



THE *Traveling Fork* CEVICHE

While **Ceviche** has long been one of my favorites, surprisingly few people in the US seem to prize it, and many don't even know what it is. Well, in a few words, it is chopped raw fish seasoned in an acid (vinegar or the juice of limes or lemons) along with a colorful combination of chopped fresh vegetables.

Some who know what it is will tell you that the vinegar or sour fruit juices "cooks" the chopped fish. I suppose that depends on what you consider to be "cooking". In my mind "cooking" means the application of heat, and



the art of making Ceviche does not involve application of heat. It is true that the acidic liquids do firm up the raw fish flesh and leave it with a texture that might be similar to cooking.

Ceviche is a Hispanic creation and it can be found in all the Latin countries. I have sampled the highly varied offerings of Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Chile, Argentina, and Spain. These countries are bordered by

large bodies of saltwater and all of them have serious fisheries. Fishing has played a large recreational part of my life, so it doesn't surprise me that Ceviche has become a component of my diet!

While almost any edible fishes can be a source for Ceviche, those fish whose flesh has a dense texture is likely to form the best stock. Redfish have been one of my preferred native sources because most of my adult life has centered on the Southwest Coastal area of Florida, and I have fished from Tampa Bay to the Florida Keys. However, I have sampled Ceviche made from a combination of Salmon and Scallops, diced squid, and one of my favorites is the Corvina.

Corvina is a cold water fish in the Pacific Ocean and they range from Northern California to Chile in the cold water of the Humboldt Current. All the Hispanic countries fronting on the Pacific eat Corvina and it is abundant there as part of their commercial fishery. It occasionally makes an appearance in Costco although it isn't regularly available this far from the Pacific. But if you can't find Corvina, try Salmon, Halibut, or whatever strikes your fancy.

I like it spicy. The versatility of this dish is you're free to make it as "hot" or as mild as you please. Traditionally, you can "heat" it up with some aji (pronounced *ah-hee*), a blend of finely chopped hot peppers with cilantro or parsley for color. Variances in salt or other recipe items makes it a highly variable dish, depending on your own personal preferences. A selection of colorful ingredients—sweet or hot peppers, makes it very attractive and tasty. *Try it!*

- BILL BLACKWELL

Ceviche

1 LARGE FISH FILET FROM A FIRM-FLESHED FISH SUCH AS SNOOK, REDFISH, OR CORVINA (CORVINA IS FROM PACIFIC SIDE OF CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA).

Remove any bones and cut into strips for chopping. Chop the fish into small cubes and add to 1/2 cup of lemon or lime juice and 1/2 cup of water in a bowl. Add the following items chopped into small pieces:

- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 red bell pepper
- 6 large black olives
- 2 stalks celery

- 6 sprigs cilantro
- 1 medium sized onion
- 1 tablespoon salt (less if you like)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

1 cucumber, peeled and halved, Use a spoon to scoop out seeds and seed pulp, cut into narrow strips and chop into small pieces.

2-3 green jalapeno peppers cut into small pieces (hot as you want it) and add some chopped red, yellow, and orange sweet peppers for color.

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and mix well. Cover and place in the refrigerator for about 4 hours before eating.

Uncover and stir again in 2 hours, re-covering and storing in refrigerator for 2 more hours. No cooking is necessary.

There is no magic to making good ceviche. You can vary the ingredients and their quantities according to your own taste.

Sometimes I will add 1/4 cup of chopped firm ripe tomato hulls with no seeds or seed pulp. I have eaten it for up to 5 days with no spoilage if kept refrigerated.

