



Queen of the Nightlife

Buenos Aires' cocktail doyenne finds inspiration – and ingredients – around the globe.

INTERVIEW BY KAREN CATCHPOLE

BUENOS AIRES' hottest bars have a few things in common: amazing cocktails, transportive spaces, and Inés De Los Santos – the bartender and entrepreneur behind them. The owner of CoChinChina, Kōnā, and Costa7070 swapped studying gastronomy for a perch behind the counter, hustling her way around the city's hospitality scene before opening CoChinChina in 2021 to quick acclaim – the moody Palermo hideaway landed on The World's 50 Best Bars list just a year after its debut.

"I've always been inspired by creativity, connection, and the complete experience a guest has," says De Los Santos, who designed CoChinChina's interior and menus to incorporate the aesthetics and flavors of both France and Vietnam. "I wanted to create a journey within CoChinChina, for people who go there to feel as if they were traveling."

Her own travels show up often in her work: CoChinChina's Alfonsina espresso martini is named after the woman who made her a traditional breakfast with cacao-infused coffee in Oaxaca. De Los Santos lets her appetite lead the way wherever she goes ("I love discovering the origins of great products: beverages, flowers, mushrooms, cheeses, oysters – the list is endless"), while sprinkling in some art and history too. Recent trips

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include Cartagena, Athens, Florence, Madrid, Mexico City, NYC, and, most frequently, São Paulo, the home of her latest project, Kitchi with chef Makoto Okuwa.

"It's not just about opening another bar," De Los Santos says. "It's about taking the leap beyond Buenos Aires and bringing my style of mixology into a new cultural setting. I want to embrace an international stage and expand my horizons."

INÉS DE LOS SANTOS' BUENOS AIRES

Buenos Aires is a very walkable city, with a wide variety of architecture that I still find fascinating. I always recommend focusing on the many things you can only enjoy here. Start at the bustling **San Telmo Market** in one of the city's most historic neighborhoods. It's great for people-watching and shopping for antiques. Take a break at **Confitería La Ideal**, where excellent tea comes with delicious sweet and savory treats. Then book a guided tour of **Teatro Colón** to appreciate the opulence and history of South America's largest opera house. Even better, get tickets and enjoy a matinee or evening performance.

Meat lovers have plenty of outstanding options for trying Argentina's world-famous beef. My favorites include **Don Julio**, where the skirt steak, called *entraña*, is my favorite. At **El Pobre Luis**, the *pamplonas* – thin cuts of chicken or beef typically filled with bacon

or cheese – are a must. Highlights at **Corte Comedor** include the chorizo trio and the flan, while **Madre Rojas** is the place for nontraditional cuts and Wagyu beef.

If meat isn't your thing, head to **Marti**. The creative vegetarian restaurant in a standout space in the Recoleta neighborhood feels like dining inside a chic greenhouse. And everything is good on the extensive menu at **Hong Kong Style** in the city's vibrant Chinatown.

Buenos Aires is full of parks and green spaces – I love strolling through the ones in the Palermo neighborhood, especially the **Palermo Rose Garden** between September and November, when the flowers are in bloom. An hour's train ride from central Buenos Aires takes travelers to the town of **Tigre** and the launch point for the public boats that slowly navigate the area's picturesque network of canals.

No matter how you spend your day, end it with a visit to one (or more!) of the city's excellent bars. When I'm in the mood for a perfect dry martini, I go to **Gran Bar Danzón** in Recoleta. For a subterranean spot with a speakeasy vibe and ultra-creative cocktails, walk through a flower shop and head down the stairs to **Florería Atlántico** in the Retiro area. And for full immersion into the world of Argentine wine, get a table at Palermo's **Pulpería Soler** to try many varieties by the glass and share small plates. 📍