



TOP NOTCH DINING IN BARCELONA, SPAIN

| BY TRACY ELLEN BEARD
PHOTOS COURTESY OF EACH RESTAURANT

The food scene in Barcelona is not limited to tapas and a glass of vermouth. Currently 25 one, two and three Michelin-starred restaurants pepper the city limits offering diners incredible high-end culinary experiences. Two spectacular choices worth a visit are Caelis and Enoteca.



CAELIS ROMAIN FORNELL

[Chef Romain Fornell](#) obtained his first Michelin Star in 2001 at La Chaldette in France at the youthful age of 24. A year later, he moved to Barcelona taking the reins at Restaurante Diana that was located at a place known at that time as the Hotel Ritz. Diana eventually converted into [Caelis](#), and the restaurant separated from the hotel business.

Caelis received a Michelin star in 2005, and Chef Fornell became the only chef to acquire a Michelin star in both France and Spain. Over the years Chef Fornell has opened several other tempting restaurants.

In 2017 Caelis shifted in concept and place. The cuisine is now less classical and more contemporary, and the restaurant moved into the Hotel Ohla Barcelona.

Sitting at the chef's table is a treat. Michelin star restaurants must maintain consistency. I spent a delightful evening observing the staff meticulously prepare identical plates. My dinner began with six single-bite tastings, each one delicious, but the pumpkin gnocchi with truffle ice stood out. The tiny gnocchi bathed in a pool of sweetened chardonnay vinaigrette, frozen truffle water and minuscule pieces of white mushroom. It was light, fruity and refreshing.

The following courses offered items from both the sea and the land. Oysters shared the stage with duck liver and a refreshing pickled sauce. Sturgeon and caviar lay on the plate with mushrooms atop a rich brown chicken stock. Precision-cut steak, slow-cooked egg yolk, iced mustard pearls, fried caper berry, and soy vinaigrette made an amazingly balanced plate with phenomenal viscosity and bright acidity.

The red mullet, my favorite, arrived with small potato cylinders, cilantro/basil pesto, potato aioli, garlic chips, and toasted pine nuts. After a spectacular cheese course and celery sorbet, the showstopping finale arrived, a crystal lemon. The outside shell reminded me of blown glass made from sugar and lemon juice, and a lemon foam filled the inside creating a diversity of textures. Lemon gel and basil sorbet adorned the dish.

Reserve a seat at the chef's table at Caelis for an incredible evening of insight and entertainment. For additional high-end experiences, contact the Barcelona Premium program at www.barcelonapremium.com.



ENOTECA PACO PÉREZ

[Chef Paco Pérez](#) began his culinary journey at the early age of 12 working at his family's tapas bar. Chef Pérez has earned five Michelin stars: two at Miramar restaurant in Llançà on the coastline of the Costa Brava in Spain; two at [Enoteca](#) inside the Hotel Arts Barcelona in Barcelona, Spain; and one at 5 Cinco by Paco Pérez in Berlin, Germany.

Chef Pérez focuses on Mediterranean gastronomy using fresh products from the garden, the mountains, and the sea. He serves a rendition of contemporary cuisine with classic and inventive touches. Chef Pérez reimagines the use of quality ingredients, creating exquisite and delicious dishes with innovative aromas, tastes and textures.

My tasting menu at Enoteca began with a lovely play on cappuccino. A delectable mix of deep rich stock fashioned from chicken and mushrooms was topped with black truffle foam

and dusted with cocoa powder. As a starter, it was delightful and surprising. Five small bites followed the "coffee." The crisp tempura-style octopus coexisted with dots of saffron emulsion, petite cilantro leaves and a dab of Moroccan spices.

I love trying new things, and at Enoteca I sampled espartenyas fricandó. Espardenyes are sea cucumbers, and fricandó is a stew typically made with beef and vegetables. Chef Pérez's fricandó was intense and hearty unleashing all the flavor of a typical stew, yet he produced it without any beef. This creative and incredibly scrumptious dish made my top-ten list of inspired foods.

The Mediterranean tuna was delicate and light, the sole with champagne sauce and mushrooms were perfectly cooked, and the squab with a thousand-day mole sauce finished with just the right amount of spicy heat.

The truffled brie crunch, another fabulously surprising dish offered at Enoteca, was heavenly. Shards of meringue sandwiched velvety brie complemented by a small piece of cotton candy which brought an incredible texture and sweetness to the plate. The combination was incredibly creative and unbelievably delicious. This "cheese course" led the way toward the desserts. The diversity of red fruits with smoked sheep milk ice cream was bright and refreshing without being overly sweet. Chef Pérez's interpretation of the "Prince Cookie" was revolutionary. His "cookie" with chocolate mousse and mascarpone toffee ice cream was a unique take on the traditional cookie.

Book a reservation at Enoteca and enjoy a culinary adventure that will tantalize your taste buds.