

Eating with Albert Adrià at elBarri



Chefs, Pastry Chefs & Chocolatiers

The Many Flavors of the elBarri by Albert Adrià

Albert Adrià and elBarri Keep the Culinary Hits Coming in Barcelona



elBarri Adrià in Barcelona

Opened in early 2017, Enigma is the latest in a string of dining concepts launched by Grupo elBarri – the brainchild of venerated Spanish chef Albert Adrià – in Barcelona's central Paralelo district.

Imagine a food court: a place where one can find an abundance of culinary choices, distinct flavors and cuisines from different corners of the world – all within walking distance of one another. Now imagine that food court outdoors, plunked down smack in the middle of one of the most gorgeous and cosmopolitan cities in the world: Barcelona. And now imagine it basking in the light of an ever growing number of stars – Michelin stars, that is – and driven by one of the most acclaimed culinary masters in Spain: **Albert Adrià**. Imagine all of this and you will be imagining elBarri, the company helmed by Adrià and his brother Ferran, along with the Iglesias brothers of Grupo Rías de Galicia (now called **Grup Iglesias**).

Like any good family, the restaurants that have formed part of elBarri during the six years since its founding in 2011, have seen ebbs and flows – merging, transforming and also determined to be unique. As Albert Adrià puts it, "Each of the restaurants has its own story to tell, united by a common plotline, which is me". Today there are six culinary concepts that constitute elBarri: Tickets, Pakta, Bodega 1900, Niño Viejo, Hoja Santa and the recently opened Enigma. And while the following summaries might help in choosing between them, elBarri also offers a selection of customized tours through its restaurants, which have truly turned this area of Barcelona into what the chef often refers to as "a culinary amusement park".

Enigma



The buzz about **Enigma** hasn't stopped since it opened its doors in January of 2017, with descriptions often using words like strange, secretive, mysterious, mazelike or – unsurprisingly – enigmatic, along with a word most often associated with Adrià's projects: spectacular. In Enigma's case, these words might apply to any of its more than forty dishes or its stunning decor, whose

designers RCR Architects just nabbed the coveted **2017 Pritzker Prize**. Glass panels that seem laced with flowing water, a ceiling of mercury-hued clouds (or are they swirls of silvery smoke?), cooking pods that grow out of the floor and flow seamlessly into the clouds... All of this contributes to the Enigma, as does the fact that diners are asked not to post any photos on social media or anywhere else. The space is divided into a labyrinth of seven, differently-styled rooms through which diners navigate through courses that find inspiration in various flavors, products, techniques and more – ultimately taking people's palates on a journey across the globe. The menu is only unveiled after diners have eaten, and the itineraries, like many of the dishes, keep changing.

Enigma is not the return of elBulli, although Albert Adrià addresses this inevitable question in an interview with *Metropoli Magazine* (January 23, 2017), stating that: "Enigma is recreating a global journey in the spirit of elBulli in 2017". He goes on to say that while his brother Ferran has been conceptually involved in the project since the very beginning, culinarily-speaking it is 100% Albert.

And while Enigma is in the capable hands of chef Oliver Peña, sommelier Cristina Losada and bartender Marc Álvarez, Albert is never far away, thanks to his new on-site R&D research lab.

Tickets

This modern tapas bar has been jam-packed since opening in March of 2011. In the words of Restaurant Magazine, which has ranked **Tickets** as 29th on its most recent list of the World's Best Restaurants: "Albert Adrià channels Willy Wonka's whimsy in his tapas fun house". Touted for its innovative, creative and jaw-droppingly fun tapas, Tickets has also brought diners to an urban outlet for a few of the classic flavors of elBulli – most notably the now-defunct restaurant's infamous spherified olives. Given a Michelin star in 2013, Tickets has also undergone certain transformations over the years, one of the most recent being the addition of La Dolça, the sweet side of Tickets where patrons sate their sweet teeth in a pastel realm located under a canopy of giant fruit.

Patka

Albert's love of Japanese and Peruvian cuisine came together in this restaurant (whose name means 'union' in Quechua) in March of 2013, resulting in a Nikkei cuisine that is bursting with traditional flavors interwoven with a Mediterranean undercurrent and that special Adrià touch. The restaurant received a Michelin star in 2014, in addition to a number of other international recognitions.

Bodega 1900

As its name suggests, **Bodega 1900** recaptures the turn-of-the-century spirit of classic Spanish vermouth bars with a decor and food selection inspired by these iconic places and culinary traditions. With its classic tiles, marble tabletops, wooden chairs and other 'vintage' decor, Bodega 1900 is at once a restaurant and homage to the past. The menu features a range of tapas and dishes with things like cured meats, cheeses, pickled foods and tiny bocadillo sandwiches stuffed with an array of fillings that might include calamari, chicken and Ibérico sausage.

Niño Viejo / Hoja Santa

Opened in July and November of 2014, respectively, these two restaurants are the manifestations of Albert's love of Mexican gastronomy, and his relationship with former elBulli stagier Paco Méndez, who runs them. Asked which of his elBarri restaurants best reflects who he is as a person and a chef, Albert remarked: "My most intense involvement is in the creation of the concept, so I feel comfortable in all of them, although I am most relaxed at Hoja Santa. Paco Méndez is alma y señor."

Hoja Santa, which has a Michelin star, offers a sophisticated and modern take on traditional Mexican food, ingredients and ancestral techniques, while Niño Viejo was conceived as an informal restaurant that pays homage to the street food of Mexico and its urban flavors.

These six restaurants and six novel concepts share their origins in the mind of Albert Adrià, a force of nature on the Barcelona restaurant scene, who shows no indication of slowing down any time soon. And now, with the inauguration of Enigma behind him, Adrià is focusing on growing and improving his creations, undoubtedly making many more diners deliriously happy for years to come.

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