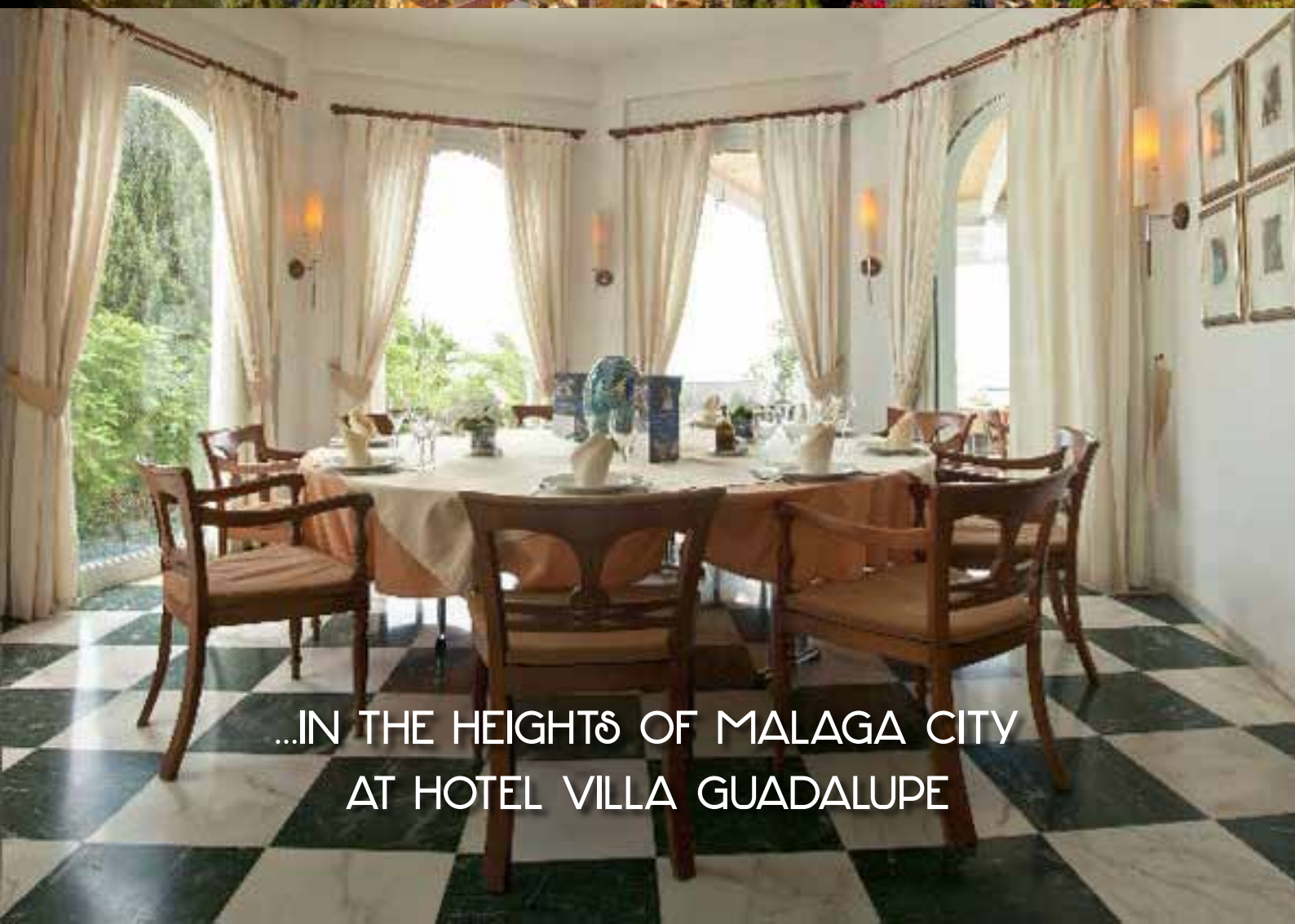


Eat, Sleep, Love...



...IN THE HEIGHTS OF MALAGA CITY
AT HOTEL VILLA GUADALUPE

ANDALUSIAN FINE-DINING IN SOUTHERN SPAIN'S FOOD CAPITAL

Sunshine fills the room, refracting through the wine glasses, casting coloured light on the pristine table cloth. One side of the dining room is panoramic windows, whilst the other is covered in striking, oversized canvases; elegant original artworks that add sophistication and colour to the space.



Placed on the table is a sharing tapa of 'Croquetas de Rabo de Toro', (homemade oxtail croquettes). Oxtail is a classic dish in Southern Spain, yet served here on black slate as croquettes, after a preparation that has taken some two days, it is no ordinary tapa.

