

# Tapa as Haiku Tokyo

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1. Tapas Workshops  
Design & Gastronomy

## INDEX

1. Tokyo. Tapas Haiku.	03
Organisers	04
Development	05
Gastronomy Concept	06
Design Role	08
Workshop explanation	10

# 1. Tokyo

## Tapas as Haiku

Tokyo will be the first town to host the Tapas Workshops to be held alongside the exhibition: Tapas, Spanish Design for Food organised by Acción Cultural Española (Spanish Cultural Action), which will later be touring around several countries.

### **What exactly are the Tapas Workshops?**

There will be two workshops: one focused on design the other on gastronomy, running alongside but separately to then join together in a major event whose aim is to spread the Spanish tapas-culture.

The Tapas Workshops have been designed to explain this modern, vague Spanish custom of "having a tapa". Research will be twofold: on the one hand, from a culinary viewpoint and, on the other, taking into account socio-cultural and formal features which may connect to the field of design. The outcomes of these workshops will be used for the final event which aims to bring together gastronomic innovation and plastic and conceptual creativity fostered by design. That is why the final event intends to be surprising and innovative for all the guests present so as to put the cherry on the cake for the closing of the workshops.

### **Spreading gastronomy and design**

To spread the Spanish "tapas"-culture, participants will be exposed to them at three different levels: First, via what they learn at the workshop in terms of cuisine; second, through a better acquaintance with the best design currently performed in Spain; and, finally, by offering a select group of people a special event where they can appreciate the values of innovation and creativity which both the chef and the designer together are able to foster.

To maximise involvement and dissemination, the participants will share the responsibility for serving as catalysts in explaining to their co-nationals whatever is performed there. Consequently, they will be responsible for making this peculiar Spanish way of eating as best understood as possible among the members of their culture. Finally, this particular approach to Spain's gastronomy and design will contribute to raising the appreciation for Spanish culture, its food industry and design products, thus, increasing the value of Spain as a trademark.

## ORGANISERS

### **AC/E** ACCIÓN CULTURAL ESPAÑOLA

Acción Cultural Española (AC/E) is a public organisation dedicated to fostering and promoting Spain's culture and heritage within and outside our borders, through a wide range of activities. These workshops, included within the "Tapas" exhibition, are part of the activities targeted at complementing and spreading Spain's best design and gastronomy.

### **di\_mad**

DIMAD is the most important Designers' Association of Madrid and has one of the largest memberships in Spain. DIMAD is in charge of managing the Central de Diseño in Matadero Madrid, an area devoted to spreading design culture, which hosts and manages all types of design-related activities. One of its main projects is the Ibero American Design Biennial (BID), the fourth edition of which will be held in 2014.

## DEVELOPMENT

Two simultaneous workshops, one on gastronomy, the other on design, will be held in Tokyo this November. In them, two outstanding Spaniards, chef Miguel Ángel de la Cruz and designer Luis Úrculo will try to amalgamate their culinary and visual ideas to devise the great final event. What brings them together is the aim for participants and attendants to experience what the current Spanish tapas culture is in a new creative way.

To develop this project, the leaders of each workshop will work with an exclusive group of Japanese participants (around thirty people, including students and young designers and chefs) who jointly will prepare everything required for the final event. They will, therefore, be in charge of making that Spanish way of eating and interacting which is known as “ir de tapas” understandable to members of their own culture.



Colour samples for vegetable casts by Mischer Traxler for PCM design.

## GASTRONOMY CONCEPT

As explained above, these workshops are being held alongside the Tapas, Spanish Design for Food exhibition in Tokyo as its first destination. The fusion of such creative activities as design and gastronomy, fields in which Spain has so much to say, will be an essential experience in these workshops.

The organisers aim to transmit the gastronomy concept of tapas as an originality and quality hallmark of Spanish gastronomy in the last few years. Several features of tapas are joined together as a concept which has taken root in the various geographical locations, climates and cultures which make up Spain. A generalised taste for simple, well-seasoned, tasty food -an outstanding feature in traditional Spanish cuisine- together with the fact that tapas are eaten spontaneously and informally in bars -so often frequented by Spaniards when socialising- contributes to making the typically Spanish open character and inclination for strong, colourful, mixed tastes feel comfortable with the "tapas".



Various examples of food ideas and experiences influenced by designers.

Indeed, it is in this open character -which rejects stereotyped forms- and the Spanish lifestyle where the tapas -which are eaten in a seemingly random fashion, casually, on the go and frequently changing partners and bars- find their perfect, natural partner. On the other hand, this spontaneity, this attachment to variety and fast food, and this light, superficial way of interacting have broken the moulds of conventionalism, and are no longer associated with negative stereotypes which, until recently, had been connected to this way of life. They are part of what contemporary society perceives as its genuine character, a post-modern and current way of life where "tapeo" or "going for tapas" is a perfect fit both in and outside Spain.

