



The spirit of elBulli utterly tantalises in Cadaqués

Compartir is an extraordinarily special kind of laidback, high-end tapas restaurant



The cosy interior of Compartir, which is the brainchild of three elBulli alumni

WHERE TO FIND



Riera Sant Vicenç 17488 Cadaqués (+3497-225 8482; compartircadaques.com).

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Ferran Adrià's elBulli restaurant, which closed in 2011, was famously inaccessible, cradled in a cove at the end of a tiny, twisting road on the Costa Brava. I got a sense of déjà vu the first time I drove up and over to Cadaqués for lunch at Compartir. The journey to the restaurant – the brainchild of three elBulli alumni, Mateu Casañas, Oriol Castro and Eduard Xatruch – is another snakes-and-ladders affair, past ancient, abandoned vineyard terraces, with precipitous plunges to either side of the road and brief, come-hither glimpses of the shimmering sea; and at the end of it, the spirit-soaring sight of the spruce blue and white fishing town long associated with Salvador Dalí, who lived nearby.



Dishes include a salad of beets and strawberries arranged around a sorbet of ajo blanco

The restaurant, which has become close to my heart, opened in 2012, and two years later the trio went on to open Disfrutar, one of [Barcelona's hottest tickets](#) today. But comparison with either of these gastronomic temples is distracting: Compartir is a different animal altogether. Whereas elBulli was an often 40-course marathon and Disfrutar does just four set menus, Compartir is an extraordinarily special kind of laidback, [extremely high-end tapas joint](#).

The locals call this kind of eating *pica pica*, meaning an informal procession of dishes to nibble on and share (*compartir* in Spanish). At

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Compartir, plate swapping is not merely acceptable etiquette – it’s practically obligatory. It’s one of many reasons why it’s my kind of place – those who, like me, are frequently haunted by the thought they might have missed out or misordered, will love it too.



Anchovies with almonds, cypress honey and truffles

So many dishes draw me back up that winding road that it’s hard to choose. There’s the vibrant carmine salad of beets and strawberries arranged around a silken sorbet of ajo blanco (like a white gazpacho, redolent with garlic and almonds), or the warm salmon shabu-shabu with shafts of green asparagus and wild mushrooms.



Red tuna “cannelloni”

Succulent monkfish comes teased into elegant chunks and repositioned on its bone, with toasted almonds and a rich, syrupy suquet reduction.

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Anchovies nestle up to almonds, cypress honey and truffles. But I find the red tuna “cannelloni” hardest to resist: a full-blooded **Mediterranean dish** where the raw fish is thinly sliced, tightly rolled and all set about with a delicious tricolour of tomatoes, black olives and basil – it’s an incitement to break the sharing rule altogether.



The courtyard at Compartir

The wine list, meanwhile, takes a ramble through Spain, with a big emphasis on Empordà, this northeastern corner of **Catalonia** that borders with France, plus selected bottles from France, Germany and the New World.

Almost all year round you can eat in the **courtyard**, fringed with terracotta-potted orange trees, while in winter the cosy interior beckons. And the staff, some of whom alternate with spells at Disfrutar, greet and regale you in any of four languages and with such fervour that you know they all genuinely eat and delight in these very dishes too – so it’s a shared experience in every way.

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