

Home and away

Take a vacation without leaving the city at **La Sirena Clandestina**



On the menu: moqueca, a seafood stew. Inset: shortbread caramel cookies | RICH HEIN-SUN-TIMES

BY JOURDAN FAIRCHILD

Cough up some major cash and you can lounge on a Brazilian beach, feasting on fresh lobster tail and sipping caipirinhas. Or, do your wallet a favor and get the same flavor — for a fraction of the cost — at La Sirena Clandestina, a 40-seat hot spot that opened last fall. Tucked into a corner of Fulton Market, this unassuming eatery seems more fit in a small fishing town than a big Midwestern city. But that's exactly what chef **John Manion** intended.

"I wanted it to feel different from the big restaurants you typically find in Chicago," says Manion, formerly of Branch 27, Mas and Goose Island. His inspiration? A quaint Brazilian city called Buzios that Brigitte Bardot famously visited in the '60s. From the restaurant's name, which translates to "hidden mermaid," down to its rough-hewn wooden floors, ambient lighting and sexy soundtrack (compiled by Poi Dog Pondering's **Frank Orrall**), Manion and his team aimed to create a similarly authentic, intimate setting.

But the star import, of course, is the



Executive chef John Manion

food. The menu draws on dishes that Manion first tasted while living in Brazil as a child, such as moqueca (\$20), a tomato-based seafood stew over risotto, and pao de queijo (\$6), a popular cheese bread sold on the streets. Truly adventurous diners might go for the grilled chicken hearts (\$8), "but that's on the menu — and will never be taken off — for

Brazilians who can't even get them in Brazilian steakhouses," he says. More familiar options, like grilled tri-tip (\$18) and lobster tail (\$28), are prepared in no-fuss fashion with chimichurri and miso-malagueta butter. "A friend told me that this is the kind of food that you want to get on a vacation, but you can never actually get," says Manion.

Similarly escapist are **Justin Anderson's** dynamic drinks. Playing with South American spirits such as pisco, tequila and cachaça, Anderson manages to be experimental yet unpretentious (try his Papi Chulo, a customer favorite, for proof). "The biggest compliment I get about this place is when people say, 'Wow, I feel like I'm somewhere else,'" Manion says. Mission accomplished.

954 W. Fulton Market, (312) 226-5300, Lasirenachicago.com

From Latin America With Love



Chicago is home to a boatload of great Latin American restaurants — everything from Brazilian to Cuban to Peruvian. And thanks to the fine gatos at GrubHub, you can have your meal delivered from any of these unanimous standouts.

Machu Picchu

3856 N. Ashland Ave.

Machu Picchu specializes in traditional Peruvian cuisine, serving citywide favorites like Arroz con Mariscos, the Peruvian version of Spanish seafood paella. Do yourself a favor: try it tonight. YOLO.

90 Miles Cuban Café

3101 N. Clybourn Ave.

The authentic Cuban fare at 90 Miles landed the restaurant a feature on Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives and has kept Chicagoans coming back for years. The Cubano Sandwich and Ropa Vieja Dinner are a few of the restaurant's top dishes.

4 Suyos

2727 W. Fullerton Ave.

4 Suyos puts a modern spin on the classic Peruvian menu. Try the Aji de Gallina — a spicy chicken stew — to see why the restaurant receives consistently high marks from diners.

Rio's D Sudamerica

2012 W. Armitage Ave.

Rio's D Sudamerica serves some of this city's best South American cuisine. To taste one of the restaurant's staples, try the Brochetas Rio D' Janeiro: skewered tenderloin, scallops and shrimp over rice and beans.

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