

Food

The Eataly effect: Why José Andrés and other top chefs keep building food halls

By [Becky Krystal](#) May 9 at 6:13



A rendering of 10 Hudson Yards in Manhattan, where José Andrés is opening a food hall. (Courtesy Related-Oxford)

Joining fellow big-name chefs Mario Batali, Anthony Bourdain and Mike Isabella, Washington's José Andrés is getting into the food hall game — in New York.

The chef and restaurateur on Tuesday announced that late next year, he will open a yet-to-be-named project devoted to Spain in the Hudson Yards development on Manhattan's West Side. He'll be working with brothers and fellow Spanish chefs Ferran and Albert Adrià. (Andrés considers Ferran Adrià his mentor, thanks to his time training at El Bulli, Adrià's defunct three-Michelin-star restaurant in Spain.)

"I cannot wait to tell the story of Spain to my adopted home of America in this iconic new neighborhood," Andrés said in a news release from his ThinkFoodGroup. Andrés was traveling in Spain on Tuesday and unavailable for interviews, a rep said.

Details on what the 35,000-square-foot dining and market project will include are slim at this point, but according to the release, the idea is "a fresh, groundbreaking take on the food hall concept featuring the very best that Spain has to offer." Among its likely

features: a tapas bar; places to grab dinner or a glass of wine; and plenty of opportunities for buying food and ingredients to go.

If the Andrés project sounds like a familiar concept, that's because it's an increasingly popular model for prominent culinary figures. Perhaps the best-known example is the Italian extravaganza, [Eataly](#), which Batali helped bring to New York in 2010. In addition to two locations in Manhattan, the company boasts outposts in Chicago, Boston and, coming soon, Los Angeles, as well as the original in Torino, Italy, and elsewhere around the world for a total of more than 30. [According to Fast Company in 2015](#), the New York City location across from Madison Square Park, was doing \$85 million in annual revenue. Call it the Eataly effect, if you will, but other big names surely took notice.

Bourdain's [Bourdain Market](#), a 100-vendor project, is scheduled to open at Pier 57, also on Manhattan's West Side, in 2019. Chef Michael Mina, whose many restaurants include Washington's Bourbon Steak, has plans to open locations of his new food hall, [the Street](#), in Los Angeles and Honolulu.

[For his next project, Mike Isabella is going big. Very big.]

Around Washington, [Isabella Eatery](#) is planned for a debut in Tysons Galleria later this year, with a mix of 10 concepts. In 2018, Philadelphia chef Jose Garces will open a Latin American marketplace one street over from Union Market, another multi-concept food hall that has been a runaway hit in the District's Northeast.

[Chef Jose Garces is bringing a Latin marketplace to Union Market]

"Food halls are a trend nowadays with chefs," said Isabella, though he considers Isabella Eatery more of an "emporium" that will offer a range of full-service experiences.

One reason: "There's options, and everyone can be in the mood for something different, and you can accommodate all those tastes," he said. That applies to type of food — Isabella Eatery will cover Greek, Italian, Japanese, Mexican and more in its offerings — as well as type of diner, whether it's a mom stopping in for an ice cream with her kids or friends meeting for wine.

Food halls also reflect the way more Americans are eating these days, allowing for people to sample a lot of different items (a la small plates) in one place. They encapsulate the move away from fine dining to casual eating, as well as the growing interest in street food. "You're shifting the entire food culture and moving away from an entirely brick-and-mortar culture that's hostile to street food to one that embraces both," said Bourdain, who, like his fellow entrepreneurs doesn't see food halls replacing restaurants but, rather, supplementing them.

Chefs are well-prepared for opening food halls, thanks to their experience in running multiple restaurants, Isabella said. Having one person in charge, rather than a hodgepodge of separate operators, makes it easier to run an efficient, centralized operation. That can also help ensure a unifying creative vision.

As Bourdain put it, "What's good about food halls is that you have individual voices expressing themselves through food." What would not be good, he said, is if large corporations decide to take advantage of their popularity with "Disneyland" versions that lack that individual approach.

In the past, those types of chains represented the most accessible opportunity for fast food, Bourdain said. Food halls are tweaking the idea with fare that is fast “but good food made by individuals.”

He said food halls appeal to a kind of democratic ideal in which you’re more likely to find a mix of people from all walks of life, citing Singapore’s trademark hawker markets, on which his project is modeled, as an example.

Perhaps not coincidentally, the idea of the food hall is much more common elsewhere in the world, said Richie Brandenburg, director of culinary strategy at Edens, the developer behind Union Market and the Garces project. “In America, we’re playing catch-up now,” he said, as consumers become more educated about food and embrace it as a hobby or recreational activity, rather than just a necessity.

That utilitarian necessity is one thing Brandenburg said separates food halls from food courts, those shopping mall staples. A food court is for the times when “I need to shut the kids up and I’m shopping at JCPenney and Macy’s,” he said.

A food hall, on the other hand, is more than that — experiential and an integrated part of the community. And most significantly, “It’s about people wanting authentic food,” he said.