

About Ceviche



Ceviche or Cebiche - Peru's National Dish

The Peruvian national dish uniquely reflects the coastal cuisine and its influences. Ceviche is the most popular dish in Peru and the pride of all Peruvians. While there are hundreds of variations, the basic Ceviche is made of fresh, raw, white fish filet cut into bite-size pieces, marinated and "cooked" in lime juice and seasoned with Peruvian chili peppers, onions and salt. Ceviche is often served with boiled sweet potatoes (camote), cooked corn (choclo), toasted corn (cancha) and raw onions.



Early, crude forms of ceviche began to appear in pre-Colombian times in the coastal civilizations of South America where fish was "cooked" with a fruit called tumbo. Later the Incas ate salted fish marinated in chicha, a fermented corn drink, and when the Spanish arrived, they added limes and onions to the mix.

In Peru, ceviche is eaten as a first course or appetizer. The dish requires fresh, quality ingredients, precise and lightning-fast execution, and a basic understanding of spices and acidity. The chef tosses fresh chunks of any firm white fish, such as flounder or sea bass, with onions, bits of Peruvian ají peppers, seasoning and, most importantly, lime juice only minutes before serving. However, ceviche is not exactly raw like sashimi is raw. The acid in the lime actually cooks the fish just before you eat it, resulting in an explosion of taste and texture. In the same dish you can find a slice of sweet potato, a few sticks of boiled yuca and a small piece of corn on the cob.



To begin, pick at the toasted, salted corn kernels called cancha serrana already on the table, and make your first order. Start with something to drink, say, Leche de Tigre, aka Tiger's Milk. It's like a kick in the face! More clearly defined, it is the tangy juice left over at the bottom of the ceviche bowl served in a glass. Sometimes it's mixed with a shot of pisco, a white grape brandy that is Peru's national spirit.



A cevichería, you will discover, is more than a mere place to order ceviche. It is a cultural institution where lime juice abounds.