

The Washington Post



Jose Andres heads for the Strip

[Jose Andres](#) has signed on to create not one but two restaurants for the future Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. The prolific celebrity chef intends to re-create his popular Spanish tapas restaurant, Jaleo, and whip up something fresh for the nearly 3,000-room luxury resort, poised to open on the Strip in December. His second eatery, affectionately but unofficially dubbed Noodle Taco by his staff, will feature Chinese-Mexican cuisine.

The Vegas Jaleo will highlight a wood-fired pit for making paella. The yet-to-be-named fusion restaurant will feature tortilla makers up front, dishes including shumai wrapped in mango and high-end ingredients such as fresh water chestnuts rather than canned.

Andres has visited China and plans to go back for research several times before December. One of his tour guides, Jorge Guajardo, is a longtime friend who happens to be Mexico's ambassador to China.

"I've always been fascinated by China," Andres says. His native Spain and China share many similarities: The people of both countries "love pork and fried food."

Andres's establishments are the latest to join five other dining venues and a wine bar on the second level of the property. The restaurants are Blue Ribbon Sushi Bar and Grill, Estiatorio Milos, Scarpetta and STK, a steakhouse (from New York), and Comme Ca in Los Angeles.

"They're all places I like to go," says John Unwin, chief executive of the two-tower, 50-story Cosmopolitan. Assembling the collection of restaurants was similar to selecting guests for a dinner party, he adds: "They all have to complement each other." In addition, the restaurants are "all first-timers" in the Las Vegas marketplace, which is thick with representatives from New York and San Francisco. By selecting Andres and David Meyers, the chef of Comme Ca, Unwin hopes to show visitors "there are other places with great food."

Designed in part by top architect David Rockwell, the Cosmopolitan will distinguish itself from its competitors on the Strip in other than matters of the table. For one thing, the complex sits on less than nine acres. ("It's very vertical," Unwin says with a smile.) Most of its rooms include terraces. One of three "pool environments" overlooks the Strip.

While Andres, 40, says he had been approached previously about doing business in Sin City, "it was never the right opportunity, the right time, the right deal." With the Cosmopolitan, "I have a lot to win" he says. (For the record, he laughed when this quote was read back to him.)

This has been a buzzy few days for Andres, the always-animated Spanish native. Tonight, "60 Minutes" is profiling him on CBS. Tomorrow, he'll attend the [James Beard Foundation's](#) annual gala in New York, where he's one of five national nominees for the prestigious Outstanding Chef award.

-- Tom Sietsema