

Nibble Chef: Krysia Villon

Business: Chiqui's Kitchen



Krysia Villon

HER STORY

Her roots

Chef Krysia Villon was born and raised in Boston, but her culinary roots stretch deep into Peru. Her father opened Cantares in Inman Square in 1982—the first Peruvian restaurant in the Boston area—while her mother and father performed together in the musical group Jania y Arturo. Krysia grew up listening to her parents sing while working in the restaurant. "For me, food and music have always been deeply intertwined," she says. Krysia will be playing a playlist at Nibble Kitchen featuring Peruvian music with the salsa, merengue, and bachata that shaped her Boston upbringing.

Beyond empanadas

Many people know Krysia through Chiqui's Kitchen and her popular empanadas, but at Nibble Kitchen she's excited to expand her repertoire. Drawing on more than two decades of research into Peruvian food traditions—and a master's degree in gastronomy from Boston University—Krysia's menu will showcase indigenous Peruvian ingredients and lesser-known dishes. Guests can expect offerings such as chicha morada, the beloved purple corn drink found throughout Peru; sauces featuring aji amarillo and huacatay, a black Peruvian mint; and a vegetarian version of "Calea," which she makes with Japanese mushrooms, inspired by Peru's long history of Japanese culinary influence.

A cuisine of cultures

Krysia often speaks about the concept of *mestizaje*—the blending of cultures, peoples, and traditions that has shaped Peru's rich culinary identity. As she explains, "Indigenous Andean ingredients remain at the core of Peruvian cuisine. Yet there is also the influence of European, African, Chinese, and Japanese cultures that have contributed to a very varied and vibrant cuisine." *Mestizaje* is a philosophy that feels especially fitting in Somerville, a city shaped by many cultures and communities coming together to create something uniquely its own.

Her Career Trajectory

"I'm using Nibble Kitchen as a test kitchen and an opportunity to explore what's next," says Krysia. "I want to see how people respond to different dishes and concepts—as I continue building Chiqui's Kitchen." Yet for Krysia, it's much more than just propelling her career. As she explains is, "I'm trying to figure out how to live in my art, and this—food—is my art."