FINE DINING - BEYOND TAPAS

Spain's food scene is undoubtedly world-class, with the country's innovative and modern chefs regularly acknowledged as being amongst the finest around. Andalucía is riding this wave of culinary inventiveness and success too, with a burgeoning restaurant and bar scene. Malaga's capital is one of the most creative food cities in the country and has been instrumental in the reinvention of the classic Spanish tapa.

This time though I'm not eating in a tapas bar, but in an elegant restaurant. It's a real pleasure to be enjoying fine dining in a city that is all too often associated with Spain's diminutive bite-sized sharing food.



CROQUETAS DE RABO DE TORO

After enjoying a small, tasty croquette of oxtail, and sipping some wine, the first plate arrives; 'Terrina de foie con migas de pan de jengibre, emulsión de manzana Granny Smith y perlas de manzana al oporto'. (Foie gras terrine with ginger breadcrumbs, an emulsion of Granny Smith apples and port wine apple pearls). It is an elegant dish, using some traditional ingredients combined with modern flavours and presented in a creative way.

Sharing this meal with me is Candace Garland, whose doesn't disguise her passion for the food. She enthusiastically explains the menu and its ingredients, the background to the restaurant, as well as the work of the chef, Amador.



AMADOR FERNÁNDEZ - CHEF

A member of Andalucía's 'GastroArte' association of culinary masters of Southern Spain, the chef is Amador Fernández Van Vūjhem. The

venue is his signature eatery, 'Restaurante Amador', within the boutique Hotel Villa Guadalupe, Malaga.

I've been wanting to come here for a long time. Amador has a strong reputation, and his family hotel tops Trip Advisor, and his restaurant regularly garners exceptional reviews.

Meeting Amador before the meal, on the restaurant's sun-drenched terrace which overlooks

the city of Malaga and out to the sparkling Mediterranean, I was struck by his friendly, humble personality. He is no kitchen bad-boy, but instead a gentle man who focuses his significant talent on bringing joy to diners, day after day.

Lunch continued, and the next dish was a delight: 'Ajoblanco Malagueño con sorbete de higo chumbo', (Traditional Malaga almond and garlic cold soup served with a prickly pear sorbet and sautéed langoustines). Served with poise by the waiter Antonio, the silky smooth ajoblanco is gently poured over the sorbet and prawns, filling the dish. Again inspiration for this creation comes from the classic Andalusian kitchen, yet Amador's version of ajoblanco has a freshness and sophistication that lifts it to the level of fine dining. The coolness of the sorbet, made from local prickly pears, the perfectly cooked prawns and the smooth ajoblanco make for a delectable combination of textures and subtle flavours.

Candace, who has been working at the hotel for almost 5 years in a front-of-house role, tells me more about the 11 room property. It is in the style of a large villa, in a privileged situation in the chic, upmarket residential area of El Atabal. Interestingly this elevated part of Malaga was once a Dutch Colony, and Amador's Spanish father, Alfonso Fernández Nieto was instrumental in the development of the area into a prestige neighbourhood. He constructed the hotel, a family business that is home to 'Restaurante Amador'.



TERRINA DE FOIE CON MIGAŞ DE PAN DE JENGIBRE



AJOBLANCO MALAGUEÑO CON SORBETE DE HIGO CHUMBO

ALEXANDER FERNÁNDEZ
- HOTEL MANAGER AND SOMMELIER

As we chat, Alexander Fernández Van Vüjhem suggests a different wine for the following courses – a young 'Ganacha' (Grenache) red from Malaga winery Bodegas Jorge Ordonez. Alex is Alfonso's other son, and like his brother Amador, he shares a passion for creating the perfect dining experience for clients. Alex is the hotel's friendly and welcoming manager and his knowledge and expertise of wine makes him an approachable and helpful sommelier in the restaurant.



GANACHA RED FROM BODEGAS JORGE ORDONEZ

The seductive and subtle aromas of the next course in this extravagant and indulgent tasting menu reach the table just before the plate. The dish is 'Ensalada de presa Ibérica ahumada con madera de cerezo, servida con un salmorejo de aguacate', (Cherry wood smoked, Iberian pork fillet salad served with an avocado salmorejo). The pork is slowly smoked onsite and the slightly sweet smelling, smoked bouquet is delicate and truly appetising. Combined with the avocado, the resulting taste is deliciously clean and flavourful.



ENSALADA DE PRESA IBÉRICA AHUMADA CON MADERA DE CEREZO, SERVIDA CON UN SALMOREJO DE AGUACATE

IRENE VAN VLIJMEN - ARTIST

The lunch is proving to be a work of art. It seems creativity runs throughout the family. The impressive works that adorn the walls of the dining room and the other spaces of the hotel are by Irene Van Vlijmen, Amador's and Alex's mother. Originally from the Netherlands, Irene was to make Spain her adoptive home, and start a family with Alfonso. They married in Guadalupe, explaining the unusual name for this Malaga Hotel.

