



## Weekend at La Barra Peruvian Tapas at Nakheel Mall, The Palm Jumeirah, Dubai

Nakheel Mall has a new, fancy food court, which rides the trend towards very high quality mini-restaurants, and wide-open shared seating.

Saying it's a food court is not even fair.

Case in point when you go for Peruvian tapas and are actually served fine-dining level dishes!





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And La Barra is a food stall – nothing more: just a humble open kitchen, a few elegant stools along the counter, and the “food hall” tables and chairs.

But do not assume a small kitchen won’t surprise!

Chef Javier Gonzalez is captain at his station, and you are in for a treat...







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First of all, the kitchen is spotless - and second of all, the menu is tight in selection, meaning they specialize in what they do best, and they don't try to over-extend.

When I see a menu with 50+ dishes, they better have an entire hotel food-and-beverage department behind them...

And so La Barra offers a good selection of *ceviche*, three very interesting salads, three starters, and four main dishes - plus special sauces, some yummy sides, desserts, and of course drinks (including a fresh Latin American drink you have never tasted before!)







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Here it is! The Chicha Morada drink (non-alcoholic)... but what is it made from?







Yes! Unique, and native to Peru, this deep purple sweet corn is the main ingredient (accompanied by other secret flavors, including pineapple, cloves, and cinnamon!)

And this underlines the philosophy of the good people at La Barra - they are representing their culinary culture in the UAE - as you will see, each dish on the menu has been carefully created with natural and indigenous foods, herbs, and spices.

Peruvian, Colombian, and Cuban staff are at La Barra, as well as training other nationalities, to assure the authenticity of the plates they proudly serve.

Indeed, I believe it is this pride that helps elevate the deliciousness of the dishes presented at La Barra - because what that small and humble kitchen produces is far above expectations, and it is operating at a level of excellence beyond food halls.

In fact, you could take any of La Barra's dishes, fancy plate them, and serve them at any of Dubai's top five-star restaurants, and they would fit right in.

Try for yourself.



The traditional *ceviche* appears to be a simple dish – and again notice La Barra’s dedication to using authentic ingredients – but actually, to get the right balance between tangy, sweet, salty, and spicy flavors is both science and an art.

Very often you will find *ceviche* too far into the acidic, or too bland, or too salty... it takes great skill, and an advanced palate, for a chef to master the perfect notes, and only then it can be called *leche de tigre* – tiger’s milk!

At La Barra, the *ceviche* was magnificent – and they have 8 variations on the menu!





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A note about the ingredients: dried plantain, as well as different (and special) varieties of corn are absolutely a requirement - and it's not only tradition, they add the umami flavors, without which it cannot be a real *ceviche*!









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It is also a question of respect. Try making an Indian curry without Indian ingredients...

You see the large white corn kernels?





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And the crunchy corn below?







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That's the real thing!







Add a serving of chicken skewers and roasted potatoes – Chicken Pituco on the menu – and you have yourself a meal fit for an Incan Emperor.

The chicken is free-range, and marinated with a magical sauce before grilling on an open fire; and the potatoes are a masterpiece!

The sauces combine so well, and in fact there are 9 sauces offered on the menu – a hint as to how important they are to the fantastic recipes that Chef Javier executes.

While a portion of Chicken Pituco comes already with two sauces, definitely I would say the other sauces deserve further exploration: next time I visit!





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Even La Barra's pet *toro* is happy with those sauces!





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One of the most delicious side of roasted potatoes I have had the good fortune of trying in many many years.

Basically, La Barra is cooking at genius level!

Again I notice the clever use of umami taste, in this case the sesame seeds and fine green onions sprinkled on the chicken...









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... as well as generous use of that flavorsome Peruvian sauce.

The other main dish we tried was the Short Rib Seco, composed of slow-braised beef short rib, with coriander sauce, and served with Peruvian rice and beans – a winner!





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Clearly the foundation of La Barra's delicacies, the sauce was generously slathered over the ribs... and the meat was cooked so tender that I laughed at the knife and instead cut it with my spoon!







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And to crown off a fabulous Peruvian lunch, of course a dessert beloved throughout Latin America!

The *Tres Leches* milk cake was also fantastic... if you had a South American grandma, you would know this is how it's supposed to be: soft, sweet, and from the soul.







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And if you don't have a Peruvian *abuela*, don't worry – La Barra will adopt you temporarily, with their homemade food!





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All in all, for a marvelous experience of authentic Peruvian cuisine, with ingredients sourced from the motherland, and absolutely no compromise – in fact, lovingly prepared for you with pride of origin representing Peruvian culinary culture – you must visit La Barra restaurant in Nakheel Mall, The Palm Jumeirah, where, in the Depachika Food Hall, you will enjoy authentic Peruvian tapas and other dishes at very high standard of deliciousness.