EL CELLER DE CAN ROCA THE BOOK

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JOAN, JOSEP & JORDI ROCA

EL CELLER DE CAN ROCA



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-JOAN, JOSEP AND JORDI ROCA

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PREFACE

—JOAN, JOSEP AND JORDI ROCA

Books are always a way to process knowledge; in the following pages, we try to show who we are and what we have learnt. The challenge of this endeavour has been to gather and order our thoughts conscientiously, to open the door to what we do and to how and why we do it, so that if you don't know very much about us, you can construe our personality and our background—Girona, an exceptional place. We wanted to reconstruct our sweetest and most fruitful life and professional experience. We who have benefited from different culinary sources, now wish to be a fountainhead. We want to be like three Rocks that are rounding off with the passage of time; we want to show our threeparty game, our brotherly connection, our professional polishing... And to illustrate how we have given wings to the creative process: with six hands and three heads under a single hat.

The book *El Celler de Can Roca. Una sinfonía fantástica* (Jaume Coll, 2006) was a way of emphasizing our respect for gastronomic literature. Jaume Coll, doctor in philology, gave us an important

piece of literature, reworking it into the culinary language with his experience and talent. That book, which he left by the door of the new restaurant, honoured us in its last lines stating the author's wish to finish what he called "the fifth movement of a fantastic symphony," that is to say, to carry on the literary and gastronomic process undertaken with a second volume. This time, however, we felt the need to speak with a unique voice. Our own voice. A modest voice, but felt in first person and with the aim to explain what we know best: our labour, transversal work focused on vanguard cuisine. As Dr. Jaume Coll would say: Ars culinaria nova. But we didn't want to do without the convergence between "object cookery book" and the literary arts, which is why we entrusted a section of the book to prestigious author Josep Maria Fonalleras. He approaches every chapter with linguistic precision, clarity and brilliance. Also, throughout the book you will find fragments of an account written by him that is a record of a day spent at El Celler. A captivating text, rich in details, in which not a single word is too much.

When the restaurant moved, on 15 November 2007, it marked a decisive point in our work. We improved our traceability with full equipment, from holm oak embers to the Rotaval. We reinforced our ability to seduce. The expectation of those who visit us grows and that stimulates us. We achieved unbeatable conditions to dig into the secret paths of cooking, we went on to have a factory of dreams, a utopia made reality, and many challenges for the future. That is where the desire was born to share our journey and show you the ways of the culinary process that have made it possible for what began as acoustic to become symphonic.

We want to underscore our creative vitality, share it and be loyal to didactic sense. To reflect a conceptual maturity. To assemble the groundwork of a cuisine that is created, lived and shared with the family (we can never thank enough Montse, Josep, Anna, Marc, Marina, Encarna, Martí, Maria, Ale, grandparents Payet, Paquita, Salvador, Encarna and Angeleta for past times...), and with a competent team that has changed through the years and is now spread out around many points of the planet.

To them all we also owe part of the merit of this work, to them and to the great amount of collaborators and our chef and server friends who, in these first twenty-five years have made our history their own, working shoulder to shoulder with us. We are aware of the human and emotional richness that their support has meant during all the time we have been cooking values. To them, who have felt close to Montse, to *el Jefe*, and to grandma Angeleta, the muse to whom Salvador Garcia-Arbós dedicated an emotional memory, we would like to show our gratitude.

Special thanks and acknowledgment also to all those people who feel great fondness for our restaurant

and who have even grown in gastronomic terms with us. The truth is that, if we had customers before, we now believe to have friends and followers. This book is also for them. And we can't forget to express our gratitude for the essential and crucial role of gastronomic journalists; sharp and brilliant ambassadors with a special sensibility to communicate the vitality in gastronomy.

Lastly, we also want to mention that the book we now present to you wouldn't have been possible without the support of Cèlia Pujals, who together with the team at Bisdixit has maintained its thematic coherence, taking great care of its design and edition. Everything is easier if you have someone like her sorting out ideas. The photographs of the dishes, in charge of Francesc Guillamet, have allowed us to show a rigorous, luminous and precise vision of gastronomy, and the atmospheric job of David Ruano has provided us with a poetic patina and the desired tone to evoke the warmth and intimacy of a discourse whispered in your ear.

As a final point, the book you have in your hands gathers the projects and memory of over twenty-five years in the making, and at the end it includes as an evolutionary synthesis, a documentary catalogue of some of the most emblematic dishes of our restaurant, emerged throughout a history that began in August 1986. It's an attempt to gather the *joie de vivre*, Gastronomy in capital letters and in the first person, of showing a life persistent in its search of flavour and knowing how to feel, with constant learning, luck, joy, stubbornness, perseverance, divertimento, faith and passion. We want to leave physical lasting proof of all of it and also write an account of the vanguard cuisine of the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, the best years of your lives.

