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# Where Dining Meets Design

story by  
CITA ARSITA FARANI

photos by  
ADRIEN WILLIAMS  
LISA PETROLE PHOTOGRAPHY

**S**ometimes the interior can make the restaurant, allowing it to stand out from the competition. Interior statements can also invite new customers while providing a sense of pride and familiarity to the returning ones. Here are 3 restaurants in Canada that invest as much a great sense of design as great food and great service.

## Rasoï

Montreal designer Jean de Lessard captures the eclectically exuberant spirit in the Indian fusion restaurant Rasoï, further heightening the sum of sensations by recreating his contemporary perception of the colors and flavors of the traditional cuisine.

Jean has combined geometric and organic shapes, which are at the source of the country's art and culture, and an assembly of new and on-site materials, contrasting materials such as silky and rough textures and finally an array of styles bringing to mind a European colonial past, with a chosen chromatic palette to reflect

the splendor of Bollywood.

A single visit isn't enough to capture the details put into the restaurant. The whole design is integrated and the four contiguous dining areas are separated by the same yellow central structure. Its lack of curvaceous shapes integral in Indian design is made up by the perforations in the structure and the other interior elements. The ceiling is decorated with references to henna art's floral and vegetal motifs. To add an authentic touch, the hanging mosaic lamps are handmade and imported from Jaipur, a city renowned as the "Pink City".





## Kinoya

This Japanese restaurant bar is another work by Jean de Lessard, but the approach is entirely different. This time he integrates the spirit and aesthetics of an izakaya, an informal place where people socialize while drinking beer and sake, and turns Kinoya into a cozy, modern mingling environment.

The space, such as how one could figure what the interior of origami looks like, is composed of triangles of various sizes, crookedly placed in a seemingly random fashion. But nothing is actually unplanned. Even the seemingly chaotic and angularity of the surfaces actually helps to muffle the ambient noise. As a whole, it looks like a fantasy cave where people are in a constant visual exploration mode, which is what Jean aims for.

The uncouth-tavern style decoration is left to its simplest expression: the furniture and lighting were salvaged from previous Kinoya, drawings and graffiti offend the eye and confirm the urban character of the establishment. Hanging banners further perpetuate the Japanese tradition.

Despite the almost shocking visuals at a first glance, the soft lighting and the smell of wood mingles pleasantly with the aromas of mouth-watering dishes, creating a cozy atmosphere that can alleviate stress, just like how an izakaya would.





## Barsa Taberna

Historical building's limitations can be a nightmare when handled poorly, but the works studio +tongtong did to Barsa Taberna is all about surprise, with literal-but-fun "bull" elements that identify the Spanish-inspired tapas restaurant.

The old stone archways now differentiate the grotto-style dining area, and the lack of windows are compensated with smart, visually attractive lighting in the form of a rear-lit mural depicting the chaotic yet fascinating running of the bulls. Above the bar, there are custom-designed LED light fixtures with armatures that resemble a charging bull frozen in a stop motion sequence. The custom-designed stools made of salvaged pine are dubbed the "little pest," or in Spanish "becho mio". With tops resembling worn butcher blocks and carved-out handles that riff on the forms of old wine crates, a reminiscence of seats fashioned out of old wine barrels or wooden crates in traditional tapas eateries.

To further capture Barcelona's tapas culture, where patrons can often pick their own tapas straight from the kitchen, the prep area was moved forward and outwards. Chefs prepare charcuterie and cheese platters out in the open, surrounded by jars of produce, hanging chili peppers, cast iron pans, and meat slicers.

