

Creative 創意因子 chemistry

Three years after shuttering his revolutionary restaurant elBulli, Spanish chef Ferran Adrià is ready to break new ground with a research facility designed to foster learning and creativity in the culinary field

西班牙名廚Ferran Adrià的前衛餐廳elBulli結業三年之後，他準備再次為烹飪界帶來變革，透過烹飪研究中心加強業界的學習及創作能力

FERRAN ADRIÀ doesn't like to romanticise his profession. "Cooking has an incredible strength but that's normal. Because everyone eats," he says. It is a surprisingly prosaic statement coming from the man who introduced the world to liquid-nitrogen cocktails, spherical green olives and Parmesan cheese in frozen-air form.

In contrast to the theatrical, science-tinged recipes he developed at the celebrated restaurant elBulli in the small Spanish town of Roses, Adrià shies away from excess in his personal life. When he arrives at a hotel suite at the Island Shangri-La Hong Kong for an interview, he is in a simple grey T-shirt and dark trousers – his go-to outfit when not in his chef whites.

Given this penchant for simplicity, the 52-year-old Catalan is hesitant about being labelled the world's greatest living chef ("we should not exaggerate" is his

名廚 Ferran Adrià不喜歡將自己的職業沾上浪漫色彩。他說：「烹飪具有不可思議的力量，但也只是平常事。因為每個人都要吃東西。」創造出液態氮雞尾酒、球形青橄欖果凍，以及冷凍棉花球狀巴馬臣芝士的人，竟然那麼輕描淡寫地形容烹飪，不禁讓人感到詫異。

位於西班牙小鎮Roses的餐廳elBulli名滿天下，Adrià曾在這裡創造出充滿戲劇效果及科學色彩的菜式。然而，私底下他作風低調，僅穿上簡單的深灰色T恤和深色長褲，就來到港島香格里拉大酒店的套房接受訪問。其實只要脫下白色廚師服，他就是喜歡這樣的簡約裝束。

現年52歲、生於加泰羅尼亞地區的Adrià個性質樸，對於被譽為全球最佳廚師有點難為情（面對天花亂墜的讚賞，他的回應是：「我們不應言過其實。」）Adrià當年加入elBulli餐廳做見習廚師，是由於他在軍隊服役時有一個月假期，為了去風景如畫的布拉瓦海岸享受陽光與海灘，他於是到位於該區的elBulli工作，沒料此舉會引領他邁向璀璨的烹飪事業。Adrià翌年即轉任全職廚師，入職18個月後再獲擢升，與另一廚師Christian Letaud並肩掌管廚房。

Adrià坦承自己是邊做邊學，「初入行時，我根本不知道創意為何物。」直至1987年事業出現重要轉捩點；這一年



Avant-garde chef Ferran Adrià plans to develop a comprehensive digital database detailing the origins, classifications and relationships of all food products

前衛創新的名廚Ferran Adrià計劃設立資料詳盡的數碼數據庫，詳列所有食品的來源、分類及相互關係

response to some of the hype that surrounds him). When Adrià started as an intern for what would later become an illustrious career at elBulli, he was mainly motivated by a desire to spend his month off from the military near the beaches on the Costa Brava. He joined the staff full-time the following year and 18 months into the job, Adrià was asked to take charge in the kitchen alongside another cook, Christian Letaud.

“When I first started, I didn’t even know what creativity was,” Adrià admits, stating he gradually learned while on the job. A major turning point occurred in 1987 when he took over the kitchen on his own and later met the great chef Jacques Maximin at the restaurant Le Chantecler in France. The experience inspired a 25-year-old Adrià to develop his own culinary style and elBulli’s avant-garde haute cuisine, a move that would earn it three Michelin stars and the top spot in *Restaurant* magazine’s World’s 50 Best Restaurants list on five occasions. “Cooking may be the language that has helped me understand creativity,” says the chef. “When I talk about or [hear of] creativity in other fields, sometimes it sounds very complicated to me. And yet, when I explain it through cooking, it’s easy.”

Under Adrià’s leadership, elBulli became one of the most talked about restaurants in the world, as famed for its infused foams as it was criticised for its calcium-chloride “caviar” spheres. Although often dubbed the *enfant terrible* of Western cuisine, Adrià reasons that breaking the rules is – and always has been – part of the rules. “Over history, there have always been changes. And almost always, the changes have been for the better, as much as others will try to tell you otherwise.”

Change is what compelled Adrià to close elBulli at the peak of its fame in 2011. “Once we reached our limit of what can be done in cooking, we had to find another path,” he says. Since the closure, Adrià has been working on the elBulli Foundation, a culinary think tank located at his former restaurant. He compares the transition to the avant-garde food revolution he kicked off in the 1990s.

The foundation currently comprises three interrelated projects, the first being elBulli 1846, a museum-like area Adrià describes as “a narrative [that] tells a story



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through the history of elBulli, creativity and cooking”. Then there’s elBulli DNA, a crew of top chefs and experts from other fields whose primary task is to experiment with creative processes. The third project is a digital database, Bullipedia, which is part of an ambitious classification project that continues the research Adrià’s team started while working on its famously detailed cookbooks, including the seven-volume *elBulli 2005-2011*.

