

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

¡Despedida! to Barcelona's Santa Rita

R. Daniel Foster · Wednesday, November 8th, 2017

Home cooking is chef Xabi Bonilla's specialty, so much so that 8 years ago he launched [Santa Rita Club Gastronómico](#) in his small Barcelona apartment. His flat's open floor plan is optimal for the enterprise, consisting of one large room with an open kitchen that overlooks three tables: one communal, and two private.

Bonilla recently announced he's closing his popular home eatery – you still have two months, however, to taste his autumn menu.

Born in Spain's Basque country (San Sebastián), Bonilla began experimenting in his mother's kitchen, and soon moved to Pamplona for formal training. He's worked in numerous restaurants, most of them notable: Casa Marcial and El Raco d'en Freixa, both with 2 Michelin stars, and Barcelona's Laurak.



Chef Xabi Bonilla of Barcelona's Santa Rita, Club Gastronómico

A decade later, Bonilla said he had entered “an existential crisis as a cook,” and desired to forge his own path. “I realized that the format and the rigidity of a restaurant didn't fit my way of living.” In short, the chef craved the intimacy that a home restaurant would deliver.

Santa Rita is a ten minute walk from the Arc de Triomf Metro stop. The apartment's main room, where all the dining happens, overlooks the Parc de l'Estacio del Nord. The room's decor is simple: ceramic dome lamps hang over tables set with ceramic blue and pink slates. The walls are also a light blue; the overall color scheme lends the meal an easy uplift.

A dark wooden bench with a fold-down center table is placed near the window – typical of mountain lodge furnishings often found in the Pyrenees.

The kitchen's island is just a few feet from the tables; the experience is much like observing a busy host (with two helpers) at a dinner party –except the chef in this setting truly knows what he's doing.



Barcelona's Santa Rita Club Gastronómico

The six course meal began with cured tuna in a mojo picon sauce (native to the Canary Islands), dashed with olives and pickled onions – a standard south of Spain dish. Broken eggs with

mushrooms, (and soon false risotto, plankton and octopus, served in shrimp mayonnaise) followed. We were off to an excellent start. The seasonings were fine and complementary; the textures varied. Other diners at the communal table agreed, with most commenting on the risotto and octopus.



False risotto plankton, octopus and shrimp mayonnaise

The red wine was from Serra de Montsant, a mountain wine region in coastal Northern Spain. Some of the 4,590 acres of vineyards are located near a monastery, which lends the region its name: Cartoixa.



Serra de Montsant, a mountain region in coastal Northern Spain produced the wine

A ravioli duck with pumpkin filling, sage and citrus tempura was served next, smoothed in a carrot sauce. This is where Bonilla's meal truly began in earnest. The taste was lively with honey notes, hit with a citrus tang.

The next dish — veal with sweet potato — was succulent, the meat cascading at the mere touch of a fork. The meat could have been warmer, but since it was cooked at low temperature, I'm certain any further heat would have toughened it. The meals were served on old style traditional porcelain.



Ravioli duck

Dessert: fresh cheese mousse and beetroot with a peanut crumble, edged by figs and plum jam. The entire table loved this dish for its texture and subtle flavors – also its bright colors that seemed paired with the room itself. An after-dish of chocolate studded with lentils was smoky and bittersweet, the lentils lending a nice crunch.

[Santa Rita Club Gastronómico](#), near the Arc de Triomf

Seating at either private or shared tables is 55€ for six courses, not including wine.

Open days Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, from 21h to 24h

Top image credit: R. Daniel Foster

This entry was posted on Wednesday, November 8th, 2017 at 3:19 pm and is filed under [Food](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [Comments \(RSS\)](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.