CHILE

Santiago Scene

by ELYSE GLICKMAN





PHOTOS THIS SPREAD San Cristobol Peak city view; Bocanariz flights.



WHERE ON EARTH

ARGENTINE MALBEC HAS BEEN ON THE LIPS of wine drinkers for years, and because of this wine producers on the other side of the Andes in Chile have worked hard to elevate their wine game. Valle de Rosario and Casablanca, fertile swaths of land between Santiago and Valparaiso, are now dotted with wineries like Viña Matetic that are as atmospheric as their Argentinian counterparts and as prolific, especially when it comes to expressions of crisp Sauvignon Blancs and hearty Cabernet Sauvignon.»



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Seafood at Restaurante 040; Stopping for churros in Bellavista; The outskirts of Central Market; Ambrosia interior; Dining al fresco at Ambrosia; Restaurante 040.

...The buzz-worthy spots were either built into former private homes or decorated to look as if they were...



AMBROSIA

«IT TOOK A LITTLE MORE TIME FOR THE RESTAURANT scene in Santiago to catch up. Back in 2012, I went to dinner and brunch at several fashionable restaurants serving gorgeously plated dishes paired with various Chilean wines. While the quality of the ingredients was top notch, some dishes fell short of the "wow factor" defining contemporary dining experiences elsewhere.

Of course, a lot can change in five years. Santiago's restaurants, under the direction of a new generation of chefs, are turning out inventive dishes that are as thoughtfully conceived as they are beautiful. This, in turn, works to the advantage of Chilean wines, whose best characteristics are properly enhanced by the foods they are paired with.

In 2012, I had an eight-course dinner Boragó, which opened in 2007 and was still riding high on its reputation as a Santiago trailblazer. It was hidden in plain sight in a residential section of the Vitacura neighbourhood, with interior fusing minimalist chic and a rustic country sensibility I would later encounter at Tierra del Sur, a then-new five-star resort inside Patagonia's Torres del Paine national park.

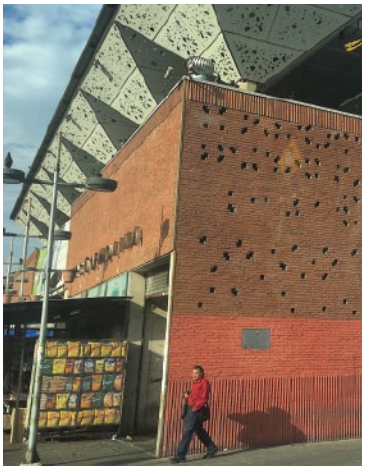
Every morsel was painstakingly arranged atop stone slabs standing in for plates (a nod to indigenous culture, the chefs informed us). Even with European formalities and wine pairings, the chefs stressed that all ingredients were Chilean, down to heirloom vegetables and herbs from the garden flanking their restaurant.

Boragó was described in local media as the Chilean version of El Bulli (the fabled Barcelona birthplace of molecular gastronomy). Even though one dish was topped with a savoury foam *a la El Bulli*, what stuck in my memory was how the kitchen made "Chilean" food cutting edge, especially when compared to the family-style formats of farmer's market and hotel restaurants. Dishes included rockfish topped with a crunchy *chicharrón* (pig crackling) sauce and a deconstructed tomato foccacia.

That earlier visit provided an interesting context for what I would enjoy in 2017 and 2018. The newer restaurants, some of which made San Pelligrino & Acqua Panna's *Top 50 Restaurants in South America* list, have their own philosophies on taking Chilean cuisine into the 21st century while staying true to its rich agricultural roots. Even with these accomplished, well-travelled younger chefs and restaurateurs adding internationalism into the mix, it says a lot that Boragó is still holding on tight to their dining destination status, and staying innovative.»









Cook it

CHILE



SERVES 10

Gravlax with Avocado Purée

AS PREPARED BY Ambrosia restaurant in Santiago.

Gravlax

Salmon
1 fillet, scaled and deboned

Lime Zest
from 1 lime

Orange Zest from 1 medium orange

Sugar 300 g

Coriander Seed 50 g

Fennel Seed 50 g

Fine-Textured Salt 100 g

Avocado Purée

Avocado 1 large

Plain Yogurt 1 cup

Lime Juice
from 1 lime

Coarse Sea Salt
to taste

Pepper to taste

1 **MIX** all the ingredients for the salmon marinade in a bowl.

