

D.C. SINKS ITS TEETH INTO WHAT'S COMING OUT OF THE KITCHEN AT A MODERN STEAKHOUSE AND A PERUVIAN CEVICHERIA



PHOTO COURTESY OF BLT STEAK

BLT Steak offers New York prime and American wagyu cuts of beef—as well as irresistible popovers.

A Passion for Pisco and Prime Cuts

by Kelly Magyarics

Peruvian food has definitely been having a moment in Washington, D.C., with hot spots like José Andrés' Asian-Peruvian-Spanish mashup China Chilcano, the chic Nazca Mochica in Dupont Circle, and Pisco y Nazca Ceviche Gastrobar. When my daughter and I stepped into the latter on a bustling Friday evening in September, we encountered a dining room filled with a happy hour crowd

chefs' yearly travels to Peru. Having just returned from a trip to Lima and Machu Picchu, I was all too excited to sample dishes that could take me back. First to arrive at the table was tiradito de atún, which topped roasted jalapeño puree with ahi, dollops of avocado, and sesame seeds. From the prolific ceviche selection came marinated octopus with Botija olive mayo, avocado, and aji limo, while a sprinkling of fried corn

with passion fruit, mint, and a touch of lip-tingling rocoto pepper. To end, the arroz con leche cheesecake was a study in Peruvian ingredients, drizzled with dulce de leche and studded with a thin quinoa wafer. Creamy, crunchy, caramelly: *Sí, sí, sí.*

Not too far away in the shadow of the White House, BLT Steak is a modern interpretation of a classic steakhouse. Recently, chef Michael Bonk proved his chops during a four-course dinner paired with wines from Australia's Penfolds, starting with BLT's signature fresh-from-the-oven popovers. Other featured dishes included cobia sashimi and a decadent raviolo stuffed with braised Australian lamb neck, but let's face it: Whether it's cowboy rib-eye, dry-aged porterhouse, or wagyu top cap, BLT is mostly about the beef. So when I was presented with an off-menu, ras el hanout-seasoned Australian wagyu strip loin paired with the latest vintage of the iconic Penfolds Grange, I tore into it with gusto. D.C. has more to offer than steak joints for politicians, but when we do them, we do them well (as opposed to well done). ■■■

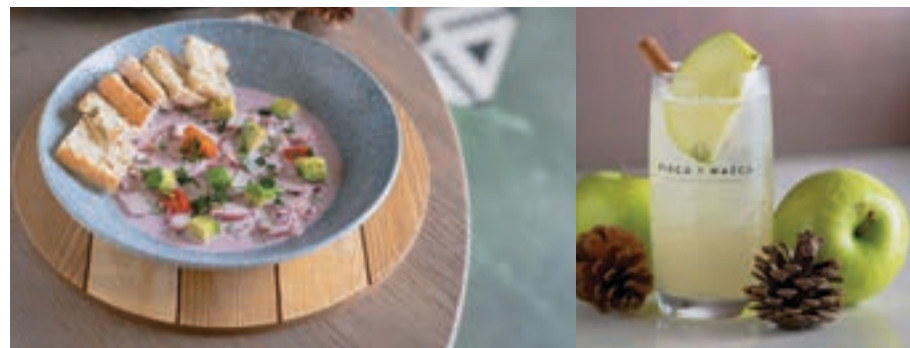


PHOTO: CHAD FABRIKANT FOR CARMIA CONNECTED

Marinated octopus ceviche tempts diners at Pisco y Nazca Ceviche Gastrobar, which specializes in pisco-based cocktails like this apple-cinnamon Chilcano.

seeking respite from the endless cycle of impeachment news over rounds of that frothy, bitters-studded Peruvian panacea, the Pisco Sour.

The room is undoubtedly one of the loudest in the city, which made it a bit tricky to hear my server's take on the new fall menu, inspired by the

kernels added crunch to succulent shrimp dunked in leche de tigre.

The star, though, was beef in the form of grilled tenderloin with chimichurri, served with grilled corn and fried plantains. I also couldn't resist the tanginess of a pisco-based cocktail called Guapo's Chilcano, flavored

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