



Juan Danilo

Ceviche

The Cookbook – Peruvian Magic

Texts by Carmen Pinilla.

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Juan Danilo Peru is Magic

First and foremost, cooking to me means freedom, the possibility to be completely myself and to be allowed to welcome quests. In my opinion, it's our task as chefs to delight people with enriching experiences, and so I want to pass on my own culinary talent in the form of a memory on a plate.

To me, cooking consists of memories, and memories are taste experiences first and foremost. Every time I am preparing a meal, I experience a flashback and return to the wonderful abundance of flavours of my childhood in Peru. Every morning, the aromas of all sorts of ingredients used in our daily rituals on the patio next to my grandmother's kitchen would mix: the smell of coffee and papaya, physalis jam on oven-warm bread. Or a visit to the *mercado de la marina*, only a few minutes from our house. Going to the market was just as exciting to me as entering a huge toy store: a magical experience of colours, shapes and smells that I was able to my make own through touch, smell and taste. I was allowed to try everything and so I created a unique database of flavours for myself. Each of the saleswomen was offering her very own spice mix and at the fruit stands there was a great variety of maracujas that were rough, sweet and sour, and full of pips and there were endless rows of potato and banana chips. A little while later I set out to discover the true essence of fish on the markets – and discovered it in its raw state, drizzled with nothing but a little lime or salt.

My father was my first teacher. He can identify aromas even from a great distance and he taught me to examine every flavour component of a dish in order to get the optimal enjoyment. Beyond that, he showed me how to identify ingredients precisely and to appreciate the food even more by doing so.

In Peru, the chef becomes a magician. This is due to the enormous diversity of Peruvian types of fruit and vegetables, spices and other ingredients: They create infinite space for combinations. This diversity is the source of my inspiration. For my cuisine it's essential to break all the traditional rules in a playful way while always maintaining a balance between sweet and sour, spicy and bitter, and umami.

Ceviche is the perfect example of Peruvian cuisine. It's an equally light-footed and balanced mixture of ingredients and mutually potentiating aromas. Despite the simple preparation ceviche is an exciting and complex flavour experience: The fewer ingredients it contains, the more intensely the flavour of the individual ingredient can unfold. A single bite can create an entire universe and transport us back to our own childhood or to unimagined places.

That is the magic of ceviche: It's never just a dish but thousands of dishes rolled into one. Just like Peru, ceviche has a long tradition, but its story is far from finished.



[...]

A Magical Union

Ceviche, which has always been the most popular food in Peru, has become an iconic dish, the symbol of an entire nation and its culture and has conquered the international culinary scene.

Seviche, ceviche, cebiche or *sebiche* – there are many spelling variations, but the pronunciation is always the same: *se – vee – tche*. There are also competing theories on the origin of this dish, which has been known since pre-Colombian times and was continuously developed, optimised and reinterpreted through colonisation and immigration.

If every dish tells its own story, then ceviche attests to the enrichment that cosmopolitan societies can gain from immigration.

Siwichi means »fresh fish« in Quechua, the principal language of the Inca empire, which is still spoken by about 10% of the more than 30 million inhabitants of Peru. The Inca had developed ways to transport the catch of the day from lakes, rivers and the ocean into the high Andes quickly. There is a labyrinth in the steep terraces of Maras, not far from the sacred valley of the Inca at the Urubamba River, that is made up of thousands of salt pans. The indigenous population cooked the raw fish with salt and the acid of tumbos, a fruit that resembles the passionfruit, and seasoned it with hot chili peppers. A very simple dish! The Spanish conquistadors disregarded and destroyed so much in their gold fever, but they were fascinated by this magical union that the fish entered into with the acid and the spice.

In 1532, at the beginning of the bloody colonisation of Peru, the conquistadors had substantial amounts of Spanish lemons and onions that they had brought on the ships to fight scurvy. But when the flu, which had been unknown in South America until then, started to spread like an epidemic and large parts of the indigenous population died, lemon juice was prescribed as a therapeutic measure. Thus began the massive cultivation of lemon trees in Piura, a region in northwestern Peru. The green variety, which adapted particularly well to the country, had a thin peel, plenty of juice and an especially high level of acidity. From then on, Peruvian fishermen took the highly acidic limes out to sea with them and were able to turn the freshly caught fish into ceviche easily.

