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Manila restaurants are running special menus to celebrate Madrid Fusion Manila. Paella specialists Arrozeria will collaborate with celeb chefs including Chelo Gonzalez to offer Iberian-inspired risotto.

Chris Dwyer

*Editor's Note — This story complements the Culinary Journeys TV series, airing monthly on CNN International. See more of the show here: [www.cnn.com/journeys](http://www.cnn.com/journeys). Share photos of your own Culinary Journeys on Instagram with the hashtag [#CNNFood](https://www.instagram.com/CNNFood) for a chance to be featured on CNN.*



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A collection of endangered, naturally produced heritage food items under the Slow Food Movement's global campaign "Ark of Taste," are presented during the exhibit. Rare Filipino products highlighted included heirloom rice that has been cultivated for generations on ancient rice terraces.  
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Chef Margarita Flores had tuna served as the hero of one of the dishes she presented. Tuna sperm is typically used to fertilize and feed sea life grass, but at just \$2 per kilogram.  
Sourcery, Madrid Fusion Manila

**Manila (CNN)** — The renaissance of Filipino food on the global stage has been a long time coming but last weekend the pace was substantially picked up with the Madrid Fusion Manila event taking place across the country's capital.

Madrid Fusion Manila has been one of the biggest food events in the world since its establishment in 2003. It's the largest culinary event ever to hit the Philippines.

It brought together the most influential and avant-garde chefs from Spain, the Philippines and Asia in a series of events on progressive gastronomy, technological innovation and the latest culinary trends and techniques.

Spanish Michelin-starred luminaries such as Elena Arzak, Luis Aduriz and Quique Dacosta joined Philippine-based chefs including Chele Gonzalez, Margarita Forés and Bruce Ricketts with others from across Asia including Andre Chiang from Singapore.

Philippines President, Benigno Aquino III, told CNN that the event is perfectly timed as the country's palate is getting more adventurous.

"Food is a value shared by our more than 100 million people," he said.

"We're also getting to be more and more cosmopolitan because of the ten million members of our population who live outside the country. As a result, every type of food you want is here -- and not just in metro Manila."

A trade exhibition and the International Gastronomy Congress, where top chefs present on foods, were two events of Madrid Fusion Manila that took place over the weekend.

Running alongside them is the Flavors of the Philippines, a month-long, country-wide cultural and gastronomic celebration.

## **5 highlights from Madrid Fusion Manila**

### **Molecular xiao long bao meets cigar-infused halo halo**

A handful of lucky diners won the culinary golden ticket with seats at one-night-only pop-ups from Manila's top restaurants, where Spanish and Asian Michelin-starred chefs partnered with local culinary stars.

These "Four Hands" dinners took place across the city including at Black Sheep, where chef Jordy Navarre was joined by his former boss, the self-styled "demon chef" Alvin Leung from three Michelin-starred Bo Innovation in Hong Kong.

Dishes on the tasting menu included Leung's signatures "Coca Cola Chicken" and "Molecular Xiao Long Bao" alongside Navarre's "Garden Vegetables" and "Cigar Halo Halo," a tobacco-infused version of the Filipino favorite dessert.

### **The most in-depth lectures on food**

Among all the inspiring food talks, chef Claude Tayag of Bale Dutung tackled one of the most divisive of topics in the country: the perfect adobo, the beloved stew meat in marinade.

"Subtle, sour, salty, garlicky, peppery, countered with ripe mango -- eaten with hot steaming or garlic fried rice," said the Filipino celeb chef .

"Nothing beats this combination to beat the rainy day blues, to bring us back to our childhoods."

Adobo, the most well-known Filipino dish -- actually more of a cooking technique -- crosses all economic boundaries with versions around the country's more than 7,000 islands using everything from classic chicken and pork to duck, quail, squid and even cricket.

Tayag once hosted CNN's Anthony Bourdain at his restaurant Bale Dutung in Pampangas, where the host of "Parts Unknown" said that "Filipino is the original fusion cuisine."

If one dish speaks to that claim, it's adobo, with its mix of global influences and ingredients.

### **The next quinoa**

Aside from the chef talks, an accompanying exhibition saw Spanish and Filipino produce take center stage.