EL CELLER DE CAN ROCA, (TECHNO)EMOTIONAL REVOLUTION

Today, gastronomy shows its polyhedral side as a recipient of the changes experimented by the parameters of luxury. The rituals of wealth are now focused on the quality of the details, whose fulfilment requires a certain freedom and feeling of wellbeing. The importance of what we could call "the strength of intentions" grows. Luxury is now sustained in the field of emotions, which has entered fully and triumphantly the world of gastronomy, making an incredible turn.

We relate to the idea of an emotional revolution, equipped with an invisible technology, product of our dialogue with science and that wants to convey generation after generation. We relate to the term "techno-emotional cuisine" coined by Pau Arenós (*La cocina de los valientes*, 2011). We have blind faith in the force of feelings, the ability to delve in the psychological impact produced by flavour, and the power to evoke memories, stirring the emotive aspect of those who visit us. We know the forcefulness of taste of each ingredient can be a tool to break the cloak with which we protect ourselves. People grant us their time and open their arms and senses to seduction; we want to be sensible to the management of those emotions.

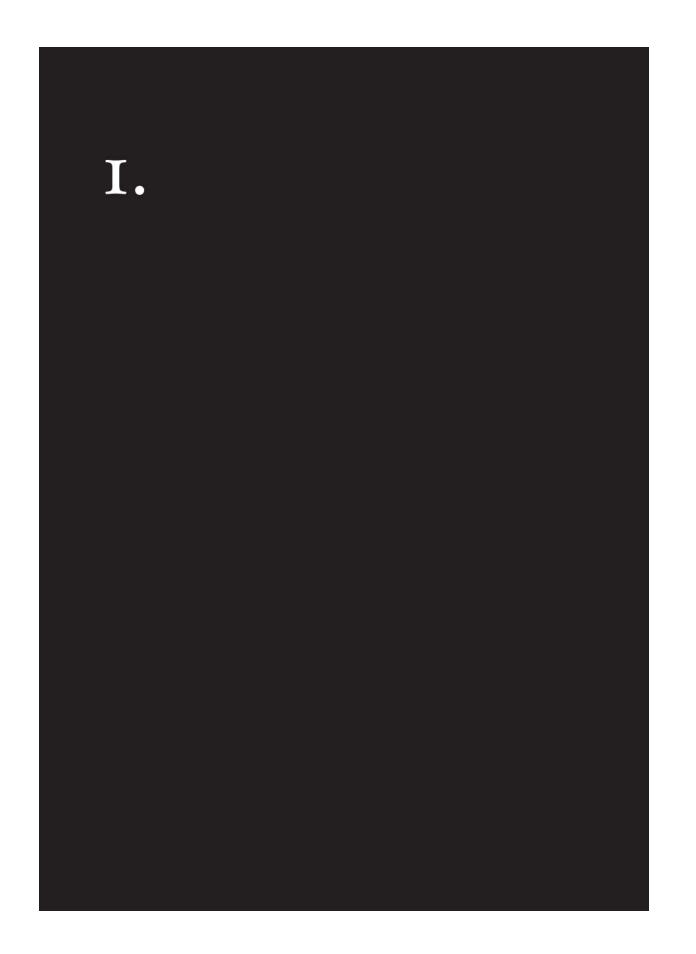
In this book we divide the creative process into sixteen chapters that will help you understand that, where there was discipline and rigidity, we try to add audacity and transgression. We try to exchange snobbish coldness for closeness and eclectic vision for sustainability, recapturing the often neglectful dialogue with the producer and the landscape. We want to substitute obsequiousness and sobriety in our offers for sense of humour and fantasy; redundant maturity for innocence and imagination; classicism for courage; routine for reflection and will to open transversal roads. And finally, we have brought the ever-presence of wine into the kitchen and it is there to stay.

Advances in science, nourished with information technology and communication, have situated us at the doors of the third millennium, in a new gastronomic world we experience actively. In this new reality emerges a sort of triangle of knowledge formed by the fields of physics, biology and new technologies, with the creation of fascinating synergies between one and the other, which will offer us moments of great emotional well-being. We try to stage the colours of emotions, both internal and external, through taste, smell and the visual aspect. We want for our cuisine to flirt with poetry. We want to awaken yearning, a wish, and to fill it with memories. Here is where techno-emotional cuisine takes over *nouvelle cuisine* and we bet decisively on it. To enjoy more and more the smell and taste and the feel of our memories. To commit to suggestion and essence brings us closer to a more highly evocative sense, a sense that is most linked to emotions, images, memories and stories—smell. With our creative lines in cooking we hope to exhibit colour, transitoriness, awareness, science, boldness and social agriculture, in addition to showing a specific geoclimatic location, but also exuding the fusions that have come to us from past generations and faraway places. We get inspiration from the Mediterranean, its luminosity, spirit of freedom and ancestral cultural leadership, with flavour as the central theme. We take in a light that doesn't blind, a light that doesn't hide; a privileged light. In a society of global tendencies, we try to show our closer cultural habits with pride. We think universally and act emphasizing on food and local agricultural products.

