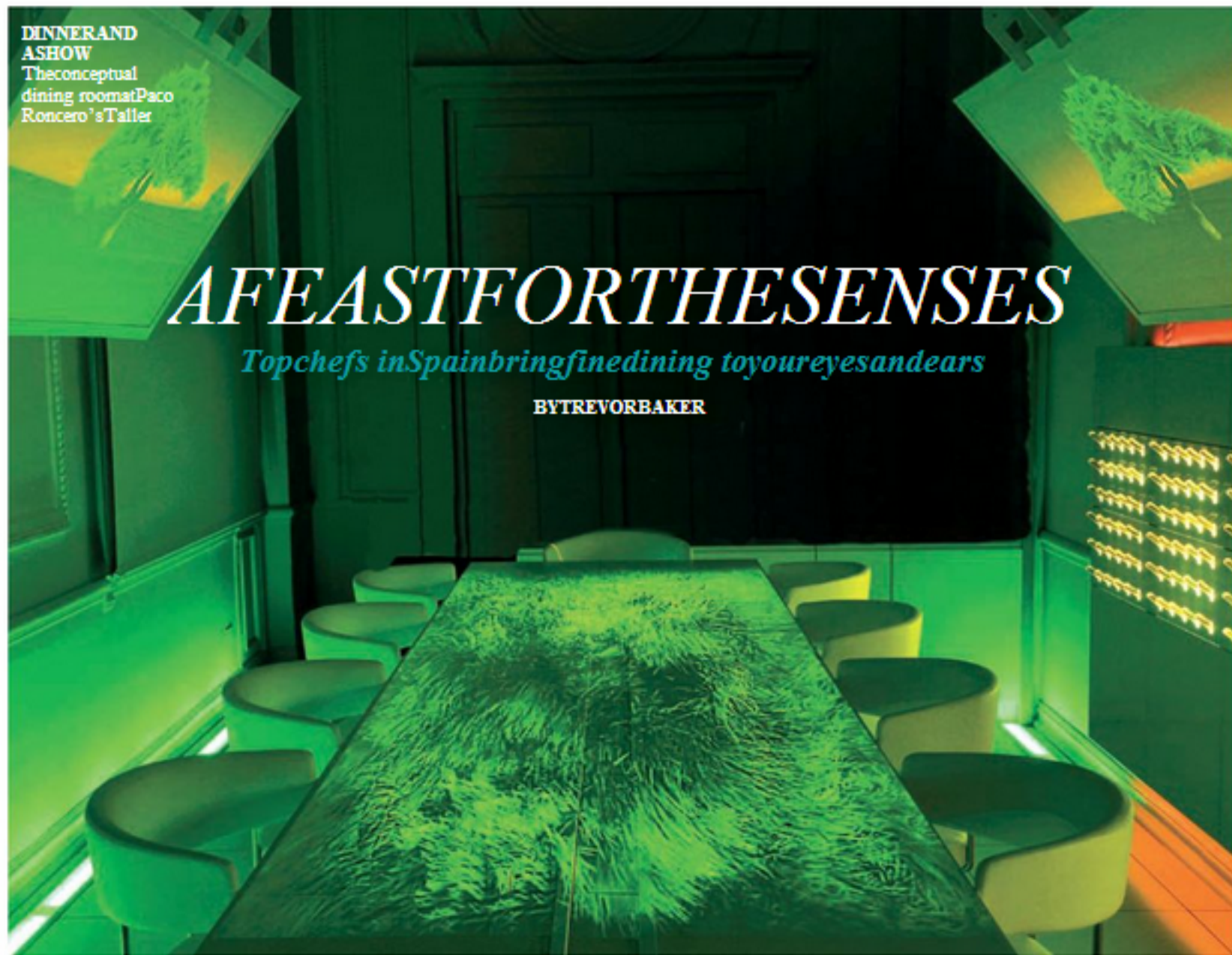


DINNER AND A SHOW
The conceptual dining room at Paco Roncero's Taller

A FEAST FOR THE SENSES

Top chefs in Spain bring fine dining to your eyes and ears

BY TREVOR BAKER



THE PROBLEM WITH sulfur hexafluoride is that it's invisible. This means that the only way Paco Roncero, head chef at Casino de Madrid, in Spain's capital city, can check whether it's there is to breathe it. To demonstrate he picks up a balloon filled with the stuff and takes a deep breath. "It's heavier than air," he explains in a voice that has suddenly acquired a subterranean growl. "It's the opposite of helium. We want to see if we can put it in a dish so the food floats on top. Imagine what that would be like!"

At school, Roncero wanted to be a biologist. That's why, after he became a chef, the natural next step was to work for Ferran Adrià at El Bulli, the world-famous Catalan restaurant where the kitchen was also a

laboratory. Since he runs his own kitchen in the center of Madrid in 2000, however, he's started using that scientific knowledge to play with more than just taste. He's one of a few European chefs who, for the last few years, have been paying attention to all five senses, using projections and sounds as well as tastes and smells. In May, for instance, the Roca Brothers—of "Best Restaurant in the World" El Celler de Can Roca—put on a "gastronomic opera" in Barcelona. Images were projected against the walls and the ceiling, and specially written music accompanied dishes such as a crisp candy apple filled with apple foam and *sobrasada* (a kind of chorizo) paste.