Spanish wines, cheeses, sausages, hams joined Philippine rice, cacao, coffee, mango, vegetables, liqueurs and more in a culinary cornucopia of the familiar and occasionally odd.

A collection of endangered, naturally produced heritage food listed under the Slow Food Movement's global catalogue "Ark of Taste," are promoted during the exhibit.

Rare Filipino products highlighted included a souring agent called sampalok or heirloom rice that has been cultivated for generations on ancient rice terraces.

Pepinitos -- tiny wild baby cucumbers not much longer than a grain of rice -- and star apples also showed the diversity of Filipino produce that could one day become the next quinoa on the international stage.

### **Foie gras' sperm substitute**

The Philippines is already well known for its willingness to embrace all parts of an animal in its cuisine: Balut, a developing duck embryo eaten in the shell, and pork blood stew, or dinuguan, are infamous.

In common with Michelin-starred restaurants in Spain and the world over, the Filipino fine dining scene has also taken on parts unknown.

Chef Margarita Forés presented tuna sperm as the hero of one of the dishes, followed by a demonstration of the versatility of cooking cow and pig udders.

Bruce Ricketts from Mecha Uma also served up sperm, this time from Spanish mackerel, with a mung bean pureé.

With tuna sperm allegedly tasting and feeling like foie gras, at just \$3 per kilogram, it makes great business sense in addition to ensuring that nothing is wasted.

### **Elena Arzak on Filipino cuisine**

Elena Arzak from three-Michelin-star Arzak in San Sebastián needs no introduction to global gastronomes.

One of the world's most celebrated chefs, she presented on "Creativity, a cuisine open to the world" and demonstrated four dishes.

She also gave her impressions on Filipino cuisine and produce.

"Chefs here are very proud of their origins and have a lot to show the world," she said.

"The transformation that is happening now and the raw materials they have is very exciting. Even if I don't know the ingredients and flavours, when I try them, I like them.

"We already use calamansi at Arzak -- I'll definitely be using coconut vinegar from now too.

"We'll have to create a whole new food dictionary just for Filipino cuisine!"

## **Upcoming events -- Flavors of the Philippines**

Pop-up restaurants by celebrity chefs, food tours and tastings, roving food trucks, special markets are some of the Flavors of the Philippines events happening this week and beyond:

### **Coffee cupping and pairing at gourmet farms**

If you truly love getting your caffeine on, an hour's drive south of Manila in Cavite is a Coffee Cupping & Coffee Pairing Tour at Gourmet Farms.

A guided tour of the twelve-hectare site and coffee 101 session is followed by cupping using the finest beans from the Philippines and single-origin varieties sourced from around the world.

Best of all? Coffee tastings are paired with local delicacies including Buko (coconut) pie from Cavite, sweet rice cakes such as Puto from Laguna and Espasol from Quezon, or peanut brittle Panocha from Batangas.

Tasty.

*Until April 30*

### **Culinaria Albay**

Culinaria Albay celebrates the cooking of the Province of Albay in Bicol Region, at the southern tip of the Philippines' largest island, Luzon.

The Bicolanos love their spice and Fiesta Culinaria brings together chefs like Gene Gonzales and Sau Laudico in demonstrating dishes including spicy sili ice cream, kusidong fish soup or dangerously-decadent longganisa sausage.

*Until May 5*

### **Madrid Fusion Manila menus**

Across the capital, restaurants have been running special menus celebrating Madrid Fusion Manila with a month of Iberian-inspired dishes.

Renowned chef Fernando Aracama is serving up a fusion of Spain and the Philippines with empanaditas of local keso (cheese) and malunggay (herbs).

Other highlights include Manila's Spanish restaurant and paella-specialist ArroZeria under guest chefs like Chele Gonzalez of Gallery Vask, offering scampi and longaniza sausage with snow peas.

Alba restaurant has dishes from the regions of Galicia, Asturias and Navarro on its Spanish Food Festival buffet menu.

*Aracama Filipino cuisine special offers lasts until April 30*

*ArroZeria's Kulinarya dinner promotion till May 9*

*Alba's Spanish Food Festival buffet menu till May 3*

*For more details on the upcoming events, go to the [festival's website](#).*

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<https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/madrid-fusion-manila-2015/index.html>