

FOOD

Upping its game

A fresh generation of chefs and a spectacular natural larder has put the continent's foodie scene on the map. But which city is leading the pack?

Lima continues to hog the limelight, with chefs Virgilio Martínez, of Central (number one in Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants 2014) and Gastón Acurio, of Astrid y Gastón (number two), acting as ambassadors for their country's cuisine around the globe.

São Paulo, meanwhile, is home to superb restaurants like D.O.M., where Alex Atala works wonders with obscure Amazonian ingredients. Elsewhere, Buenos Aires offers so much more than steak — arguably the continent's finest sushi and river fish, for starters.

But the rising star of South America's dining scene is Bogotá. As it sheds its violent reputation, the Colombian capital is shaping up to be a foodie hotspot. So committed is it to its culinary talent, in fact, that an entire neighbourhood has been named Zona G — that's 'G' for Gourmet.

Making the most of post-drugs war Colombia is Juan Manuel Barrientos, a 32-year-old Instagram-popular chef who trains former soldiers and guerrilla fighters to work in his kitchens. At El Cielo (meaning 'Heaven' in Spanish), Juan Manuel intersperses



Astrid y Gastón Restaurant
Right: Pear and roquefort salad with caramelised walnuts, Criterión.



dishes with non-edible surprises for a full sensory experience.

Just across the road from El Cielo is Criterión, the flagship of the Rausch brothers, Jorge and Mark, whose restaurant empire spans much of the country. Named Best Restaurant in Colombia in Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants 2014, Criterión serves up creative dishes such as Pringles-style crispy potatoes and scallops 'au cheval' — with a fried quail's egg on top.

Closer to downtown Bogotá is Leo Cocina y Cava, where celebrity chef Leonor Espinosa champions local produce, from seared tuna with big-bottomed Santander ants, to corozo

berry cocktails and arrechón, an aphrodisiac drink.

Aside from its many fine dining options, Bogotá also offers hearty local fare like *ajiaco* (a chicken and potato stew). Spend a day in the colourful La Candelaria district before diving into a cosy cafe like La Puerta Falsa.

Finally, a trip to Bogotá isn't complete without a trek to Andrés Carne de Res, an hour's drive from the capital. The 64-page menu features everything from grilled Argentine cheese to Peruvian ceviche and pisco. *Words: Laura Price, content editor for Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants theworlds50best.com*

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