

Booked up from scratch: Simon Petutschnig's secret recipe for success

The trendy restaurant "Fera" in Palma has reason to celebrate: in just five years, the restaurant has become one of the finest gastronomic addresses on Mallorca. In this interview, 44-year-old chef Simon Petutschnig talks about hospitality, the magic of sauces and his favourite products.

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Simon Petutschnig is head chef at the Fera restaurant on Mallorca. (Photo: © Natxo Bassols)

Mr Petutschnig, five years of Fera - a lot has happened in that time: first Corona, then staff shortages, now the high food prices. And Fera is still on the road to success. How do you do that?

Indeed, there was a lot of movement. Through Corona, we also had time to think in the beginning. And for us it became even clearer that there is only one way: to focus on hospitality and quality.

Even if it has its price?

Quality has its price. You have to decide: Do you want to offer quality or not? For us, the answer was and is clear: There is nothing else than quality at Fera. Good food has become expensive. That is true. We have to adjust the prices.

How do the guests react to this?

For this kind of cuisine, you really have to have guests who are willing to spend the money. And we have them. Our guests are connoisseurs, they appreciate the quality of our cuisine. That is our trademark.

Five years of Fera: From new to fully booked - how did you achieve that?

That doesn't happen by chance. You have to work for it. The guests trust us. They know that what we offer is fairly priced. Many guests are very loyal, repeat offenders, so to speak (*laughs*).

And there are guests who thank you warmly when you say goodbye - with happy faces. That's a nice reward. And it also does something to the team.

What has changed about your way of cooking in the five years?

I concentrate even more on the product, let the product speak for itself. And perhaps I cook less technically, more old school again. Very much in the tradition of classic French haute cuisine.

For example, I have completely changed the kitchen organisation and created a saucier station again. And I cook all the sauces, stocks and jus myself. That takes a lot of time. But it's worth it! Sauces are the soul of a dish.

Has the presentation of your dishes changed?

We have become whiter. We used to have grey plates, then black, red, green, blue. Now we are more in the purist phase.



In the Fera restaurant, everything is now served in white. (Photo: © Natxo Bassols)

We arrange everything in white, which includes white tablecloths. That has more finesse, more elegance. And the dishes come out particularly well. It's like when you paint a picture: if

you have a white background - and not a blue or green one - you have much more freedom to create something that is also an eye-catcher in terms of colour.

Are there any new trends that you are following now?

Trends? With me, the guests set the trends. I talk to them a lot, listen to them. What do they like, what do they particularly like? I base my decisions on that more than on my own personal preferences. It makes no sense if I love fish soup but no one orders it.



The Fera restaurant in Palma (Photo: © Natxo Bassols)

What do the Fera guests love?

Mallorcan products like gambas from Sóller, for example. But also others like Gillardeau oysters, Wagyu and Simmental beef or caviar.

Has anything changed in this respect in the five years?

Not when it comes to taste. But my feeling is: people are enjoying more since the beginning of the Corona pandemic.

We offer a chef's menu in the evening: in a long and a shorter version. 80 per cent of guests choose the longer - and more expensive - menu! And at lunchtime we now also offer a chef's menu with exclusive products for 100 euros. Here, too, over 50 per cent of the guests choose the gourmet version. Even at lunchtime, the motto is: enjoy.

It's about enjoyment. And about the price-performance ratio. If it fits, the guests appreciate it. But we also have a small, less expensive gourmet menu and offer a veggie menu. And you can also eat à la carte here.

Which product fascinates you again and again?

Onions and shallots! Simple products, but so essential and versatile. In purees, soups, sauces, vinaigrettes, beurre blanc, hollandaise sauce ...

You've been cooking since you were 16. Is cooking still your dream job?

I am lucky that I enjoy my job. It's not work for me, it's a vocation. If you do a job with love, passion, enthusiasm and dedication, then - so they say - you won't have to work for the rest of your life.

Can food make you happy?

Definitely. When it's something you really look forward to and the proverbial mouth waters. Carinthian Kasnudeln and my mother's apple strudel in Austria, for example. Or a good burger with homemade bread. Dishes must have a soul. It must contain the soul of the person who prepares it. For me, that is soul food.

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