



Ceviche Classico

MARCH OF + × THE PERUVIAN

— By Meliana Salim

In recent years, the Nuevo Latino culinary movement has taken the gastronomy world by storm. Ubud's hot newcomer, PICA South American Kitchen, is positioning itself as the undisputed destination for this nouvelle gourmet cuisine worthy of a trip to the cultural heartland of Bali.

Soot over tacos and tortillas. Rest in peace, "Eat, Pray, Love". Ubud is revved up and ready for an irresistible jolt of Latin American flamboyance and vigour. In a town where conscious eating rules, with the incessant mushrooming of raw food cafés, juice bars and organic shops, PICA South American Kitchen's arrival on Jalan Dewi Sita is much-welcomed.

PICA's menu is predominantly Peruvian, the original fusion cuisine that has become an unstoppable global phenomenon since 2011, perched high up on the gastronomic pedestal thanks to the relentless endorsement of

acclaimed chefs the calibre of Ferran Adrià, Gastón Acurio, Alain Ducasse and Nobu Matsuhisa.

A project of love conceived by a spirited couple, chef-owner Cristian Encina and co-owner Monica Fernandez, this inconspicuous hole-in-the-wall is small but never cramped, its vibe laid-back and relaxed. At PICA, the line of responsibility is distinctively drawn: Encina reigns in the open kitchen, while Monica manages front of house operations—a winning formula that has earned them a cult following. The design is simplistic and clean yet not an afterthought, staying clear of kitsch and clichés, while retaining a warm, convivial ambiance where South American swagger is balanced with Balinese sensibility.

Hailing from Santiago, Chile, with years of culinary experience in fine dining restaurants across Chile, New Zealand and Australia, Encina's unfettered enthusiasm led him to experiment with a kaleidoscope of Latin American flavours, cultures and spices—a bit of Brazilian, Chilean and Argentinian, with a special place on the menu for Peruvian dishes. The thoughtfully curated wine list is limited but elegant, with an emphasis on new world wines from South America, Australia and New Zealand.

"South American food is different from country to country, of course, but when you look beyond its differences, it is fresh, somehow simple and complex, and all the time intriguing. It's very exciting for me to explore and re-interpret the rich diversity of South American cuisine," said the Chilean-born chef.



Causa Del Mar



Pulpo Al Olivo

Embrace the Latin way of celebratory dining by sharing plates with friends, tasting your way through South America. Expect artful arrangement without the pretentiousness. Start with the invigorating ceviche Nikkei, a subtle Japanese take on the Peruvian classic of raw mahi-mahi, red onion, coriander, tamarillo dressing and leche de tigre ("tiger's milk" consisting of a lemon marinade used to cure raw seafood). The causa del mar is a colourful Peruvian potato cake starter served cold with a trio of octopus, prawn and mahi-mahi escabeche (citrus-marinated) topped with criolla sauce.

Still on Peruvian turf, the pulpo al olivo and the picante de pescade y camarones are two delightful mains that have us coming back time and again. The former is a succulent, flavourful octopus main, lovingly prepared through a lengthy, tenderizing process and presented with a simple quinoa salad and olive sauce. The latter is a stunning duo of crispy-skinned, perfectly moist white fish and delicately breaded and fried prawns on a creamy picante sauce with sweet green peas, a dollop of fresh cheese, black olives, a quail's egg and a side of rice and corn.

PICA regulars rave about the pancita de lechon (a pork belly dish with roasted

vegetables, sweet potatoes, green apple puree and date sauce) and the smoky bife ancho (300g of top-grade Australian Angus rib-eye served with chimichurri, beef jus and a seasonal side), claimed by some as the best pork belly and steak in Ubud. Personally, I love the understated simplicity of the pastel de choclo, a harmoniously balanced stew of sweet corn puree baked with savoury mushrooms and criolla.

Between the two desserts on offer, the leche asada (Chilean crème caramel) and the tres leches (Peruvian "three milks" cake), I prefer the latter—a chilled Genoese sponge cake soaked for at least three hours in three forms of milk (evaporated, condensed and cream), infused with fragrant spices of vanilla, cinnamon and cloves, and enlivened with a hint of tangy passion fruit.

Chef Cristian Encina has perfected the art of reinventing Latin American food at PICA, heating up the neighbourhood with his gutsy, uninhibited, authentic flavours, bringing in a fresh, contemporary twist whilst honouring timeless traditions. ☺

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