

Naked Fish

Cebiche

Cebiche, ceviche, seviche, sebiche. This cool and refreshing lime marination of chopped fish with diced chili and veggies has as many spellings as Pickerel has *comadres*. Pickerel's favorite spelling is *sebiche*, derived from when English sailors—new to the Peruvian coast—tasted naked fish mixed with fiery ají chili and started screaming, “Sonofabitch! Sonofabitch!” The natives took this incomprehensible expression as the English name for a spicy fish dish, and soon they began imitating its sound, unsuccessfully—sonofabitch ... sonabitch ... sebitch ... sebiche ...

Four hundred years later and four thousand miles up the coast, every Mexican seaside dweller has a recipe for naked fish. Some *cebiche* makers add pickled jalapeños to their marination. Others add fresh serrano chilies. Some like it with finely diced coriander, while a few prefer a pinch of oregano. There are those who add tomato puree, tomato juice, canned V-8, Clamato cocktail, a trickle of beer, or a dash of red wine. Others add none of the above, preferring instead to condiment with their favorite bottled sauce.

Pickerel's recipe comes from the kitchen of Maria Delgado Viuda Del Mar (widow of Del Mar), who Pickerel continues to console whenever he visits Playa Colorado, a fishing village west of Guasave, Sinaloa.

Ingredientes (four servings)

- 1/2 kg filleted fish (1/2 kilo *pescado fileteado*) Pickerel prefers surfperch (*mojarra*) or triggerfish (*cochito*) for this recipe.
- 1 tsp salt (1 *cucharadita de sal*)
- 1 tsp ground pepper (1 *cucharadita de pimienta molida*)
- 10 limes (10 *limones*) For extra tanginess, use green limes (i.e., not yellowed).
- 1 cucumber (1 *pepino*)
- 1/2 white onion (1/2 *cebolla blanca*)
- 1 medium tomato (1 *tomate mediano*)
- 1 serrano chili (1 *chile serrano*)
- 3 sprigs coriander (3 *ramitas de cilantro*)
- 1 cup Clamato juice (1 *taza de jugo Clamato*) V-8 juice may be substituted.
- 1 tbsp Salsa Huichol (1 *cucharada de Salsa Huichol*) (See *Bottled Sauces*, page 29.)
- 12 tostadas (12 *tostadas*) (See *Dangerously Crisp Tortillas with Toppings*, page 56.)

Equipo

Lime squeezer (*exprimidor de limón*)

Mixing bowl (*tazón para mezclar*)

Colander (*escurridor*)

Preparación

Cut fish into dice-size cubes. Remove errant bones. Place fish in bowl and mix with salt and pepper. Squeeze lime juice into a cup. Ten limes = about 1 cup of juice. Pour juice onto fish and mix well. Lime juice should cover fish. Squeeze more limes if necessary. Cover bowl, and allow fish to marinate. Go drink beer, lie on the beach, or spy on female neighbors. When marinated fish turns white—about 20 minutes—it is “cooked.” Instead of drinking beer, lying on the beach, or spying on neighbors, you should have been dicing those veggies.

Peel cucumber, remove seeds, and slice. Dice the same size as fish. Next, dice onion, tomato, and chili (remove seeds first). Cut these smaller than cucumber. Remove stems from coriander; mince leaves finely.

Using colander, drain lime juice from fish. Add veggies. Mix well. Add Clamato. Mix again. Add Salsa Huichol. Mix once more. Cover and chill 20 minutes. Your naked fish is ready.

Spoon *cebiche* onto whole tostadas, or break tostada into chips and use to spoon *cebiche*. Either way, enjoy the taste of marinated fish and crunchy cucumber with coriander in the background. Watch for lime juice dribbling down your chin.