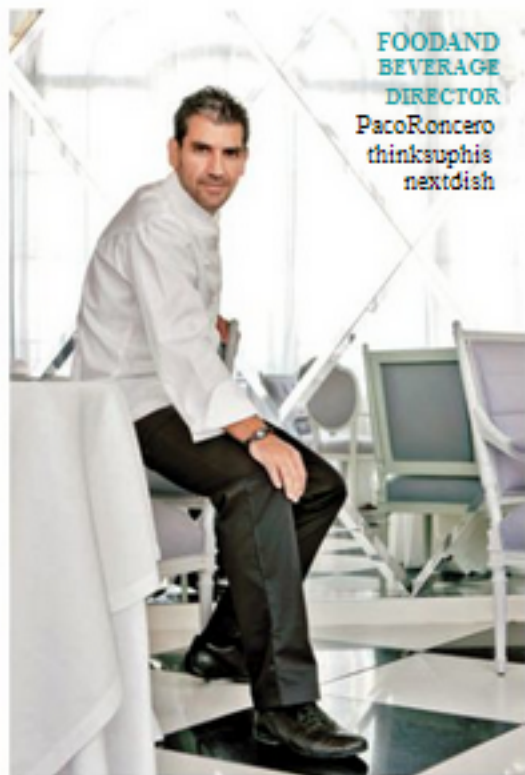
"You're replaying with inputs from other senses to create a magical moment," says

El Celler de Can Roca head chef Joan Roca. "The taste of food is different depending on where you eat it. Coconuts, for example, isn't anything special. It's just sugar. But if you're a child having it for the first time at the fair, it's something magical."

Roncero offers a similarly multisensory experience to anyone who can afford the 8,000 to 15,000 euros for a group of eight, which is the only available seating arrangement at Taller, his food workshop and restaurant in Madrid. It may be pricey, but remember, this is more than just dinner. Highlights include a picture seemingly being painted on the table from a projector above, a Bloody Mary that spins around to the sound of The Rolling Stones' "Let's Spend

theNight Together” and a video of fluttering butterflies that is beamed onto the side of your plate just before real butterflies fly out of the ceiling. Even the temperature and humidity change. (Roncero hopes that next season’s show will include food that floats on air, as well.) With all this going on it would be easy not to notice the virtuosity of the actual food: 17 courses of Mediterranean-influenced technological wonder. Just before the butterflies appear, for example, diners are served a “false risotto,” made of calamari chopped into rice-size chips and blended with green curry sauce.

“The food is always the most important thing,” says Roncero. “In the past we’ve seasoned it with salt and pepper. Now we’re trying to season it with emotion, too.”



FOOD AND BEVERAGE DIRECTOR
Paco Roncero thinks up his next dish



TO EACH HIS OWN
The West Side Highway at Chefs Clubby Food & Wine

MANHATTAN COLLEGE

A Colorado bartender teaches guests how to find the perfect version of the classic cocktail

Bourbon or rye? Single barrel or blended? Traditional sweet vermouth, Antica or Punt e Mes? Though it might seem simple, the classic Manhattan cocktail is more complicated than James Bond’s classic martini. So Anthony Bohlinger, executive bar director at Chefs Clubby Food & Wine in Aspen, Colo., developed his make-your-own Manhattan menu to help guests navigate their options and learn to personalize the cocktail.

“I designed the menu so you can’t have a bad combination of ingredients,” Bohlinger says. Visitors simply pick a whiskey, then move on to a related vermouth and bitters, then add a garnish or two and perhaps a modifier for extra flavor or a personal touch. Here, Bohlinger tells us how to make the bar’s most popular recipe, the West Side Highway. —AMBER GIBSON

BOARDING PASS ▶ Savor service for all your senses in United Business First the next time you head to Madrid. You will relish flat-bed seats, more than 150 hours of on-demand entertainment and menus designed by our congress of award-winning chefs. United flies nonstop to Madrid year-round from our hub in New York/Newark, with summer seasonal service from our hub in Washington, D.C. To discover more about Business First or to book a flight, visit united.com.

West Side Highway

- ▶ 2 oz. High West Son of Bourbon American whiskey
- ▶ 4 dashes Angostura bitters
- ▶ ¼ oz. Aperol
- ▶ Brandied cherry
- ▶ ¾ oz. rosemary-infused Carpano Antica vermouth
- ▶ Sprig of thyme

To infuse the vermouth, place five rosemary stems in a liter bottle of Carpano Antica and let steep for several days. Strain. To make the cocktail, combine all liquid ingredients over ice in a mixing glass. Stir for 20 seconds. Strain into a chilled coupe glass. Garnish with the sprig of thyme and brandied cherry.