



Chef Nic Vanderbeeken Brings His Borderless Food Concept To Apéritif in Ubud, Bali

Under the helm of Executive Chef Nic Vanderbeeken, Apéritif in Ubud, Bali offers an elevated dining experience. Here, the lines are blurred between cultures, traditions, time, geography, and flavor profiles. Chef Nic's culinary philosophy, *Borderless Food*, is an embodiment of boundless creativity in the kitchen. Utilizing time-honored cooking techniques, he whips up dishes both familiar and new to bring people together through food. He begins, "There are many dishes in the world that look similar, but the flavor profiles [and] ingredients are different. If you look [at] food, [you will find that] we are all connected with each other."

The *Borderless Food* concept is the beating heart of Apéritif. It's what shapes the menu and informs the meticulous selection of the world's finest ingredients. It also inspires an unexpected, unforgettable journey of the palate.

Food Without Borders

Drawing inspiration from recipes around the globe, Chef Nic and his team of culinary artists orchestrate a gastronomic symphony of flavors that transport the senses to the most unexpected destinations. He describes, "We are not limited to one cooking style. We have Japanese, Nordic, French, and Indonesian influences." There is a sense of freedom that comes with serving up borderless cuisine, says Chef Nic. "We use local ingredients and flavors and translate them into our vision of cuisine. Some of our recipes are classic French, but infused with Indonesian flavors."

Inside the kitchen of Apéritif, creativity knows no boundaries. Chefs are encouraged to explore, innovate, stay open, and seek out new culinary pursuits. Chef Nic and his dedicated team bring together Japanese *umami* (which directly translates to 'essence of deliciousness') with French finesse, Nordic freshness, and rich Indonesian heritage in one menu. He explains, "We look at recipes and understand the similarities between different countries and their cuisines. Then, we bring them together in one menu."

The restaurant's location in Ubud, Bali also gives the team access to local, hard-to-find ingredients—from spices to microgreens and other produce. These are often integrated and reimaged into the recipes at Apéritif, adding a unique layer to the *Borderless Food* concept. Chef Nic clarifies, "We are not fusion." The use of local produce in the menu demonstrates affinity and respect for the Island of the Gods. It echoes the archipelago's rich history of culinary arts, which was developed over the years through encounters with other cultures. This deep connection with the land and its epicurean history strongly resonate with Apéritif's *Borderless Food* concept.

An Epicurean Journey Around the World

While Chef Nic himself is French-trained, the menu at Apéritif unfolds like a global epicurean journey, told through a rich symphony. It opens like a melodic overture. *Apero* at dawn are served at the Bar. Palate warmers like Chicken Liver Mousse with Balado and Shallot, Cured Red Snapper with Ponzu and Yogurt are brought out in upbeat temp. It ushers in a harmonious build up of excitement and anticipation for what's to come—the unexpected.

Movement transpires as diners head to the grand dining area for an adagio of complex umami flavors. Charcoal Puffs filled with Smoked Mackerel are culinary interpretations of slow, powerful notes skillfully strung together by a maestro. A small plate of Chawanmushi with King Prawn and Dashi invites the palate to step into a world of clean, delicate flavors punctuated with just the right amount of zest. It is at this point that senses are awakened for a gastronomic waltz.

There are two tasting menus to choose from when dining at Apéritif. The Signature Menu showcases familiar and well-loved dishes from the restaurant. Chef Nic observes, "People sometimes travel to us and expect certain dishes on the menu. [So] we created a Signature Menu." After the palette-warmers, the Signature Menu opens like the clean, crisp notes of a sonata. Bonito is a fresh, delicate and tangy dish that combines ginger flower, yuzu and hibiscus. It is followed by umami-filled servings of Wagyu (Tokusen Roast Carpaccio, Black Garlic, Bone Marrow, Mustard Seeds), and Vegetable Garden (Gulai, Dewandaru, Black Garlic).

