

ENTERTAINING WITH FLAIR



In July 2013 Chef Cherkas partnered with his wife Virginia Entizne to open Cuca, their lifelong dream. Having reached its second-year milestone, Cuca has succeeded in establishing itself as one of Asia's favorite delicious destinations. Opposite page: Chef Cherkas with Makati Shangri-La's Executive Chef Paul Lenz

SERVING THE BEST

Chef Kevin Cherkas is a culinary star who has cooked in some of the world's most outstanding restaurants

by RAUL MANZANO | photographs courtesy of SHANGRI-LA MAKATI



In Spain, Kevin Cherkas honed his skills at Michelin three-star Arzak Restaurant in San Sebastian, Michelin three-star El Bulli in Roses, and Michelin two-star La Broche in Madrid. He also left his mark in New York City during his tenure with Daniel Boulud at his highly regarded Michelin three-star Daniel.

As testament to his culinary talent, he is the recipient of numerous awards. These include gold and silver medals at the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs national and regional

competitions in 2003, a gold medal at the USA Chicago Culinary Salon Team Canada 2001, and three gold medals at the British Columbia Chefs Association Hot Culinary Competition in 2000, to name a few. Most notably, he joined the Bocuse d'Or World Cuisine Contest 2001 as an apprentice representative and achieved a fifth-place finish.

His first steps in Asia where helming the fine dining restaurants Blu at Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore, and prior to that, Restaurant Lafite in Shangri-La Hotel, Kuala Lumpur.

In 2011, the organizers of Madrid Fusion invited him as keynote speaker and guest chef in the greatest culinary event in the world, held annually in Madrid, Spain. His participation in front of thousands of industry professionals and journalists was such a success that Cherkas was invited again this year to Madrid Fusion Manila 2016, this time representing his own restaurant. There, he shared his cooking philosophy on serving Western cooking made from the best and freshest local ingredients.

In July 2013, he partnered with his wife Virginia Entizne to open Cuca, their lifelong dream. The restaurant is set in the beautiful expanse of a coconut grove in Jimbaran, Bali, and offers a casual destination serving *tapas*, cocktails, and desserts. At Cuca, Cherkas' philosophy is centered on Western cooking made exclusively from the best and freshest local ingredients. He handpicks the tastiest products Indonesia offers and reinvents them through using techniques acquired throughout his outstanding culinary career. Having reached its second-year milestone, Cuca has succeeded in establishing itself as one of Asia's favorite delicious destinations.

For a limited engagement over three nights, Sage Bespoke Grill at the Makati Shangri-La offered the bespoke creations of multi-awarded Cherkas. The excellent dining experience included pre-dinner cocktails and a





seven-course dinner paired with the finest Spanish wines. The culinary experience started at the first floor bar area of Sage, where *champiñones del bosque* (pickled mushrooms with roasted garlic and ricotta cheese), *vieiras al horno* (scallop with mashed cauliflower and toasted butter crust), and *bollo Iberico* (honey glazed pork with soft pancake bun, pickled cabbage, and coriander, all paired with *sangria* (Rioja red, iced fruit, and brandy soda) were served.

After that gastronomic preview, we knew greater things were going to happen at dinner. We were led to the second floor dining area of Sage where a seven-course dinner was going to be served, family-style.

