

Overview

Dress Code	Reservation Yes	Buffet No
Private Room	Accept Credit Card Yes	Smoking Area No

Signature Dishes

- Bombas from Barceloneta
- The Other Spanish Tortilla
- Traditional suckling pig "Segovian style"

Review

SETTING



Catalunya is, lucky for us, located in the very office block that houses *Hong Kong Tatler* and its sister publications. Set on the ground floor of Guardian House in the quiet end of Oi Kwan Road in Morrison Hill, this restaurant is set up for those in the know – unless you're en route to study, swim, or pray (the area is home to several schools, a public pool and both an Islamic centre and Baptist church), you're unlikely to sweep close to Catalunya's decidedly low-key façade. Wrought iron details envelop the two corners of the large building (which used to house a furniture showroom), and the corner entrance is kept welcomingly open – just inside, a gloriously sultry bar area with glimmering liquor bottles and gentlemanly leather booths is already earmarked as our potential after-work watering hole. Just past, a half-step down, is the main dining room with an impressive glowing lantern centrepiece, around which you'll find tables perfect for anything from conspiratorial dates to raucous group gatherings lubricated with much wine. The only thing that doesn't impress us is the generic thud-thud of the nightclubby soundtrack, which is pitched at odds with the otherwise stylish but welcoming space.

FOOD



Laying claim to an El Bulli connection is by far one of the most overused gimmicks in the restaurant world, but chef Alain Devahive Tolosa is one of few who can do it convincingly. Having worked with Ferran Adria for over ten years, chef Tolosa's style of cooking is very much – as the name of the restaurant also implies – in the realm of contemporary Catalan cuisine. For those who have never experienced the whimsical signatures of what was once the world's best restaurant, those ubiquitous spherical olives are here for your taking, at HK\$15 a pop. The menu is smart and concise, with a good selection of tapas that doesn't take your eyeballs on a rough ride; bigger plates are on the next page, heavy on the meat and seafood with showstoppers such as roasted suckling pig. This theatrical dish serves 3-4, and is rolled out to the table, where waiters deftly (and noisily) chop up the milkily tender meat, the thin crackling breaking like glass sugar, with mere saucers. But some of the more humble, quiet dishes impress deeply – a tomato tartar served with light tomato foam and lacy thin crisps of toast, manages to mimic the texture of a fine raw wagyu mince. The house signature bombas, too, are comforting and satisfying in their simplicity – buttery, silky potato lava encasing minced beef, encased in a crisp and golden exterior anointed with dollops of aioli and spicy paprika-laced sauce. We wish our martini glass containing the flavours of tortilla (in reality a layered concoction with caramelised onion, egg yolk and potato foam) preceded the dish, as the flavour blast of the bomba rendered the quirky tortilla rather bland. Also worth glossing over are the sweetbreads with squid in a non-descript brown sauce oddly reminiscent of the Chinese stir-fry canon; while perfectly tasty, it pales in comparison to the overwhelming Barceloneta seaside flavour carried in a mussel-shaped cast iron pot of lobster rice. While the portion is initially more meagre than we expected, the richness of the plump grains of rice swollen with shellfish stock, garlic and wine becomes overwhelming (in the best way) after a few bites. The lobster is cooked in a way that parts of it are almost still rare, showcasing the natural sweetness and fresh but creamy texture. The desserts menu doesn't do itself justice with curse descriptors – we chose 'Almond', and were presented with a gloriously oozing almond and chocolate fondant with a smooth citrusy orange sorbet.