

ADAPTATION IS THE WAY FORWARD

BY MATEU CASAÑAS, ORIOL CASTRO, AND EDUARD XATRUCH



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The two Michelin-starred Disfrutar restaurant in Barcelona has not two, but three Uber-talented creative geniuses (Mateu Casañas, Oriol Castro and Eduard Xatruch) at the helm. The trio, in their words, were the DNA of Ferran Adria's elBulli restaurant, the world's premier culinary incubator, before venturing out on their own. Undoubtedly their skills match their passion for gastronomy and as they face the COVID-19 crisis looming over Spain, their beloved Barcelona and their own Disfrutar and Compartir restaurants they reflect on how the food world will be impacted.

First, and we will not tire of doing it every time we have the opportunity, we want to thank the work of all those who protect us and make our lives easier these days. Especially to all those who take care for those who need it most, as there are many houses where luck shows the worst of it's face.

That said, it is clear that what we are writing here is the result of the reflections of three people, Eduard Xatruch, Oriol Castro and Mateu Casañas and, as such, we do not try at all to describe any absolute truth, we just

want to simply express our most humble opinion to make it available to anyone who might be interested in what we have to say.

A sudden stop around the world in such a short period of time, if we are not wrong, is a totally unprecedented event. There were few who have interpreted globalization as a potential problem, so far, all were advantages... it is clear, and now it has been proven that not everything was so easy, and reality has put us in our place.

On the other hand, those of us who live in the

first world, if there are two worlds, we must accept that we are also vulnerable and that there is probably an awkward question, but that many ask ourselves: what would have happened if the south hemisphere would have been the most punished again? Would we have continued to live as if nothing happened in our untouchable bubble? Would there have been an economic-social setback? That should make us think deeply.

It is difficult to comment on a situation of which, we are convinced, we have not yet assimilated the real consequences that it will have in our lives, but we cannot help but be absorbed in optimism that blindly relies on the capacity of all as to collective to overcome any situation no matter how difficult it is. This has been demonstrated to us by all the generations before us, so we won't give up easily.

It is also true, however, that doubts are there, and these create mistrust, fears and many feelings that we should keep away from our daily lives and, therefore, we ask that they clearly keep us informed in detail.

This is the only tool we have, obviously leaving aside the VACCINE we all crave. Information is the only antidote to fear and can help the whole of society to keep their hopes intact.

The sudden stoppage we have had to deal with has been devastating. First of all, the first two weeks we had to take care of the people close to us: the customers, who were waiting for an experience in our home and, especially, the TEAM, all of them helped us get on track in a not very pleasant situation for anyone and with few alternatives. We must thank them all sincerely!

Once we had overcome these first obstacles, we began to make slow, quiet reflections, long and deep, trying to look inwards the way we had been doing for some time. Searching well within ourselves to understand what had happened, where we were, and especially trying to interpret where we were going and how we should do it.

We need to be able to analyse our problems without looking too much at the navel





(Spanish phrase: being self-absorbed or self-centered) and, in doing this, we will be able to set a good scale of priorities and seeing who we can help before setting our sights on ourselves. The situation is complex, there is no manual for situations like this, and we believe that we must let ourselves be carried to help others in everything they need. The day-to-day agenda, as it should be otherwise, is marked by the urgencies demanded by society and it must be this way.

Gastronomy is a very transversal sector that involves many people both directly and indirectly. From the most primary of the sectors such as hunting, fishing or gathering, farms, distributors, transport, neighbourhood markets, restaurants and bars of all kinds: neighbourhood, casual, restaurants based in a product, and even the most avant-garde ones, based on a tireless creative and conceptual work... All of them work day by day in a hard but very rewarding profession, the attention to others.

Each and every one has different problems, some common and, therefore, also different solutions.

We do not like to talk about re-invention, we prefer to talk about ADAPTATION. Adapting to the new situation is the only way we can go beyond this new dimension in which we have fallen in recent weeks. Being true to our professional principles and paying attention to what really in essence means that we are unconditionally committed to our principles, both personal and professional. The COVID-19 will not change us, we will be the same as always and we will fight for an idea, cook as we know and show us as we are, without more.

It's is no secret that the bravery of the people to go back to living more or less normal life depending on theirsituation, will conditioned their return to normal. As a sector, we need to make a firm commitment to solidarity and, above all, to help us all begin to move the wheel that moves us all.

The recovery of the labour market is the key for society to overcome this problem that has stopped us all today, and only from the commitment of employers, employees and clients will we be able to re-flow everything, to distribute, the more the better, the return generated in all directions.

As entrepreneurs, we are aware that the goals for 2020 can only be to lose a little. We are aware that, economically speaking, we will have a negative balance and, the three of us, as the top managers of the company, we will do everything in our power so that we can remain more united, strong and determined with our culinary concept, because we understand that Compartir and Disfrutar are a fundamental part of our lives. The goals we must keep in mind are to stay, not disappear and to keep as many jobs as we can. And this means to take care of our producers, distributors, team and customers.

When the time comes, administrations will need to be agile, dynamic, committed to all sectors of society and brave! Very brave!

The sector is not asking for any favour treatment, the sector is only saying that it deserves to be valued for its importance, both directly and indirectly. Gastronomy and tourism indirectly affect many service sectors (transport, shops, leisure, etc.), and have a direct effect on many disparate industries. Protecting gastronomy means that, indirectly, much of society and the economy are protected.

Tourism is one of the most important engines in the world, and it would be unwise to neglect the number of people who are linked to it. The GDP generated by hospitality and tourism in many countries is not a negligible percentage and, beyond economic figures, gastronomy and tourism are also culture, and as such they need to be helped and protected.

With the effort of all of us we will get it!

