

SUPPER

HOTEL FOOD & DRINK







El Vicenç de la Mar

MALLORCA

A new boutique hotel on Mallorca's rugged coast gives a local Michelin-starred chef the chance to spotlight the island's cuisine.

Words: Shanna McGoldrick • Photography: Courtesy of El Vicenç de la Mar

At the North-Eastern tip of the Mallorcan coastline, where jagged cliffs fall away into azure waters and pastel villas dot the sun-baked scrubland of the surrounding hills, lies the resort village of Cala Sant Vicenç. Known for its turquoise coves and sunlit beaches, this village at the foot of the Serra de Tramuntana mountains has a glamorous past: in the Fifties, the jet-set flocked to the rugged and wind-whipped northern part of the island in search of the quintessential Balearic summer. But over the decades, the hedonists moved on to pastures new, and the resort slipped into life as a family-friendly holiday spot.

Recent years, however, have seen a something of a rejuvenation: today Sant Vicenç's balmy waters are dotted with the white sails of sleek catamarans, as well as the foamy explosions of kids jumping giddily from the rocks. This chic return to form was confirmed in May with the arrival of El Vicenç de la Mar, a Design Hotels member and sleek, 35-key boutique hotel that overlooks the dreamy Cala Molins Cove.

It's a landscape Santi Taura knows well. The Michelin-starred chef grew up in Lloseta, a village of around 5,000 inhabitants in the centre of Mallorca, about 40 minutes from this part of the coast. His food is steeped in the flavours and traditions of the island and his career – since the launch of a debut restaurant in his grandmother's house in Lloseta – has seen him pay tribute to its produce and to its culinary identity, which, like the languages spoken here, often combines Mallorcan, Catalan and Castilian Spanish influences.

Taura heads up the fine-dining venue El Llorenç and the Michelin-starred restaurant DINS Santi Taura at The Mallorca Ç Collection's sister hotel El Llorenç Parc de la Mar in Palma, making him an obvious choice to oversee the culinary offering at El Vicenç. He has crafted the menus both for U Mayol, a casual lunchtime bistro situated on the ground floor of the hotel, and for the fine-dining rooftop eatery Restaurant El Vicenç, which comes into its own in the evening, offering expansive sea views.



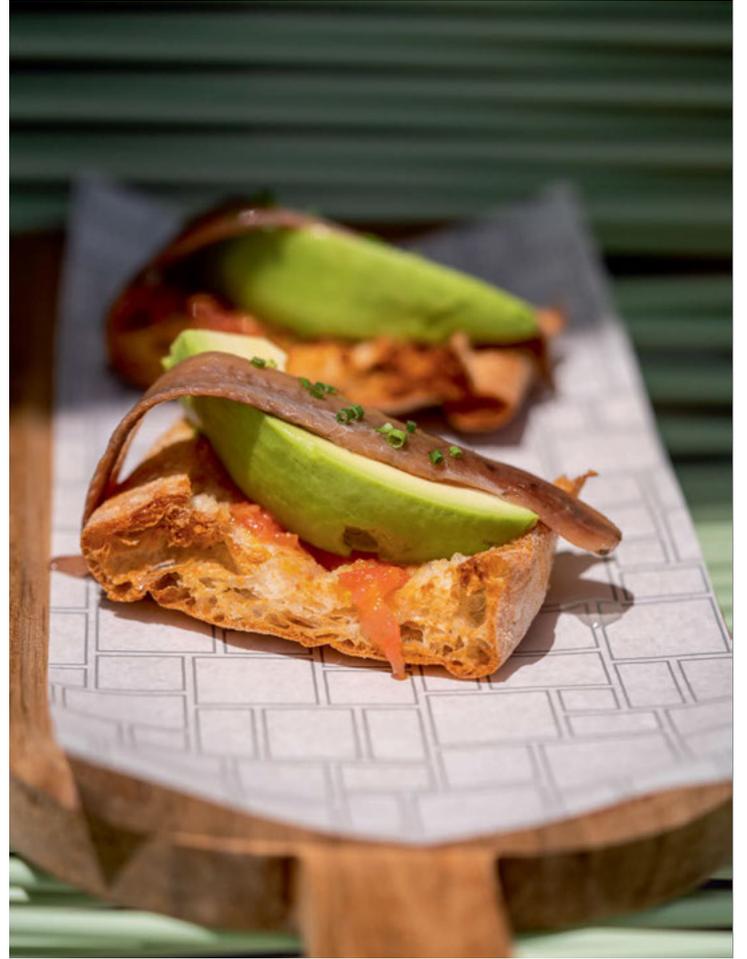
The culinary offering across the resort pairs traditional croquettes and toasted bread with fresh anchovies and seasonal vegetables

