

CHIFA

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LATIN SUPERSTAR CHEF JOSE GARCES INTRODUCES CHIFA, A PERUVIAN-CANTONESE RESTAURANT

PHILADELPHIA, PA – In early 2009, Latin superstar **Chef Jose Garces** will debut his new restaurant, **Chifa** (707 Chestnut Street, 215-925-5555), named after the unique hybrid of Peruvian and Cantonese cuisines found in Peru. With a brilliant color palette, the stunning restaurant will feature a center-stage ceviche bar that sits atop a Chinese apothecary cabinet, a 16-seat gold resin communal table, a welcoming lounge for late night dining and Chef Garces' dazzling menu of signature small plates. Chef Garces will be the first restaurateur to elevate this cuisine from its humble roots to what is destined to become one of the country's most sought-after restaurants.

“I am constantly exploring Latin cuisines, and when I began researching chifas, I was fascinated by the combination of these two seemingly different food cultures. But their common grounds, such as fresh seafood, liberal seasonings and rice-based dishes, come together in a way that is at once new and comfortingly familiar,” says Chef Garces, who is Ecuadorian-American. He has quickly become one of the country's top chefs with the popular restaurants **Amada**, **Tinto** and **Distrito** in Philadelphia, **Mercat a la Planxa** in Chicago and a new cookbook to further promote Latin cuisines entitled *Latin Evolution* (Lake Isle Press 2008).

When Chinese workers came to Peru in the late 19th century, they brought their cuisine with them. Over the years, they adapted their foods to work with Peruvian ingredients and incorporated native South American cooking techniques. Chifa is the

phonetic pronunciation of the Chinese character that represents this shared cuisine and also came to refer to the restaurants that serve it.

Chef Garces' tempting menu at Chifa will combine the flavors and ingredients of both Asian and Latin cuisines. A few dishes will be: **Arroz Chaufa con Mariscos**, a traditional Chifa-style fried rice with Chinese ham, egg and scallion, topped with soy- and ginger-glazed shellfish; **Aji Gallina**, a classic Peruvian dish of slow-poached chicken in a spicy sauce of aji amarillo, walnuts and queso fresco, served over confit purple potatoes and garnished with purple Peruvian olives; **Lomo Saltado con Conchitas**, beef tenderloin marinated in ginger and soy and stir-fried with peppers, tomatoes and bay scallops, then tossed with fried yellow mountain potatoes and cilantro; and **Roast Duck Buns**, steamed Chinese buns filled with crispy roast duck over foie gras mousse, garnished with plum sauce, pickled scallions and five-spice sea salt. Menu items will range in price from \$10 to \$28.

Chifa will also feature a **Ceviche Bar** with more than 10 kinds of fresh daily ceviche preparations. The bar will be staffed by Chef Garces and his talented team, who will prepare each ceviche to order. Selections will include: **Oyster**, with *leche de tigre*, avocado, calamari and pisco, served as a shooter; **Tuna** with rocoto emulsion, soy, sweet potatoes, red onion and cilantro; and classic **Ecuadorian Ceviche**, a nod to Chef Garces' family roots, with orange, fresh tomato and avocado. Ceviches will range in price from \$14 to \$24.

"Traveling to Peru with our Chifa kitchen team and experiencing this incredibly diverse cuisine first hand opened my eyes to a world of new possibilities," says Chef Garces, who worked closely with **Chef de Cuisine Chad Williams** in creating and executing Chifa's menu. "The vibrant markets, especially the fish markets and their incomparably fresh ceviches, were as gorgeous to look at as they were to eat. It was the most exciting culinary journey we've taken to date, and I can't wait to share this style of food with my guests."

The space to showcase this intriguing food was designed by **Jun Aizaki** of Creme Design Collective, the creative force behind Garces' three award winning Philadelphia restaurants. For Chifa, Aizaki drew from images of the chifas in Lima, Peru.

"When we first began studying chifas, we noticed that a lot of them relied heavily on exaggerated interpretations of Asian motifs," says Aizaki, "so we incorporated a lot of Asian elements into a Latin theme, to capture the feeling of both cultures."

Chifa boasts three dining rooms. The first is the main dining room and bar area, festooned with banquettes and earthy shades of terra cotta, ochre and brown leather with

hand-crafted shutters. Large ceiling fans, custom-made blue and white tiles and floral fabric accents lend an airy feel. A second dining room, which features the ceviche bar, is painted vibrant red and accented throughout with wood screens carved in Chinese-inspired geometric patterns. The lower level has a sexy, clandestine feel inspired by an opium den with its own bar, lush fabrics, red and black laquered tables, hanging lanterns and plush purple couches and ottomans for lounging.

Like all Chef Garces' restaurants, Chifa's beverage program will further enhance guests' transportive experience. A carefully crafted selection of wine and beer will be complemented by signature cocktails such as: **Asian Five-Spice Rye Manhattan**; **Classic Pisco Sour**; **Mint and Lima Bean Gin Fizz**, a sly nod to the capital of Peru; and **Burnt Orange and Sesame Martini**. A daily **Fresh Tropical Fruit Pisco Sour Pitcher** will be a natural cocktail choice for groups. Drinks will range in price from \$8 to \$12. Chifa will also offer an elaborate, artisanal selection of Chinese teas, to incorporate that important aspect of Asian cuisine into guests' meals.

Born in Chicago to Ecuadorian parents, Chef Jose Garces credits his family with inspiring and nurturing his interest in food from a young age. Garces' three Philadelphia restaurants form his eponymous **Garces Restaurant Group**. He is the owner and executive chef of all three, and each is counted among the city's most acclaimed: **Amada**, an authentic Andalusian tapas bar; **Tinto**, a wine bar and restaurant inspired by the Basque region of Northern Spain and Southern France; and **Distrito**, a spirited celebration of the vibrant culture and cuisine of Mexico City. Chef Garces is also the executive chef at Chicago's much-praised Catalan restaurant **Mercat a la Planxa**, where he worked in collaboration with Sage Restaurant Group. Recently, he appeared as a challenger on Food Network's hit show *Iron Chef America*, where he defeated Iron Chef Bobby Flay.

Chifa will be open seven days a week for dinner. For more information, or to make a reservation, please visit www.chifarestaurant.com or call 215-925-5555.