

Cristina Elena Muñoz Fernández

Head chef at 99 Sushi Bar Bilbao

 <https://www.99sushibar.com/>



I am from Basque Country in Spain. I have worked in different restaurants: Izariya Madrid, Nikkei225, Sumo, Crudito, 80 Grados, Gokan and 99 Sushi Bar. I studied at the Tokyo Sushi Academy in 2015 and made internship at Hachitora restaurant (inside Daiwa Hotel in Utsunomiya). I had my own restaurant but due covid-19 I transformed it to take away and as I didn't like the concept, I decided to close it and will be opening in 2025 my own restaurant again.

What triggered to become a Japanese chef, and what do you value as the chef?

I became interested in Japanese food because of Japanese culture and became so fond of Japanese food at my first Japanese food job with Rui Maehara that I decided that Japanese food was gonna be my food and. I felt in love with how something apparently so simply had so much technique, putting effort in natural food, seasonality and hospitality. Taking care of my customers, and always looking to create a balanced food that improves the taste of ingredient itself it's what attracted me the most. Working in counter with clients in front of me was something I never experienced before in Spanish restaurants, and I liked it because gave me the opportunity to show to the clients something far away from just food and interact with them.

What did you infuse in your work for the local qualifier? How did you feel about it?

I focused on local ingredients are very important in my country and my city and preserving plate and natural flavors. I felt everyone worked very hard trying to show their vision and showing themselves in the again, working under so much pressure. I am very sure everyone is very again, but competitions are very hard. Speaking with all, everyone had many minutes lefts when they tried at their restaurants, but with competition many mistakes were made so I felt bad for them, but sure there will be more opportunities to compete together again, and everyone will have their chance.

What is your motivation for the final?

I am so excited, making a lot of research about ingredients typical of Kyoto during that season, and thinking about what I would like to serve. I am very nervous and worry but I know I will do my best for sure.



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