2 **PLACE** the salmon on plastic wrap on a plate and cover it on both sides with the marinade.

3 **WRAP** the salmon firmly in the plastic wrap and refrigerate it with a weighted object on top for 24 hours.

4 **TURN** the salmon fillet over on the plate and refrigerate for another 24 hours.

5 **REMOVE** the salmon and wipe off excess mixture with a cloth.

6 **CUT** the fillet into thin slices.

7 **IN** a food processor, blend the avocado, yogurt, lemon, salt and pepper to make the dressing.

8 **PLATE** the salmon slices, with the avocado dressing in a bowl on the side.

PHOTO OPPOSITE The garden at Ambrosia.

«In the city's nex-generation restaurants, the hallmarks of Spanish tapas and sharing plates set the stage for Santiago's modern food culture. Along with that, there are many charming Japanese influences (referred to as "*Nikkei*" in Peru and Chile) and a few Italian and French flourishes thrown in for good measure. While beef and lamb are generally and uniformly excellent, standouts remain the salmon and other swimming delicacies caught along the coastline.

Hotel restaurant chefs are taking strides towards modern adaptations of traditional recipes, favouring lighter side dishes and condiments that allow natural flavours of proteins and produce to shine through. A fine example is The Glass, a rooftop restaurant at the Cumbres Vitacura Hotel, whose clientele is a mix of business travellers and cruise ship passengers.

The Glass' menu introduces itself as offering "generations-old Chilean traditions rescued and revived using modern gastronomic techniques." Although the restaurant doesn't offer the kind of culinary adventure promised by Boragó and its successors, chef Claudio Úbeda has received numerous awards from top Chilean food magazines in 2016 and 2017 for his ability to craft dishes defying large hotel restaurant tropes. Although the menu included more eclectic selections such as sea urchins in fried bread and kidneys in a sherry sauce, I opted for basic appetizer and main course with beef and salmon, which were fresh, flavourful, and beautifully prepared. That said, it is not just large business hotel restaurants upping their gourmet game. The restaurant at the boutique hotel Luciano K, a revitalized Art Deco landmark building, has a strong following among young Santiago movers and shakers not only for its rooftop views and cocktails but also its fresh spin on classic dishes.

After a six-hour walking tour covering essential Santiago sites (Plaza De Armas, Cerro San Cristóbal) and several hip enclaves enlivened with street art, I was ready for a tasting of Chilean Carmeneré, Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon. Bocanáriz in the Lastarria neighbourhood, based on the packed bars and tables alone, was clearly the place to do that. The surroundings reminded me of neighbourhood wine bars I visited in Bordeaux, Rome, Seville, and Split, Croatia. There was the familiar library-style arrangement of wine bottles, numerous chalkboards scrawled with the night's specials, sturdy wooden tables, muted lighting, and witty gastronomy-themed quotes splashed on cream-coloured walls.

Our tasting was arranged ahead of time, and an interesting appetizer plate with pâté and cheese awaited us. A choice of a root vegetable tortellini or a lamb stew followed, as well as a dessert bursting with autumnal flavour and texture. The lamb stew, punctuated with dark leafy greens and mustard seeds, was an extraordinary partner for all the wines in the flight, fastidiously labelled on paper tags attached to the glass stems.

By dinner time the next evening, it hit me that the buzz-worthy spots my food-focused hosts (executives for LATAM airlines promoting its restaurant-inspired food program for economy cabins) chose for us were either built into former private homes or decorated to look as if they were. Ambrosia, a family enterprise revitalized by the founders' daughter and San Pellegrino "Chef of the Year" Carolina Bazán and sommelier Rosario Onetto, was built into a modern bungalow-style house surrounded by wildflowers and tucked into a residential street in Vitacura.

Ambrosia offers a six- or nine-course tasting meal. Our group started with shared seafood tapas that included breaded fish, octopus in a squid-ink reduction, and a variety of salmon, tuna, and langoustine tartare-like plates jauntily dressed with panko, cauliflower purée, quinoa and microgreens. Picking a main course was challenging, so we ordered a few of the signatures and shared: Ravioli filled with egg yolk, herbs and goat cheese; Sous vide-cooked beef accented with mustard seeds and green beans; and rockfish resting on risotto with beets topped with a pea purée.