Like a conductor to a podium, Chef Arvin then steps out from the kitchen to tell the story of doting grandmothers and their time-honored recipes. He presents his signature Spring Chicken (Tor Paitan, Koya, Bumbing Kuning), a tribute to the beloved chicken soup recipe of his grandmother in Java. It's personal encounters like the sharing of stories between chefs and diners that bring Balinese warmth to the fine dining experience at Apéritif. Chef Nic opines, "Through borderless cuisine, we bring people together and tell them a bit about the country where we live and also where we've traveled and grew up in."

The culinary symphony peaks, in true scherzo form, as the centerpiece of the Signature Menu is brought out. Chef Nic's Venison Wellington is a hearty, flavorful chorus that brings together

the rich textures and spices of foie gras, sweet potato, and rendang. According to Chef Nic, Rendang is an Indonesian dish that he relates to the most. Back in Belgium, the beloved Flemish stew is made utilizing the same cooking methods. Tapping into his roots, connecting with the archipelago, and channeling creativity in the kitchen, he then decided to use the rendang sauce on his famous venison Wellington. He comments, "Till today, it's a match made in heaven."

The crescendo to Apéritif's unique culinary progression, also takes flight with Japanese-inspired mains like Opu Fish (Woko, Miso, Tomato) and Kagoshima Wagyu A5 (Sweet Potato, Pair, Sesame, Gulah Juru, Jus). Chef Arvin's passion for Japanese cuisine and fermentation bring new depth to these dishes. Vegetarian options on the menu like Mushroom Venison and Cured Miso Mushroom are also reimaged and brought to life by the *Borderless Food* concept. Using the finest and freshest plant-based ingredients, these dishes dare to defy the boundaries that once confined vegetables are mere sidings.

Desserts are rolled out at the end of each meal like a coda to a song—soft, sweet, and lyrical. They read like the diary of an imaginative pastry chef now finding her voice and unique style in the kitchen. Apéritif's Chef Dayu Chintya has worked alongside some of the world's greatest chefs. She now brings to Apéritif's desert repertoire a selection of sweet endings that seamlessly blend saccharine, sour, tangy and zesty flavors. Every bite from creations like Sensation White (Mango, Meringue, Coconut, Cheesecake Crumble), PB & J (Peanut Butter Mousse, Raspberry, Blackberry, Biscuit) and Petit Fours, a moment of pure bliss.

Boundless Freedom, Creativity, and Imagination

The beauty of Borderless Food is that it is constantly evolving, changing, and finding new expressions on the plate. Chef Nic confesses, "I don't like to keep a dish forever on the menu. So, we created the Avant Garde menu, which changes every three months." This unique and exciting feature makes Apéritif a dining destination that is worth a special journey every time in Bali.

The Avant Garde Menu is a culinary journal chronicled and cooked by the team at Apéritif. Since moving to Bali, Chef Nic has continuously explored new ingredients and flavor profiles. He has also been working closely with his team, hatching new ideas to elevate the fine dining experience at Apéritif. Through constant research, collaboration, and product development, Chef Nic's concept of *Borderless Food* comes to life in Apéritif's Avant Garde Menu.

Private dinners are also held regularly at the restaurant, which further emphasize the *Borderless Food* experience at Apéritif. These intimate gatherings around the dinner table celebrate the boundless possibilities that unfold when like-minded individuals and brands are brought together by food.

Recipes for the Unexpected

Chef Nic's *Borderless Food* concept is nostalgic in that it brings beloved and familiar flavors to the table. It progresses and unfolds like a symphony—overtures and adagios to start, crescendos for mains, and sweet codas to close. Dishes are imbued with imaginative elements—a spice, special sauce, local ingredient, or fine produce—that lend a clear sense of place. Chef Nic shares, “When diners come to Apéritif, they come across something that they are familiar with, but presented in a different way. People from all over the world come here [because they want to] taste something from Indonesia, but also [want] to understand what they eat and recognize it.”

