at 15:04

These food pictures looks good and it's making me hungry.

xx

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