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New Generation Spanish Cooking in Hong Kong

The sweet taste of success for chefs Paco Roncero (View62) and Alejandro Sánchez (Mesa15)



Photo by: @View62 by Paco Roncero.

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Hong Kong is one of the world's great culinary capitals. The former British colony reflects China's new open approach to trade and commerce, which is also a feature of the food and drink scene. The inhabitants of this bustling metropolis are fascinated by the fusion of world cuisines plus the mix of tradition and innovation. Two renowned Spanish chefs, Paco Roncero and Alejandro Sánchez, are living the Hong Kong adventure at first hand.

Paco Roncero, one of the best known names in cutting-edge Spanish cooking, is having a whirlwind 2012. Defying the setbacks of the current international economic situation, this Madrid-born chef is ready to take on the world in defense of his very personal brand of cooking.

In June this year he launched two projects running alongside his fantastic work in **La Terraza del Casino restaurant** and his two **Estado Puro** tapas bars in Madrid. The first involves an exclusive venue inside Casino de Madrid where diners are treated to an evening in which technology, science and cooking come together to create a unique experience. The other is his first restaurant outside Spain, **View62 by Paco Roncero**, based in Hong Kong.

When asked about his first impressions of Hong Kong, the chef is barely able to contain his excitement about this project: "We opened on 15 June with a spectacular event... Since then we've made a limited number of tables available for lunch and dinner to try and get things moving along gradually. We're filling all the tables every day. We're getting very good reviews too, but we can't be over-confident, we have to keep working hard".

Caution is another of Paco's virtues, as he is fully aware that the Asian market is not an easy one. His idea consists of taking the cooking style he has developed in Spain over to Hong Kong, adapting some of its key features to suit local customs. But what is certain to remain unchanged is the unmistakable stamp of forward-looking Spanish cuisine and its products: "In Hong Kong we're introducing a kind of cooking that's very modern, but with Spanish roots" says Roncero, who is obviously fascinated by this great capital city. "It's incredible, there's such an endless variety of restaurants, cultures and cooking styles all packed into such a small space. I wanted to be part of that. Hong Kong is a world leader in cutting-edge design and innovation, all the things I try to make my food stand for".

The city's leading position in the field of technology and innovation did not escape the notice of the founding partners of View62 restaurant. Roncero explains: "We're focusing on creating amazing dishes using modern technology. But, at the same time, we're keeping the essential flavor of the ingredients intact". All this is happening in a remarkable setting: "View62 is the only revolving restaurant in the whole of Hong Kong; it's a very unusual concept that surprises diners, and it's one that I want to reflect in the food we serve here".

From Almería to Hong Kong

Alejandro Sánchez also belongs to this group of young Spanish chefs who have taken Spanish contemporary cuisine to international level. Trained in great Spanish restaurants such as **El Mesón de Doña Filo**, **Casa Solá** and the now closed La Broche alongside **Sergi Arola**, this chef returned to his native Roquetas de Mar (Almería, **Andalusia**) to set up his own restaurant. A real haven of good food, where creativity pays tribute to excellent local produce grown in local fields and from the Mediterranean Sea that surrounds this tourist town.

At the moment, Alejandro is combining his work in Roquetas with running the culinary side of things at **Mesa15** restaurant in Hong Kong. For the last two years he has been commuting between the peace and quiet of Roquetas to the hustle and bustle of a major business center like Hong Kong.

Alejandro can surely be proud to say he brought over to this huge city a series of dishes in which traditional Spanish cooking is presented in an aura of modernity, working with a range of products imported from Spain and with an impressive wine list featuring labels from many of **Spain's wine-producing areas**.

A successful first year at Mesa15 has prompted Alejandro to start making plans to open a second restaurant in Hong Kong. Very few details are available as yet, not even the name has been revealed, but he plans to open in the last quarter of this year.



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