



# If Memory SERVES

PHOTO: DUSTIN DOWNING

PHOTO: CAL BINGHAM



Maggi Seasoning is found on a shelf with other essential cooking ingredients at Otium in Downtown L.A.

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE FOOD TO TRIGGER INSTANT RECALL. HERE, TWO CHEFS REMINISCE ON THE **FLAVOR THAT TAKES THEM BACK.**

by Carolyn Horwitz

**YOU DON'T NEED TO** be a Proustian scholar to know food can evoke powerful memories. Come in contact with an ingredient or preparation style reminiscent of childhood or a special meal, and all five senses work together to create a rich tapestry of nostalgic associations.

For Ricardo Zarate—the Los Angeles-based chef who just opened his sixth acclaimed restaurant, Rosaliné, as an homage to his late mother—memories of his childhood in Lima, Peru, revolve around mealtime. As one of 13 siblings, he was part of a family where shopping and food preparation were handled with military precision.

Zarate's Chifa—a blend of Peruvian and Cantonese cuisines—dish of tallarín saltado reminds him of his childhood in Lima.







PHOTO: DUSTIN DOWNING

Hollingsworth's grilled ribeye with an heirloom tomato salad is simple, yet full of flavor.



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Chef Tim Hollingsworth in Otium's rooftop garden. Many of the herbs grown there find their way into the restaurant's dishes.

"My mother created a little army in the house," Zarate says. "Everybody had to do their duties, like in the restaurant business. All my brothers and sisters, at some point we all had to cook, to learn how to chop onions and garlic."

Many dishes Zarate had growing up reflected Lima's large community of Chinese immigrants, who arrived from the Guangdong province in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In fact, a quintessential Peruvian dish, lomo saltado—beef, onions, chilis and soy sauce stir-fried in a wok, served with French fries and rice—puts the Cantonese influence on full display. "When you go to Lima, you're going to find one Chinese restaurant every three blocks," Zarate says, noting that the mashup of Peruvian and Cantonese cuisines is referred to as "Chifa," a colloquialism for the Cantonese word for eating rice.

These days, when cooking at home in L.A. for his family (he has three kids, ages seven, 11 and 18), Zarate turns to Maggi Seasoning

for a taste of home, getting the kick of umami that deepened those Chifa dishes in Lima. "It's the flavor profile," he says. "It has this acidity. When I use soy sauce, I have to add a little bit of vinegar, other ingredients to put it together. With Maggi Seasoning, it's already done. For cooking something really quick, this will be the best way to go." He adds, "I can sauté anything, put Maggi on top—boom, done."

Another L.A. chef whose dishes are informed by his roots is Timothy Hollingsworth, who oversees Otium, the chic, contemporary restaurant adjacent to the Broad museum downtown. While Hollingsworth was raised in Northern California, his parents spent their formative years in Texas and Arkansas. "At least once a week we'd have chili," he recalls. "Sunday pot roast, Frito pie, tacos . . . Tex-Mex, somewhat Californian and very Southern."

It's a far cry from the vaunted cuisine Hollingsworth produced in his 13 years at The

French Laundry in the Napa Valley, or the sophisticated dishes he now serves at Otium. But there's a parallel in spirit. "The way I cook is similar to the way I grew up," he says. "It's extremely approachable. If you're going to have raw fish here at Otium, it's going to be prepared in a way that I can serve to my mom, who doesn't like raw fish, and she would like it."

Take his grilled ribeye with heirloom tomato salad. The inspiration for its accompanying salsa came from a restaurant in Cabo San Lucas, where he was served grilled Mexican onions as a condiment for tacos. "Little onions, just cooked over a wood fire, charred, served, and then on the table is a bottle of Maggi Seasoning," Hollingsworth remembers. "You season the onions with lime and douse it with Maggi Seasoning, and it has this incredible flavor."

To make a salsa for his steak dish, Hollingsworth roasts whole garlic cloves in olive oil







Chef Ricardo Zarate at his newly-opened restaurant Rosaliné in L.A.



