

 ENIGMA

Albert Adrià's long-anticipated restaurant

Enigma has a couple things in common with his big brother's legendary El Bulli—a penchant for complex flavors and textures and an equally impressive legacy. Comparisons end there. While Ferran revolutionized molecular gastronomy in a bucolic rural setting, Albert's indulgent 50-course tasting menu centers on playful combinations of seasonal and international ingredients and recalibrating the dining experience from a static to a mobile one. This shifting feast takes place in an urban setting that includes a nondescript street entrance in Barcelona and a futuristic, monochromatic gray interior conceived by the chef himself to focus diners' attention on the food.

The inspiration for Enigma—named after the act of deciphering “mystery” dishes—incubated years earlier at Albert's 41° Experience, a tiny 16-seat bar pairing gourmet snacks and cocktails that closed its doors in 2014. Enigma serves a \$235 menu (minus drinks) to only 28 guests at a time in six distinct areas. At their reservation time, guests punch in a secret code

at the entrance and walk down a corridor leading to the first experience: a Japanese *ryokan*-inspired area, where they are greeted, offered a scented hand towel, and served hibiscus tea and nibbles—a *cereboshi*, which is pickled cherry with sakura petals in purple shiso vinegar, and a yuzu-sake crystal wafer sprinkled with wasabi shavings. From there, guests are ushered to each vignette through a meticulously orchestrated service that never seems rushed or prolonged. The Cellar offers tiny courses paired with mini cocktails, such as the nori cube and a

↑ The nori cube is a delicate, paper-thin ring made of caviar, chlorella butter, and crunchy seaweed.

blood-orange-infused sherry.

At the next two stations, the Bar and the Planxa, guests surround staff members who prepare on-the-spot cocktails and morsels devoured in two bites. During the Dinner experience the real game begins, as diners have the option of guessing dish and dessert ingredients—ranging from subtle to convoluted—before the actual flavors are revealed. Here the portions are larger, and standouts include a refreshing two-toned Spanish Raf tomato soup and oysters delicately spritzed with masato,

a juice made from fermented Peruvian yuca. Sweets are composed of equally intricate flavors, such as one made with curry foam mixed with pumpkin sorbet, blood orange, peanut, ginger, mint, and sesame.

The final experience is a re-creation of 41° Experience. For true Adrià fans this is a nostalgic highlight, whether experienced at the end or the beginning of the evening—as Enigma may shuffle its serving sequence to add yet another layer of mystery. enigmaconcept.es —JESSICA BENAVIDES CANEPA



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 ASTRID Y GASTÓN

Chef Gastón Acurio

is a national hero in Peru. When he took time off a few years ago, many expected him to run for president. Instead, he returned to the kitchen last year and spent 4 months changing everything about his flagship, Astrid y Gastón. Located in a splendid 17th-century hacienda in Lima, the once all-white interior now burgeons with contemporary Peruvian artwork, antiques, and rich colors. And the molecular-gastronomy menu has been banished in favor of

Acurio's expressive exploration of Peruvian cuisine. The 15-course tasting menu (\$120; \$206 with pairings) is a tour de force of his greatest hits, such as *cuy* prepared in the style of Peking duck, along with new dishes including a sea-urchin salad with soba noodles. Acurio says he isn't interested in gaining more accolades and just wants to cook and create delicious menus. Are his ambitions that limited? Who knows, but his restaurant is spectacular. astridygaston.com —M.B.