



EDITOR'S PICK

FOOD & DRINK

## Let's Eat: Mishqui Peruvian Cuisine brings Madison sweets and savories from South America

By Victoria Davis Sep 26, 2021



Owner of Mishqui Peru Cynthia Garcia sprinkles chopped cilantro over a plate of Lomo saltado at Christine's Kitchen in Madison. The Peruvian dish is made with steak, pan-fried vegetables, rice, French fries and a rich pan sauce.

RUTHIE HAUGE



By Victoria Davis

Cynthia García's motto has always been to “dream while you're awake.” And it was a driving force that helped her start her business, Mishqui Peruvian Cuisine.

“It's been very exciting going on this path” said Garcia, who grew up in Iquitos, Peru. “I love bringing Peruvians in my community those memories from a home country that's far away. And for my other customers, it's all about the experience of trying something different, something new with all of these full flavors.”

From savory options like chicken or beef empanadas (\$3 each) to sweet treats like tres leches cake (\$3.99), García has been introducing Peruvian provisions to the Madison community for the past two years. Operating out of Christine's Kitchen, Mishqui Peruvian Cuisine (or Mishqui Peru) offers curbside pickup on the weekends — most often Sundays — with menu items posted on their Facebook. Customers can place their orders by calling or texting.

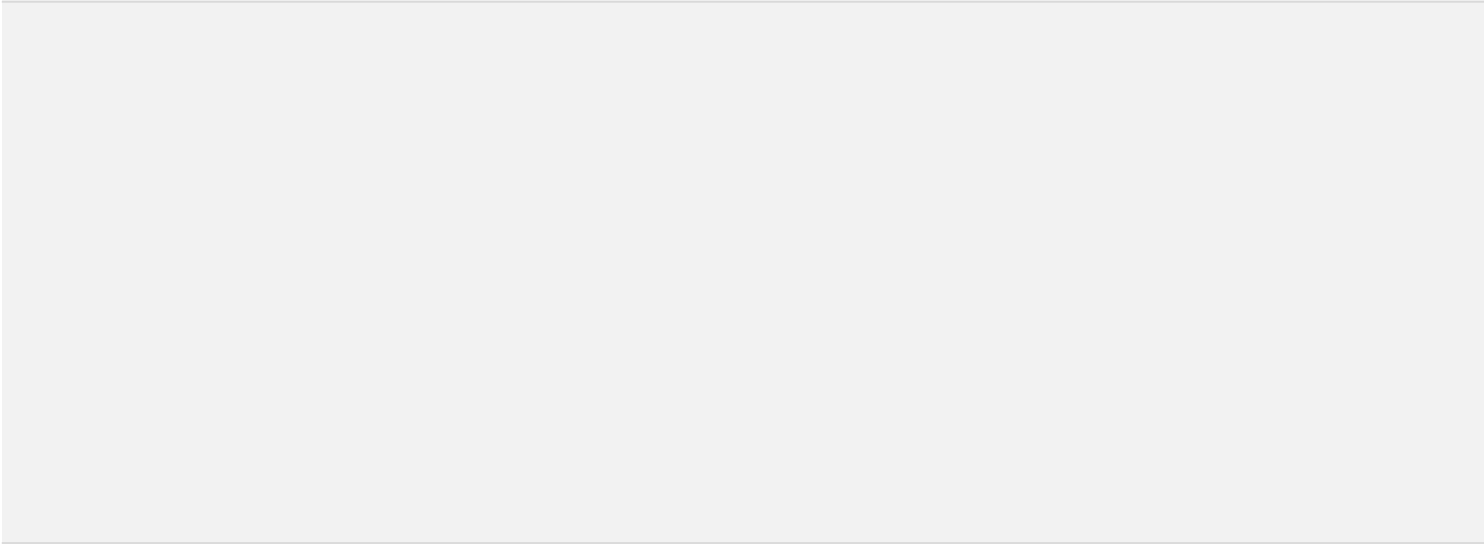


Clockwise from lower left are Lomo saltado, ceviche, alfajores, tacu tacu with lomo al jugo, flan and empanadas from Mishqui Peru, at Christine's Kitchen in Madison.