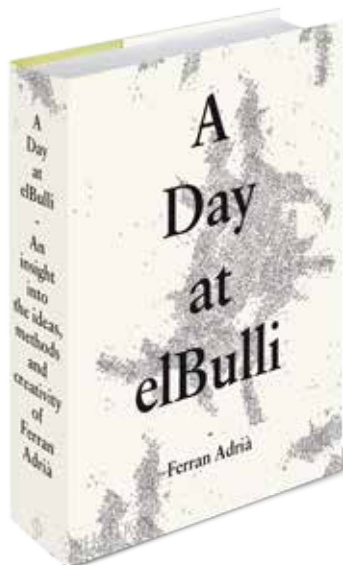
Working on Bullipedia has required Adrià to delve into the history, biology and even etymology of food. Indeed, he can’t talk about any ingredient without referencing the Neolithic era, “where everything happened and mankind changed”. He argues that in order to create in any discipline it is first necessary to understand the origin and evolution of the materials involved. “When you talk about mangoes, you can’t just say ‘mango’ because there are many different varieties and it’s impossible to know them all,” he says, before suggesting the tropical fruit could have been an entirely different organism 10,000 years ago. “I am a cook, not a botanist, but I have to have a notion of this,” he says.

Adrià has become an ambassador, bringing gastronomy into the world of higher education and has worked with universities such as Harvard, where he guest lectures at the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. “Ten years ago, if you said a cook was going to be a guest lecturer at Harvard, people would have thought you were mad,” he says.

Cooking – and the world’s perception of it – has evolved significantly since Adrià first entered the kitchen but the chef believes there’s always room for innovation. “The only thing that human beings can be criticised for is that, with the opportunities we have today, we could be better.” And if that means challenging the unknown, then Adrià is more than happy to comply.

A Day at elBulli takes readers through the methods and ideas behind Adrià’s world-famous eatery

《A Day at elBulli》帶領讀者了解 Adrià 主理的知名餐廳採用的烹調方法及理念





他獨自統領廚房，後來更受到法國著名餐廳Le Chantecler的名廚Jacques Maximin啟發其創意，促使當時年僅25歲的Adrià決意發展個人烹飪風格，為elBulli埋下成為前衛高級料理的種子，結果餐廳在他領導下榮獲米芝蓮三星殊榮，並五度榮登英國《餐廳》雜誌「全球50間最佳餐廳」之首。他說：「烹飪猶如一種語言，協助我明白到什麼是創意。當談起其他行業的創意，有時候會令我感到很複雜。然而當我透過廚藝解釋創意，卻是易如反掌。」

在Adrià的統領下，elBulli成為世上最多人談論的餐廳，不論是備受讚賞的泡沫式美食，還是為人非議的氯化鈣「魚子醬粒」，都引來熱話。Adrià常被稱為西餐界的「壞孩子」，但他認為「打破常規」正是烹飪界的常規之一。他說：「綜觀歷史，變化是常規。雖然旁人會向你潑冷水，但變化往往能帶來改進。」

正因為求變，促使他於2011年將如日方中的elBulli結業。他說：「一旦我們達到烹飪極限，便需要另闢新徑。」餐廳結束後，Adrià轉而為elBulli基金會工作，而這個烹飪研究中心就設於餐廳原址。他形容這次變革，等同他在1990年代發動的前衛料理革命。

現時基金會有三個相關的項目，首項是設立elBulli 1846，Adrià形容這個類似博物館的場地將會「敘述elBulli的歷史、創意及烹飪故事」；第二個項目名為elBulli DNA，由頂尖廚師及其他範疇的專家組成團隊，首要任務是進行創意實驗。第三個項目是為龐大的分類存檔計劃建立數碼數據庫Bullipedia，而該分類計劃的目標是要延續Adrià團隊的嚴謹研究。他的團隊撰

elBulli Taller (left), the former laboratory of elBulli restaurant, known for its unconventional dishes, such as spherical ravioli and minty pea salad (above)

elBulli餐廳結業前的實驗室elBulli Taller (左圖)，以創作反傳統的菜式聞名，例如球形的意大利餃子及薄荷味的豌豆沙律(上圖)

寫的烹飪書以詳盡見稱，當中包括合共七冊的烹飪大全《El Bulli 2005-2011》。

為了製作Bullipedia，Adrià深入鑽研歷史、生物學，乃至食品詞源學。事實上，無論他談及任何食材，都要追溯至新石器時代，因為那是個「世界萬物和人類改變的年代」。他認為無論任何範疇，創作的首要條件都是要了解素材的來源及演化。他說：「當你談到芒果時，不能只說『芒果』，因為芒果品種繁多，沒可能完全知曉。」他指出芒果這種熱帶水果在一萬年前可能是一種截然不同的有機體，並補充說：「我是廚師，不是植物學家，但我對這方面必須具有概念。」

Adrià已成為將美食研究引進高等教育的大使，他與多間著名學府合作，例如在哈佛大學工程及應用科學學院擔任客席講師。他說：「十年前，如果你說有廚師在哈佛大學擔任客席講師，人人都會覺得你瘋了。」

在世人眼中，打從Adrià踏進廚房開始，烹飪界便出現翻天覆地的演變，他卻相信永遠存在著創新的空間：「人類唯一可被批評的是：今日機遇處處，我們應該可以做得更好。」若然為此而要挑戰未知領域，Adrià樂意奉陪。■