



NEWS RELEASE

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**Peruvian Cooking 101:
Where it is from, where it is going
*Nearly two decades following political shift,
global appreciation for Peruvian cuisine builds***

Kirkland, Wash. (Feb. 8, 2007) – For adventuresome foodies, Peruvian cooking may be a new frontier.

The new styles of cuisine in Peru are taking pioneering techniques from Europe and mixing them with the already fused cuisine of Peru, which includes foods of immigrants and ancient Peruvians,” says Gus Rivadeneira, general manager of and a partner in Kirkland-based Mixtura.

“This is akin to standing on the shoulders of giants, you can only get even higher,” Rivadeneira said.

Peru’s contemporary cuisine is a panoply of ingredients, techniques, flavors and styles of both its ancient indigenous peoples and its immigrant cultures.

Peru seems a natural cradle for creative cuisine. It boasts an astounding assembly of indigenous ingredients—the country is the birthplace of more than 4,000 varieties of potatoes, hundreds of other tubers, edible roots, tropical and sub-tropical fruits, an array of flavorful peppers. Ancient grains are plentiful and the Pacific Ocean offers a bounty of seafoods.

Although a study in fusion throughout the epochs, the gastronomy of South America's third-largest country has proliferated only recently.

“When the conquistadors arrived, real Peruvian cuisine went to sleep,” said Lima native and Mixtura's Chef Emmanuel Piqueras. Piqueras—included in *Restaurant Hospitality's 2005 “Rising Stars” award program*—is infusing the Northwest with his brand of showy yet sophisticated Peruvian creations at Mixtura.

Few people in North America are better situated to demystify Peru's culinary arts than Piqueras. And that is not just because of the rave reviews rolling in for Piqueras and Mixtura.

In Lima, considered the food capital of the Americas, Piqueras worked among the crowd credited helping start less than two decades ago an awakening in Peruvian cuisine.

Beginnings of the movement can be traced to the early 1990s. An amateur cook named Bernardo Roca Rey, who happened to be publisher of a daily newspaper, began experimenting with ingredients and techniques eschewed in contemporary Peruvian cuisine.

Roca Rey made ancient ingredients new again by incorporating them into modern dishes. For instance, Roca Rey substituted Andean quinoa for rice in risotto and came up with what is now known as quinotto.

Roca Rey's newspaper began publishing regularly recipes and a food column.

His daughter, Hirka Roca Rey, found inspiration and opened a restaurant—Pantagruel. Another early adopter was Chef Cucho La Rosa, who opened the first restaurant with a completely New Andean menu.

Cooking in the style of New Andean, or “Novo Andina” as the movement also is known, fundamentally is about mixing Peru's old ways and old ingredients with foods brought by immigrants.

A repressive government for decades had held that sort of mixing as taboo.

“No one dared to mix the various distinct cuisines in Peru. The country was politically and geographically isolated, so that little of its astonishing variety of foods...showed up in the markets. Even when they did, *limeños* disdained ingredients from the Andes, considering them peasant food,” wrote Laura Fraser in the August 2006 issue of *Gourmet*.

About the time Bernardo began his public experimentation, the political climate changed toward openness.

Cooks and chefs, one after another, joined the new culinary adventure.

La Rosa after several years moved over to Hirka Roca Rey's Pantagruel. Piqueras by 1996 became sous-chef for Pantagruel and worked under La Rosa, today considered the father of the New Andean movement.

Piqueras and his business partners chose the name Mixtura as homage to the fusion between foods rooted in Incan times and contemporary, immigrant-influenced Peruvian cooking.

"The key to Novo Andina is that the ingredients are familiar but are made new when they are prepared using modern techniques," Piqueras said.

And with the vast array of ingredients and ethnicities found in Peru, no one or two dishes can be held up as standards.

"At Mixtura we often meet people who have been to Peru and are asked whether we have this or that dish. We do not exaggerate when we offer our standard reply: 'if we could offer all the dishes that you can get in Peru, our menu would be the size of a telephone book,'" said Rivadeneira.

Mixtura consistently presents dishes of classic Peruvian ingredients and flavors unmatched anywhere in the United States.

Causa Marina—a beautifully presented dish of purple Peruvian potatoes, Dungeness crab, prawns, avocados and smoked salmon that Piqueras created for Mixtura—has a loyal following among diners.

Mixtura's Quinotto—incorporating wild mushrooms and truffle oil—is an outstanding quinoa-based take on Italian risotto.

“We in the Pacific Northwest are lucky to have one of the most distinguished chefs of the new Peruvian fusion cuisine right here in the Seattle-metropolitan area,” Rivadeneira said.

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