After Peru was colonised, a certain way of preparing ceviche developed over the course of three centuries in which the predominantly white fish was marinated in lemon juice until the acid had completely cooked the fish – this could take hours, sometimes even days.

When the first migrant workers from the Japanese region of Okinawa were employed to the farms at the Peruvian coast towards the end of the 19th century, the history of a fascinating convergence began. Since that time, the Japanese demographic group in Peru has grown to be the second largest on the South American continent and ceviche has undergone an incredible evolution.

Japan and Peru, two countries at opposite ends of the Pacific, were home to two culinary traditions that have strong ties to the ocean. The Japanese immigrants were astonished by the abundance of species in Peru. Many types of fish, such as octopus, salmon, tuna or swordfish (which are downright kingly types of fish in the Japanese cuisine) were considered inferior and unusable for the preparation of ceviche in Peruvian cooking.

Just one generation later the descendants of the first immigrants – called *nikkeijin* – were preparing exquisite ceviches with the disregarded types of fish aided by the introduction of new ingredients such as ginger, soy and mirin: this was the beginning of the Nikkei cuisine, which is celebrated all around the world today.

However, the Japanese were of the opinion that ceviche was being marinated for way too long. They gave the crucial impulse to shorten the cooking time immensely, which is the preferred technique for ceviche today. Beyond that it's the Japanese knives and the superior cutting techniques of the chefs familiar with them that have taken ceviche to new and sophisticated variations.

There is no Nikkei cuisine in Japan, as the owner of *Maido*, Mitsuharu Tsumura, won't tire of stressing: Nikkei is Peru.

[...]

CEVICHE

Ceviche is the national dish of Peru. Its simple basic concept has become a modern way of cooking today: raw fish is cooked in lime juice without losing its freshness or its unique taste.

THE GREAT TRADITION

Ceviche is simplicity in perfection.

Javier Wong

Bonito

CEVICHE DE BONITO A LA ANTIGUA

Serves 4

400 g bonito

1 level tsp. salt

1 pinch white pepper

1 tsp. finely diced garlic

1 tsp. finely diced celery, remove
outer layer

½ ají limon (remove seeds and veins) or

1/8 habanero pepper, finely diced

2 tbsp. yellow ají paste (see recipe on page
128)

juice of 8 limes

50 ml fish stock

½ red onion without stem

2 tbsp. chives

5 coriander leaves

some plucked lettuce or sprouts to garnish

4 tbsp. popped chulpi corn (see recipe on
page 135)

100 g diced boiled sweet potato

In the past, bonito was the most popular fish for ceviche and was prepared according to this recipe. Yellow ají paste is a basic ingredient of many dishes in Peru, every housewife, every chef has their own recipe. In the past, you could buy small bags with the required amount of yellow ají paste on the markets, and you always knew which stall sold the best paste. If you don't want to prepare the ají paste yourself, it's easy to buy on the internet.

Cut the bonito in 2 x 2 cm dices, put them in a bowl, add salt and pepper. Mix thoroughly.

Combine the garlic, celery and ají limon with the ají paste and add the mixture to the fish.

Pour the lime juice and the fish stock over the fish and leave to stew for a good 2 minutes.

Julienne the onions and mix in carefully.

Finely cut the chives and the coriander leaves and sprinkle over the ceviche. Garnish with lettuce, chulpi corn and diced sweet potato and serve straight away.



NIKKEI

My »signature style« was most inspired by ceviche.

Nobuyuki Matsuhisa

Co-Owner of »Nobu«

Scallops

CEVICHE DE CONCHAS DE ABANICO

Serves 4

12 scallops, ideally with the roe

1 pinch salt

½ ají limon (remove seeds and veins) or

1/8 habanero pepper, finely diced

2 coriander stalks (stems and leaves)

1 tbsp. finely diced ginger

juice of 8 limes

½ red onion without stem

San Lorenzo Island is located just outside the harbour of Lima, Peru's capital. The small island is home to a very diverse ecosystem. The island is inhabited not just by Humboldt penguins and seals, there are also many species of fish found before its shores. It has always been a custom of the local fishermen to eat the freshly caught scallops alive with a little lemon juice.