RUTHIE HAUGE

"We have two picnic tables and once you arrive, let us know and we'll bring out your food," said García, whose most popular entree order is the lomo saltado (\$16.99) with strips of stir-fried sirloin with onions, tomatoes, oyster sauce, soy sauce and chicken broth served with crispy French fries and white rice. Another favorite is chicken causa (\$5.99), made with two slices of potatoes mixed with Peruvian peppers, yellow peppers and lime with a shredded chicken salad with veggies and mayo in the middle and garnish on top.

She added, "Peruvian food is still pretty new in this area, so I always include pictures of the menu items and descriptions of the food in our Facebook posts too. There were a few Peruvian restaurants but many of them are not open anymore. That's why I'm always making the most popular dishes to Peru. Tomorrow I have one order of 20 empanadas. And I cannot go one Sunday without making the chicken causa."



Mishqui Peru's story began 11 years ago, when García started as a home baker, looking for a way to bring a little bit of home her family and friends after her first two years in Madison. The baked good that eventually brought García's food, and eventually Mishqui Peru's, so much traction was her alfajores, shortbread cookies filled with dulce de leche.



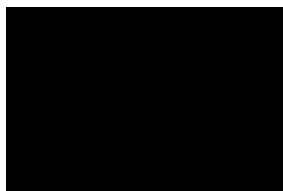
Alfajores are Argentinian cookie sandwiches filled with dulce de leche from Mishqui Peru, at Christine's Kitchen in Madison.

RUTHIE HAUGE

“One of my friends, who's a really good businesswoman, she told me ‘Hey, Cynthia, you cook really good food. Why don't you sell it?’” said García. “And I figured I'd try it and I started selling to her and then she told her friends and other friends told their friends and suddenly people I didn't even know started asking for my food.”

But it wasn't until deciding to take a semester off from getting her nursing assistant degree that what started as a way to her Peruvian community together for large family meals started to change into a long-time dream come true.

"I was studying to support myself and my son, but I was so stressed out," García said. "It felt really good to be helping people and I felt so professional with that stethoscope around my neck, but I didn't feel fulfilled. Then I started to reopen all the cooking boxes I'd packed away at the start of school."



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**Cap Times Idea Fest: Madison food entrepreneurs take the plunge**

Rob Thomas | The Capital Times

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And, once again, word got around that García was back to cooking.

"My friends started telling everyone I started cooking again and immediately I started getting requests for alfajores cookies for events, for Christmases, and I was really enjoying it," García said. "I knew that there would be stress with this too if I wanted to make it a business, but the adrenaline I felt for cooking and baking came from a passion deep inside."

And that passion drove García to further refine the skills she had by enrolling in the culinary program at Madison College, where she graduated two years later in 2020. It was in the midst of her schooling, after the first year, that she started Mishqui Peru. She sold almost 1,000 boxes of alfajores last Christmas.

This year, Mishqui Peru appeared at Taste of Madison, Willy Street Fair and Art Fair on the Square, selling their increasingly famous alfajores at two for \$1 along with their chicken causa, empanadas and ceviche (\$13.99) – marinated tilapia cooked in lime juice mixed with cilantro, red onion, garlic, ginger and celery and served with boiled potatoes or sweet potatoes. It’s already proven to be a favorite.



Empanadas are filled with beef, chicken and vegetables from Mishqui Peru, at Christine’s Kitchen in Madison.

RUTHIE HAUGE

“In some cases, two hours, I completely ran out of food,” said García. “Some people were just standing by the tent because they couldn’t stop buying the ceviche.”

Now, in addition to curbside pickups at Christine’s Kitchen, Mishqui Peru has their alfajores available on wholesale at La Concha Bakery and La Bonita, along with their tres leches cakes and flan at Camino Real.

García hopes to someday have her own restaurant as well. It’s a request she says she gets from customers on the regular.

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By Nicole Haase, Special to the Cap Times

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“That’s why I’m here working hard, so we can make that happen.”

