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Keep It Simple: Why Bogota's Misia is a Restaurant Favorite Among Locals

by Karen Catchpole | Sep 07, 2015

2 minutes

In 2014 Leo Cocina y Cava in Bogota, Colombia was inducted onto the list of [50 Best Restaurants in Latin America](#), shining a spotlight on Chef Leonor Espinosa and her meticulous preparation and presentation of dishes that incorporate and respect obscure Colombian ingredients and techniques. With [Misia](#), the restaurant she opened in May of 2015, Espinosa has turned her talents to pared down representations of Colombia's most basic and beloved foods.

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Despite the acclaim, many Colombian diners are still put off by the protocol and precision of the cuisine at Leo Cocina y Cava. Misia is for them. The quaintly decorated space is a "*piquetadero* and *refresqueria*" and the menu is an ode to cherished pan-Colombian flavors. All sausages are made in-house including a sweet *morcilla* blood sausage inspired by an onion-heavy recipe, wonderfully dense and flavorful *butifarra* and, of course, *chorizos longanizas*. At Misia even the *piquete* plate for two, which heaves under the weight of all those meats and more, is almost a healthy option thanks to fresh ingredients and nearly grease-free presentation.

Beverages include the usual-suspect juices plus uncommon options like *borojo* with cinnamon, *chontaduro* with honey and lemon and *badea*. The mandatory *arepas*, *empanadas*, and *carimolas* are light and made to order and bear no resemblance to their over fried, under stuffed, soggy grease bomb cousins sold throughout the country (thank God). Fish, salads, and soups are also well-represented on the menu that covers breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Misia is a word commonly used in Afro Caribbean communities in Colombia and it means *senora*. That's fitting as much of Espinosa's work has been fueled by a desire to honor and preserve the culinary techniques of women all around Colombia through her [Fundacion Leo Espinosa](#). Take a peek into the bustling, open kitchen at Misia and you can see a living beneficiary of the foundation's work.

Her name is Cecilia and she's from a community near Cali where she struggled to find work and dignity as a domestic employee with little or no options. She is now the *jefa* of the kitchen where she rules the roost with a bright smile. Espinosa tears up as she tells me Cecilia's story but then smiles suddenly. "Cecilia insists that it's her kitchen," she laughs.