

Chef On/Chef Off video series: What Canchita chefs Daniel and Tamara Chavez eat

Salads, aguadito, potato chips galore! Join Daniel and Tamara Chavez in their restaurant Canchita and in their home kitchen to learn more about their thoughts on cooking, culture, and eating well.



Eunice Quek
Correspondent

UPDATED SEP 21, 2024, 01:00 PM ▼

SINGAPORE – Ever wondered what chefs eat in and out of their restaurants?

Chef On/Chef Off is a new three-part video series by The Straits Times that features the food which chefs make in their restaurants, as well as what they eat outside of work, on their days off.

It kicks off with Peruvian chef Daniel Chavez, 44, and his Mexican wife and fellow chef Tamara, 34. They run Canchita Peruvian Cuisine and Spanish restaurant Tinto, both of which are located in Dempsey.

They have another restaurant, tapas wine bar Vino Tinto, slated to open in November in the Central Business District.

In recent years, the duo – Mr Chavez with more than 20 years and Mrs Chavez with over 10 in the industry – have become a lot more mindful about what they eat and its effects on their well-being the next day.

They have cut down on drinking alcohol and having supper after work.

Constantly having to taste food is a genuine job hazard, they say.

Your guide to Singapore's best eats

And the world's top culinary destinations

Sign up

By signing up, I accept SPH Media's [Terms & Conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#), as amended from time to time.

Yes, I would also like to receive SPH Media Group's marketing and promotions.



Al and Tamara Chavez have become a lot more mindful about what they eat after work. PHOTO: ST VIDEO

Mrs Chavez says: “As chefs, we need to try food. When we are working, we are always tasting, so we feel full all the time.”

They try to have their last meal for the day by 5.30pm, before dinner service commences.

Staff meals – usually rice with stir-fried vegetables and a chicken dish – are more than just sustenance.

“I love eating in the restaurant because it builds relationships with the team. They are more relaxed and chat more about their lives,” she adds.



Peruvian Cuisine's Causa "El Mercado". PHOTO: ST VIDEO

In work mode, Mr and Mrs Chavez typically whip up dishes like Causa “El Mercado” (\$28) – a traditional Peruvian potato salad layered with crab meat, prawns, watermelon radish and parrillera sauce (a type of barbecue sauce).

The restaurant is also known for its ceviches, tacos and seafood dishes.

At home, their meals are simple and comforting, but no less flavourful.



Chavez's green salad. PHOTO: ST VIDEO

A go-to staple is Mr Chavez’s raw “green salad”, which comprises thinly sliced spinach, cucumber and mashed avocado dressed with lemon juice, salt and olive oil.

He pairs it with a bowl of hearty aguadito (Peruvian coriander chicken rice soup) spiced with peppers and lime juice.



Chavez's aguadito, a Peruvian coriander chicken rice soup. PHOTO: ST VIDEO

He laments that people do not cook much at home any more, and believes that everyone – chefs included – should return to the stove.

“It’s important that chefs cook at home and that they don’t see it as another version of their work,” he says.

Watch ST’s video till the end for a bonus clip of Mrs Chavez’s jazzed-up “night chips”, doused with hot sauce and tajin (ground and dried chilli powder) from her well-stocked larder, which has no fewer than 10 kinds of peppers and hot sauce.

The next two videos will feature pastry chef Louisa Lim of the three-Michelin-starred Odette restaurant at the National Gallery Singapore, and chef Manjunath Mural of modern Indian restaurant Adda in Beach Road.

Info: Canchita Peruvian Cuisine at 9A/B Dempsey Hill opens from 11.30am to 3pm (Thursdays to Sundays), 5.30 to 10.30pm daily. For more information, go to canchita.sg

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

[My Perfect Weekend with Mexican chef Tamara Chavez of Spanish restaurant Tinto](#)

[Raising the roof: Vibes and views at rooftop venues elevate the dining experience](#)

Join [ST's Telegram channel](#) and get the latest breaking news delivered to you.