

LIFESTYLE | OTHERS

Liza Morales on building and moving with purpose, together with Lexus

By Tobias Jared Tomas | Aug 20, 2025



COVER Architect Liza Morales of Ecotecture Design Studio proves with Elaia by Cyma that great design and sustainability can go hand in hand (Photo: Lexus Philippines)

When things are built with purpose, they are built with the future in mind. Through careful planning, Liza Morales of Ecotecture Design Studio has long created spaces that are familiar, genuine and respectful of both people and the planet. She recently partnered with Lexus to take friends and guests to Elaia by Cyma in Tagaytay, which embodies the very essence of her design philosophy: authentic, sustainable and timeless.

Lexus takes us to Elaia by Cyma in Tagaytay, a new restaurant designed by Architect Liza Morales of Ecotecture Design Studio

Riding in Lexus hybrid vehicles—including the Lexus RX, the Lexus RZ and the Lexus LX—we made our way to Elaia in Tagaytay, which was renovated from an old, abandoned rest stop. The exterior features wooden slats that allow air to flow into the restaurant, while a pergola adds a touch of shade and garden tones. Eschewing the popular blue and white palette reminiscent of Greek coastal towns and cities, Morales has chosen a more understated approach to the establishment's interiors, with an emphasis on solihya patterns and wooden accents. The foundation and roof were largely retained from the original structure.

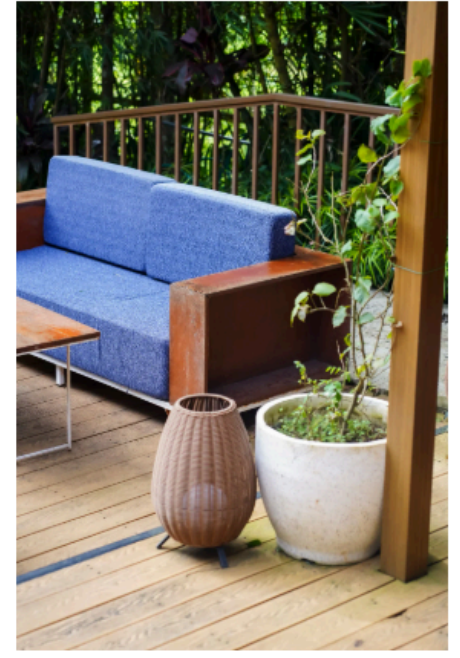
Fresh Greek



ABOVE Elaia by Cyma in Tagaytay



ABOVE Blue tones amidst wooden accents



ABOVE The exterior seating and lounge area of Elaia

“If you go outside of Athens, in places with basket weaving, it’s actually quite similar to what we have here,” Morales explains. “It puts a Filipino spin to it, but it has that provincial Greek vibe.” However, that recognisable shade of blue still remains in the seating and cushions as a complementary aspect, not the centrepiece. The result is a warm, pleasing atmosphere that feels familiar and lived-in.



ABOVE The basket-inspired headlamps are intentionally positioned to facilitate excellent lighting for photographs, Morales explains



ABOVE Lexus Drive to Elaia was a celebration of sustainability and craftsmanship

Elaia, which means ‘olive’ in Greek, has its story told through symbols illuminated on the wall. Morales explains, “They tell how you extract the oil, so if you follow it all the way to the outside, there’s a story [to be told].” Down a short flight of stairs is the exterior seating area, where one can fully enjoy the fresh air of Tagaytay.

“We embraced what was already there. The goal was to open it up to light, greenery, and texture and to let it breathe again,” Morales says. As a longtime Lexus driver herself, she is proud of her association with the brand, whose values echo her own. “Like Lexus, we believe in quiet craftsmanship, innovation and making sustainability feel natural,” she adds. “It’s about respect for people, for resources, and for the experience.” Her architectural style has always shown her preference for passive cooling, natural ventilation and locally sourced materials.

Made sustainable



ABOVE Chef Robby Goco shares how Elaia's menu is made with fresh, local produce

Elaia's chef Robby Goco prepared a menu consisting of authentic Greek fare. "Sustainability goes beyond sourcing," Goco declares. "It's also about responsibility. We run Elaia without throwing anything away. We try to use everything...we use the whole animal from nose to tail. We're into composting." He adds, "All the vegetables we have are sourced within a five-kilometre radius."

This trifold approach—supporting local farmers, minimising waste and sustainable practices—further reinforces what Morales set out to create: a restaurant where such environmentally conscious choices are not treated as a hurdle, but as an authentic part of the establishment itself.

Morales's architectural style has given new life to this corner of Tagaytay, reflecting her affinity with Lexus. Elaia stands as a reminder that the future begins with sowing seeds in the present, and it encourages everyone to make their own mark.