

## Ceviche de Mahi Mahi

By Chef Richard Sandoval, Maya,  
New York City

Yield: 4 servings

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound mahi mahi
- ½ cup lemon juice
- ½ white Spanish onion, finely diced
- 1 cup chopped cilantro, chiffonade
- 1 cup chopped tomato, finely diced
- 1 cup ketchup
- ½ cup buffalo sauce
- ½ cup tomato juice
- 2 tablespoons honey
- Salt and pepper
- 5 cups canola oil
- 1 cup whole chives
- 1 avocado, sliced
- 2 corn tortillas, cut into ½-inch triangles and deep fried

### METHOD

1. Fillet the mahi mahi, removing the pinbones, skinning it, and cutting it into ½-inch cubes.
2. Marinate the mahi mahi in the lemon juice for 1 hour. Drain the fish and refrigerate it in a plastic container.
3. Mix together the onion, cilantro, tomato, ketchup, buffalo sauce, tomato juice, and honey. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Store the mixture in a plastic container in the refrigerator.
4. In a food processor, blend the oil and the chives. Pour the blended oil into squeeze bottles.
5. To serve, toss the mahi mahi cubes with the ceviche sauce. Season with salt and pepper, if desired. Equally divide the ceviche among four soup plates. Place an avocado slice on top of the ceviche, at the center. Add a tortilla chip, and dress with chive oil around the rim of the plate.

Marco Colantonio, Director of Operations at Maya, recommends serving with Thornbury's 2001 Sauvignon Blanc.

### LIGHTENING UP

Sandoval always aims for a lighter, fresher, and healthier version of Mexican cooking, which is often dominated by fatty ingredients. One way he achieves lightness is by using canola oil rather than the traditional lard. "In my parents' restaurant, Madeiras, their tamales are the most popular item and they are made with lard. I choose vegetable shortening to get a much lighter texture."

When asked if one dish best illustrates his "old ways in new hands" philosophy of modern Mexican cooking, Sandoval points to the Chile Relleno. "My Chile Relleno is not battered and fried; it's made with a mild, roasted poblano pepper stuffed with seafood

(shrimp, calamari, scallops) and manchego cheese, and served on a black bean purée with chile de arbol, salsa, crema fresca and chive oil."

### ARRANGING A MASTERPIECE

From the moment the waiter first appears carrying a heavy, two-tiered silver bowl inserted within a volcanic rock vessel (which Sandoval and company call a "fountain"), it's obvious that presentation is an important element of a meal at Maya. The top tier is layered with chunky guacamole, while the bottom tier cradles crispy deep-fried *totopos* (tortillas).

In many artistic dishes, Sandoval updates traditional Mexican presenta-



tion. His Pescado a la Talla, for instance, is a pan-roasted filet of red snapper perched on a bed of red cabbage and tomato salad and festooned with swirls and zigzags of spicy cilantro-chipotle sauce. Another Sandoval creation, Tacos de Atun, is an arrangement of a small piece of pan-seared tuna atop quartered flour tortillas, served with a colorful chile de arbol sesame sauce, and a chalk-white, sweet-and-spicy jicama salad.

### VIRTUOSO PERFORMANCE

Sandoval stresses quality in everything from the ingredients and preparation to the service and décor. His modern Mexican cuisine is a unique yet accessible fare that counters the usual Tex-Mex blur of textures and flavors. In Sandoval's kitchen, Mexican food is transformed so that each ingredient stands out; the dishes are complex without being unapproachable. "I want to play with your palate but make sure that you get each distinct flavor," Sandoval claims, alluding to dishes like the Mariscada, a divine combination of sea scallops, shrimp, mussels, and clams served with black rice (made with the liquid from cooked or canned black beans) and a coriander seed-red pepper emulsion. His "classroom" may have been the "rich and wondrous culture" of his native Mexico, but Sandoval's take is decidedly contemporary and original. ☞