This easily prepared scallop ceviche emphasises the intensive flavour of the fresh scallops. The sea flavour finds optimal expression when the roe is used as well.

Quarter the flesh of the scallops, halve the roe, put everything into a bowl and season with salt. Combine the ají limon, the coriander stalks, the ginger and the lime juice thoroughly and pour the mixture over the scallops. Julienne the red onion and add it to the bowl, garnish with coriander leaves and serve straight away.



VEGETARIAN

Ceviche is more than just a dish, it's a concept.

Virgilio Martínez

Avocado CEVICHE DE PALTA

Serves 4

4 tbsp. cooked edamame
8 radishes
4 button mushrooms
4 tbsp. cooked peas
4 tbsp. cooked corn
1 level tsp. salt
1 tsp. finely diced ginger
½ ají limon (remove seeds and veins) or
1/8 habanero pepper, finely diced
½ red onion
1 tbsp. mango or tamarind juice
juice of 1 orange
4 passionfruit
1 peach
½ avocado
½ mango
5 raspberries
5 blueberries

Cook the edamame in salted water for 2 minutes until al dente.

Divide the radishes into eighths, remove the stem from the button mushrooms and cut them into thin slices, then put them into a bowl with the peas, the corn and the edamame. Season with salt. Add the finely diced ginger, yellow ají and red onion.

Sprinkle the ceviche with the mango or tamarind juice as well as the orange juice. Remove the flesh from the passionfruit and add it to the mixture.

Dice the peach, the avocado and the mango, halve the raspberries and blueberries and mix in gently.



CREATIONS

More than anything else, ceviche is a refreshing bomb of acidity that is bursting and invigorating with power and spiciness.

Tim Raue

Nauta

CEVICHE DE NAUTA

Serves 4

200 g small cocktail potatoes
400 g salmon fillet
1 level tsp. salt
½ aji limon (remove seeds and veins) or
1/8 habanero pepper, finely diced
1 tsp. finely diced ginger
250 ml traditional tiger's milk (see recipe
on page 123)
50 ml coconut milk
2 maracujas or passionfruit
½ avocado
fresh coriander leaves or coriander sprouts

Alternatively:

200 g mango, finely diced
½ small red onion without stem, cut
julienne

This recipe is a homage to Wilma Ahuanahuari, a wonderful woman who left behind her family in Nauta at the bank of the Amazon River to take care of me and my siblings in Pueblo Libre, Lima. It was her who familiarised me with the sensational abundance of flavours of the Amazonía, from which I draw inspiration to this day. Years later, after I had left Peru to train as a chef in Berlin, I created this ceviche that is enlivened by a lot of memories and emotions. It contains and combines everything the Amazonía means to me: the unique freshness of the jungle fruit, the mild hotness of the Peruvian chilis and Wilma's infinitely loveable charm. To me, cooking consists of memories, and memories are taste experiences first and foremost. Every time I prepare or taste a dish, I experience a flashback. That's when I return to the abundance of flavours of my childhood that breaks all the rules in a playful way but always maintains a balance between sweet and acidic, just as the passionfruit and the coconut milk in this recipe.

Bake the potatoes in the oven at 170°C (circulating air) golden brown.

Cut the salmon fillet into 2 x 2 cm cubes, add salt and leave to rest for 2 minutes. Dice the yellow aji pepper and the ginger very finely, add to the salmon and combine thoroughly.

Purée the tiger's milk with the coconut milk and the flesh of the maracujas or the passionfruit, then strain through a sieve and pour over the seasoned fish as evenly as possible. Quarter the lukewarm potatoes, slice the avocado and place on the ceviche, use mango or, alternatively, red onion. Garnish with coriander leaves or sprouts and serve.

