

## Simple Ceviche

Today, 7:23am By Laura Anhalt

As I was preparing dinner this evening--nothing fancy--just shrimp ceviche, stuffed artichokes, and red wine pear compote for dessert--I suddenly had a flashback. I found myself in my Mexico City 5th floor apartment where I lived before moving to Buffalo in 1999. It was nestled in an affluent yet bohemian part of town called “la Condesa”.

As I kept chopping up the ingredients, I relived every corner of my old home--spacious but cozy, the walls painted in deep purple and Mexican pink, terracotta tile floors and huge windows that overlooked the Castle of Chapultepec (an impressive historical landmark). I was now in my kitchen, bright yellow walls with randomly encrusted midnight blue tiles and the monumental sub-zero freezer & fridge combo that were this close to creating design chaos. I remembered the feeling I used to get while looking out the kitchen window. *What a neat place to live and hang out with friends!* Everything is in walking distance and the shops and restaurants are as diverse as they get.

There are fresh juice stands in almost every corner, taco places everywhere (the real ones), and coffee shops galore, ice cream parlors, sushi bars, trendy shops, upscale restaurants and little eateries that expand into the streets making it look like a Parisian portrait. Not to mention the bread and tortilla shops, as well as the ambulatory food market that installs itself in the middle of the street every Tuesday. And all of this happens amidst old colonial architecture and hip new construction.

“Sooooooo, *what made you come to Buffalo?* (I always get asked the same question, the accent must be **the one** that gives me away) *what made you leave paradise ?*” Throughout the years my answers have changed. Initially, during nostalgic moments, I would have loved to answer, “*Because I wasn't thinking (clearly).*” Although coming to Buffalo was indeed a very random aim at the map, it has proven to be the best decision I've ever made. It's a great place to live and since moving into the heart of the city, I have found that there are a lot more Buffalo enthusiasts like myself than I ever

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thought. More and more, I hear people say, “*We love Buffalo and we are glad that you are here.*” What is clear to me right now is that whatever reason brought me here is not the reason that’s keeping me here.

In many ways, the city of Buffalo reminds me a lot of what I left behind; it is a place with great architecture, historical landmarks, amazing homes and good people. My home now is just as old and holds the same feel as my apartment in Mexico City. It took almost two years of remodeling and lots of permits, frustration and tears but in the end—new hardwood floors, new walls, tons of primer and bright paint colors, all new electric wiring and plumbing, and a gourmet kitchen later—it paid off! I moved my family in to our gorgeous home. Now, all I have to do, if I start getting a hint of nostalgia, is walk myself to Elmwood Avenue and stroll up and down the Strip. I drop a visit to the chocolate and candy stores, specialty food and dessert shops, deli’s, sushi bars and coffee houses. I always make it a point to grab a bite in one of the many trendy restaurants of the area. After that, just like magic, the nostalgia puffs away!

A firm believer in following one’s passions and sharing them with others, I’ve indulged myself for over two and a half years by giving “real” Mexican hands-on cooking lessons in my home kitchen with hopes of sharing the folklore, magic, and traditions of my land through food and history. Although I’ve had to be creative, learn to modify and sometimes rewrite my own recipes to make things work with the products I can find, all in all, this area does offer a great variety of ingredients without having to go out of your way to get them. The following recipe is a good example.

Every Latin American country with a coastal line claims fame to ceviche. We are all correct! Ceviche is prepared very differently from region to region, from person to person and my recipe is no exception, I claim fame to it myself as well.

The most traditional way of preparing ceviche, is with raw fish such as fresh tuna, red snapper, or mackerel. The fish is “cooked” in high acidity marinades made with lime, lemon or acid orange (or a medley of all!) by a process called denaturation. Denaturation refers to a change in the structure of a protein, in this case, giving the fish the appearance and texture of being cooked. However, when preparing ceviche with shrimp, octopus or squid, it is highly recommended that they be precooked (not over cooked) prior to preparing the dish. They simply do not “cook” in the citrus based marinades.

This just goes to show that you can be very creative with this particular dish while having fun trying to create your own version.

So, from my home to yours--enjoy!

### **Laura’s Shrimp Ceviche**

24 oz of precooked (about two minutes in boiling water) cleaned, medium size shrimp  
5 parsley sprigs  
5 cilantro sprigs  
6 key limes or 3 regular limes  
2 Serrano chiles or green hot peppers, optional (don’t be afraid to use them, they are not as “hot” as their reputation and their taste is delicious)  
2 big red ripe tomatoes  
1 small white onion  
1 medium can or jar of pitted green or black olives  
2 big ripe avocados

## Salt & pepper to taste

To prepare: Cut the shrimp into big chunks and place in a bowl. Then cut the rest of the ingredients (except for the avocado and the limes) very finely and then add to the shrimp. Squeeze the limes and add the juice to the shrimp mix. Lastly, dice the avocados and add them to the other ingredients. Mix well, but gently, to incorporate. Make sure that all of the mixture is covered in lime. Taste and then add salt and pepper to your liking. Cover the bowl and place it in fridge until you use it.

To serve: The mixture should be cold and can be prepared a day ahead. I recommend that you consume it within three days of being prepared.

Cool tip: For a striking presentation, serve in martini or red wine glasses. You can sprinkle additional cilantro (very finely chopped) and add a wedge of lime, however, it is optional. Serve with saltine crackers or homemade tortilla chips.

***Editor s Note: If you re looking for the freshest shrimp in the city, your best option is La Marina Market & Grille on Hertel Avenue. Nothing they serve has ever been frozen or chemically treated, and it is all reasonably priced. They also make ceviche, so if you re not much of a cook, that may be a good alternative. Stop by and ask for Rosalie, she s been in the business almost 20 years and has an amazing breadth of knowledge on the subject of all things that come from the sea.***

### La Marina Seafood Market & Grille

1503 Hertel

834.9681

[www.lamarinaonline.com](http://www.lamarinaonline.com)

#### Hours:

Tuesday 5pm – 9pm, Wednesday & Thursday (market days) 11am – 9pm, Friday 11am – 10pm, Saturday 5pm -10pm\*

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