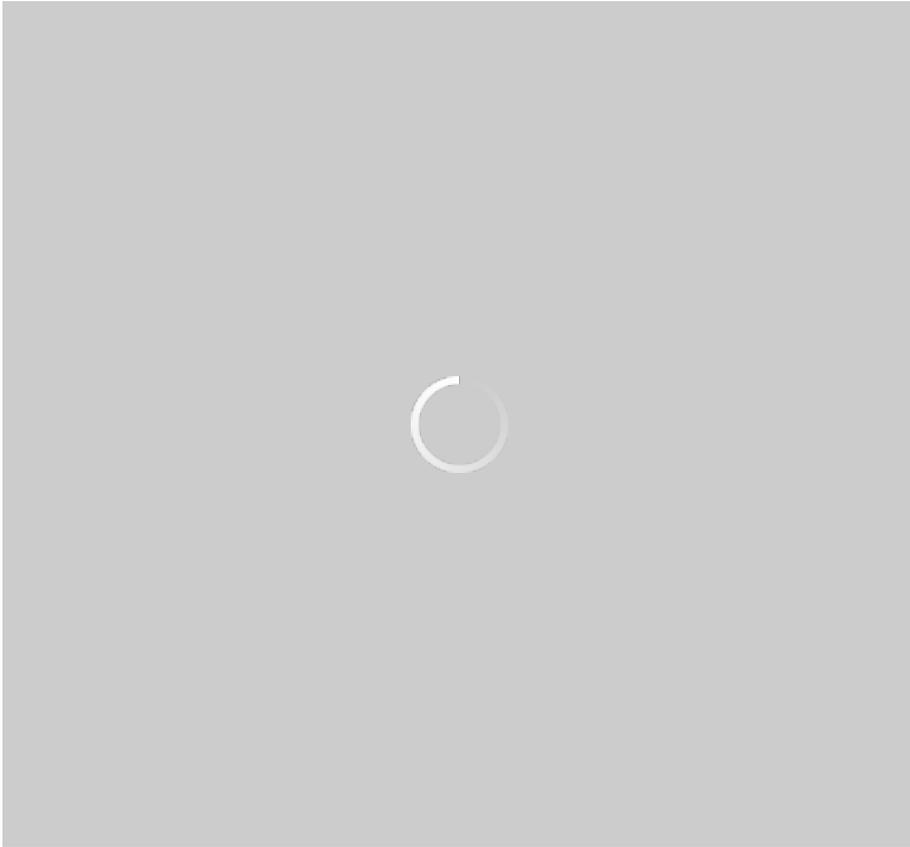


# A TASTE OF LATIN AMERICA



## CHEF CESAR VILLARREAL'S MENU AT CESAR'S BISTRO TAKES TASTE BUDS ON A JOURNEY SOUTH OF THE BORDER.

By MIGUEL ÁNGEL ORDUÑO

I walk pass the small outdoor patio as day gave way to night, instantly transporting me into vibrant, colorful, spice-filled Latin America.

Bright, lime green chairs and wooden tables greet me as I walk in. The sound system pumps the rhythms of salsa music through speakers above. White walls on the right side of the restaurant feature multi-colored acrylic artwork of artist Calixto Shibaja, which are for sale. I take a seat and the waiter, a smile on his face, greets me, hands me a menu that contains some of the best dishes Latin America has to offer.

Welcome to Cesar's Bistro.

Owner and Head Chef, Cesar Villarreal, opened the Latin-American bistro in December 2014, dubbing it "The new Latin American cuisine."

The menu features traditional meals found in different countries throughout Latin America, but displays each course with a presentation usually found in American and European cuisines.

After looking over the menu, I decide to order a sausage empanada. For only \$2.99, it's a bargain, considering how filling they are. The empanada itself is quite simple. It is bread stuffed with spicy, homemade pork sausage and potato.

The choripan, consisting of spicy sausage, tomato, lettuce, arugula, and chimichurri sauce is also reasonably priced – just \$9.99 – and is straight from the chef's personal cookbook.

As the waiter places the white porcelain plate in front of me, the small but filling meal course was bordered by bright colors of corn, tomato, and lettuce.

The spices fill the air of the restaurant, the same ones that were prevalent in every bite from the empanada and choripan. Both dishes were served with a spicy mayo that presented a spicy, yet sweet taste and paired well with the dishes.

What makes this small restaurant special is that Villarreal carefully designs everything on the menu, and everything needed for any dish is freshly made every morning.

The most popular menu items are the empanadas, which are available in two other styles: tropical and veggie.

Another favorite is the Caribbean pulled-pork, which consists of crunchy plantains topped with homemade sour cream, tender pulled pork, and homemade guacamole.

Walk in on the weekend, and you will find a fully-staffed restaurant ready to deliver a taste of Latin America.

Cesar's Bistro is located on 6240 E. Pacific Coast Highway in Long Beach and is open Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

CATEGORIES

DINING

TAGGED

BISTRO

FOOD

LATIN AMERICAN

LONG BEACH

RESTAURANT

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MIGUEL ORDUNOS

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