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Peruvian chef Daniel Chavez opens Canchita Peruvian Cuisine (Singapore) in Dempsey Road

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Canchita in Dempsey Road

About a decade ago, Peruvian chef Daniel Chavez arrived on Singapore's shores as Executive Chef of the late Santi Santamaria's Spanish outpost at Marina Bay Sands. Ten years later today, he has opened – and recently closed – casual Spanish eatery Ola Cocina del Mar ("Ola") as well as Tono Cevicheria ("Tono"), in the process successfully inducting Singapore palates to the exhilarating flavours of the Peruvian ceviche.

After wrapping up a long-running Spanish-Peruvian chapter with his former business partner, Chavez is turning the page and going back to his roots with the opening of Canchita Peruvian Cuisine at Dempsey Road.



Amazonas, an 80-seat dining room

Named for a largekerneled corn traditionally eaten as a snack in Peru, itself home to more than 50 indigenous corn varieties, Canchita takes over the former roost of Tippling Club with 3,386 sq ft of space sprawled over Amazonas, an 80-seat main dining room, and Inca, a 30-seat ceviche bar. Whilst the latter is quaint and cosy, the wicker baskets and faux greens-decorated former is cheerful, casual and true to its name, offers stunning views of the neighbourhood's Amazonian jungle-like lush vegetation framed by floor-to-ceiling windows, making for a breath-taking backdrop.



Owner Daniel Chavez (left) and Head Chef Tamara Chavez (right)



Restaurant Manager Celvin Chiang (right)

Former General Manager of Ola Kitchen Group Celvin Chiang now runs the floor while Chavez's Mexican wife and former head chef of Tono Cevicheria, Tamara Chavez, helms the semi open-concept kitchen as head chef.



Beef Tongue Taco

If you've been to Tono, you'd know that Tamara used to dish out some of the meanest tacos in that part of town. At Canchita, she continues to offer a limited taco selection on a daily basis but she keeps the best, her Beef Tongue Tacos (\$26) for the weekend brunch: sliced beef tongue with avocado puree, black beans, burnt onions, chopped parsley and a spread of mayonnaise. While good on its own, it tastes even better with the sweet and smoky habanero pineapple chilli dip served on the side.



Ceviche Peru

No one goes to a Peruvian restaurant without ordering a plate of ceviche and Canchita's extensive ceviche offerings with four options including a Nikkei-inspired tiradito make for an appetite-piquing opener. For your virgin trip here, I suggest Ceviche Peru (\$25), thick-cut lime-cured kingfish served with red onions, toasted cancha as well as sweet potato sticks and crisps in a piquant and deliciously exhilarating white tiger's milk (the citrus-based marinade for ceviche) bath that is, take my word, shamelessly worth slurping up.



Sudado Amarilito

One of my favourite dishes at Ola was the tomato-based fisherman's soup and at Canchita, Chavez rehashes it as Sudado Amarilito (\$34), a Peruvian-inspired seafood soup rich with tomatoes, aji amarillo (Peruvian yellow chillies) and, last but not least, Peruvian fermented corn cider for a touch of acidity. Clams and locally-reared barramundi complete the most unusual sweet and tangy broth replete with toasted cancha for textures.



Arroz Con Pato

For her debut menu, Chavez also offers a discovery of Peruvian rice dishes like the widely known Cantonese-Peruvian fried rice dish of Arroz Chaufa (\$38) and over at Cachita, they cook it supremely well. But if you prefer to try something a little offbeat, I suggest you come for the weekend brunch menu that features Arroz Con Pato (\$34), an interesting and vibrant mash-up of pumpkin, dark beer and coriander-infused rice brightened with aji amarillo, spiked with fermented corn cider and served with crispy duck slices. It's refreshing because it's not something that we've been exposed to in Singapore.



Chilcano Canchita

You should not leave Canchita without so much as a sip of their cocktails. Conceived and curated by Joe Alessandrone from Junior The Pocket Bar, the cocktail list here currently features 7 swizzles and my glass of Chilcano Canchita (\$22) – Pisco Archolado, Mixed Ginger, Lime, Soda – is refreshing, thirst-quenching but also first-rate.

9A and 9B Dempsey Road, Singapore 247 697; +65-62327895; canchita.sg

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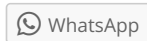
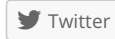
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