

Road to the World's 50 Best 2017: Albert Adrià of Tickets

CULTURE FOOD & DRINKS INTERVIEWS & RECIPES



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Humbleness and excellence are two words that can be associated with Albert Adrià. After many years of learning and living the chef's life at elBulli, Adrià has created a food district called elBarri, in Barcelona, where he combines the best of traditional Catalanian gastronomy with his own creative style. His six restaurants hold a total of three michelin stars: La Bodega 1900, Enigma, Hoja Santa (), Niño Viejo, Pakta (*) and Tickets (*). We spent some time with him to discuss his current projects, his expectations for the upcoming World's 50 Best Restaurants ceremony, his memories of elBulli and how tapas are the new form for haute cuisine.*

Hi Albert, thanks for talking with us today. Firstly I would like to ask you how would you describe your restaurant Tickets to someone who isn't familiar with it?

Tickets takes part in the elBarri project, a funny way of approaching haute cuisine through tapas, which is normally considered more ordinary. We are trying to bring something new to the table here and adapt our style to the society's standards, too. The financial crisis in Spain has also influenced this idea, although things need to evolve anyway. We're looking to bring the tradition closer to people by presenting it in a less traditional way, just more fun.



All the people who dined at your restaurant say it was one of the most fun, if not crazy, experiences they've ever had. Is that your secret ingredient?

I tell you the truth, I wouldn't be worried if I weren't placed on the best restaurants guide, but if a guide presenting the funniest restaurants didn't list me, I would be. Well, I guess my secret is simply listening to the client and to not let ourselves become gentrified. At Tickets we have fun through food, and

that's its characteristic. It's a fun and noisy place.

The experience is fun and crazy but the kitchen is extremely focused. How many chefs work there and what's your relationship with them?

I always say we are serious, so that you can have fun. In fact, every restaurant we own shares this organisation rule. At Tickets, we are 25 cooks and five pastry chefs. There is no menu: people eat à la carte, so we need to be fast and agile. It's true that they also often listen to our recommendations. Bear in mind, we get more than 100 people a night, opening at 6.30pm and shutting down at 2am. This is why we need to have a great relationship together as a team.



You and your brother Ferrán have basically put together an Adrià district in Barcelona in recent years: elBarri. Your most recent opening is Enigma which, by the name of it, is something mysterious. Can you tell us about it?

Well, that's partly true. It has the intention of being mysterious for everyone who visits. However, I also believe the name works well in every language, so it has that international touch to it, too.

Is the district going to expand in the next years?

Actually, we are not thinking about expanding now, although I have different projects on hold in other places. For instance, I've been delaying a project in the Dominican Republic, the idea for which is a beach club. I once thought of opening something in Tenerife, too. But then I would stop going on vacation every year, so I changed my mind. Enigma's creation has been really exhausting. So that also made me think again about expanding.



Adrià is synonymous with experimentation. There's a lot of focus on 3D printers for food. Do you think the future of fine dining cuisine will feature them?

3D printers have always been my speciality. I use them more than anything to create cooking tools, much more than to cook really. Anyway, this is like everything else – you need to have initiative and to find more uses out of them if you want them to be featured in future fine-dining cuisine as you're asking me. Utility is the most relevant element. I'm pretty convinced that new cooking tools will keep appearing, but for them to stay we need to find a use for them.

Barcelona's food scene seems to be growing year by year. Is there a restaurant you are more excited about or that you would like to go back to?

Barcelona is a very touristic place and nowadays more so than ever before. That's something that makes restaurants open up. Responding to your question, I have three, the sea's trilogy: Estimar, La Barra de Carles Abellán and Marea Alta. They sell fish mainly, very good quality fish, which is always fresh.

Your good friends and [colleagues from elBulli – Oriol, Eduard, Mateu – seem to be doing great with Disfrutar. Have you been there?](#)

Yes, sure I've been. It picks up the baton from elBulli excellently, and I feel it is maturing a lot, too. You know, elBulli represented a way for us to understand life and you can see that through the food. I have great appreciation for the three of them.

What's your best memory from the days of elBulli?

Without a doubt the first five years, when I was living in a caravan – hippy times. Apart from that, everything that Ferrán and Juli taught me is priceless, as well as all the trips we made around the world. They were 23 wonderful years of my life.

We had an amazing time when you came to London with 50 Days of Adria. When [we had a chat with you and Virgilio Martinez](#) a few months back you hinted that you were interested in coming back. Do you have any plans?

The problem with London is that it's too big. But really, for gastronomy I feel that London is the centre of the world and it has a lot to offer. It has a lot of potential, too. We're thinking about going there with Heart Ibiza. It's a project that puts together music, shows and gastronomy



Currently [in London there's WastED, Dan Barber's pop-up on food waste](#). What's your take on using produce that would otherwise be wasted?

I think it's a genius idea: recycling food is very necessary. You see, when I come out from Enigma, I see people throwing out food from the supermarkets, and a bunch of people going to the garbage and picking it up. Tons of food is being wasted every day. So things like that can definitely change the game.

So in ten days you are going to be in [Melbourne for the World's 50 Best ceremony](#). Are you excited? Have you ever been to Australia?

Yes, I have been. They couldn't have found a better place to be honest. And I am more grateful than excited, I don't expect anything really.

Is there a restaurant in particular you are looking forward to eating at?

Well, we'll see. I know there are going to be a lot of Spanish chefs there, so they will surely tell me where to go. I also love Chinese food.

Sadly when you look at the 50 Best website it's depressing to see that Elena Arzak is the only female face. How long will it take to see half of them female?

I'm delighted to be able to work with women, but this is not a matter of sexes, I think. The kitchen is a way of life, so if you wish to create a family, then it's not going to be possible to keep up, because this is a very demanding profession. That's a choice you have to make.

Who is your favourite female chef?

Well, Elena and I are great friends. But of course there are many other magnificent female chefs, such as Susie Diaz, Maria José San Román and Carme Ruscalleda.

I don't want to steal any more of your time, just one last question. Who is going to win on 5th April?

I believe there won't be too many surprises. From my point of view, as I've told you before, it's an honour to be on the list, but I don't think I deserve it. It's great to be on it though!

