



Tara Jessop ---- 9 October 2017

With a new restaurant seeming to open just about every week in the [Catalan capital](#), it's got to be something pretty special to get the foodies talking. Enigma, the latest project by famous chef and restaurateur Albert Adrià, has taken the Barcelona dining scene by storm, with critics describing it as a 'post-restaurant' experience. From secret access codes to mystery dishes that leave diners guessing, here's why Enigma is Barcelona's most mysterious restaurant to date.

A Long Time in the Making



Albert Adrià, brother of world-famous chef [Ferran Adrià](#) and former elBulli chef, is fast becoming Barcelona's most successful restaurateur. When the avant-garde tapas restaurant

Tickets opened on Avenida Parallel just a couple of years ago, it was, and to some extent still is, the most coveted table in town.

When Ferran Adrià's elBulli restaurant – five times voted best restaurant in the world – closed its doors in 2011, younger brother Albert Adrià decided to open his own venue in Barcelona. Initially a cocktail bar, 41° soon evolved into Albert's own fully fledged culinary expression and was eventually awarded a Michelin star. In 2014, however, Adrià decided to close down 41°, convinced that the full potential of the concept could not be fully realised in its current space.

In the meantime, the youngest of the Adrià brothers continued to build his restaurant empire known as [elBarri Adrià](#): a group of restaurants concentrated around Avenida Parallel and the Poble Sec and Sant Antoni neighbourhoods. These include Bodega 1800, modelled on a classic Spanish bodega; Pakta, a [nikkei](#) or Peruvian–Japanese fusion restaurant; and Hoja Santa, a Michelin-starred Mexican restaurant.

After two and a half years, Adrià's vision for the future of the 41° concept finally materialised, and in January of this year, Enigma at last opened its doors to the public.

A Most Enigmatic Opening

If any new restaurant opening always carries a certain degree of mystery, [Enigma](#) has taken this to a whole new level. True to its name, Enigma has left everyone wondering what is going on behind its doors.

What the world has been able to find out about the restaurant has been diffused by the lucky few who have been able to acquire one of the email tickets that secure a reservation. This ticket contains a code, which staff then enter into a device at the restaurant to give guests access to the venue – it's like something out of a spy novel.

If the restaurant's opening so far hasn't taken social media by storm, this has a lot to do with the restaurant's very strict photo policy. Guests are requested to refrain from taking any pictures of the food, and staff are keen to enforce this, although there are a few pictures available online.

The 700-square-metre (7535-square-foot) venue was designed by Pritzker Prize-winning [RCR Arquitectes](#) from the Catalan town of Olot. More than a dining room, Enigma has seven distinct dining spaces, each with its own theme. They are all neutral in colour, with miles of ceramic, steel and glass; the spaces act like a blank canvas, so that the food can do the talking.

Mystery as a Key Ingredient

If there's a considerable amount of mystery regarding what guests can expect from Enigma, the surprise does not end once guests step through the door. In fact, it seems that mystery is the dominant flavour of much of what takes place here.

As you would expect, the food at Enigma is wholly creative. While drawing on Spanish [flavours and ingredients](#), the dishes are also said to be infused with influences from Asia, South America and elsewhere. More to the point, though, the dishes are born of technical innovation, original flavour combinations and the creative vision of Adrià and his team.

Catering to just 28 diners for every service, Enigma offers only a tasting-menu experience that costs around €220 per guest without drinks. There are no details of what the menu entails on the equally enigmatic website, although it does state that allergies may be accommodated, but vegetarian options are not available.

In fact, rumour has it that some dishes are not even presented to the guest before they eat them, but rather the diners are invited to test their senses and guess what they have just eaten.

Furthermore, there are allegedly over 40 dishes served over the course of the dining experience, which, unsurprisingly, is said to take over two and a half hours to enjoy.

From secret access codes to mystery dishes, Enigma seems to have very much earned its name. One of the most original dining experiences in Barcelona at the moment, it has been described as a 'post-restaurant' by food critic Pau Arenós. It seems that the only way to really crack Adrià's Enigma is to experience it for yourself.

