



CONTACT: Arturo Varela
(267) 765-0367, arturo@visitphilly.com
Amber Burns
(215) 599-0781, amber@visitphilly.com
Tweet Us: [@visitphillyPR](https://twitter.com/visitphillyPR)

Tweet It: Latino chefs are on the rise in @visitphilly: <http://vstphl.ly/2k8mFxr>

LATINO CHEFS TAKE THE HELM AT PHILADELPHIA RESTAURANTS
Philly's Celebrity & Rising-Star Chefs & Restaurateurs Proudly Claim Latino Heritage

PHILADELPHIA, September 29, 2017 – Philadelphia's national reputation as a thriving, open-to-all city extends to its flourishing culinary scene, which features a multitude of executive chefs of Latin descent. From nationally renowned luminaries with multiple successful restaurants (**Jose Garces, Guillermo Pernet**) to upstarts making a solid name for themselves here (**Jezabel Careaga, Adan Trinidad, Cristina Martinez**), these talented chefs come from all over Latin America, the Caribbean and South America, bringing a highly diverse set of flavors and traditions to the communal table.

Here are just a few Latino chefs making an impact in Philadelphia, leading by example and sharing their cuisines with an audience eager to eat it all up:

Name: Dionicio Jimenez

Restaurant: El Rey, 2013 Chestnut Street, (215) 563-3330, elreyrestaurant.com

His Story: Jimenez, executive chef of Stephen Starr's stylish Center City taqueria El Rey, entered Philadelphia's restaurant scene through the inauspicious dish pit. He worked his way through the top kitchens of Marc Vetri's eponymous dinner destination and Xochitl before landing at El Rey, where he crafts soulful but accessible renditions of Mexican home cooking, including fresh ceviches, chiles relleno and lamb *mole negro*.

Name: Juan Carlos (JC) Piña

Restaurant: Café Ynez, 2025 Washington Avenue, (215) 278-7579, cafeynez.com

His Story: Born and raised in Mexico City, Piña was already handy with a knife upon arriving in Philadelphia in 2001: He cooked professionally in his home city and had mastered the Pueblan specialties taught to him by his grandmother Concepción. After putting in time in well-regarded kitchens Morimoto, Tinto, Parc and Pod, Piña became the chef de cuisine at Jet Wine Bar in 2010, which led to his current position at Ynez, also owned by restaurateurs Jill Weber and Evan Malone. At this all-day café on the border of the Graduate Hospital and Point Breeze neighborhoods, Piña offers specialties like his hearty *carnitas cemita* and *pollo mole*, dishes inspired by his family's cooking. In his free time, Piña is an avid collector of rock-and-roll vinyl.

Name: Adan Trinidad

Restaurants: Jose Pistola's, 263 S. 15th Street, (215) 545-4101, josepistolas.com; Sancho Pistola's, 19 W. Girard Avenue, (267) 324-3530, sanchopistolas.com; Pistola's Del Sur, 1934 E. Passyunk Avenue, (267) 519-2329, [@PistolasDelSur](https://twitter.com/PistolasDelSur)

-more-

His Story: Originally from Puebla, Trinidad got an early start in professional cooking, working in Philly kitchens by the age of 15. By 23, he was sous chef to some of the top Latino culinary talents in the region, including Jose Garces at El Vez and Douglas Rodriguez at Alma de Cuba. After helping chef Richard Sandoval expand with 40 restaurants across the U.S., Trinidad returned to Philly, upping the culinary game at Joe Gunn and Casey Parker's popular beer bar Jose Pistola's. He's since gone on to partner with Gunn and Parker for two additional projects: Sancho Pistola's in Fishtown and the brand-new Pistola's del Sur, an East Passyunk Avenue entry that will feature playful menu items like Mexican-inspired pizza.