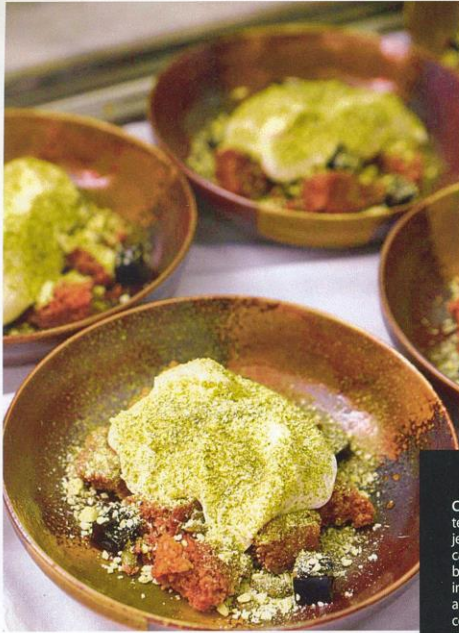
The dinner started with appetizers: a *ceviche de pescado*—fresh sliced raw fish served with chili lime dressing and watermelon ice and followed by a *pulpo à la brasa*—grilled Galician octopus with fresh apple, caramelized cauliflower, and coriander sitting on a divine Asian *gazpacho*. The main courses included *arroz caldoso*—hand cut squid grains that looked and tasted like rice cooked with a vegetable stew and garlic cream and topped with Valencian popped rice; *pollo frito*—Cherkas' take on organic fried chicken accompanied with wild honey, country coleslaw, sesame dust, and basil; *ternera con patatas*—the chef's take on shepherd's pie—beef and mushrooms with whipped potato and an exquisite Rioja red marmalade.

Finally my favorite part of the meal—dessert. Cherkas did not fail to impress again. He started out with *desayuno*—sweet runny mango with frozen passion fruit and whipped coconut and ended the seven-course dinner with *tarta de tea-ramisu*—a play on the classic tiramisu—black tea cake with grass jelly, mascarpone cream, and caramelized seed. Truly a sweet end to a memorable feast.

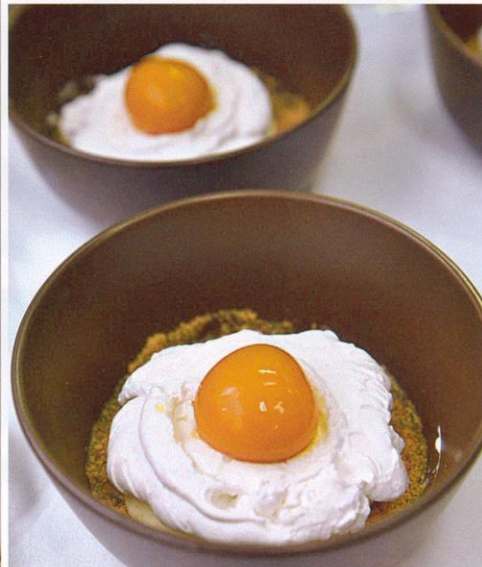
From top: The Makati Shangri-La chefs assisted Chef Cherkas in the preparation of the seven-course meal. Left: Chef Cherkas with the Makati Shangri-La chefs: Area Executive Chef Paul Lenz, Executive Pastry Chef Romain Renard, Sage Bespoke Grill Chef de Cuisine Eric Weidmann, and Executive Sous Chef Gilles Galli

Clockwise from right:
Cocktails included
'champiñones' del
bosque—pickled
mushroom with roasted
garlic and ricotta cheese;
'bollo iberico'—honey
glazed pork on a soft
pancake bun with pickled
cabbage and coriander;
'vieiras al horno'—scallop
and mashed cauliflower
on toasted butter crust





Clockwise from left: 'Tarta de tea-ramisú'—black tea cake, grass jelly, mascarpone cream, and caramelized seeds; 'pulpo a la brasa'—grilled Galician octopus in Asian 'gazpacho' with fresh apple, caramelized cauliflower and coriander; 'arroz caldoso'—hand-cut squid grains in a vegetable stew with garlic cream and popped Valencian rice; 'desayuno'—sweet runny mango with frozen passion fruit and whipped coconut; 'pollo frito'—organic chicken with wild honey, country coleslaw, sesame dust, and basil





Lance Gokongwei



Chef Cherkas greeting Yvette Fernandez and Sandra Ramos



Mia Borrromeo, Chef Cherkas, and Raul Manzano



Pepper Teehankee



Patti Javier, Chef Cherkas, Aencille Santos, and Cristina Cruz



Simone Cordedda and Virginia Entizne