

Architect Liza Morales, Driven by Sustainability, Breathes New Life Into Elaia by CYMA

Lexus's focus on sustainable design made it a no-brainer for Morales to do the same in building purposeful architecture into old structures.



By JV ORDOÑEZ | A day ago



IMAGE PHOTO: Lexus Philippines

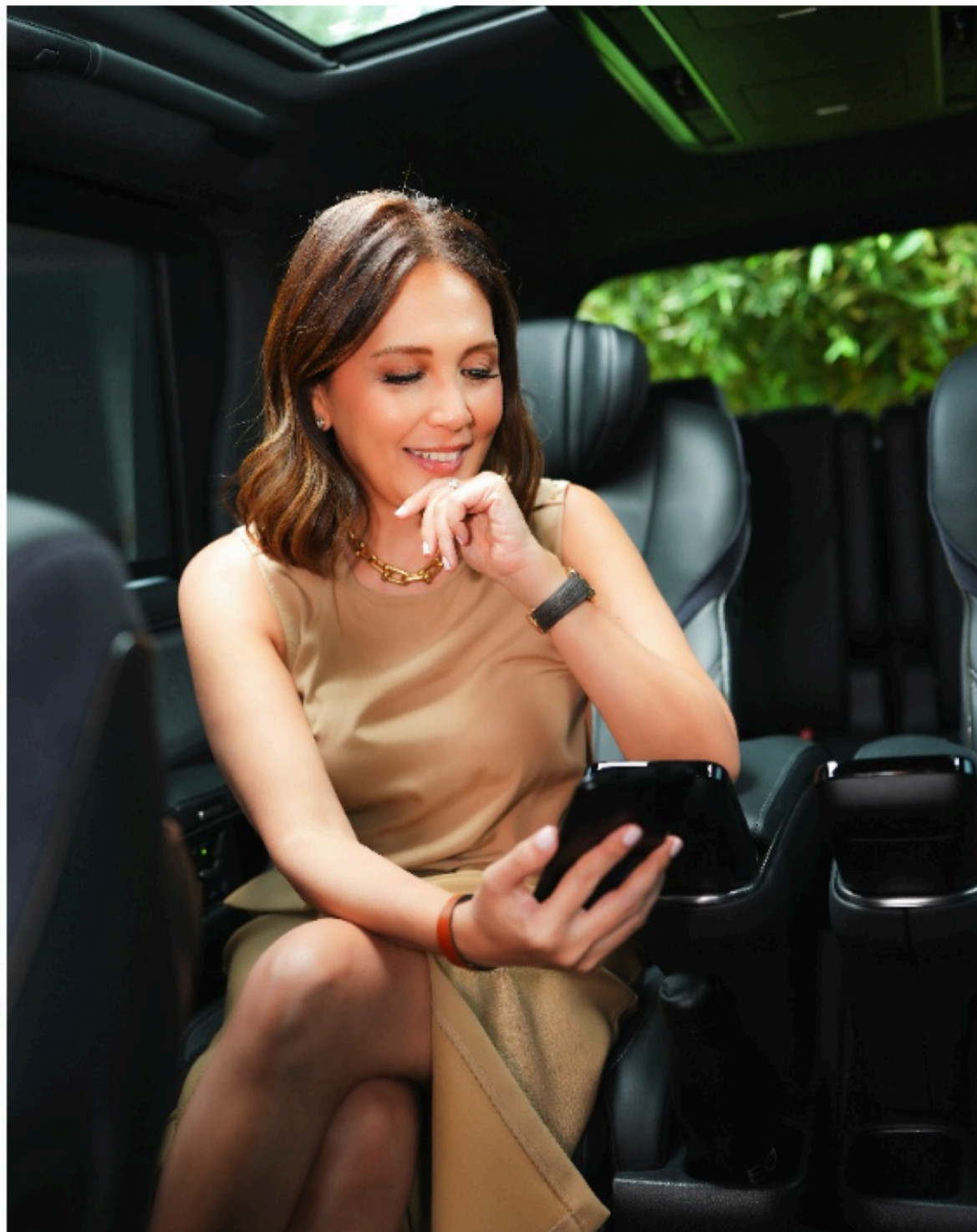
The rustic and homey design of the Greek restaurant Elaia by CYMA in the town of Silang, Cavite near Tagaytay was born out of a design ethos centered on ensuring things don't go to waste for the planet's sake.

This is what the trailblazing architect, Liza Morales, told us after our drive to Elaia as hosted by Japanese luxury car brand Lexus. The Greek restaurant is now a world away from the rundown state it was in.

“We design spaces that are authentic, thoughtful, and rooted in care—for people, for place, and for the planet,” she said, citing her Ecotecture Design Studio.

“We reuse what we can, bring in light and airflow, and work with natural materials. It's about creating beauty that lasts—and that feels good, inside and out.

Lexus has been a long-time advocate for design work centered on the use of sustainable materials, which Morales says was why the brand aligned with her design ethics in building purposeful architecture into old structures.



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Elaia by CYMA before renovation



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“I’ve been a proud Lexus hybrid owner for the past eight years, and I love how the brand proves you don’t have to choose between performance and responsibility. Quiet luxury, refined design, and a real commitment to sustainability—values which are so aligned with mine.”

Esquire Philippines and other media members were invited out for a scenic drive in hybrid Lexus cars to the new Greek restaurant that boasts fresh, unprocessed ingredients, and dishes based in extra virgin olive oil.

“Elaia by CYMA is a testament to sustainable architecture. We preserved existing structural elements like the foundation, slab, and exterior walls, reducing the need for new materials,” Morales detailed the restaurant’s construction.

“Elaia pairs timeless Greek cuisine, with a focus on olive oil, with a thoughtfully renewed space and beautiful al fresco dining.”

Elaia’s head chef, Robby Goco, told us that the place had been renovated, repurposed, and completely gutted while retaining foundational structures.

How Elaia by CYMA's Food Takes Sustainability to Heart

“We run Elaia with a clear focus on sustainability. Using everything, minimizing waste, and ensuring profitability while being conscious of our impact,” Goco said.

“We also practice nose to tail. We use the whole animal from nose to tail. We’re looking into composting. We’re segregating our wastes.”

He added that ensuring nothing goes to waste provides for dishes containing the best possible ingredients and flavors.

Elaia also cooks with vegetables sourced only about five kilometers away from the restaurant, grown specifically for the team.

“You should see the tomatoes that we have. It’s only grown for me, for us. We bring in our extra virgin olive oil from Greece, from Peloponnese, and the acidity is the lowest you can ever find in this country.”

The seasoned chef, who already has two successful restaurants as feathers in his cap, said that Elaia highlights more progressive interpretations of Greek flavors.

It is no wonder that the vegetables and dishes from northern Greece are among the freshest we’ve tasted due to their pairing with the cool weather in Silang, which is five minutes away from Tagaytay.

The nearly two-hour trip to Silang, which felt like it flew by in an instant due to the quiet and comfortable drive in the Lexus UXe FSport NNZ 1737, was a rewarding sight to behold.

Elaia’s Seafood Crudo of Salmon, Tuna, Hamachi, and Scallops Chicken Broth with Dakos Crouton and Cilantro Pesto reset our palettes for the sumptuous mains to come.

Elaia by CYMA's exterior



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