Name: Jose Garces

Restaurants: 16 and counting, garcesgroup.com

His Story: Ecuadorean by heritage, Garces has built a pan-Latin empire from his Philadelphia home base, growing from humble beginnings into a premier chef with 16 restaurants across three states, plus the District of Columbia. After growing up in Chicago and cooking in both Spain and the U.S., Garces landed in Philly in 2001. He opened Amada, his flagship Andalusian tapas restaurant in Old City, just four years later. Steady expansion, along with several hit cookbooks, a role on Food Network's "Iron Chef America" and a Best Chef: Mid-Atlantic award from the James Beard Foundation would soon follow. These days, Garces splits his time between his many concepts; his Garces Foundation, which provides support and services to Philadelphia's immigrant communities; Garces & Sons Coffee, where Chef Garces works with his father, who roasts all of the coffee; and Luna Farm, his 40-acre farm in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

Name: Jezabel Careaga

Restaurants: Jezabel's Cafe, 2536 Pine Street, (267) 519-2494, jezabelscafe.com; Jezabel's Studio, 208 S. 45th Street, (215) 985-2725, jezabelsstudio.com

Her Story: At Jezabel Careaga's friendly Fitler Square neighborhood cafe, the native of northwestern Argentina bakes some of the best empanadas in the city. Her entrepreneurial spirit has taken her all the way from South America to Philadelphia, where she's made a name for herself as one of the most authentic Argentine bakers in town. In addition to the empanadas, served with her signature *chimichurri*, Careaga's specialties include scratch-made sweets like *alfajores* and *medialunas*. Outside cooking, Careaga is an accomplished woodworker and designer who has built furniture and fixtures for her shops; shoppers can actually purchase original wares at her West Philly location.

Name: Yun Fuentes

Restaurant: Alma de Cuba, 1623 Walnut Street, (215) 988-1799, almadecubarestaurant.com

His Story: After cutting his teeth on his home turf of Puerto Rico, where he cooked in kitchens throughout Old San Juan, Fuentes moved to New York City, learning under chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten and working for free in two of Daniel Boulud's kitchens in order to hone his culinary chops. The former chef de cuisine at Jose Garces' Tinto and Village Whiskey has found a home at Stephen Starr's long-running Alma de Cuba, executing executive chef Douglas Rodriguez's exacting vision of Nuevo Latino cuisine. These days, that includes everything from innovative ceviches to creative spins on classic rustic Cuban dishes like *vaca frita* and *lechon asado*.

Name: Guillermo Pernot

Restaurant: Cuba Libre, 10 S. 2nd Street, (215) 627-0666, cubalibrerestaurant.com

-more-

His Story: A two time James Beard Award winner, Pernot is among the country's most prominent Latino chefs. Born in Argentina, he previously led the kitchen at Gloria Estefan's Allioli in Miami's South Beach and owned and operated ¡Pasión!, a groundbreaking Center City restaurant credited with bringing modern Latin cooking to the city. In addition to overseeing four Cuba Libre locations—in Philly, Atlantic City, DC and Orlando—Pernot is the founder of a unique culinary series that brings the best chefs in Havana to Cuba Libre locations for one-of-a-kind guest dinners. He's also a member of the American Chef Corps, which has brought him to countries like Honduras to educate local farmers and chefs on sustainable agricultural practices.

Name: Cristina Martinez

Restaurant: El Compadre, 1149 S. 9th Street, (267) 746-7658,

Her Story: Originally from Toluca, Mexico, where lamb barbacoa is a way of life, Martinez serves her family's signature tacos with a rich consommé made from the drippings of the slow-roasted meat on Saturdays and Sundays. During the week, made-from-scratch tortas satisfy her hungry patrons. Martinez, who started out preparing barbacoa into her apartment before expanding to a street cart and eventually a brick-and-mortar shop, has plenty of Philly fans, but the country has taken notice. *Bon Appétit* named South Philly Barbacoa, her first establishment, one of the best new restaurants in America in 2016. In 2017, she merged the spot with sibling restaurant El Compadre. Along with her American-born husband and partner, Ben Miller, Martinez is an outspoken advocate for undocumented workers in America.

Name: Jorge Espinoza

Restaurant: Scarpetta, Rittenhouse Hotel, 210 W. Rittenhouse Square, (215) 558-4199,

scarpettarestaurants.com/philadelphia

His Story: Though Mexican by heritage, Espinoza's true passion lies in Italian cuisine. A butcher turned high-end chef, Espinoza grew up in Guertaro, learning the art of cuisine from his parents, both excellent cooks. He began his stateside cooking career in New York City, eventually linking up with chef Scott Conant in 2003. Along with Antonello Paganuzzi, they would go on to open the first location of Scarpetta in 2008, an imprint that would eventually expand to multiple cities, including Philadelphia in 2016.