While she says one of the biggest rewards has been getting positive messages from returning customers about how much they love the food, García says one of her favorite parts of running Mishqui Peru is setting an example for her “number one helper,” her son Adrian Gutierrez, who was only a year old when the journey began.

“I love being an example for my son that, no matter how old you are, you can continue dreaming,” said García. “I always tell him to make sure to dream even when you’re awake and follow your passion.”

**MISHQUI PERUVIAN CUISINE**

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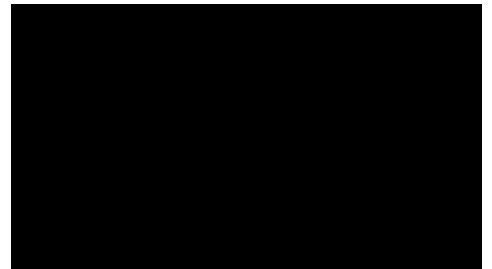
Curbside pickup location is Christine's Kitchen, 2817 E. Washington Ave.

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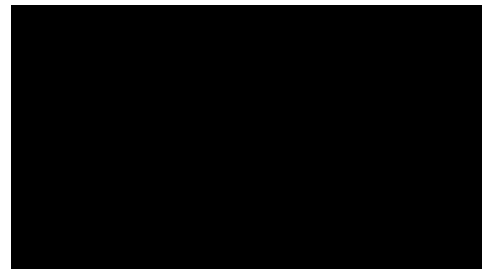
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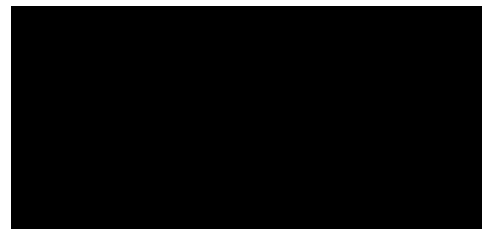
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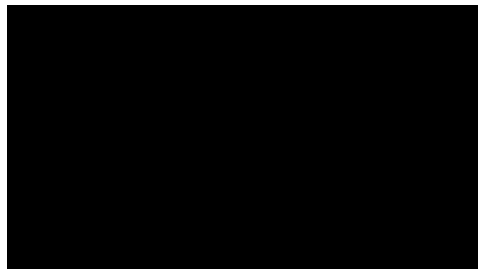
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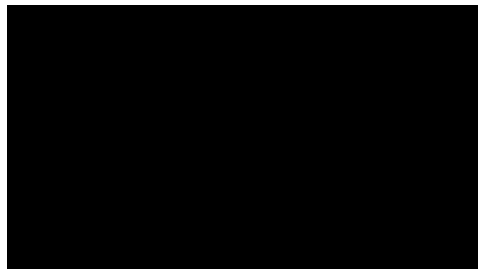
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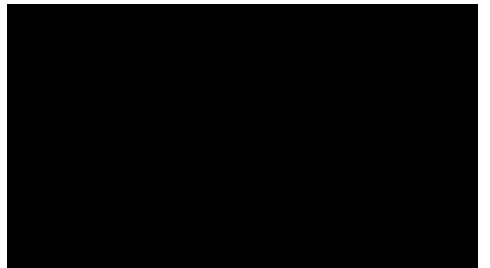
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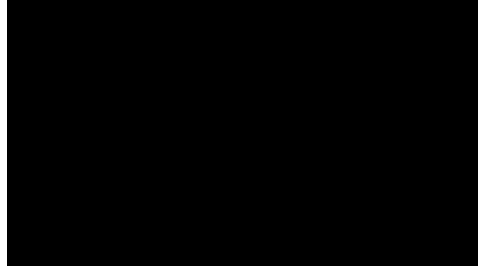




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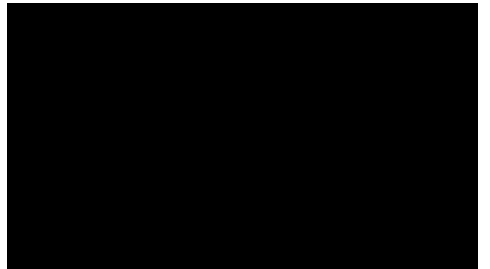
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