

# TAPAS THE FAROESE WAY

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The Faroe Islands' new and only tapas restaurant offers a delicious mix of genuine Faroese cuisine served in the Spanish tapas style, in a cosy and enjoyable atmosphere.

Located in the heart of Tórshavn, a few meters away from Hotel Hafnia, the restaurant's premises, the house known as Katrina Christiansen (earlier known as Heinesen's, Restorff's, Skálahús, and Bertskerstova) has a long and fascinating history.

Newly refurbished in a way that largely recreates the old house, with many intriguing original features and items preserved.

Exterior view of the newly renovated house.



JENS KRISTIAN VANG

**Tórshavn finally got its very own tapas restaurant—Katrina Christiansen, a unique blend of Faroese cuisine in the popular Spanish style and a house full of history and atmosphere, the birthplace of famous author William Heinesen.**

**F**AROESE AND Spanish cuisine might seem like an odd pairing, but new tapas restaurant Katrina Christiansen has proved a hit with diners since it opened on April 1 this year (2017).

It all started with a house. Grey, wooden and spanning across four floors in the very center of Tórshavn, the 300-year-old building has housed doctors, been the birthplace of famous author William Heinesen and served as a popular local convenience store. But for the last 12 years, the doors have been shut.

Now, Katrina Christiansen, as the house has been known since the 1920s, has opened as a Spanish Faroese fusion restaurant, serving local produce such as langoustine, mussels and lamb tapas-style.

“We wanted to create a unique experience, which offered something different from the other restaurants in the Faroe Islands,” says head-chef Jóhan Joensen.

Restaurant guests are encouraged to eat slowly, with a full tapas menu taking two to three hours to consume.

Traditional Spanish dishes are intentionally left out of the menu according to the head chef. He wants guests to experience Faroese cuisine and produce combined with Spanish traditions.

“We didn’t want a restaurant reeking of garlic with salsa music in the background,” he says.

The Faroe Islands have longstanding culinary ties to the north of Spain as a major exporter of salted and dried cod—or bacalao, as the Spanish call it.

“The Faroese salt fish is famous in Spain,” Mr. Joensen says. “We export large amounts of salt fish to the north of Spain. It’s very popular with the locals. The Faroese climate adds a very unique flavor to the cod. Whenever we get Spanish guests in the restaurant, they’re always keen to try the salt fish.”

Katrina Christiansen serves three variants of bacalao, which also happen to be the chef’s favorite on the menu.

Mr. Joensen is no stranger to fish. Originally a sailor for many years, he found his love for cooking at sea whilst working briefly as a ship’s cook. The discovery prompted him to train as a chef. He was head chef at Áarstova, another popular local restaurant, from 2011 to 2016.

## NOVELTY AND NOSTALGIA

Since Katrina Christiansen opened, the tables have been fully booked nearly every evening according to Mr. Joensen.

The building which houses the restaurant has also become an attraction in itself due to its long history.

The house has had several different names. It became known as Katrina Christiansen when a woman of the same name opened a convenience store there in 1927. Her son later took over the business, which remained open until in 2005.

“Many of our older guests remember the house from when they used to come in to buy kerosene and sacks of flour,” says



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Head-chef Jóhan Joensen.

Oddbjørg Højgaard, General Manager of Hotel Hafnia, which owns and operates the restaurant.

For anyone visiting Tórshavn, Faroese or foreigner, this place is a must-see. The restaurant’s exposed wooden walls are decorated with memorabilia such as framed coffee sacks, old newspapers and toys dating back to the Second World War. Even the original shop till has been put back in place. The result is a cozy, informal atmosphere brimming with culture and history.

“We tried to find as many original objects belonging to the house as possible; things that had in fact been left to be discarded off,” Ms. Højgaard says. “We want people to take their time to enjoy the atmosphere and the many details, and so serving tapas seemed perfect.”

Katrina Christiansen was originally known as Bartskerastova. Bartskeri is an old Faroese word, which can mean either barber or surgeon. Hans Albertsen Matras, who was a surgeon from 1707 to 1743, was

the first person known to have lived in Bartskerastova. Several surgeons lived there in the following decades and possibly some before Matras’ time as well.

The house was also the birthplace of author William Heinesen, who famously dubbed Tórshavn “the world’s navel”. Heinesen, who renounced his candidacy for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1981, is widely recognized as one of the most influential Faroese writers. He was born in 1900 and lived in the house for the first five years of his life. He later returned after completing his studies in Denmark.

“Many people stop by just to see William Heinesen’s birthplace,” Ms. Højgaard says.

In collaboration with local brewery Föroya Björ, the restaurant has produced two specialty beers named ‘William’ and ‘Katrina’.

“Young people see our restaurant as a quirky novelty whilst it brings back memories and nostalgia for the older generations,” Ms. Højgaard says.

One of the restaurant’s several seating sections.

