

Encounters – Restaurant Andrea and Hotel St. George's Restaurant World

Restaurant Andrea will open its doors at Lönnrotinkatu 4, Helsinki at the start of next year. Hotel St. George and Restaurant Andrea will offer food experiences together and independently, as separate concepts. With the internationally renowned restaurateur **Mehmet Gürs** in charge of its concept, Restaurant Andrea will be much more than a hotel restaurant.

Mehmet Gürs is a superstar in the restaurant scene of Turkey. His restaurant, *Mikla*, has been listed as one of the 50 best restaurants in the world. In Turkey, Gürs's family company has founded a total of 14 restaurants, three coffee shops and a coffee roastery. He has also had his own cooking program on television. Gürs, born in Tammissaari, Finland, grew up in Stockholm, studied in the United States, and has lived his adult life in Istanbul. He takes pride in sourcing supplies for his restaurants from small local producers, with the help of the company's dedicated food anthropologist.

“The food concept of Restaurant Andrea is very close to my personal principles. We cook from local ingredients. That's because I like my food to travel less than I do. It's important to have a good idea and real passion for making it happen – the customers can sense that, too. It all starts from the food and how it's eaten – like whether the food you serve is meant to be shared. Sharing food between your party is an intimate moment. The music and the interior design of the restaurant come next.

I personally love the sounds of the dining room, the laughter and the hum of conversation. Eating should be entertaining. Not just fine dining but fun dining. As a restaurant is a sort of theatre, the staff also play an important role: whether they come close to you or remain more distant.

Restaurant Andrea is a totally new experience for me: I'm used to Turkish customers. Opening this new restaurant is a truly exciting moment for me – and for Helsinki too, I'm sure.”

Restaurant Andrea will be born in co-operation with the food industry visionary and restaurateur **Antto Melasniemi**, who is also facing a new challenge. Besides being responsible for Hotel St. George's food concepts at *Hotel St. George Bakery* and *Wintergarden*, he will oversee everything related to food and drink, from the minibar concepts to the room service selection.

Antto Melasniemi is known for his three successful Helsinki restaurants: *Kuurna*, *Ateljee Finne* and *Putte's*. Melasniemi, the ex-keyboardist of the band HIM, has been an ambassador for Finnish food culture abroad – for example, cooking with solar panels in Milan. He's also been involved in promoting

Finnish art and design in London and Stockholm with his ground-breaking *HEL YES* restaurant. What's more, Melasniemi has helped turn Helsinki's Flow Festival into a unique culinary music event.

“When you're developing a new restaurant, you must have an open mind and always challenge yourself. When something feels too easy, you need to consider whether you've already turned over every stone. What's most important in planning a restaurant, however, is not what things look like but how they feel,” Antto describes the creation of Hotel St. George's restaurant world and concepts. “When you put your heart and soul in a new restaurant, it's destined to become original. If you just try to follow the trends, the restaurant is unlikely to be a success. Good food is honest, an expression of the time and place you're at. You could say that good food inspires me and makes me happy.”

This is the start of an interesting journey.

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