Unsurprisingly, seafood is central to the menus at both restaurants. “Local products make up approximately 75% of our offer,” explains Taura. “Whenever I think of a new recipe, I always think of Mallorca first and the rich variety of products we have right here on the island, from seafood to salt, pork and special tomatoes. We even use honey from a local apiary.”

At U Mayol, this approach translates to an F&B programme that spans traditional cocktails and generous sharing plates, with a keen emphasis on the catch of the day. Here, sun-kissed diners – most of them not long out of the water themselves – are presented with an ever-changing specials list showcasing freshly-caught fish, ranging from tuna or John Dory to red snapper and seabass, cooked over coals so that the charred, bubbled skin reveals flakiest tender meat underneath. Presented simply with silky potatoes and a sauce of the fish’s own juice, the dishes encapsulate the simple, hearty, but expertly executed ethos of U Mayol. Also

on the menu are a range of traditional starters, including acorn-fed Iberian ham Cortegana and toasted bread with deliciously briny anchovies. Sharing plates include Gillardeau natural oysters, squid served Andalusian style with tzatziki sauce, and hearty paellas, while Taura’s favourite dish is the prawn salad, which he explains is a typical dish for Mallorcans to enjoy when spending Sundays at the beach with their families.

A discreet and attentive team of waiters is also happy to guide diners through the dessert list, which takes diners on a nostalgic spin with its retro Mallorcan favourites. Highlights include the zingy lemon bomb with homemade tart citrus ice cream, and a classic Mallorcan bonbon, a sweet concoction of chocolate-coated vanilla ice cream. “When we think of U Mayol, we think of an informal seafood restaurant where you can come to eat and refresh yourself during a day at the beach, in a place with local products, elaborations and a well-cared-for environment,” concludes Taura.





The atmosphere at the Restaurant El Vicenç, meanwhile, is both more formal and intimate, with the secluded, candlelit tables facing out to sea. “We envisioned the Vicenç as an ideal place to end the day, with a classic menu, good product and the mixing of both local and international dishes,” elaborates Taura. “Accompanied, of course, by a good selection of wines and cocktails to enjoy while the night falls and the moon rises in Molins Cove.” The menu caters to the hotel’s well-heeled clientele with European-inspired dishes such as steak tartar (served with Mallorcan brown bread) and chateaubriand carpaccio, but still puts more traditionally Mediterranean cuisine in the spotlight. Starters and nibbles include classic cod croquettes and a Mallorcan soup called ‘manjar blanc’ of lobster, while the mains focus on festive dishes such as red mullet fillets with Ibicencan ‘bullit’ sauce and porc negre suckling pig, which the chef was keen to include as it is widely recognised as a national dish of celebration in Mallorca.

Taura’s established relationships with local suppliers ensure that the freshest produce is used in his kitchens. “Many are small, specialised producers, which makes the dishes so special,” he says. He also relies on his Executive Chef, Jaume Comas, who controls the group’s restaurants on days when he himself is in the kitchen at DINS Santi Taura. “We have been together for 12 years and professionally we are the same person,” he asserts.

After years at the helm of his restaurants in Palma, how did Taura adapt his approach for El Vicenç? He says that while his venues in the capital deal in “a historical and cosmopolitan offering,” the new hotel’s location sets it apart from the bustle of urban life, requiring a different culinary programme. “At El Vicenç we are in a city located in one of the most historical and beautiful parts of the Balearic Islands,” he highlights. “By the cove, the focus of the noontime is the beach and family life, while at night, we complement the area with an idyllic and romantic offering.”



IN A BITE

Operator: Mallorca Ç Collection

Architecture: Rafael Balaguer

Interior Design: Magnis Ehrland

Creator-Chef: Santi Taura, Group Santi Taura

Corporate Executive Chef: Jaume Comas,

Group Santi Taura

Beverage Director: Joan Arboix

Glassware: Schott Zwiesel

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