For us, the future of cuisine will oscillate between the tendency toward the product and the process, as it has always been the case in the history of gastronomy. We are convinced that cannelloni, ham croquettes and gazpacho can live side by side with spherification and mimetic tricks. The cuisine of El Celler de Can Roca wants to make a fresh and thoughtful offer that undresses and dresses (as if undressing and dressing were one thing) with techniques used from conceptual maturity, but merely suggested and always prioritizing flavour.

The creative process captured in the sixteen chapters of this book—Tradition, Memory, Academia, Product, Landscape, Wine, Chromatism, Sweetness, Transversal Creation, Perfume, Innovation, Poetry, Freedom, Boldness, Magic and Sense of Humour—is a life and thought reality built from everything we have done in the last twenty-five years.

Even if the calling of the cook leads us through the paths of craftsmanship, the aim comes closer to goldsmithing, with artistic and innovative attitude as a fundamental incentive. In our opinion, the cook is not exactly an artist, but must still invariably have the freedom to act, constantly reclaiming creativity and navigating a warm cuisine where the acoustic alternative of a live performance has its place, as well as the symphonic option of a more complex construction. The culinary tendency we want to follow has four cardinal points: authenticity, boldness, generosity and hospitality. We bet on a simple and proactive attitude toward new culinary horizons of emotional revolution. We "cook to generate feelings." This books hopes to be proof of our strong commitment and conviction that we must know how to live in a flavourful manner and believe cuisine is a way to happiness, culture and land. Turn the page and we will guide you through the secrets of the cuisine of El Celler through a door wide open.



- THE PATH TO THE NEW CELLER



A SHORT ACCOUNT OF ITS BEGINNINGS Cookery was written in the fate of the Roca brothers. Or perhaps they have written their fate in their own handwriting with the effort, patience and rigour that have characterized them over the last twenty-five years and that still define them. Hard work has earned them recognition and a name, but their childhood milieu was, without a doubt, a determinant factor in their development.

Can Roca, the restaurant opened by their parents in 1967 in Taialà—an outlying district of Girona populated by immigrants from Andalusia—was the living room where the three brothers grew up, tossed coins, did homework and watched Un, Dos, Tres, a popular Spanish TV show back in the seventies. "Our table at the bar was next to a gas stove," recalls Joan. A crowded bar prevented their parents from dedicating more time exclusively to the boys. So the restaurant's kitchen and dining room became the perfect place for them to spend hours, first as spectators of the hustle and, soon after, as active participants. "Our grandparents and even the customers, who often times were also our friends, looked after us. That was a very fun place, we spent time with many people and many things happened," says Josep. Upstairs from the restaurant there were five or six rooms that were part of the inn to accommodate workers from Navarre, Andalusia, or

Aragon working in Barcelona factories like the neighbouring Nestlé, or in the construction of the AP-7 motorway. "Suddenly our family was very big. We shared a roof and even, sometimes, a table with all these people who came to our house. We spent time with them and that, for us, was rewarding and enriching," explains Joan.

The elder brother looked after the two younger ones; he was the more responsible, diligent, and the one who established rigour and order. From an early age, the role of Joan Roca was to be the most mature of the three. Dedicated, hardworking, serious and passionate about the profession of his grandmother, Angeleta, and his mother, Montserrat, the cook of Can Roca. As young as nine, his mother had a chef jacket tailor-made for him, which he still has and lets his son occasionally dress up with. He spent his afternoons in the kitchen and, unknowingly, began to engineer his future. When the time came, he didn't hesitate to decide what he wanted to be when he grew up: "I saw that people were happy at my parents' restaurant." That was all he needed; he wanted to keep making people happy.

The scents of his childhood include the *escudella i carn d'olla*, stocks and, in the afternoon, vanilla for custards. Back then, there was a lot of work to do at Can Roca, there was never a break and, as soon as the three lunchtime shifts were over, it was time to prepare the dishes for the following day or the upcoming week. After school, Joan helped in any way he could: "Every Tuesday afternoon I made sausages with my father. We minced the meat, and then we seasoned and stuffed it. I practiced so much with the hand mincer that I won every arm-wrestling match in school!" Grandma Angeleta, grandma Francisca and other elderly ladies, friends of the grandmothers, were always in the kitchen peeling garlic, onions or beans; spent the afternoon chatting and solving the problems of the world. It was, after all, our home kitchen.

In spite of being well aware of his calling, Joan kept good grades and, in those times, a studious boy had to go to university. Professional training was stigmatized, but fate lent him a hand and one of the only two culinary arts schools in the country opened in Girona, only a few kilometres from home. "Life is full of circumstances that make everything go in a certain direction, and I'm sure the Culinary Arts School made it possible for me to study cooking at the time. If I hadn't done it in that moment, everything would have turned out different." The school didn't only determine Joan's future, but also that of his brothers, who followed on his footsteps a few years later.

