Peruvian cuisine, The Tradition and Umami Rich Food

Organizers: NPO Umami Information Center, Foundation of Ajinomoto Dietary Culture
Sponsors: Peruvian Embassy, Peruvian Tourism Bureau, Ajinomoto Co., Inc.
Supporters: NOBU TOKYO, International Press, KYODAI MARKET
Date and Venue May 25, 2010 at ABC Cooking Studio in Marunouchi, Tokyo, Japan
100 participants: (culinary specialists, researchers, journalists, etc.)

Contents:
・Opening address by Mr. Norio Yamaguchi, Chairman,
   (Ajinomoto Co., Inc. / President, Ajinomoto Foundation for Dietary Culture)
・Speech from an honored guest, Mr. Juan Carlos Capuñay
   Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Peru
・Presentation by Chefs Toshiro Konishi and Pedro Miguel Schiaffino
   History of Peruvian cuisine, Culinary Characteristics of three regions (Coast, Mountain, Sierra), Peruvian influence on other countries, Umami rich Peruvian ingredients and Cooking demonstration (four menus) and tasting
・Closing note: by Dr. Kenzo Kurihara, Chairman, Non Profit Organization, Umami Information Center

Peru is known as the country of origin of popular ingredients such as tomato, potato and chili. Being located in southern hemisphere, the culinary culture is yet not well known in Japan. Thanks to Toshiro Konishi and Pedro Miguel Schiaffino, The Umami Information Center (UIC) and the Foundation of Ajinomoto Dietary Culture co-organized the first Peruvian culinary seminar.

Chef Konishi explained the Andes characterize Peruvian climates into three regions. He did visual presentation of culinary culture and traditional ingredients of each region.
   Costa (Maritime region): White fish, Duck, Beef, Onion, Lemon, Chili, Corn, Avocado, Tomato
   Andes or Highland: Goat, Pork, Chicken, Small fish (Ispi), Butter beans, Corn, Peanuts, Olive, Chili
   Amazon or Jungle: Chicken, Egg, Rice Fish (Paiche), Chili, Fruits (Papaya, Lucuma, Pineapple)

Subsequently, tasting session of Chicha de jora (fermented corn drink also used as seasoning), Alpaca Charqui (alpaca dried and salted meat. Charqui refers to the technique used in the Andean highlands to cure meat by salting and dehydration. The term “jerky” in English is derived from this Andean term) Aji amarillo (yellow chili pepper sauce), Aji mirasol (red chili pepper sauce) followed. Most of participants were thrilled to taste them for the first time. Peruvian participant whispered that he missed charqui very much. For him, it could be Peruvian dashi.

Pedro handed over Toshiro. He vividly demonstrated four major Peruvian dishes which Toshiro talked about.
Ceviche: Peruvian style SASHIMI.
Bite-sized raw fish/seafood marinated in lemon based sauce.
Boiled corn and sweet potatoes are commonly used as garnish to balance sweetness and sourness, as mentioned by Pedro

Solterito: Popular salad in Andean area
Light taste salad of Andean butterbean and fresh cheese. Butterbean taste similar to broad bean.
He added small fish from Lake Titicaca, the highest navigable lake in the world

Anticucho: Grilled skewered beef heart
One flagship dish of Peruvian cuisine. Pieces of beef heart grilled after a few hours marinated in various Peruvian spices. Served with chili sauce.

Carapulcra: Stewed dried potato and meat.
Traditional cuisine. It is believed to be the oldest Peruvian stew and its origins go back to pre-Inca period.
In former times, llama or alpaca meat was used and beef, pork and chicken have come into wide use now.
Using various spices, they are simmered for hours.

In a question-and-answer session, Konishi mentioned;
Corn is a staple food in Peruvian dietary culture. There are four sorts of corn and all four are not sweet.
He didn’t arrange the tasting menus for Japanese but they are to Japanese people’s taste.
Equivalent to Japanese cuisine, Peruvian dish makes the best use of ingredients. That’s why Japanese people are fond of Peruvian cuisine.
Schiaffino had prior knowledge of umami. With his experience of green tea, dashi in Kyoto kaiseki restaurant and organic tomatoes, he recognized that umami is universal taste. He said that umami is everywhere!
Peruvian rich culinary culture and two wonderful chefs enchanted all participants.
セビーチェ: ペルー流のお刺身。(試食Ⅱ)
海岸地域の魚介類をレモン果汁(ペルーのレモンはライムに近い)ベースの調味料でマリネしたもの。酸味が利いているので付け合わせには茹でとうもろこし、甘煮のサツマイモを添える。

ソルテリーテ: サラダ。(試食Ⅱ)
山岳地方アンデスのバタービーン(ソラマメに似ている)とフレッシュチーズのさっぱりしたサラダ。チチカカ湖産の小魚(いりこに似ている)を入れる。

アンティクッチョ: 牛ハツの串焼き。(試食Ⅲ)
ペルーの街角で良く見られる庶民的な料理。マリネ液に漬けて焼き、唐辛子ソースを添える。

カラプルクラ: 乾燥ジャガイモと肉類の煮込み。(試食Ⅲ)
古代インカ帝国時代から伝わる伝統料理でかつてはリャマやアルパカの肉を煮込んだが、現在は牛肉・豚肉・鶏肉が使われ多くの香辛料を用いてじっくり煮込む。

⇒「~ご家庭で味わうペルー料理~」レシピー参照。

試食後の質疑応答では、小西シェフより「ペルーでは主に4種類のとうもろこしを食べているが、主食用なので甘味のないものを食べている。日本でおつまみに見かけるジャイアントコーンはペルー産。」「これらの試食の品々は非常に日本人の口に合うが、日本人向けにアレンジはしていない。ペルーは食材の豊富な国。食材の豊富な国は、素材そのものの味を生かした調理をするので、そこが日本の調理と共通していて、日本人の味覚にあうのだと思う。」との言葉で締めくくられた。

また、初来日のペドロシェフは、ペルーでもうま味を学んできたが、日本でのお茶席、京都老舗料亭でのだしの試飲、有機栽培のトマトの試食等により、多くのうま味を体験し"Umami is everywhere!"と感激し、「Umami is world common flavor」とコメントした。

ペルーの豊かな自然、それに育まれた素晴らしい食文化に接し、ペルーをこよなく愛す2人のシェフに魅了された一日となった。