

FEATURE

It's 8 a.m. Somewhere: Spain

Pancakes for dinner, Adrià-style.

BY GENEVIEVE KO MAY 9, 2016

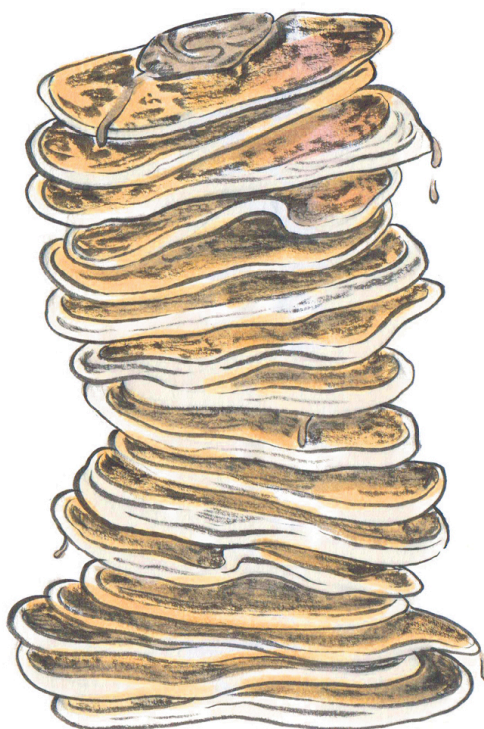


Illustration by Carly Jean Andrews

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The earliest you can eat **Albert Adrià's** blueberry pancakes is nine p.m., and that's only if you dine at the unfashionably early seven-o'clock first seating at Tickets, his boundary-pushing Barcelona tapas restaurant.

"There isn't the tradition of having a proper breakfast in Spain," says Adrià. "It's not common to put a lot of time into breakfast: you drink your coffee fast and go to work. I usually have a banana or a coffee with milk. Otherwise, sometimes sparkling water with a small sandwich. Sweet breakfasts are not something very common in Spanish and Catalan culture."

“The pancakes,” he explains, “are a connection to what I’ve tried in the U.S. I would have pancakes only from time to time, because they’re quite heavy. A pancake is not something you can have every day.”

Adrià’s pancakes-as-dessert capture a fleeting moment in their -making—that half second when pancakes come off the griddle and their golden sides have the most delicate crispness. He creates a thin, shattering shell that replicates the outermost layer of a hot-out-of-the-skillet pancake and replaces the cakey center with airy yogurt cream. On top is a perfect square of tan caramel that evokes the mingling swirl of salted butter melting into warm maple syrup.

“The pancake is a dough that pops,” explains Enric Monzonis, who makes the pancakes at La Dolça, the dessert bar within Tickets. “We were trying to make a dough for a different dessert—a traditional Catalan cookie that’s called *neula*. You press it on a griddle and then you roll it,” he says. “But it popped and inflated. From the minute it popped, the real work started. Because we had to calibrate the recipe to make this popping possible every time. Then we asked: *What can we do with this?* We reached a point where it looked like a pancake, and then we started to think about the flavor. We tried it with bacon and edgier things, but we decided to stick with simple flavors like yogurt and maple syrup. Finally, the technique found a way with the flavor.”

“The only ‘molecular’ element that’s involved is used to emulsify the butter and the maple syrup. But not everything has to be molecular. -Desserts don’t strictly have to be molecular, that shouldn’t be a limitation. When I think about desserts, I think *fluir*: flow. We can always be evolving our creativity in the kitchen. Flavor is really important, but the most important thing is to reach the child inside everyone. Try to use flavors that bring people there.”

“Sugary foods are not meant only for feeding oneself; there’s a pleasure part. You eat it because you like it,” Adrià says. “With dessert, there’s this prize component. You work hard, and you deserve to have this little pleasure.”