

Review: Catalunya Hong Kong

Authentic Catalan cuisine by chef Alain Devahive Tolosa



Paella doesn't get any prettier than this.

6 May, 2013 - Dominic Ngai



The Spanish have dominated culinary news headlines in recent months. At the San Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurants Awards 2013, three of the top 10 restaurants were Spanish, with Girona's El Celler de Can Roca taking the crown.

Asia, too, finds itself caught in the eye of the storm of the Spanish cuisine uprising. Jason Atherton, who once worked for Ferran Adria at elBulli, has opened three tapas bars in Singapore, Hong Kong, and [Shanghai](#) since 2012.

MORE: [Jason Atherton's 22 Ships review](#)

Now chef Alain Devahive Tolosa, another elBulli alumnus who spent a decade with Adria, has also set up his contemporary Catalan eatery, Catalunya, first in [Singapore](#) and now in Hong Kong.

Atmosphere

Sitting in a quiet corner of Morrison Hill, [Catalunya Hong Kong](#) feels like a shrine and a neighbourhood restaurant all wrapped in one, created for worshippers of Catalan cuisine. The modern, spacious 8,000 square foot interior accommodates 40 people in the lounge area, 140 in the dining room, and a party of 16 in the VIP room.



The street view of Catalunya's main dining room.

Food and drink

Catalunya Hong Kong has a plentiful selection of cocktails, spirits and high-quality Spanish wines. Their signature Stairway to Heaven (HK\$160) cocktail was the most impressive. We loved balance between the fresh coriander leaves, sweet pineapple puree and the tangy lime juice while a small weaved container oozing herb-scented smoke was served on the side for a full-sensory experience.



The must-try cocktail at Catalunya is Stairway to Heaven.

Everything we tasted, from the briny olive oil marinated Cantabrian anchovies (HK\$110) to the bright, elBulli-esque tomato tartar (HK\$100), showed the attention to the quality of ingredients along with the thoughtfulness and skills of chef Alain's team in creating and executing plates that were packed with multiple layers of harmonious flavours and textures.

The ham, cheese and truffle bikini (HK\$115), presented like Singapore's kaya toast, was light and creamy all at once. The combination of melted mozzarella, aromatic truffle shavings, and Iberian ham resting between thin toasted bread slices with the texture of crumbly crackers, brought ham and cheese sandwich to a new level.



The Catalunya tomato tartar was a hit.

The suckling pig tapa (HK\$135), served like cubes of Hangzhou's Dong Po Rou, is more complex than it looks. Strips of meat are layered and pressed between two pieces of crispy skin and served with lemon puree. The salted Mediterranean red prawns (HK\$500) that came next were so fresh and plump that we happily consumed the savoury shells along with the meat.



Taste the Mediterranean in these crimson red prawns.

For dessert, the torrija with smoked milk ice cream (HK\$70) was a delightful surprise that tasted strangely (and deliciously) of bacon. Chocolate lovers would also enjoy the chocolate textures (HK\$95), which was an exciting bittersweet bite accented by the bold presence of saffron and passion fruit.

MORE: [6 best chocolate cakes in Hong Kong](#)

Verdict

Catalunya Hong Kong is already the talk of the town and seems to be on its way in becoming the next power dining hotspot in the city. During its soft opening, the restaurant is open only for dinner from 6pm daily. Lunch service will begin after the grand opening.

Having witnessed so many Spanish restaurants openings in Hong Kong lately, the folks behind Catalunya believe that the spirit of friendly competition only raises the bar for the quality and consistency of Spanish restaurants in the city. In the end, it is a win-win situation for both the diners and restaurant operators.

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MORE: [Want more Spanish food? See our reviews of Querno and Boqueria in Hong Kong.](#)



Born in Hong Kong and raised in Toronto, Dominic Ngai is a walking definition of a Chinese-Canadian. After university, he spent three years in Shanghai eating xiaolongbao and speaking Mandarin with a Canadian accent. Fate has brought him back to his birthplace to start a new chapter in his life. Follow him on Twitter [@dominicdn](#).