

# From ancient roots to worldwide tables

Peruvian phenomenon in the gastronomic boom lands in Southern Vermont

By Luis Sanchez

To all my readers: I have been contributing to the Food & Health section of the Brattleboro Reformer, Bennington Banner and Manchester Journal for the past few months, sharing stories about ingredients, health benefits and even recipes, all centered around the rich concept and culture of Peruvian cuisine and its unique preparation methods.

Many people have contacted me, expressing their gratitude for this contribution, but most are eager for more information about Peruvian cuisine: what it is, where it started, and other inquiries related to this vibrant culinary tradition. For this reason, I've decided to take a different approach in today's article.

Rather than focusing on recipes or health benefits, I want to share the secrets, and the fascinating history of how Peruvian cuisine became a global gastronomic boom. Join me as I delve into the essence of Peru and uncover what makes its culinary heritage so special.

The world has recently witnessed a remarkable evolution in culinary traditions, and at the heart of this transformation lies the vibrant and diverse cuisine of Peru. Once a hidden gem confined to the Andes and coastal cities, Peruvian food has ascended to global prominence, captivating food lovers with its rich history and flavorful offerings. This gastronomic boom can be traced through centuries, leading to an intriguing local manifestation in Brattleboro.

## THE ANCIENT FOUNDATIONS OF PERUVIAN GASTRONOMY

The origins of Peruvian cuisine can be traced back thousands of years, primarily to the Inca civilization, which thrived from the 15th century.

The Incas effectively utilized the region's biodiversity to cultivate a variety of staple crops, including over 5,000 varieties of potatoes, quinoa and maize — ingredients that remain essential to Peru's culinary landscape today.

Long before the Incas, coastal fishing communities developed their own culinary practices, leading to the creation of iconic dishes like ceviche. This dish involves marinating fresh fish in lime juice, a method that has been used in Peru for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Therefore, it is more accurate to say that the roots of Peruvian cuisine extend back to ancient civilizations, including the Incas and earlier cultures in the region.

The Spanish conquest in the 16th century introduced new ingredients, such as green lime from Southeast Asia used for ceviche, along with diverse flavors and techniques that melded with indigenous practices to create a uniquely Peruvian culinary tapestry.

Dishes like Lomo Saltado emerged, showcasing the fusion of Peruvian ingredients with Asian cooking methods, reflecting the wave of influences that shaped the country's gastronomic identity over centuries.

Moreover, the influx of immigrants from China, Japan, Italy and Africa introduced further diversity, leading to dishes like "chifa" (Peruvian-Chinese cuisine) and Nikkei cuisine — a delightful blend of Peruvian and Japanese flavors — as well as Italian influences with pasta and various dough-based dishes.

This rich historical context reveals the complexity and adaptability of Peru's culinary landscape, establishing it as a hub of innovation and cultural celebration.

## BRIDGING CULTURES THROUGH CULINARY EXPERIENCES

Peruvian cuisine's popularity around the world has created wonderful connections between cultures, inviting food lovers to experience something special that goes beyond borders.

Peru's rich history and vibrant traditions help create amazing cul-



KRISTOPHER RADDER — VERMONT NEWS & MEDIA

Liliana Nedoklanova helps Luis Sanchez in the kitchen at Amaru Gourmet at Bar 580 in Brattleboro in making Ceviche Clasico.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY AMARU GOURMET  
Inspired by a booming interest in Peruvian cuisine, chef Luis Sanchez took a bold bet to establish a Peruvian kitchen in a Southern Vermont town.

sine and flavors for diners to enjoy.

As people taste authentic Peruvian meals, they develop a deeper appreciation for the country's diverse culinary heritage, encouraging culinary adventures in welcoming places like Brattleboro. This journey doesn't just please the taste buds; it also sparks curiosity about the interesting ingredients and stories behind each delicious bite.

Inspired by the booming interest in Peruvian cuisine and the achievements of Peruvian chefs, I took a bold bet to establish a Peruvian kitchen in the charming community of Brattleboro.

My deep-rooted Peruvian heritage instilled in me a pride for my culinary traditions, prompting me to introduce authentic flavors to this area. Together with my partner, Chef Lana, I opened Amaru Gourmet, a restaurant that honors our cultural roots while providing a unique dining experience to the local community.

People are often amazed to discover a Peruvian corner right here in Brattleboro. It's incredible — 11 out of 10 customers ask me how a Peruvian restaurant ended up in this lovely community. They typically expect to find this cuisine in larger cities and even in other regions, but not in places like Brattleboro.

I'm following in the footsteps of

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other influential chefs and riding the wave of this gastronomic boom. With this boom, I believe that our food will soon be found in every city and town, and this is my contribution to bringing a taste of Peru to our Brattleboro community.

