

Press Release:

BRINGING THE FLAVORS OF COSMOPOLITAN PERÚ TO MANHATTAN, AT TUTUMA SOCIAL CLUB.

Afro-Peruvian jazz gets a home in a new club/restaurant being started by a leading musician and a young restaurateur with a culinary history.

When New Yorker Santana Matwey went to Perú for a visit last year, she liked the country a lot – so much so that she decided to bring it back with her. In Lima, the coastal capital, the lively social clubs known as peña had a warm community spirit that she found both embracing and captivating. Most of the clubs featured live music of particular sophistication and rhythm, a distinctive sound known as Afro-Peruvian jazz.

But the food blew her away, too. Some of the more memorable flavors came from upscale tapas prepared by acclaimed chefs who had merged aspects of Perú's fabled culinary repertoire with contemporary elements learned in the gourmet capitals of the world.

She toured Perú as part of a private group led by Gabriel Alegría, a New York City-based jazz trumpeter. Alegría is of Peruvian descent and is known as one of the world's foremost players and composers of Afro-Peruvian jazz. He took the group to the clubs he played. Matwey had an intuitive feeling that other Manhattanites would welcome both the exiting food and the atmosphere, and Alegría said that if she was serious, he would sign on to help make it into a club where he could book, and play with, some of the world's most achieved musicians. Tutuma Social Club was born.

It would be fair to say that the need to entertain guests with food was in Matwey's bloodstream. Her father, Joseph Bari, is a restaurateur, founding and running the legendary Ray Bari Pizza restaurants. In the early 1970's, Santina's parents sometimes worked 17-hour days, so she literally grew up "pouring sodas at age six. I begged them to let me do it. I couldn't reach the counter so they had to put me up on a little stool."

Joseph Bari also taught his daughter "not to take No for an answer." Santina focused on two favorite chefs she found in Perú who had attracted followings around the globe, but they had returned to Perú to open their own restaurants. Convincing them to come to New York City took more than a little bargaining. At Tutuma Social Club, Carlos Testino and Rodrigo Conroy, with experience gained in Barcelona and Paris, have designed an innovative menu.

So what about Peruvian food would make it worth exploring, for those who haven't been able to try it?

Most of us think of Perú as the home of jagged mountain peaks, Macchu Picchu, Inca gold, Spanish conquistadors and dense jungle. But the country is also noted for its food. Even the most cursory web search will reveal that food experts seem to agree that Perú's unique historical, biological and cultural factors have resulted in one of the world's most diverse cuisines.

Chocolate, hot peppers, corn, tomatoes, quinoa and potatoes all originated in the New World, where the Incas worshipped them as gifts from the gods.

A staggering number of fruits grew naturally in Perú, and the exceptionally rich plankton life in the Pacific fed more species of fish than any other coast in the world. Even many centuries ago, Perú had developed a culinary cornucopia as compared to many other parts of the world.

Spanish explorers introduced their own foods: limes, olives and grapes. The conquistadors also brought significant numbers of African slaves, whose descendents settled primarily along the coast and intermingled with native Amerindians. They were partial to rice, peanuts, peppers and seafood. In the late 19th century, Perú was one of the first countries to recognize Japan, and waves of Japanese and Chinese worker immigrants brought Asian influences to the menu.

Peruvians have always given their own spin to traditional Spanish and Amerindian dishes and there are lots of other foods that simply aren't the same anywhere else. Take for instance a drink called Chicha Morada out of fermented blue corn (tastes sweet and sour), humitas which are their own version of corn-wrapped tamales, barbacoa (the original barbecue from Spain) and meat and fish stews that incorporate a wide variety of unique local Peruvian chilé peppers like recoto and aji amarillo.

An absolute must at Tutuma Social Club will be the real ceviche: sole or flounder marinated to “cook” with strong limes and Peruvian chilés and onions. Ceviche is generally agreed to have been invented in Perú and although it has caught on all over the Latin world, aficionados say that the original Peruvian stuff is still the best.

Other specialties abound: Conchitas a la Parmesana, fan shellish baked with garlic and topped with parmesan, Anticuchos de Lomo, loin beef skewered and marinated with herbs native to Perú (achiote, chilé mirasol and yellow chilés), rice with seafood, spicy rice mixed with seafood of the season that looks similar to paella but is completely different in taste, and Tacu Tacu, pork and red beans with a yellow chilé pepper sauce, served with rice.

The dessert list will be pleasantly unfamiliar to most New Yorkers.

Lucuma and chocolate Makis is made from lucuma, a firm dessert fruit with a boiled egg-like texture that tastes rather like sweet maple and is covered in a sauce of chocolate and Pisco. Or, try Alfajores, a flaky biscuit-like cookie that has a creamy, condensed milk filling.

The legendary Pisco Sour will be the signature drink of the house. Pisco, a brandy, is distilled from black Quebranta grapes that the Spanish conquistadors brought. In the Peruvian terroir, the grapes mutated and took on a characteristic earthy flavor.

Keeping things authentic, the bar plans to feature unfamiliar cocktails, such as the Algarrobina, Chilcano, Tutuma, Machupicchu, and Perú Libre. Cusqueña lager from Perú will be the beer of choice, an award-winner noted for adherence to the Bavarian rule of natural ingredients.

In addition to innovative food and drink, there's another side to Tutuma Social Club that will stamp the restaurant as one of an entirely different breed: live world-class music every night, and without a cover charge. At Tutuma, music won't be a background element: a music professor designed the stage and a distinguished roster of international talent is slated to perform.

Many of the musicians are friends of Gabriel Alegría, who has played with outstanding musicians all over the world. Alegría wants his new venue to showcase Afro-Peruvian jazz in a way that no club outside Perú has done before.

The mix of food and music will be equally important in creating the party atmosphere that the owners want to create every night.

Between Santina Matwey's inherent knack for developing atmosphere and running a good restaurant kitchen, and Gabriel Alegría's ability to ensure performances by the best musicians, Tutuma Social Club promises to be an exciting addition to

Manhattan's nightlife.

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TUTUMA SOCIAL CLUB is a new restaurant/music venue in Manhattan that combines upscale Peruvian tapas with the best in live contemporary Latin jazz. Santana Matwey, a second-generation New York restaurateur, and Gabriel Alegría, a jazz trumpeter known as one of the world's leading creators of Afro-Peruvian jazz, have joined forces to import the atmosphere found in peña, the vibrant urban clubs of Perú. Featuring live Afro-Peruvian music every night, the club plans to offer world-class performances, without a cover charge. Tutuma's menu has been expressly designed by two of Perú's most acclaimed young international chefs.

Tutuma Social Club is at 164 East 56th St (corner 3rd Ave), New York, NY 10022. Open 7 days a week, lunch through dinner, 11 am -1 am.

Telephone 1-866-988-5299.

Press officer: Jasmine Sandler 1-646 722-8189 www.tutumasocialclub.com.