Always having a passion for the peninsula, Irene studied at Madrid's Real Academia de Bellas Artes San Fernando. There she specialised in the monumental arts, with a particular focus on the painting of frescos. Remarkably, shortly afterwards Irene was the only non-Spaniard selected for a significant national exhibition of Spanish artists and her career blossomed. The late Irene Van Vlijmen's extraordinary works, found throughout the hotel, and the coloured glass mosaics at the hotel entrance, are a beautiful legacy of her great artistry.



The fish course is served; 'Mero salvaje servido con salsa de pil- pil de gambones' was served. (Wild red grouper served with a king prawn "pil-pil" sauce).



MERO SALVAJE SERVIDO CON SALSA DE PIL- PIL DE GAMBONES

As a Malaga restaurant one can expect great fish here, and Candace explains that the fresh fish is brought to the restaurant daily by a deep sea fishermen. Here again Amador demonstrates his commitment to quality fresh ingredients. Earlier he described his commitment to sourcing exceptional ingredients that make each plate a success – it's fundamental to his approach and he's proud of the rich source of produce in Spain in general and in Andalusia in particular.

The delicate dish is complemented by a subtle garnish of fresh thyme sprigs and an edible flower. In fact almost all dishes are given an additional visual and taste dimension with the use of edible flowers. The aromatic herbs and flowers are grown in the hotel's own vegetable garden and provide the perfect complement to Amador's complex and tantalising dishes.

The penultimate dish, the meat course, is 'Costilla de ternera "Black Angus", servida con cremoso de chirivias'. (Imported Black Angus short rib, slow cooked (for 72 hours) served with a parsnip puré). The meat is cooked using the 'sous-vide' system, where it is vacuum wrapped and very slowly cooked in a water bath, in this case for 72 hours. The result is exceptionally tender meat that is perfectly cooked throughout; the outside and inside are cooked gently and to the same degree.

It sounds a cliché to describe meat as 'falling off the bone' but it's certainly fair in this case; the tender beef rib is so rich in flavour, with a buttery smooth texture.



COSTILLA DE TERNERA BLACK ANGUS, SERVIDA CON CREMOSO DE CHIRIVIAS

CANDACE GARLAND

- MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Candace is able to answer my questions about the food and restaurant with ease; she clearly knows the Villa Guadalupe very well. She came here from Canada as part of her hospitality studies and fell in love with Malaga. Now responsible for the marketing communications of the hotel and restaurant, Candace has worked in almost all aspects of the family business, from helping in the kitchen, to serving in the restaurant, as well as meeting and greeting guests. Candace has fallen not only in love with Malaga, but also with one of the city's great chefs. It's no secret that Candace has found her true love here, in the appropriately named chef Amador.

WEDDING VENUE

The two are to marry in October, 2014 and Candace will continue to be very much part of this family run hospitality business. The wedding reception will of course be held here. Hotel Villa Guadalupe is already a favourite amongst the Malaga elite and international visitors for exclusive, intimate weddings parties. The large dining room and expansive outdoor terrace with seductive views across the city and the Mediterranean make for a magical setting.



I've almost polished off the bottle of red by the time the pudding arrives; a striking plate of 'Tarta de queso y vainilla con glaseado de arándanos y helado de violetas' (Vanilla cheesecake served with a blueberry glaze and violet ice cream). Visually it's a winner, and once you spoon into the smooth cheesecake and taste it with the violet ice-cream, it only gets better.



DESTINATION DINING

Restaurante Amador is a popular dining destination, offering a la carte lunches and evening meals throughout the week. Guests can also help design their own tasting menus like the one I have enjoyed. Weekends see regular live music for a more vibrant atmosphere, perfect for extending an evening meal with after dinner drinks and dancing on the terrace.

Hotel guests can benefit during the week from a specially priced set menu that makes eating at the hotel unbeatable value, and many diners choose to take a room, making the dining experience a complete break.



The small hotel has an outdoor salt water infinite swimming pool and sun terrace both with views. Most guest rooms also have private balconies overlooking the city. The hotel's location offers easy access to the city's main arteries, making getting here easy. Malaga city centre is just a 15 euro taxi ride away, taking about as many minutes.

The hotel is also well placed for access to the airport, making it an attractive destination for the beginning or end of a vacation on the Costa de Sol.

So, for a delicious flavour of Andalucía's e
volving gastronomic scene, pay a visit to:
RESTAURATE AMADOR AT THE HOTEL VILLA GUADALUPE.

HOTEL VILLA GUADALUPE

Urbanización: El Atabal
Bandaneira 6
29190 SPAIN



Phone + (34) **952 43 28 62**

Fax + (34) **952 10 02 13**

vlijmen@villaguadalupe.com

WWW.VILLAGUADALUPE.COM