Chilean wine pairings, naturally, were offered, but the cocktails were irresistible. Along with the bar's version of the classic pisco sour, there were a handful of excellent sweet and savoury cocktails, including a margarita seasoned and rimmed with *merken* (a blend of chili pepper, toasted coriander, and salt used by indigenous Mapuche people) and a zesty passionfruit mojito.

After a day trip to the wineries, my whirlwind food tour of Chile's capital region was winding down. As traffic cooperated, and there were a couple of extra hours to spare, one of my fellow travellers and I chose to spend it in the Bellavista area, dominated by bars and restaurants appealing to young artists and college kids. Patio Bellavista was a prime place to people-watch and buy a few small paintings to take home. As she was leaving on an earlier flight, my companion scheduled her own multi-course dinner at Restaurante 040, inside the Tinto Boutique Hotel on a quiet side street in the neighbourhood.

It did not take much to convince me to join her for a drink before heading to my own dinner with the rest of the group at Restaurante 99 in Vitacura. 040's selling points included a new bar menu and cocktail sipping room, and a food concept devised by Spanish-born Sergio Barroso, who lists a stint at El Bulli among his many globetrotting accomplishments. Though Barroso could thrive anywhere, he stated in local media that it was the natural bounty of Chile that convinced him to stay and further refine his art. It was also interesting to observe that several dishes had at marked Nikkei influence along with a few other Asian flavours.»



Cook it

SERVES 4

Salmon with Panko Parmesan Crust, with Spinach, Mushrooms and Bearnaise Sauce

THIS IS ONE of the most popular dishes at at the boutique hotel Luciano K. It's a clever way to use both parts of an egg — whites in the crust for the fish, yolks in the sauce.

Salmon
1 x 750 g fillet, skin on, deboned

Parmigiano Reggiano Cheese
150 g, grated

Panko Breadcrumbs
300 g

Whites of 4 large eggs, yolks reserved

Salt and P**epper** to taste

Vegetable Oil
for shallow frying

Olive Oil 1 Tbs

Button Mushrooms
200 g

Fresh Lime Juice
a few drops

Spinach
1 small bunch

1 **WHISK** the egg whites until soft peaks form. Combine the panko with the parmesan cheese.

2 **CUT** the salmon into four equal portions. Season with salt and pepper. Coat the skinless side of each piece with egg white and press into the panko mixture to form a crust.

3 **HEAT** a small amount of oil in an ovenproof skillet over low heat. When it is shimmering, add the salmon fillets crust side down and cook until the crust is starting to crisp, then turn the fish over and transfer the pan to a 400°F oven to finish cooking, about 7 minutes.

4 **MEANWHILE,** clean the mushrooms with a damp cloth. Heat the olive oil in a skillet and sauté the mushrooms over medium heat until golden. Sprinkle with salt and lime juice and set aside. Wash the spinach and add it to the skillet. Sauté until wilted then add to the mushroom mixture and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper.

Bearnaise Sauce

Butter 200 g

Yolks of 4 large eggs

Tarragon Vinegar
¼ cup

Freshly Ground Black Pepper 1 tsp

Shallots
150 g, finely chopped

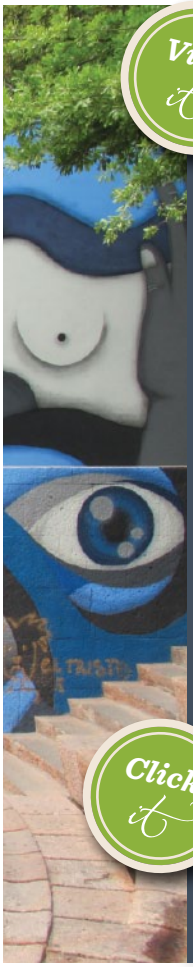
Salt to taste

5 **MELT** the butter in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Skim and foam from the surface, remove the pan from the heat and set aside, keeping the butter warm.

6 **IN** a small saucepan, bring the tarragon vinegar, shallots and pepper to a low boil and allow to reduce to 2 Tbs. Allow to cool until luke warm, then add to a mixing bowl with the egg yolks and whisk until frothy.

7 **RETURN** the pan of water to the stove and bring to a simmer. Set the bowl of egg mixture over the pan of water, making sure that the bottom of the bowl is not in contact with the water. Gradually whisk in the melted butter. As soon as the sauce thickens and is smooth, remove it from the heat, season with salt, and keep warm.