Name: Rene Arroyo

Restaurants: El Balconcito, 658 E. Godfrey Avenue, (215) 342-2340; 7326 Castor Avenue, (215) 342-3165; 20 S. 2nd Street (coming soon), elbalconcito.com

His Story: El Balconcito has become a name synonymous with Peruvian and Portuguese cuisine in Philadelphia, thanks to the cooking of Arroyo, who opened his first location in Lawncrest in 2005 and a second outpost in Northeast Philly four years later. At this family-owned mini-chain, the emphasis is on quality ingredients, from the signature *ceviche mixto* on down. Arroyo recently traveled to Peru to research new ideas for his growing brand's fast-approaching Old City location, which will juggle traditional and modern influences via its menu and dedicated second-floor pisco bar.

Name: Roberto Juarez

Restaurant: Blue Corn, 940 S. 9th Street, (215) 925-1010

His Story: Located in the heart of the 9th Street Italian Market, Blue Corn truly epitomizes the importance of family. It's run by the Sandoval siblings, all Philly dining veterans who worked toward a shared goal of one day owning a place of their own. While Roberto Juarez fills the executive chef role here, everyone is quick to deflect praise to other team members. He credits ceviche chef Meximino Sandoval—as well as family members and chefs Patricio Hernandez, Pascual Sandoval and Cupertino Hernandez, who contribute to the menu development from outside of Philadelphia—for turning their 9th Street hotspot into one of the most creative and reliable Mexican restaurants in South Philly.

-more-

Name: Judith Suzarra-Campbell

Restaurant: Sazon, 941 Spring Garden Street, 215-763-2500, sazonphilly.com

Her Story: A pioneer in introducing traditional Venezuelan cuisine to Philadelphia, Suzarra-Campbell comes to the city from Caracas, the capital city where she first met her husband Robert Campbell. The couple opened their authentic bring-your-own-bottle (BYOB) in 2004, offering their traditional *arepas* in addition to large-plate specialties like *pabellon criollo* (shredded flank steak) and *patacon*, tostones stuffed with meat or veggies. Suzarra-Campbell is particularly proud of her ability to accommodate gluten-free, vegetarian and vegan diners without compromising the flavors of her home country.

Name: Reinaldo Alfonso

Restaurant: Jones, 700 Chestnut Street, (215) 223-5663, jones-restaurant.com

His Story: Born in Costa Rica to Cuban parents and raised in Miami, Alfonso leans on his diverse heritage to bring a new perspective to the kitchen. A veteran of high-end South Florida restaurants, Alfonso has also worked for Jose Garces and served as the chef de cuisine of Chez Philippe in Memphis' Peabody Hotel, infusing the local cuisine with Latin flair to create a style he called "Nuevo Southern." In the Stephen Starr orbit since 2010, Alfonso, a veteran of Alma de Cuba and the original Continental, currently runs the ship at Jones, Starr's popular American comfort food concept in the Historic District.

Name: Nery Hernandez

Restaurant: Buddakan, 325 Chestnut Street, (215) 574-9440, buddakan.com

His Story: Hernandez left his native Guatemala in 2000 with the goal of proving himself in America's high-pressure kitchens. Breaking into the industry in Washington, DC, he ascended from line cook to executive chef at the Georgetown restaurant J. Paul's. In 2006, he relocated to Philadelphia and broke into Stephen Starr's employ as a sous chef at the Continental Midtown. He'd later run the show at Starr's flagship Continental in Old City before becoming executive chef at the Atlantic City outpost of Buddakan. Currently, Hernandez runs the show at Starr's stalwart Buddakan in Old City; the globally minded pan-Asian restaurant remains one of the hottest tables in town.

VISIT PHILADELPHIA® is our name and our mission. As the region's official tourism marketing agency, we build Greater Philadelphia's image, drive visitation and boost the economy.

On Greater Philadelphia's official visitor website and blog, visitphilly.com and uwishunu.com, visitors can explore things to do, upcoming events, themed itineraries and hotel packages. Compelling photography and videos, interactive maps and detailed visitor information make the sites effective trip-planning tools. Along with Visit Philly social media channels, the online platforms communicate directly with consumers. Travelers can also call and stop into the Independence Visitor Center for additional information and tickets.

Note to Editors: For high-resolution photos of Greater Philadelphia, visit the photo gallery of visitphilly.com/pressroom.