

## REPORT

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WEEKLY DISPATCHES FROM ROGUE MAGAZINE

WEEK OF OCTOBER 13, 2013



## A Culinary Trinity

For the three brothers running the world's best restaurant, it all started in their mother's kitchen. El Celler De Can Roca's brilliantly understated modern Catalan cuisine has stealthily taken the culinary world by storm

Words by Pamela Cortez

At El Celler de Can Roca, meals start with an olive tree. After an *amuse bouche* or two, a bonsai-sized olive tree, which signifies the start of every meal here, is placed in front of you. You're encouraged to pick an olive from a branch then pop the juicy orb into your mouth—and what a textural surprise: the olive is covered in a thin layer of caramel, stuffed with anchovies. It's beautiful, simple, but complex at the same time, and this singular olive represents the kind of cuisine eldest brother Joan cooks at Can Roca. It is worlds away from that other Catalan restaurant, whose famous olive is an exercise in molecular gastronomy—Can Roca is still experimental, but wildly understated.

While the restaurants surrounding San Sebastian became a culinary trip for gastronomes everywhere, Can Roca (which is how it is known to locals) climbed its way to the top of the San Pellegrino list with relatively less noise than their Basque counterparts and eclipsed often by close neighbor El Bulli. Situated in Girona, a good five-hour drive away from the Michelin capital, the restaurant has humble roots. The three brothers behind the world's best restaurant, Joan, Josep, and Jordi, grew up in their mother's kitchen—the original Can Roca, which opened in 1967—honing their individual skills until eventually opening beside it in 1986. To this day, family is very important to how El Celler de Can Roca is run, with staff meals served not in the new space where the current incarnation stands, but back at their mother's old restaurant.

The magic of Can Roca lies in their synergy, with the brothers at the helm of the three elements integral to running a Michelin-stand establishment: eldest brother Joan, the head chef, middle brother Josep, the sommelier running the front of house, and young upstart Jordi, the impulsive force in charge of the pastry kitchen. They work together in a way only siblings could, with an inherent intuition as well as a deep respect of each other's work. In fact, their skills oftentimes influence

each other; for instance, Josep's extensive knowledge of wine plays an important role in the savory kitchen, with Joan developing dishes that often feature texturized wine, such as anchovies, truffle, and merlot.

Though Can Roca is often known for being a molecular kitchen—brother Joan did, after all, develop the roter machine responsible for modern-day *sous-vide* cooking—but Joan Roca pays tribute to Catalan cuisine in every aspect of their modernist menu. His signature dish is an ode to a prawn native to the region, always grilled and surrounded by ingredients from the ocean, the head juices intact. Pastry at Can Roca is also very different from most experimental kitchens, which tend to use savory ingredients—I recall a very challenging dish in Nuno Mendes's *Viajante* that paired my chocolate soil with milk-braised jicama—they are inventive but still retain a sweet quality. Jordi Roca's most famous dish combines a fruit made from blown sugar, resting on a bed of candyfloss.

The brothers are a collective force. They run a catering business, two hotel restaurants, and an ice-cream parlor among others. However, their most daunting undertaking yet is the culinary opera *El Somni*, which all three brothers have been working on with artist Franc Aleu. Whispers about the opera say that it merges cinema, food, and music in a way that has not yet been approached. Though a trailer entitled "Dreams," can now be viewed online, there is no real indication as to what the 12 diners for each seating will experience at *El Somni*—except that the concept will most definitely be challenging, a pleasurable assault on the gastronomic senses.

Taking on the title of World's Best Restaurant is a daunting task, to say the least, but the Rocas have rightfully inherited the crown from El Bulli, reclaiming the culinary prestige for Spain—Catalunya in particular. It is an experience that delight anyone with a love of good food, without alienating them. That is, if you can manage to get yourself a seat.

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## Rediscovering Ossorio

Words by Chryssa Celestino

A little known figure finally coming to light within the intersections of Abstract Expressionism, Art Brut, and Assemblage is the late Filipino-American artist and collector Alfonso Ossorio. Born in Manila in 1916 into a family built on a sugar fortune from Negros Occidental, Ossorio led a life of affluence: he resided in America, was educated by Harvard and English boarding schools, and hosted the likes of Jackson Pollock, Jean Dubuffet, Mark Rothko, Max Ernst, and Willem de Kooning in his Hampton home. His art swims in the ambiguities of the figures he obscures—religious, human, or imagined—yet remains afloat in the precision of his draftsmanship. In the Philippines, Ossorio leaves a legacy through *The Angry Christ* mural at St. Joseph the Worker Church in Victorias, Negros Occidental, where Jesus is depicted less in his immaculacy, and more in rage and unconventional vibrancy.

Following recent interest in the late Ossorio's impact, particularly on Abstract Expressionism, running concurrently in New York to show his work from the late 40s to early 50s are the solo exhibit at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in Chelsea (his 10th one-man show with the gallery), and the group exhibit with his contemporaries Jackson Pollock and Jean Dubuffet at Parrish Art Museum in the Hamptons organized by the Phillips Collection, Washington DC.

Alfonso Ossorio: *Blood Lines*, 1949–1953  
Runs until October 26, 2013  
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery  
100 11th Avenue, New York, NY



Photo by Charlie Gonzalez

## I Got Soul But I'm Not A Soldier

Head up north to La Union from October 24 to 27 for *Soul Surf*, a festival celebrating the province's vibrant surfing culture, flourishing art, and independent music.

Words by Arienne Lim

La Union is the surfing capital of the North for many reasons. It doesn't just have endless waves all-year-long and for all skill levels; it's also become an alternative beach destination for anyone looking for a good time. European backpackers grabbing beers with Manila surfers, local rockstars jamming with L.U. locals—you might even say it's the country's epicenter of beach bohemia. Yes, there will be surf workshops, a pro-surf competition, and other beachside activities like yoga and live art sessions during the day, but

Soul Surf (LaUnionSoulSurf.com) offers much more than the waves to get stoked on. Headlining this three-day surf and music festival are international music acts Classixx, RAC (Remix Artists Collective), and Panic City. The best of local audio fare will also be performing in force, from Franco, Salamin, Indio I, and Tropical Depression, to Quest, The Bloomfields, DJ Euric, and Nix Damn N.

Different packages are available to make sure that whatever wave you're riding, whether it's on a surfboard or on a soundtrack, it will be nothing short of epic.