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Friday, February 10, 2006 - Page updated at 12:00 AM

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Restaurant Review

In love with Mixtura's colorful "novo-Andean" cuisine

By **Nancy Leson**

Seattle Times restaurant critic

Valentine's Day is next week, and I'd like to celebrate by telling you that I've fallen deeply and passionately in love.

I'm gripped by the kind of longing that makes my cheeks flush, my knees weak and has me on the phone with friends describing every hot little detail of my new romance — with Mixtura, the new Peruvian restaurant in Kirkland.

Mixtura is as exotic as it is familiar, its structural bones recognizable from its earlier incarnations, most recently as Jäger. Seated in a soft, supple banquette I gave the place the slow once-over, absorbing its small curved bar, its stylish simplicity, its well-schooled waiters serving up frothy pisco sours along with astute recommendations and snappy repartee. Suddenly, everything old looked new again.

One of 10 counter seats fronting the kitchen is the perfect perch for watching chef Emmanuel Piqueras and crew as they create a magical mosaic of modern Peruvian cuisine. Piqueras, late of Lima and, more recently, Andina restaurant in Portland, offers a Technicolor adventure in derring-do that melds indigenous ingredients with artful technique, bringing us a taste of what's currently captivating cosmopolitan Peruvians.

And though my new love is purely for Mixtura, my heart goes out to Piqueras for bringing such a ray of culinary sunshine to our oft-gray corner of the world.

As he did at Andina, Piqueras is offering his take on "novo-Andean" cuisine, inspired by fresh seafood and a cornucopia of produce including choclo, yucca, lucuma, passion fruit and ajies — the colorful chile peppers essential to the cuisine.

His menu is composed, in large part, by a long list of "mixturas" — two dozen little dishes, many also offered as a tapa

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Stylish new Peruvian restaurant in Kirkland captures our critic's heart with its technicolor take on "Novo-Andean" cuisine.

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Mixtura ★★★★★

148 Lake St. S., Kirkland, 425-803-3310, www.mixtura.biz
Latin American

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Reservations: recommended.

Hours: Dinner 5:30-9:30 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays; 5:30-10:30 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays; bar open: 4-10:30 p.m. (tapas available).

Prices: Appetizers/tapas \$4-\$16, entrees \$17-\$32, desserts \$5-\$9.

Drinks: South American cocktails (pisco sour, caipirinha, mojito) and

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