For the last few years, the type of meals Spaniards order in restaurants has been much more similar to the way of eating at home with the family than to what used to be customary in restaurants. This way is commonly known as "putting some food in the middle of the table for nibbling", a snack variant, but done as a "formal way of eating" where everybody sits around the table. Instead of each individual having a first and second course plus dessert according to their fancy and the chef's suggestion, the first course becomes a mixture of foods to be shared among the whole group to then move to the second and main course, more to each one's individual taste. Often, the dessert is also shared so as to allow diners a greater variety and to jointly enjoy all the restaurant specialities. Nibbling is not very different from the gourmet sampling menu in high cuisine restaurants. What is important is to sample new tastes, to share the food tasting experience, which is typically an endless source of comments among diners, just like at family dinners, where the same food is shared by everybody and so everybody samples the same flavours. This communal experience all meals have has been increased by this new way of ordering food in Spanish bars and restaurants. It may very well come to be known as "served in the Spanish fashion" just as there is the English, the French or the Russian fashion.



Design installation Dear New York by Luis Úrculo for Zara.

## DESIGN ROLE

The other significant pillar in the proposal to meet the challenge of identifying that which is genuinely Spanish in the tapas is based on bringing in a profession which is just as creative and also enjoys recognition outside Spain. What we are talking about is design, more specifically current Spanish design. Designers are best suited to explain a country's tangible culture. They are creative and skilled in communication. They know what lies behind first appearances, which functions belong to usage and need, and which are mere rituals or customs disguised under established forms. This is why we have favoured this professional mix. We do believe that the chef-designer partnership is an enhancing value capable of developing innovation in research in such a way that the future path in the development of the tapas culture might be properly and more effectively understood. The final aim of these workshops is to consider what a tapa is and how it should be presented to other cultures.



Graphic Illustration  
by Luis Úrculo.

Roland Barthes pointed out a long while ago in his book *Empire of signs* the different ways the West and the East have of preparing food. Food in Eastern cultures is presented on the table in small chunks, so that diners do not have to cut it up. Western cultures, on the other hand, use knives and forks to cut the food in small bites in front of the other diners and get it ready to put in their mouths. The widely-spread Spanish custom of tapas is an exception to this rule in Western culture. Neither the sandwich nor what is known in Spain as “bocadillo” are so close to the Eastern way of presenting food on the table, due to their size and the fact that you need to eat them by biting. The workshops have been called Tapa as Haiku, as they intend to show similarities in terms of brevity and essence between tapas and this type of Japanese poem. Brevity and essence in the fields of design and gastronomy will be the aim of the people running the Workshops to put across.



Still image from the video CO-VERS by Luis Úrculo. A recreation of Chicago's Marine Towers and of the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

## WORKSHOP EXPLANATION

The aim is to host an event in Tokyo which combines the resulting ideas from both workshops, one led by a Spanish chef, the other by a Spanish designer, so that they guide two groups of students of gastronomy and design who will be in charge of carrying out such a promising event.

The final event in Tokyo will take place after the workshops and will bring together the interaction between chef and designer with the help of the Japanese participants. Before travelling to Tokyo, both artists will need to explore into and decide on what their joint presentation will consist of. On the one hand, they will need to assess what each one will be doing in the workshop they are to lead in Tokyo to narrow down what will be created there. On the other, they will plan their final joint presentation. DIMAD will be in charge of hosting, preferably in Madrid, the preliminary exchanges between chef and designer. The aim of these exchanges is to think of both the content and the philosophy behind their final joint effort. The exchanges will focus on conceptualising the way Spanish culture envisions the custom of tapas as the leitmotiv of the event as a whole.



Two dishes by Miguel Ángel de la Cruz from his book *El cocinero recolector y las plantas silvestres*.



The design workshop will take place in the Embassy of Spain in Tokyo. DIMAD will be responsible for contacting design schools and designer associations in Tokyo to organise and coordinate this workshop. The workshop designer will give a joint presentation with Juli Capella, the Tapas exhibition curator, during the TDW. In the presentation he will explain what the workshop is about and will introduce himself as a designer, while the curator will give a brief explanation of the contents of the exhibition and of the design culture in Spain.

The chef will lead the workshop on gastronomy. It will be held in a specialised kitchen well-equipped with all the facilities needed by the chef and his assistants to create the dishes. The assistants will be Japanese and DIMAD will be in charge of their selection. The place chosen for this workshop is Tokyo's Hattori Nutrition College.

The final event will be held in the auditorium of the Embassy of Spain in Tokyo and will coincide with the reinstallation of the exhibition "Tapas" there. Thus, the outcome of both workshops will be a culinary and design event in which a chef in cooperation with a designer will interpret the new Spanish culture of tapas.

**1. Tokyo**  
**Tapas as Haiku**

**Tapas Workshop**  
**Design & Gastronomy**

Organisers:  
AC/E & DIMAD  
[www.accioncultural.es](http://www.accioncultural.es)  
[www.dimad.org](http://www.dimad.org)

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