

MOVING ON

From left, Eduard Xatruch, Oriol Castro and Mateu Casañas, the true head chefs of elBulli who have joined forces to open Compartir.



DOWN TO EARTH

Ferran Adria's right hand men have resurfaced at a sunny seaside eatery in Costa Brava, serving unassuming fare with elBulli DNA. BY JAIME EE

REMEMBER these three names: Eduard Xatruch. Oriol Castro. Mateu Casañas. elBulli may be used as a resume booster for everyone from former stages to junior waiters, but Xatruch, Castro and Casañas are the true head chefs of elBulli – Ferran Adria's trusted right hand men over the years. While they can easily pick from top jobs anywhere, the three best friends have teamed up to open their own place in the popular seaside getaway of Cadaques.

Located two and a half hour's drive from Barcelona in Costa Brava, Compartir – Spanish for 'to share' – is a relaxed eatery in a charming 300-year-old villa with stone walls, classic decor and a terrace for alfresco dining. The chill-out vibe is reflected in its menu – unassuming traditional fare that's not quite tapas in proportion, but family-style plates to pass around.

"We did not want to open a fancy restaurant," says Xatruch, the spokesman for the three. "We have worked 15 years in fine dining, so we want a more relaxed format."

Although the cuisine is traditional, there is no denying that the DNA is still elBulli. "We use advanced techniques like foam, air and spherification, but there is plenty of room for traditional methods as well."

That means pre-meal snacks like wispy crackers dusted with shrimp or seaweed powder or an unusual salad of tomatoes and strawberries covered with a shower of grated Parmesan and a dressing made of almond milk, olive oil and balsamico. Because of its proximity to the sea, the seafood is excellent, especially fresh oysters served in hot suquet (seafood broth). The to-die-for dish? An unforgettable lobster rice – whole plump grains swimming in a potent seafood broth with huge chunks of juicy shellfish. For dessert, superb chocolate bonbons of white chocolate and yoghurt encased in crisp chocolate shells shoot delicious liquid into your mouth.

Besides Compartir, the trio "are also involved with the elBulli Foundation with Ferran – we are currently finishing the book of elBulli 2006-2011, and conceptualising the Bullipedia project."

The Spanish crisis has bitten hard but Compartir is doing encouragingly well, says Xatruch. With its elBulli finesse and down-to-earth cuisine, Compartir is destined to be a long-term spot of sunshine on Costa Brava's dining coast.

Compartir Cadaques, Carrer Unio 14, 17488 Cadaques, Girona. Tel: 972 25 84 82. www.compartircadaques.com



WITH FLAIR

Fresh oysters are served in hot suquet (seafood broth)

CONVIVAL

Compartir is a relaxed eatery in a charming 300-year-old villa with typical stone walls, classic decor and a terrace for alfresco dining. Photos courtesy of Compartir