



Albert Adria strikes out on his own



Photo: ST

It also inspires them to think up original ideas, he adds, citing the restaurant L'Eggs by Spanish chef Paco Perez in Barcelona, which features the titular item cooked every which way.

Chef Adria, who has a six year-old son, Alex, with his wife and publicist *Silvia Fernandez*, 40, is highly regarded among the chefs who have worked at elBulli.

He started there at age 15, working through the different stations in the restaurant before focusing on pastry and creating the whimsical desserts served in the restaurant.

In 1997, he left its kitchen but went on to run El Taller, the Barcelona workshop which created the cutting edge techniques that have made elBulli famous.

These include hot jellies and spherification, a technique used to make wobbly exploding olives, mango "ravioli" and caviar-like pearls filled with olive oil and other flavours.

In 2007, he opened Inopia, a tapas bar in Barcelona, while still involved with elBulli.

"It was good to do something for myself," he says. "elBulli is quite special. I wanted to go out to see what is real life."

He later took an 18-month break to "have a family life" and to cook for Alex and watch him grow up.

During that time, he was also thinking up new ideas, which have since been realised in his clutch of restaurants.

He is not done tinkering with them either.

In October, he will move 41 Degrees about 700m away to a much larger building, and Tickets will occupy the vacated space. There are also plans to start a cocktail school.

On the website which gives information about his restaurants, es.bcn50.org, there is an intriguing link called Enigma 2014.

Click on the box and up pops a photograph of two adjoining buildings that seem to be in a city other than Barcelona.

Asked if he will open restaurants outside of Spain and the chef says at first that he has no plans to do so. Then he reveals that he is likely to open a restaurant in New York next year.

In fact, he is headed to the Big Apple at the end of this month to look at a space his investors have found.

There is also the beach club he wants to open in the Dominican Republic next year, and he is challenging himself to make it the best beach club in the Caribbean.

Why the Dominican Republic?

The businessman in chef Adria says: "There is a good airport and rich Americans holiday there."

And after that, who knows what the chef might turn his inquiring mind to.

"Chinese food, you have a thousand concepts, it's unbelievable. It's one of the best kitchens in the world," he says.

"I love the wok, the big fire."

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