Visit it

Restaurante 99
www.99restaurante.com/en

Ambrosia
www.ambrosia.cl

Bocanariz
www.bocanariz.cl

Borago
www.borago.cl

Restaurante 040
www.040.cl/en

Tinto Boutique Hotel
www.Tintoboutiquehotel.com

Hotel Cumbres Vitacura
www.cumbresvitacura.com

Luciano K/Terrace K
www.Lucianokhotel.com

Patio Bellavista
www.patiobellavista.cl

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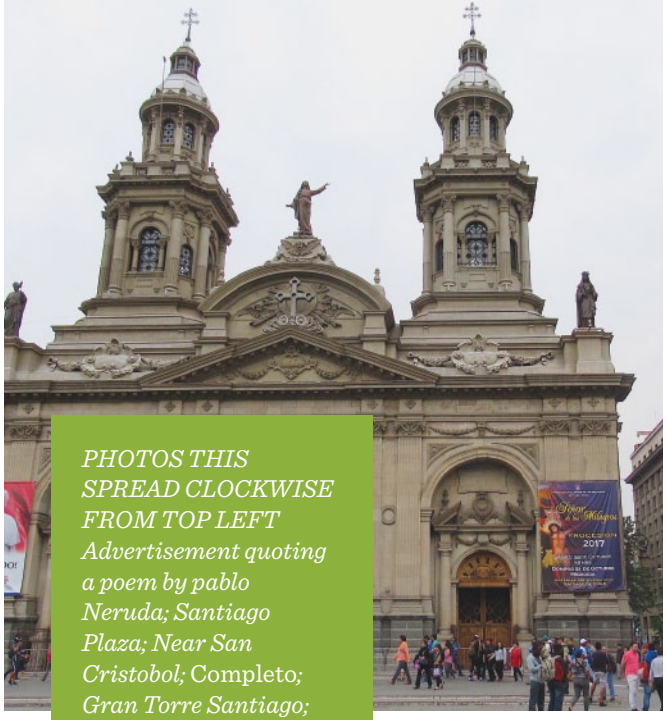
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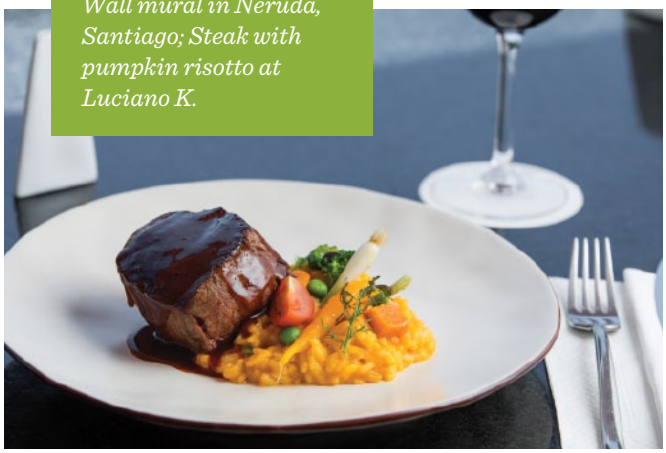
«I joined the rest of the group at Restaurante 9 at around 7.00 pm. This shoebox-sized restaurant had several touches reminiscent of Boragó, from the use of stone slabs and tree trunk slices as serving pieces, to golden lighting and rough-hewn furnishings. Chef Kurt Schmidt (a veteran of European gastronomic destinations Noma in Denmark, Azurmendi in Spain, and Santiago's own Boragó) has become a trailblazer in his own right, earning the repu dominated every course, along with surprising texture combinations, especially in a signature multi-mushroom dish. Dessert, though presented in a gravity defying fashion, was at its heart Christmas in a glass with wonderful flavours and textures of gingerbread, ice cream, and brown sugar.

The 1920s art deco building housing boutique hotel Luciano K (named for architect Luciano Kulczewski) dominated the skyline. While the 64-story Gran Torre Santiago now reigns as the tallest building in South America, Terrace K atop the property has its own strategy of making the classic building a culinary landmark in Lastarria.

