SORREL MOSELEY-WILLIAMS

FOOD

PUBLISHED

WINE TOURS

A journalist and sommelier tasting, sipping and writing my way around Latin America

TRAVEL

Open wide at wide river

in FOOD

COME WINE WITH ME

by SORREL

ABOUT

APR 12, 2015

RIO ANCHO, Uruguay — What happens when a nuclear engineer and an artist from Santiago del Estero get together with one of Argentina's foremost chefs? A farm-to-table restaurant and three-room guesthouse on the outskirts of Colonia del Sacramento in Uruguay.



In fact Marcelo Susevich and Miri Fioramonti have been married for donkey's years, owning a rural summer house in Paraje El Caño neighbourhood for the past two decades. Then, with their children all grown up, they realized they could fuse their passion for gastronomy - Marcelo helped found Colonia's farmers' market - with hospitality, an inadvertent hobby given the stream of friends who came to stay over the years. Three years ago, they decided to take the plunge and convert their home, adding an exten-

into the side of a small hill that offers up an epic panorama of the wide river (hence the name), a perfect spot for sunsets as well as an intimate 20-seater restaurant. Throw into the mix Marcelo's professional change of heart that saw him move into film and

TV production (he just finished shooting his latest film about Pope Francis in Madrid last

sion to create Río Ancho. Taking a rationalist approach to architecture, the lodging is built

week). Along this new path he met Martín Molteni, executive chef of LatAm 50 Best Restaurant Pura Tierra, started a foodie bromance and filmed a gastronomic journey in Peru together. Sadly that project never made it to any size screen but the seed was sown. And while

Martín doesn't exactly have much free time what with a new baby and and a new restaurant in 2014, he gladly came on board the Río Ancho project, which opened in January. A day trip to Colonia will never be the same again should you dine here. On a dollar run?

Walking up the lighthouse gets dull so splash out and enjoy the rural side of the Unesco

heritage town. Open Thursday to Sunday and strictly only attended by the adorable Miri

and Marcelo, go with the intention of having lunch. That three-course meal - I guarantee

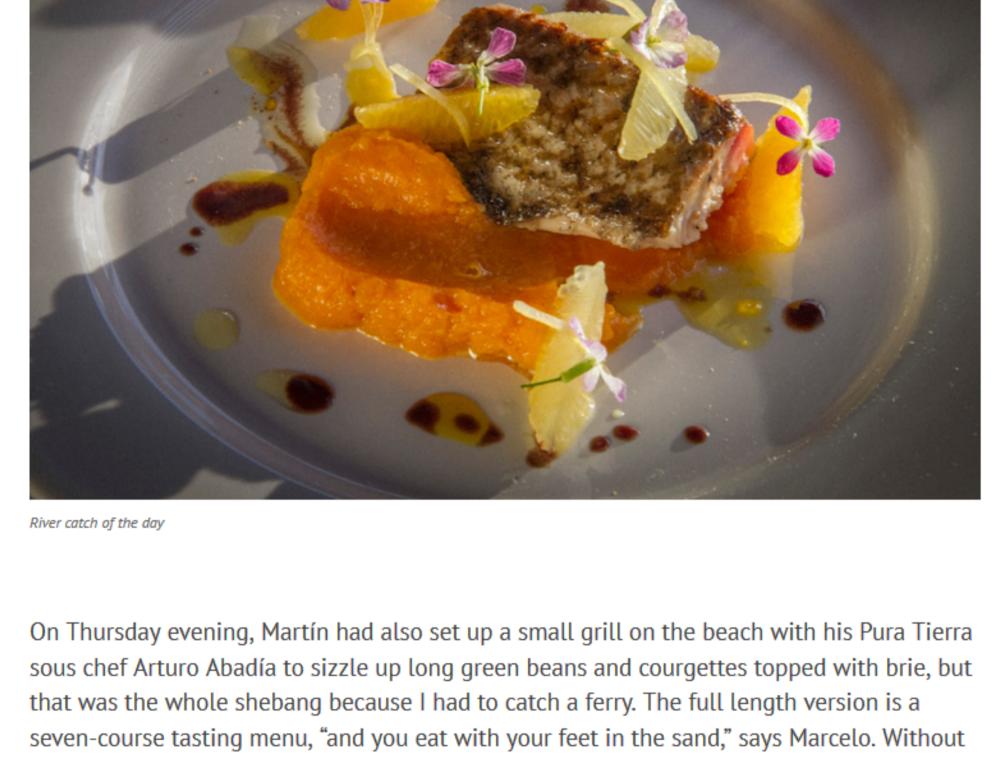
you, however - will turn into something else rather more special and unique. So much so that you'll never go to José Ignacio or Cariló ever again. This is the deal. Reserve a table for lunch (US\$50 per person), upgrade to a day pass (US\$100). After dipping into the seasonal tasting menu that deals specifically in local produce from goat's cheese to tuna cactus fruit, almonds, olives, lamb, and the catch of the day, Río Ancho becomes your personal playground.

