
Local Rivera dishes art-inspired cuisine

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Rivera, a restaurant located in downtown Los Angeles, has joined forces with the Pacific Standard Time art initiative to create the ultimate collaboration of art and food. Since Feb. 7, the modern Latin fusion restaurant has been offering a limited-time three-course menu inspired by the art exhibited at affiliated galleries and museums. This secret menu is available by request, or by proof of admission at any Pacific Standard Time museum exhibition.

Acclaimed chef John Sedlar, who opened Rivera in 2009, developed this elaborate menu. Sedlar was recently voted Chef of the Year by Esquire Magazine and is extremely well-known in the restaurant world for his cutting-edge, modern take on Southwest cuisine. According to his website, magazines "Gourmet" and "Food Arts" named him the "father of modern Southwest cuisine," as a result of his experiential combination of Hispanic cooking and French technique.

The restaurant has a relaxed and comfortable vibe, which serves as a sort of escape from its energetic, tourist location situated in the center of bustling downtown next to the Staples Center. Rivera's décor is modern and chic. The architecture as well as the interior is heavily streamlined and minimalist, which emphasizes the restaurant's experimental menu and fusion-style cuisine.

For the first course, chef Sedlar drew inspiration from Beatrice Wood's "Fish Platter" (1970), featured at the "Beatrice Wood: Career Woman-Drawings, Paintings, Vessels, and Objects" exhibit at the Santa Monica Museum of Art. The appetizer is presented on a platter that reveals a photograph of the piece of art itself, a teal-blue ceramic plate in the shape of a fish. This crudo assortment of both fresh and smoked seafood includes scallops, yellowtail, tuna and salmon and is subtly accentuated by a lime-flavored foam that complements the smoky flavor of the fish. The dish is presented with kumquats, red Fresno chiles and red seaweed – all of which theoretically contradict each other in terms of flavor but come together wonderfully.

For the main course, Sedlar pays homage to Ed Ruscha's "Los Angeles County Museum of Art on Fire" (1965-1968), located at the Getty Center's exhibition titled "Crosscurrents in L.A. Painting and Sculpture 1950 – 1970." This course contains fire-grilled chicken breast, which is delicious and incredibly moist, paired with a unique take on the Cobb salad, which includes a poached egg instead of hard-boiled and goat cheese in lieu of blue. The colors in the salad and the chicken refer to the artist's rendering of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in its before-the-fire stage, as stark and uniformly white. The connection between the artwork and the course is especially evident in the "incendiary" salsa, which in both taste and appearance represents the fiery, burning section of the building in Ruscha's painting.

The final course is a dessert inspired by the painting "Beach Trash Burning" (1982) by Carlos Almaraz, currently exhibited at The Fowler Museum's "Mapping Another LA: Chicano Art Movement." The dessert includes three colorful scoops of sorbet alongside a simple buttery cookie. The colors of the sorbet – bright yellow, green and a dark magenta – match almost perfectly the colors in the painting of a pile of debris on fire before a bright blue sea and sky. In addition to coloring, the taste of two of the sorbets, roasted pineapple mescal and poblano chile lime, are the perfect spicy and fiery accompaniment to the fire portrayed in "Beach Trash Burning." The other sorbet flavor, pomegranate hibiscus, balances out the spice perfectly and the freshness serves as an allusion to the beach part of the painting.

Foodies and art aficionados alike will enjoy this creative collision of arts which is available both at the Rivera location in Downtown L.A. for \$44 and the Playa location in Beverly Hills for \$34. The PST dinner menu will be available at both locations through March 31.

The PST art initiative is exploring the relationship between food and art further by hosting three food truck fairs, all of which are held at different museums and will have meals inspired by the art presented at that particular exhibition. On Saturday, Feb. 25, the food truck meet-up will be at the Santa Monica Museum of Art from 11 A.M. until 3 P.M. and will feature five different food trucks, including Global Soul, Pnut Butter Truck, and Smokin' Willies Truck, complementing the museum's current exhibit, "Beatrice Wood: Career Woman-Drawings, Paintings, Vessels, and Objects." On Saturday, Feb. 18, the Los Angeles Museum of Art collaborated with five different food trucks, including Aunties Fry Bread, King's Corner BBQ, and Lobsta Truck. The final food truck fair will be located at the Pasadena Museum of California Art on March 3, featuring Casablanca Truck, Go Chew, and Flat Iron Truck.