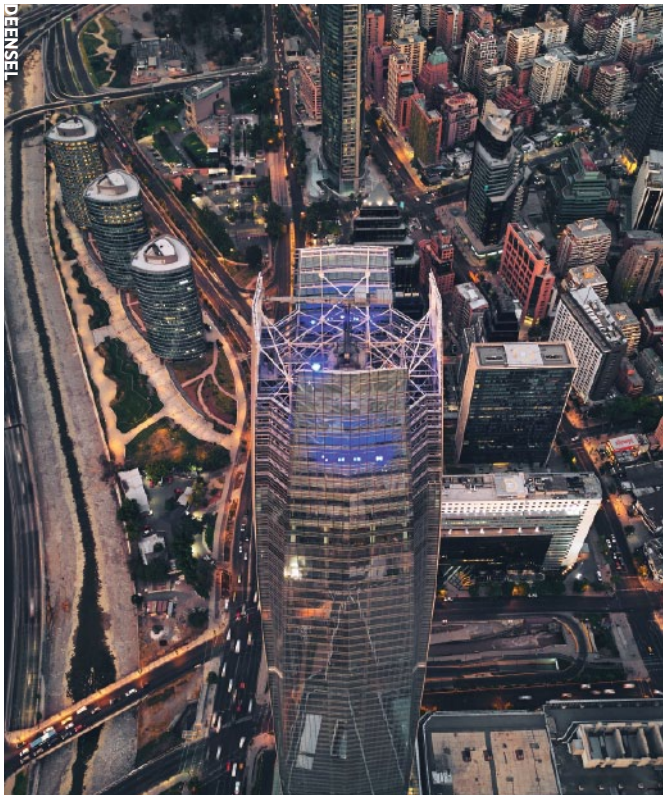
The Terrace K kitchen's creativity is evident in the refreshing reinvention of tapas staples using Chilean seafood and produce. Delicious adaptations included crab cakes enlivened with ginger, ceviche croquettes coated in panko crumbs, and octopus marinated in mustard and citrus. The main courses could easily fit into a "continental dining" category, but have definitively South American tweaks. The spinach and ricotta angelotti gets extra texture from quinoa, while a *tapapecho* (Chilean brisket) enveloped in corn pastry and merlot sauce felt like an elevation of what might be served in a Chilean home during the holidays. T&T

Los Angeles-based writer **ELYSE GLICKMAN's** last story for **TASTE&TRAVEL** was about Taiwan.





PHOTOS THIS SPREAD CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Advertisement quoting a poem by pablo Neruda; Santiago Plaza; Near San Cristobol; Completo*; Gran Torre Santiago; Wall mural in Neruda, Santiago; Steak with pumpkin risotto at Luciano K.*



DEENSEL





CHILE

Back On The Market

THE BEST PLACE TO EXPLORE life beyond the city's recent culinary boom is the Mercado Central de Chile, which opened in 1872 and today encompasses a sprawling produce market, and separate areas for fresh fish, beef, dairy products, herbs and spices, and other staples. Given its infrastructure and interesting sights (such as football-sized corn cobs, massive heads of lettuce, and a dizzying selection of fruit), a game plan for exploring the parts of the market you are most interested in is a must. It is also widely known that the cutesy eateries in the centre of the market's landmark building are planned out for tourists.

THE BEST PLACES TO GRAB A STREET FOOD SNACK or sit down for ultra-local specialties are along the peripheries of the main market or tucked away in narrow alleys between buildings. Seafood is the main draw, and given the bounty that comes from having the world's largest coastline, the number of only-in-Chile specialties will not disappoint. They include the tomato- and potato-based stew *caldillo de congrio* (rumored to be dish of choice for Chilean favourite literary son Pablo Neruda), *Locos Papas Mayo* (Chilean sea snails and potatoes topped with mayonnaise) and *Pastel de Jaiba* (a rich and cheesy crab casserole).

WHILE CHILEAN EMPANADAS ARE DELICIOUS, hot dogs — re-imagined as *completos* — are now the street food of choice in Santiago. Though topping combinations are practically endless (including those that are billed as 'Italiano' with pizza-inspired toppings), classic variations often include a (literal) mash-up of avocado, chopped tomato, sauerkraut, and dollops of mayonnaise. Dominó (no relation to the US pizza chain) is a top pick for local expressions of the American favourite introduced to Chile in the 1920s. Another is Charly Dog, noted not only for its high-quality meats, but also offering a vegetarian variation of the classic *completo*.