Kick back on the elevated deck for a little bird spotting with the telescope, wander the lush grounds or head down to the sandy beach. The kindly owners will even lend out two-man kayaks and if that seems totally awesome on a sunny afternoon, wait until you paddle out towards the sun as it sets on the horizon.

some deck chairs and serve up the house cocktail, the eponymous Río Ancho made with Cynar, tonic water and homemade grapefruit syrup, topped with an orange slice to represent that glorious descending fireball.

But the piece de résistance is cocktail hour. Miri and Marcelo set up a small bonfire on their

section of beach – private in principle though it can be accessed via the coast – lay out



a doubt, you'll want to stay the night.

up.)

hops over everything three weeks or so, Arturo has made Colonia his new permanent base, and much like Pura Tierra, the focus is on sourcing top quality local produce. And it's not like Martín has a lot of time on his hands, running two restaurants, leading the Bocuse d'Or team, preparing for next week's Masticar food fair and so on. What made him get involved in another new project?

He says: "I'm a nature enthusiast and I like the challenge and everything directed towards

that, and this project transmits this. It's a beautiful place to try things out and use it as a

base for development. Not only do I scout for products in Uruguay but I can then apply that

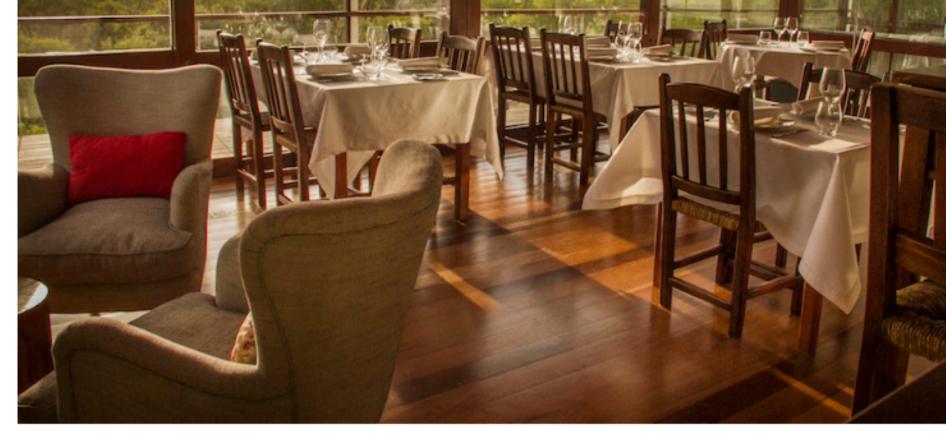
to other projects. The dairy farm is a mile away, the fishermen are also really nearby and so

that is something I can take advantage of here that I can't in Buenos Aires. It releases some

But if a midday eat and greet is only within your budget, here's the lowdown. While Martin

frustration!" Lamb is one cut that features regularly on the weekly menu, given it is sourced locally though there's also a strong emphasis on catering for vegetarians, given that it's Marcelo's lifestyle choice. (He does admit to trying dishes though, so he knows what's being served

One highlight of a special nine-course tasting menu so I could get a real sense of it was the stuffed cherry tomato in a light gazpacho-style jus. Finely chopped red and yellow bell pepper, courgette and aubergine formed the stuffing, while a bite of melon was a surprising and refreshing combo with the tomato.



Rabbit is also sourced locally, and both Marcelo and Martín say that the more they use it on

the menu, the more the producer will respond to their demands, creating a positive food

circle. The terrine and fillet duo was backed up by a tasty olive mayo, and sprinkled with crunchy black olive ashes, the fillet succulent and both matching well with the olive. My star was the free-range pork, slow cooked al vacío (vacuum) for 12 hours before being taken apart then put back together for a final heat blast in the oven to crisp up the crackling. Apple sauce, perfectly fresh given the autumnal harvest, oven-roasted red shallot and

a perfect sea salted miniature roast potato served with the pig's own juices. Tender, flavourful, locally sourced and probably slaughtered yesterday. Hearty, modern, locally sourced fare. One of the dessert options showcased local cheese including the semi-hard Colonia, a young fresh goat's cheese and a Gouda from Carmelo, recently anointed the best in

Uruguay. Washed down with Botrytis Noble 2009 from Familia Deicas in Canelones, a five white grape late harvest wonder, and it was all happening in my mouth. If you can upgrade to the seven step tasting menu (US\$100), do so as it will truly showcase

this part of Uruguay's ever expanding local produce, plus regional wine is included in the price.

Río Ancho

This is an undiscovered gem – and you heard it here first.

Paraje El Caño, Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay, +598 4520-2205

www.rioanchocolonia.com, Thursday to Sunday