## THE GLOBAL ASCENDANCE OF PERUVIAN CUISINE

In the late 20th century, Peruvian gastronomy experienced a renaissance, propelled by passionate chefs who recognized its potential for global appeal. Chefs like Gastón Acurio, Virgilio Martínez and Mitsuharu Tsumura emerged as pioneers, highlighting the ingredients and culinary techniques that define Peruvian cuisine.

Acurio, often referred to as the ambassador of Peruvian cuisine, established his flagship restaurant, Astrid y Gastón, in San Isidro, Peru, which reimaged traditional dishes with artistic flair, asserting the prominence of Peruvian cuisine in the global dining scene. Following this, Acurio's seafood restaurant, La Mar, in Miami, became renowned for its exceptional ceviche, further showcasing the culinary richness of Peru.

Martínez's Restaurant Central, in Lima, Peru, gained unprecedented recognition as the number-one restaurant in the world last year, showcasing its commitment to farm-to-table dining and the incredible biodiversity of Peru. Central not only highlights the country's rich culinary heritage, but also emphasizes sustainable sourcing and seasonal ingredients to create dishes that tell the story of Peru's diverse ecosystems.

Tsumura's Maido, in Lima, Peru, currently ranked fifth in the world, further solidifies this reputation for its innovative Nikkei cuisine, which artfully blends Peruvian ingredients with Japanese culinary techniques, alongside Kjölle, in Barranco, Peru, and Mayta, in Miraflores, Peru, which have secured spots among the top 50 best restaurants globally this year and last year.

The inclusion of Peruvian ceviche on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in December

2023, alongside the baguette from France and kimchi from North Korea, marked a significant milestone, further cementing the importance of this cuisine to Peru's national identity.

Today, there are thousands of Peruvian restaurants around the world, with locations in cosmopolitan cities such as Dubai, Tokyo, Miami, New York, Madrid and other cities, as well as numerous establishments throughout the United States. Yet, Brattleboro hosts only one Peruvian restaurant.

This unique presence highlights the powerful globalization of Peruvian cuisine, reminiscent of the trends witnessed with Chinese cuisine as it spread across the globe. The ubiquity of Peruvian flavors demonstrates a gastronomic boom that is reaching every corner of the world and inviting people to explore its rich offerings.

Adjusted to contemporary expectations, Peruvian cuisine has captivated diners worldwide. The use of local superfoods like quinoa and aji peppers, along with an emphasis on sustainable sourcing, has attracted health-conscious enthusiasts eager to explore new flavors.

## A CULINARY LEGACY FOR THE FUTURE

The remarkable rise of Peruvian cuisine, with its deep-rooted history and modern global acclaim, sets the stage for a vibrant culinary future. As interest in diverse culinary traditions continues to grow, the legacy of Peru's gastronomy is likely to expand even further, reaching new audiences and inspiring innovative interpretations of classic recipes.

The continued success of renowned Peruvian chefs and restaurants on the world stage paves the way for aspiring chefs and food enthusiasts to explore and share this dynamic cuisine. By integrating locally sourced ingredients with traditional Peruvian recipes, culinary artists worldwide can create their own interpretations, contributing to the ongoing evolution of this gastronomic movement.

In this context, Peruvian cuisine emerges not just as a trend but as a wave shaping modern cooking

and dining. It combines the allure of ancient culinary techniques and traditional ingredients with contemporary presentation and innovative approaches, creating a culinary experience that is both nostalgic and modern.

As more people discover the rich flavors and cultural stories behind Peruvian cuisine, it becomes clear that this phenomenon is a testament to the enduring power of food to connect people, cultures and communities.

## CELEBRATING PERUVIAN GASTRONOMY

The journey of Peruvian cuisine, from its ancient roots in the Andes to its celebrated status on tables worldwide, is a remarkable tale of cultural evolution and gastronomic excellence. As Peruvian flavors continue to spread to restaurants across the globe, including the notable Amaru Gourmet in Brattleboro, diners are invited to experience the depth and richness of a tradition that has so much to offer.

Ultimately, the phenomenon of Peruvian cuisine serves as a testament to the beauty of culinary diversity — the ability of food to transcend borders and unite people. Each dish connects us to the past, celebrates the present and invites us to partake in the vibrant future of global cuisine.

As we savor the flavors of Peru, we honor the traditions, innovations and stories that make this experience truly extraordinary. The blend of ancient and modern cooking styles in Peruvian cuisine exemplifies how cultural legacies can evolve while remaining firmly rooted, creating a fusion that resonates with diners worldwide.

With a growing desire for authentic gastronomic experiences, Peruvian cuisine shines brightly as a remarkable example of how history, culture and innovation converge to create unforgettable meals.

From the bustling kitchens of Lima to cozy dining spots in Brattleboro, the flavors of Peru invite exploration and celebration.

In every bite, you'll discover a narrative — a chance to embark on a culinary journey that bridges cultures, connected by the universal "language of food."

Experience the magic of Peru, where every meal tells an extraordinary story!

Luis Sanchez is the owner of Amaru Gourmet in Brattleboro.