

A ceviche scorned

As I sit here typing this, I am considering a quick little fall to the knees to pray to The Ecuadorian Lunch Lady so that she may not deny me the *fruits de mer* of her labor as punishment for my recent ceviche indiscretion.

It all kicked off two months ago, with my arrival at the new job. I soon became a member of the noontime group congregated outside, piled behind a hulking minivan and waving dollars in the air, beseeching "*por favor*" in hopes that there was enough of the good stuff to go around for lunch.

Fridays are the Golden Day, when you double-check to make sure your wallet carries the six bucks that guarantees you a one-way ticket to a culinary Ecuadorian Eden - *ceviche*. A bowl of the warmest, softest, fluffiest rice ever to puff up on this earth; a salty, greasy bag of homemade corn nuts; and the crowning jewel - a large, full container brimming with lime juice, red onions, cilantro, tomatoes, and gorgeous shrimp.

You take your stash and steal off to the nearest office, picnic table, corner...anywhere you can be alone to slowly blend the rice in, dipping your spoon deep in the mix and soaking in the goddamn glorious flavor.

(Oh, god...I need a moment...)

The other day, I had ceviche on the brain. I had just finished telling a friend the day before about The Ecuadorian Lunch Lady's magical powers, when I passed by a Mexican restaurant. An enchilada? Maybe. A taco? Quite possibly...

But wait...was that...*ceviche* on the menu? Did I dare? Oh! And it came on a tostada! "The Ecuadorian Lunch Lady will never know," I rationalized. (Although, it can be said that having an internal monologue about stepping outside of one's ceviche paradigm is probably not rationalizable at all.)

I slowly worked my way through a mediocre basket of chips, waiting... hoping. And then it happened. The promised dish arrived on a hard, burnt corn disc, surrounded by wilted lettuce leaves and a pile of something greenish-brownish. It came devoid of shrimp, afraid of flavor, and instead was sprinkled with a generous helping of what appeared to be the cancerous bits of a dead eel.

It also came along with a bout of 10-hour gut rot that made me believe that The Ecuadorian Lunch Lady will most definitely put a hex on you for daring to betray her prized ceviche.

Lesson learned: You don't fuck around with ceviche; and copious amounts of Immodium AD will *not* cure ceviche hexes

--Shawnté Salabert, June 2006