

Gourmet Getaways

Deep Blue Delicacies

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY YVONNE MILOSEVIC
SPECIAL TO THE DJ WEEKEND

For a new take on the local seafood scene, consider Fisherman's, a well-conceived restaurant recently opened in Las Mercedes. A sleek bar spans most of the lobby area, and patrons can relax in a side lounge and patio for appetizers, drinks, and conversation that doesn't compete with the lively – but low key – 60s tunes streaming from hidden speakers.

Though a seafood specialist, Fisherman's forgoes the cliché nautical décor of nets and mounted marlins to offer a more sophisticated, design-minded ambiance. The mix of blond woods, opaque glass, metal accents, and white chairs give off a hip yet unpretentious feel, and the scarlet banquettes in the lounge keep the room from looking overly modern and cold.

Unlike the majority of restaurants in its class, which take their culinary inspiration from traditional Spanish recipes, the dishes created here look to the entire Western Hemisphere for inspiration. Founding partner Franco Russo Vecchio explains that he and his associates traveled to well-known seafood restaurants in Boston, San Francisco, and Mexico to come up with the eclectic menu of Pan-Asian, Mediterranean, and American specialties.

In appetizers alone, Fisherman's has 20 enticing dishes ranging from classic crab cakes, shrimp and seafood cocktails, and carpaccios, to more exotic fare, such as the tuna tataki served with curry mayonnaise and pineapple chutney, oysters Rockefeller stuffed with fennel, chives, spinach and parmesan cheese, or the yucca shrimp – giant prawns stuffed with yucca puree. For those who can't decide on just one, the mixed appetizer plate with Thai spring rolls, salmon *flautas*, and two yucca shrimp is a great starting point for your first visit.

Moving on to main courses, the specialties of the house include shrimp fajitas, Mediterranean sea bass, the Asian-influenced Black and White Tuna, and the One Way Salmon, baked skin-on and served over clarified butter. Seared to perfection and coated with black and white sesame seeds, the tuna I sampled was perfectly accompanied with a citrus-spiked teriyaki sauce and a side of heavenly creamed spinach.

For purists, the menu offers 250-gram portions of the freshest grilled grouper, sea bass, tuna, salmon, swordfish or prawns. My companion swears the delicate, moist swordfish was among the best he's tasted in years. In the future, Fisherman's plans to organize themed menus based on lobster, crab, or oyster creations that reflect the best of the season's catch. Russo and his partners have smartly acknowledged that not everyone is a fan of food from the sea, and so the menu also includes several salads, pastas, steak, and chicken dishes.

Perhaps the most surprising thing on the menu is the ultra-reasonable prices. To explain this act of economic solidarity, Russo says tough times require restaurants to pull out all the stops if they want to turn occasional cus-

tomers into regulars, and that means providing attentive service and fresh, quality food at a moderate price. Based on my recent dining experience, Fisherman's Seafood and Bar has got the formula down right.

Sea Bass Ceviche is one of Fisherman's most popular appetizers. Here's how to make it:

Ingredients:

750 grams sea bass
500 grams tomatoes, seeds removed
300 grams diced onion
200 milliliters canned tomato juice
500 milliliters fresh squeezed lime juice
200 milliliters fresh squeezed orange juice
30 milliliters Tabasco sauce
100 milliliters olive oil
200 grams diced capers
200 grams chopped green olives
5 grams oregano
50 grams fresh cilantro
30 grams sweet potato
salt and pepper to taste

Preparation:

Clean the sea bass and cut it into approximately one centimeter cubes. Marinade in lime juice overnight with salt and pepper. The next day, drain and rinse the fish. In a medium size bowl, combine the sea bass with the tomato juice, orange juice, and lime juice. Let stand for 15-20 minutes. Drain off a little bit of the excess liquid, keeping the sea bass covered in its juice. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well.

Serve in a shallow bowl on slices of steamed sweet potato and surrounded by nacho chips or toasted pita triangles.



Black and white tuna

Fisherman's Seafood and Bar

Avenida Principal de Las Mercedes at Calle Mucuchies
(212) 993-1829 / 4235

ATMOSPHERE: Pan-Asian seafood served in an intimate second-floor dining room, with a modern, sprawling first-floor bar.

PRICE RANGE: Appetizers, Bs.4,400 to Bs.9,400; salads, Bs.4,400 to Bs.5,400; raw bar, Bs.3,900 to Bs.7,400; main courses, Bs.5,400 to Bs.11,400.

CREDIT CARDS: Visa, MasterCard, American Express

VALET PARKING: Yes

Menu listings and prices are subject to change.

Ceviche



Mixed appetizer plate