The culinary team at Apéritif also cooks up unexpected gastronomic experiences through small details that create an elevated fine dining experience. “I like to take my guests by surprise,” expresses Chef Nic. Apart from the Signature and Avant Garde Menus, Apéritif also gives guests the option to enhance their experience with opulent add-ons that include: Russian Sturgeon or Beluga Caviar served with blinis and creme fraiche, Kagoshima Wagyu A5, Canadian Lobster and Homemade Cappelini.

Bespoke dinnerware designed by Chef Nic in collaboration with local artisans speaks volumes of the team's keen eye for detail and passion for elevated fine dining. They are also manifested in the unexpected rollout of a bread trolley or a tray of fine cutlery for dinners to choose from. Punctuating every bite and delightful surprise are the finest wines handpicked and paired by Apéritif's in-house sommelier Jean Benoit. The restaurant's impressive selection of grape varietals from the world's most celebrated vineyards is a centerpiece unparalleled in Bali's dining scene.

At Apéritif, the elevated fine dining experience is informed and inspired by the *Borderless Food* concept. It is expressed in the way the menu takes diners on an epicurean journey across cultures, traditions, time, and regions. It is told through a symphony of stories about falling in love with food. But more than that, the *Borderless Food* concept at Apéritif is brought to life by the spirit of creativity, boundless imagination, and openness of Chef Nic and his team of culinary talents.

ABOUT CHEF NIC VANDERBEEKEN

Chef Nic's culinary journey began when he was 14. “I started to work in the kitchen as a porter. Quickly, I understood that this is where I belong. I enjoyed the buzz and the art of cooking” His passion for food also stems from childhood. Growing up, he watched as his mother pursued her love for cooking at home. Determined to pursue a career in gastronomy, Chef Nic enrolled at culinary school at Ter Groene Poorte in Bruges. By 15, Chef Nic grew into his role as commis (junior chef), dedicating weekends and holidays to honing his skills. He graduated from culinary school four years later and began a journey that would later inform his concept of *Borderless Food*.

Chef Nic's unique style and point of view are a culmination of his extensive experience throughout the years. He's worked at CasCades in Viceroy Bali, Bistronomie Evita (founded in Ho Chi Minh City), Bistro Berto in Waregem, Savarin Hotel-Restaurant at Roeselare, 't Convent Lo-Reninge, and Biggles in Wevelgem. Chef Nic has also lent his creative culinary vision to establishments like Karpendonkse Hoeve, Bistrot D'eygalieres 'chez Bru', Sanglier des Ardennes, St Christophe, Marquette, and 't Hoveke.

The Belgian Executive Chef is dedicated to nurturing creative talents in his kitchen at Apéritif. He shares that throughout his journey, "I was inspired and motivated by the chefs I've worked with." In leading his team today, he inculcates the very same core values once imparted to him by mentors—hard work, perseverance, curiosity, and openness. He advises, "Start at the bottom and work your way up. Open your eyes and mind. Learn and observe."

Alongside the *Borderless Food* concept that continues to grow and evolve at Apéritif, Chef Nic's incubator of culinary talents brings stories and breathes life to dishes that spark cultural dialogues.

About Apéritif

Apéritif is a fine-dining restaurant located amidst the picturesque rice fields of Ubud, Bali. Its splendor transcends the present, transporting guests to a bygone era where old-world refinement takes center stage. The restaurant and bar, equal in grandeur and elegance, offers discerning diners an elevated experience unlike anything else Bali has to offer.

Renowned for its borderless flavors crafted under the expertise of Belgian Executive Chef Nic Vanderbeeken and the restaurant's team of creative experts, Apéritif blends culinary influences from the old Spice Islands with modern European flavors and traditions. The experience begins with pre-dinner drinks and canapés at the bar. Here, the unexpected unveiled, adorned in the finer things of life— a meticulously curated wine cellar, matched in loft by the impressive cigar collection and top shelf spirit selection. More than just a journey of the palate, Apéritif serves up a complete sensorial experience.

For more information about Apéritif visit www.aperitif.com.