



## Dining

# Culinary Hit-maker

Acclaimed Barcelona chef scores big again

BY JENNIFER CEASER

**A** TOP A CUP OF bright-crimson hibiscus tea floats a sprig of tiny white Mediterranean wildflowers foraged from the Catalan countryside. It's accompanied by a translucent rectangle of yuzu-flavored "edible paper" dotted with acid-green wasabi and a bite-size "cherryboshi," a chewy rendition of the fruit wrapped in pickled cherry blossom petals. Traditional Japanese music tinkles from above.



This highly stylized, ryokan-inspired moment kicks off the four-hour, 40-plus-course culinary journey at **Enigma**, the newest Barcelona restaurant from white-hot **chef Albert Adrià**. Adrià, who with his older brother, Ferran, put Spain on the world gastronomy map with El Bulli, has established a mini empire of local eateries since the two shuttered the famed three-Michelin-star spot in 2011. His tapas joint, Tickets, scored 25th on the 2017 World's 50 Best Restaurants list.

But Enigma, which opened in January with a months-long waiting list, is Adrià's most ambitious solo effort, a gourmet experience that goes well beyond the typical tasting menu. Each night, the waitstaff guides just 24 dinner guests through six discrete spaces — among them a wine cave, a bar, and a grill area — serving them a series of themed snacks and small plates, referred to as "enigma." The minimalist decor — opaque tables and chairs, frosted wall panels that resemble sheets of ice — virtually recedes into the background, the better to showcase the colors and tastes that define Adrià's inventive, modern cooking.

In the larger, seated dining area, where the bulk of the dinner takes place, servers place dishes before you without divulging their ingredients until after you've finished savoring them. It may sound like a gimmick, but it encourages you to concentrate on the flavors at hand. Plates alternate between deliciously simple — a paper-thin slice of wagyu topped with miso salt — to wonderfully complex, such as king crab served with a spicy-sour lime-coriander ribbon of gelatin and dusted with tiny, crunchy dried shrimp.

For the evening's final stage, the waitstaff ushers you through what looks like a storage area and into a full-fledged cocktail bar. The room buzzes with rock music as mixologists whip up signature drinks such as the Derby, a blend of bourbon, fresh quince, mango cordial, and double-malt beer. It's the perfect way to steel yourself for the bill — about \$240 per person, excluding drinks. *Sepúlveda Street, 38-40, Barcelona; [enigmaconcept.es](http://enigmaconcept.es)*