

TASTING NOTES



TUCK IN

A hearty bowl of Peruvian seco

PERUVIAN SECO

This month, in premium cabins aboard United flights from the U.S. to Latin America, you can enjoy seco sauce in the short rib of beef entrée, served with roasted potatoes and lima beans

While its ingredients vary as wildly as the landscape of its native Peru, seco is an iconic dish for many Peruvians—and one they are equally likely to make for a special occasion as for a simple weeknight dinner. The hearty stew has a base of aji amarillo peppers—a staple of Peruvian cuisine—and contains other vegetables and spices. But nearly everything else differs by region: In the North, it's made with goat meat; in and around Lima, it's made with beef; in both regions, it includes cilantro, introduced to Peru by the Spaniards. In other parts of the

country, seco can be made with lamb, fish, chicken or duck. Some recipes call for a corn-beer marinade, which makes the meat so tender that it falls apart after cooking. (The word “seco” derives from “sheco,” the name of the large platter traditionally used to serve the dish; but “seco” is confusingly also the Spanish word for “dry,” which this stew decidedly is not.)

Nico Vera, a Peruvian-born, San Francisco-based chef, who promotes Peruvian food and drink through cooking classes and his blog, PiscoTrail.com, says seco is one of his favorite dishes:

“Both my grandmothers were wonderful cooks, and I learned to cook from my mom, so every time they prepared *seco de cordero* [lamb seco], it was a special treat.” Today, he makes his own traditional *seco de cordero* (“served with a side of rice and white beans, garnished with pickled red onions and paired with a glass of Syrah,” he says), but he also likes to experiment with presenting the dish in different ways. He recently made a version he called Peruvian pot pie: *seco de cordero* served in a ramekin, with a top crust made from empanada dough. —CHRISTY HARRISON, MPH, RD