

■ RESTAURANT SPOTLIGHT ■

Renowned chef imports Peruvian flavors

By LINDA THOMAS
CONTRIBUTOR

A chef – described as “the next Emeril” of the culinary world – mixes fresh seafood with colorful peppers, passion fruit and key lime at his Kirkland restaurant, Mixtura.

Restaurant Hospitality magazine named Chef Emmanuel Piqueras, 34, one of the industry’s “rising stars” in December 2005, the same month Mixtura opened.

Piqueras prefers to think of himself as a cook, rather than a chef.

“I’m no prima donna. I am an authentic cook,” Piqueras said. “When you see me working in the kitchen, I am there as part of a team. I’m not above mopping the floor.”

Chef Piqueras grew up in Lima, Peru, with the Pacific Ocean and Andes Mountains as his playgrounds. His childhood memories include surfing, which he still loves to do, and cooking a vast variety of Peruvian foods.

Peru’s climate in South America makes it possible to grow a range of crops, including red potatoes and quinoa, a staple grain of the Incas. Exotic peppers, wild mushrooms and spices are found in the Andes. Fish, octopus and shellfish from the ocean are abundant.

“Peru has so much to offer on its own. The food was also influenced by the Spanish, Italian, French, Chinese and Japanese,” he said. “Our food is a fusion or mixture of flavors, and that’s why we called it Mixtura.”

In addition to fresh seafood specialties, Chef Piqueras and his team create vegetarian, chicken and beef



Emmanuel Piqueras met his partners in Portland, where he was a chef in another Peruvian restaurant, before they opened their Kirkland place.

BUSINESS REPORT / DAVID NELSON

entrees.

Some of Mixtura’s signature dishes are: Tacu-tacu de pallares relleno con vista al mar, which is fresh fish served on Peruvian lima bean rice cakes that are filled with scallops, shrimp and calamari; Escabeche includes marinated asparagus and hearts of palm from Peru, flavored with olive oil, garlic and piquillo peppers; Pastel de chocolate is a dessert of hot molten chocolate cake with cool passion fruit.

The restaurant seats about 100 people with an additional 15 in the bar area for more unique tastes such as La Pasion de Emmanuel. That drink includes vodka, fresh lime juice and a homemade guava puree.

“If you go Peru and stay there for

one year, eating three different meals each day, you would not repeat the same dish,” said Gus Rivadeniera, who is part owner of Mixtura along with Chef Piqueras. Their third partner is Oscar Acosta, who’s been a restaurateur in Vancouver, B.C. for 25 years.

All three share a Peruvian heritage and met in Portland, where Piqueras was chef of the acclaimed Andina restaurant.

Rivadeniera, originally a software engineer, said they also have “chemistry” that will make their business successful.

“We aren’t pretentious people. We all have a ‘what you see is what you get’ style,” he said. “But I also think Emmanuel can walk on water and

leap tall buildings in a single bound.”

The partners considered several locations for their restaurant and settled on Kirkland because of its location near the waterfront.

They would also like to open Peruvian restaurants in Vancouver and San Francisco. But for now their focus is Mixtura.

They recommend making reservations by the middle of the week because the restaurant is packed on Friday and Saturday.

Chef Piqueras said he’s so busy on the weekend he often doesn’t have a chance to get out of the kitchen and meet customers.

“I love talking to people,” he said. “I laugh and I joke with them. I want them to be happy and excited about trying food from Peru.”

Mixtura

Address, phone and website:
148 Lake St. South, Kirkland,
(425) 803-3310, Mixtura.biz

Type of food/signature dishes:
Peruvian cuisine, fresh seafood
with vegetables imported from
Peru

Hours: Tuesday-Thursday,
Sunday 4 – 9:30 p.m.,
Friday and Saturday 4 – 10:30p.m.
Closed Sunday

Reservations: Required for Friday
and Saturday evenings and
recommended during the week

Special features:
Banquet space for 25

Michael’s Toyota leaving Bellevue’s Auto Row

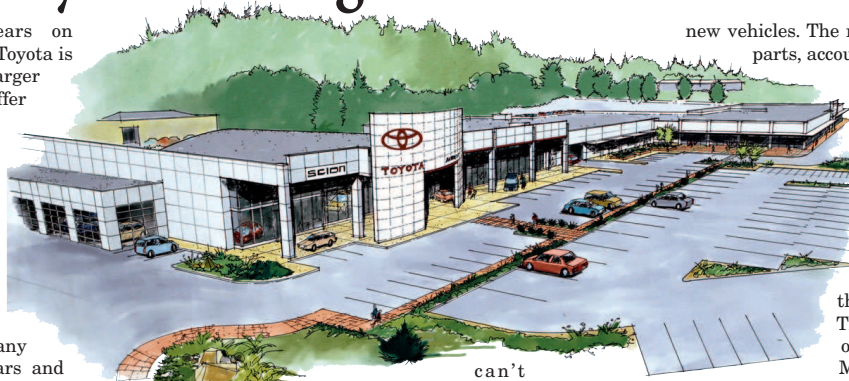
After more than 30 years on Bellevue’s Auto Row, Michael’s Toyota is preparing to move to a much larger location that it hopes will offer more visibility and greater sales.

When it makes the move July 1, the dealership will go from 2.9 acres at its current site on 116th Avenue NE to 14.2 acres at the new location on the north side of I-90 in Bellevue’s Eastgate. Instead of space for 210 new and used vehicles, the company will be able to display 550 cars and trucks. Customer parking will expand to 76 spaces, up from the current 32.

The \$38 million pricetag includes buying the property, construction and moving.

In making the move, the company will be giving up the benefits of doing business where many dealerships are concentrated in favor of an area with only one other auto dealer nearby. The company weighed the pros and cons before deciding to move.

“We’ve been here since 1974 and it’s been a good location,” said Erik Paulson, vice president and general manager. “We’re able to sell 400 cars a month here. Obviously, I-405 is nearby but drivers



new vehicles. The rest of the space will be for parts, accounting and executive offices.

Paulson said the new showroom will be unlike the typical car dealer’s display area. “It will have a fireplace and 12 plasma screen televisions,” he said. “It will be a more customer-friendly atmosphere with more of a home feeling than a typical car dealership. That will drive us apart from other dealers.”

Michael’s 177 employees will be working at a store that covers property formerly occupied by four retail stores, including Safeway and a Mormon bookshop. Customers will be able to visit nearby restaurants while waiting for their cars to be serviced.

After the move, Michael’s plans to lease its existing location.

While the Auto Row will be losing one dealership, it will be gaining a new one in the future. Lexus of Bellevue has acquired the former Bellevue city hall and police headquarters south of Michael’s for \$24.7 million and plans to develop a four-story office building and showroom on the site.

can’t see us from there. I think the visibility from I-90 will make the new store a much better location for us. We’re projecting that we’ll sell 750 new and used vehicles a month.”

Paulson said Chaplin’s Subaru and Volkswagen, which is just east of the new Michael’s location, will generate traffic, as will Honda of Bellevue, which is to the west and on the south side of the freeway.

Michael’s new location will cover 80,000 square feet under one roof. A majority of that – 48,000 square feet – will be devoted to service, while another 12,000 square feet will be showroom of