



Photography: Kenneth Theissen



# PERUVIAN CEVICHE

by Chef **David Lizano** of *Así es mi Perú*

This is not Aruban ceviche. It's better. Chef David Lizano, recruited from Peru along with the rest of *Así es mi Perú* kitchen staff, tested every sweet potato available to find just the right one to balance the sour lime of the *leche de tigre* – the tongue-tingling marinade for the fish.

**T**hat balance is the biggest difference from Aruban ceviche, in addition to the spicy *rocoto* chili pepper and crunchy *cancha* and soft, white *choclo* corns (yes, you need both). The guest leaving after a late lunch gets it. “That was the best ceviche I’ve ever had,” he says to owner Roxanna Salinas, who opened *Así es mi Perú* in the *Paradise Beach Villas* by Eagle Beach in December 2016.

“We prepare everything like we would if you came to my family’s home in Peru,” she says. “We’re lucky because on this island we’re able to find the right ingredients.” When she lived in the US, limes often weren’t acidic enough. Now, she travels every two months to Peru for ingredients like *frijol canario*, *ají amarillo*, *ají panca* and *choclo*. “The *choclo* is totally different from American corn. We bring 20 kilos of it every week during high season,” she says.

Besides quality ingredients, the secret to Chef Lizano’s ceviche marinade is home-made fish broth, reduced and blended with fresh aromatics, minced fish and a touch of evaporated milk, which is added to the larger slices of grouper. (Chef Lizano leaves out the milk for guests with lactose intolerance; he also makes a vegan ceviche with mushrooms).

You can order this ceviche solo or get it as part of the *Trilogía Marina*, with *arroz con mariscos* (comforting seafood with rice) and *jalea* (crispy, deep-fried seafood or fish with caper-tartar sauce and Peruvian *salsa criolla*). Other menu standouts include *lomo saltado* (beef stir-fried with French fries, onions and tomatoes in soy sauce), crab *causa* (layers of spiced potato surrounding a creamy seafood salad with avocado, hard-boiled egg, Peruvian olive sauce and crispy fried plantains), and a rich *parihuela* seafood soup made with the intensely flavored Peruvian *madre* or mother stock.

Save room for cinnamon-spiced purple corn *mazamorra morada* custard and *picarones* – sweet potato-pumpkin donuts with *lúcuma* ice cream, a Peruvian fruit that tastes something like caramel mixed with roasted sweet potato and avocado. Or come back to try the assortment of freshly made exotic ice creams and sorbets at Salinas’ *gelateria* next door, adjacent to her newly opened Peruvian rotisserie chicken spot, *Las Brasas Peruanas*.

The whole street is starting to feel like a Little Peru, and, as she says, you’ll feel plenty at home.

**Peruvian Ceviche**

Serves 2

**INGREDIENTS**

1 orange sweet potato, boiled, then peeled and sliced into 1/2-inch-thick slices  
 2 leaves of crispy romaine lettuce  
 300 g (10 oz.) red snapper  
 2 tsp. (4 g) minced garlic  
 2 tsp. (4 g) minced celery  
 2 tsp. (4 g) minced ginger  
 2 tsp. (10 ml) water  
 1 tsp. (5 g) salt  
 1/2 tsp. (2 g) minced red jalapeño  
 2 tbsp. (30 ml) sliced cilantro leaves, plus more to garnish  
 6 ice cubes  
 Juice of 4 limes, about 1/2 cup (125 ml) juice  
 1/2 cup (125 ml) *leche de tigre* (see sidebar)  
 1/2 cup (125 ml) red onion slices  
 1/4 cup (65 ml) *cancha chullpi*, baked with oil and salt until toasted  
 1/4 cup (65 ml) fresh *choclo* kernels  
 1 slice of *rocoto* or red jalapeño pepper, to garnish, optional

**Instructions**

1. Place a one-inch-thick slice of sweet potato and a lettuce leaf in two bowls.
2. Slice the red snapper into approximately one-inch by one-inch pieces. Place in a medium mixing bowl.
3. Blend the garlic, celery, ginger and water until smooth.
4. Add to the mixing bowl along with the salt, minced red jalapeño and cilantro.
5. Add the ice cubes and pour the juice of four limes and the *leche de tigre* over top.
6. Stir in the red onion slices and a little more chopped cilantro.
7. Add more salt to taste then divide between the two bowls of sweet potato.
8. Garnish with the *cancha*, fresh *choclo* and a slice of hot red chili pepper.



**TIGER'S MILK RECIPE**

In a medium pot, simmer 1 fish head, 1 fish fillet, a few cloves of garlic, a handful of chopped celery, some sliced red onions, a little salt in just enough water to cover. After 15 to 20 minutes, strain the stock (use the fish fillet for soups or salads) and blend the stock with a heaping tbsp. (10 g) each of celery, ginger, garlic, lime juice, red onions, cilantro, and minced fish fillet. Add 2 to 3 grams (1/2 tsp.) of *rocoto* chili pepper or purée, a little evaporated milk (optional) and salt and black pepper to taste. It'll be worth the effort. "You could use fish stock, but it's different," agree Salinas and Lizano.



**CHEF'S TIPS**

1. The most important part of this recipe it to use fresh ingredients, from the red snapper to the *choclo*. You can sometimes find fresh white Peruvian corn at Ling & Sons or at specialty South American grocers.
2. Chef Lizano likes eating the ceviche right away, when the fish is barely marinated. "You can still taste the fish that way," he says.
3. Use fresh lime juice and don't cut the fruit to juice it until you're ready to marinate the fish. "The lime loses its acidity after it's cut," says Lizano.
4. The best way to eat Peruvian ceviche is to take a little bit of everything in one bite – fish, sweet potato, corn, red onion and *leche de tigre*.