In addition to its bold flavor, Maggi Seasoning adds a splash of nostalgia to Zarate's cooking: "It's the flavor profile. It has this acidity. I can sauté anything, put Maggi on top—boom, done."

and Maggi Seasoning, then finely chops them with onions and jalapeños that have been charred on the grill, finishing it with lime juice. Maggi Seasoning, he says, "is rich, it's a lot of umami, a lot of flavor. So if you have a vegetal component and you add acid—even right now I'm salivating because I've been eating it. This brings it out, and the acid makes it not heavy, and I want to go back for another bite."

The steak is an accessible dish he hopes people would make at home, but Hollingsworth has also used the versatile seasoning in more complex restaurant creations, such as a black cod with potato, leek ash, charred onion, clams and purslane salad.

Zarate, for his part, uses Maggi Seasoning not just in lomo saltado, but also in steamed eggs with white rice (he kisses his fingers at the thought); steamed chicken with ginger, garlic and saké; and fried rice. But most be-

loved by his family is tallarín saltado, a variation on the lomo made with noodles, Maggi Seasoning and "anything you can find in the fridge. They love it."

It all spurs frequent reflections of his childhood, and they're especially poignant as he launches Rosaliné. "This is a tribute to my mother. I really love everything [I've done], but this is a little bit more personal," he says. "For me, food is memories."

Hollingsworth agrees, noting that for him, the most unforgettable meals are those that come with "reference points." As an example, he cites Otium's corn agnolotti made with cotija cheese, chile de arbol oil and Tajín seasoning: "You eat it, and you're from Los Angeles, and you're like, 'Oh my God, this is like a street corner.' This is like elote [Mexican corn on the cob]. You're not going to go home and be like, 'What did I have?' You remember; it's enforced. That's the way I like to cook." ■ **cr**

## Ricardo Zarate's Tallarín Saltado

- 6–8 oz. ramen noodles, boiled
- 2 oz. pancetta
- 2 oz. La Chang sausage
- 5 large shrimp
- 2 oz. poached chicken breast, cut into large dice
- 1 aji amarillo chili, sliced
- 3 oz. red onion, cut into large dice
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into large dice
- 1 green bell pepper, cut into large dice
- 2 oz. cherry tomatoes
- 3 oz. Maggi Seasoning
- 2 oz. oyster sauce
- 1 oz. sesame oil
- Cilantro and parsley for garnish

### PREPARATION

In wok, sauté ramen noodles in olive oil. Transfer to plate and set aside. Add pancetta to wok and render fat. Once golden, remove the meat and set aside. In the rendered pancetta fat, sauté shrimp until just cooked. Add chicken, La Chang sausage and pancetta meat and sauté. Add all vegetables and sauté briefly (vegetables should remain crisp). Add Maggi Seasoning, oyster sauce and sesame oil. Season with salt and pepper.

Place mixture atop noodles and garnish with cilantro and parsley leaves.

## Tim Hollingsworth's Grilled Ribeye with Heirloom Tomato Salad

### FOR THE STEAK

- Ribeye
- Salt and pepper to taste

### FOR THE SALSA

- 2 onions
- 1/4 cup lime juice
- 20 garlic cloves
- 1/2 cup Maggi Seasoning
- 2 green jalapeños
- 2 red jalapeños
- 1/2 cup olive oil

### FOR THE SALAD

- 4 heirloom tomatoes, cut into large chunks
- 1 cucumber, cut oblique
- 1 avocado, cut into eighths
- 1 bunch arugula, washed
- 1/2 lemon, juiced
- 5 Tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

### PREPARATION

Heat grill to medium high. Season steak with salt and pepper and grill to desired doneness.

In a small pot, roast garlic cloves in olive oil. Add Maggi Seasoning and cook down until tender, approximately 5 minutes.

Slice onions and jalapeños, season with salt and pepper and place on a heated grill. Grill on both sides until blackened. Remove from grill and chop. Chop roasted garlic, reserving olive oil. Toss vegetables with garlic and salt and pepper. Finish with lime juice and olive oil from garlic—be careful not to add full amounts, but rather taste as you combine.

For the salad, add salt and pepper to lemon juice and whisk in olive oil. Combine tomatoes, cucumber, avocado and arugula in a bowl. Dress salad and toss until well combined.

Serve the steak alongside the salad, sliced and drizzled generously with salsa.

