

Hotel María Cristina to Welcome Two-Michelin-Star Restaurant Amelia by Paulo Airaudo in 2026

The partnership between Hotel María Cristina and Paulo Airaudo Group strengthens both as international symbols of hospitality, luxury and culinary excellence.



Chef and Paulo Airaudo Group Owner, Paulo Airaudo and Rafael González Ensesa, General Manager at Hotel María Cristina

Photo: Óscar Oliva

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San Sebastián, 20 November 2025. In San Sebastián—renowned gastronomic capital and the city with the highest density of Michelin stars in the world—Hotel María Cristina, a Luxury Collection Hotel, will add a new chapter to its history in 2026 with the opening of Amelia by Paulo Airaudo, a restaurant awarded two stars in the Michelin Guide.

Built by the Sociedad de Fomento de San Sebastián—the economic development agency of the city — and inaugurated on 9 July 1912, Hotel María Cristina was named in honour of Queen María Cristina of Habsburg-Lorraine, a passionate admirer of the city, who was appointed honorary mayor in 1926. Owned by the municipality through Sociedad de Fomento and managed by Marriott International under its Luxury Collection brand, the hotel has been a symbol of elegance and hospitality for more than a century.

With the arrival of the Amelia restaurant, Hotel María Cristina completes its gastronomic offering and reinforces its position as one of Europe's leading references in luxury hospitality and haute cuisine. Since its opening, this Belle Époque icon has welcomed travellers from all over the world, attracted by its sophistication and its connection with the living history of San Sebastián.

The addition of Amelia represents a perfect synergy between the hotel's timeless elegance and the avant-garde philosophy of Paulo Airaudo, an Argentine chef of Italian heritage who has made San Sebastián his home since 2017. With seven Michelin stars to his name and restaurants in cities such as Barcelona, Hong Kong, Florence and Bangkok, Airaudo is today one of the most influential figures in international gastronomy.

The new restaurant will occupy a unique space designed by architect Javier Orduña of Biarkio Arquitectura. The setting will be elegant and sophisticated, offering a high level of privacy. The project includes an open kitchen surrounded by a counter seating twelve guests, as well as two additional tables. This layout will help create a warm and intimate atmosphere, very much aligned with the philosophy of both the chef and the hotel.

Its culinary proposal is built around the concept of an "Italian omakase", where diners place complete trust in the chef and his team to guide them through a unique gastronomic journey. Airaudo reinterprets this Japanese tradition through his Italian roots and cosmopolitan culinary vision, giving particular prominence to seafood and the ingredients that inspire his cuisine around the world. The result is an experience defined by technical precision, elegance and emotion, in a constantly evolving menu that reflects his personal approach to flavour and creativity.

Over the years, Hotel María Cristina has hosted world-class culinary initiatives, including pop-ups by Michelin-starred chefs Francis Paniego and Hélène Darroze. Its current gastronomic offering includes The Gallery, a restaurant combining Basque cuisine with international influences and seasonal produce; Dry Martini San Sebastián, an iconic cocktail bar serving classic and signature cocktails in a space inspired by the glamour of the many film stars who have stayed at the hotel; and MIMO Bite the Experience, a cookery school and gastronomic centre offering classes, tours and private experiences with chefs.

A Strategic Alliance for Donostia/San Sebastián

The partnership between Paulo Airaudo Group and Hotel María Cristina is supported by Sociedad de Fomento de San Sebastián, as part of its commitment to gastronomy as one of the city's strategic sectors and, in particular, to fostering talent and supporting the growth of entrepreneurial and innovative business ventures. This support is reflected in the selection of Amelia for the EKINN+ Gastro acceleration programme of Sociedad de Fomento, with the various resources and backing it provides.

The project represents an important step in a strategy of talent attraction and development, promoting generational renewal in the sector and strengthening the city's brand while enhancing the offering of a key asset for both the city and Sociedad de Fomento: Hotel María Cristina.

About Hotel María Cristina, A Luxury Collection Hotel, San Sebastián

Inaugurated on 9 July 1912 and named in honour of Queen María Cristina, who frequently spent long holidays in San Sebastián, Hotel María Cristina is a true icon of the city. Managed by Marriott International under its luxury brand The Luxury Collection, the hotel has, over its 113 years of history, had the privilege of hosting some of the most notable figures of the 20th century—from royalty and aristocracy to leading cultural and film personalities—thanks to its strong connection with the San Sebastián International Film Festival. Since 1953, the hotel has become the home and headquarters of the most renowned national and international film stars, from Elizabeth Taylor, Gregory Peck, Alfred Hitchcock, Steven Spielberg and Sophia Loren to Bette Davis, Susan Sarandon, Mel Gibson, Pedro Almodóvar, Woody Allen and Brad Pitt. A key venue for social and family events in the city, Hotel María Cristina plays a central role in Donostia's civic and cultural life.

About Chef Paulo Airaudo

Born in Argentina to an Italian family and a resident of San Sebastián since 2016, he is the founder of Paulo Airaudo Group, headquartered in Donostia/San Sebastián. The group comprises sixteen restaurants, seven Michelin stars and operations in Spain, Italy, Hong Kong, Thailand and the United States. Airaudo's projects range from fine-dining establishments to casual concepts and traditional taverns.

He settled in San Sebastián in 2016 and opened Amelia in 2017, his most personal project, which today holds two Michelin stars. Since 2019, he has expanded his culinary universe with restaurants such as Da Filippo, Cantina Argentina 1985, The Blind Pig, La Bottega di Filippo and Ibai (one Michelin star), all in San Sebastián; Aleia in Barcelona (one Michelin star); NOI at the Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong (two Michelin stars); and Luca's (one Michelin star) at Hotel La Gemma in Florence. In 2025 he further strengthened his presence in San Sebastián with the opening of Egosari, a pintxo bar and traditional Basque restaurant in the Old Town, and Sankaku, an izakaya-style Japanese concept. That same year he launched three new international fine-dining restaurants: Sartoria at Empire Tower in Bangkok; Da Lorenzo at NH Collection Venezia Grand Hotel Palazzo dei Dogi in Venice; and Belén at the Intercontinental Hotel in Chiang Mai (northern Thailand).

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