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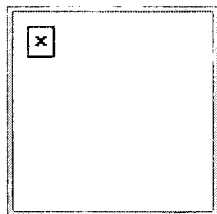
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Feb 17, 08:39 AM

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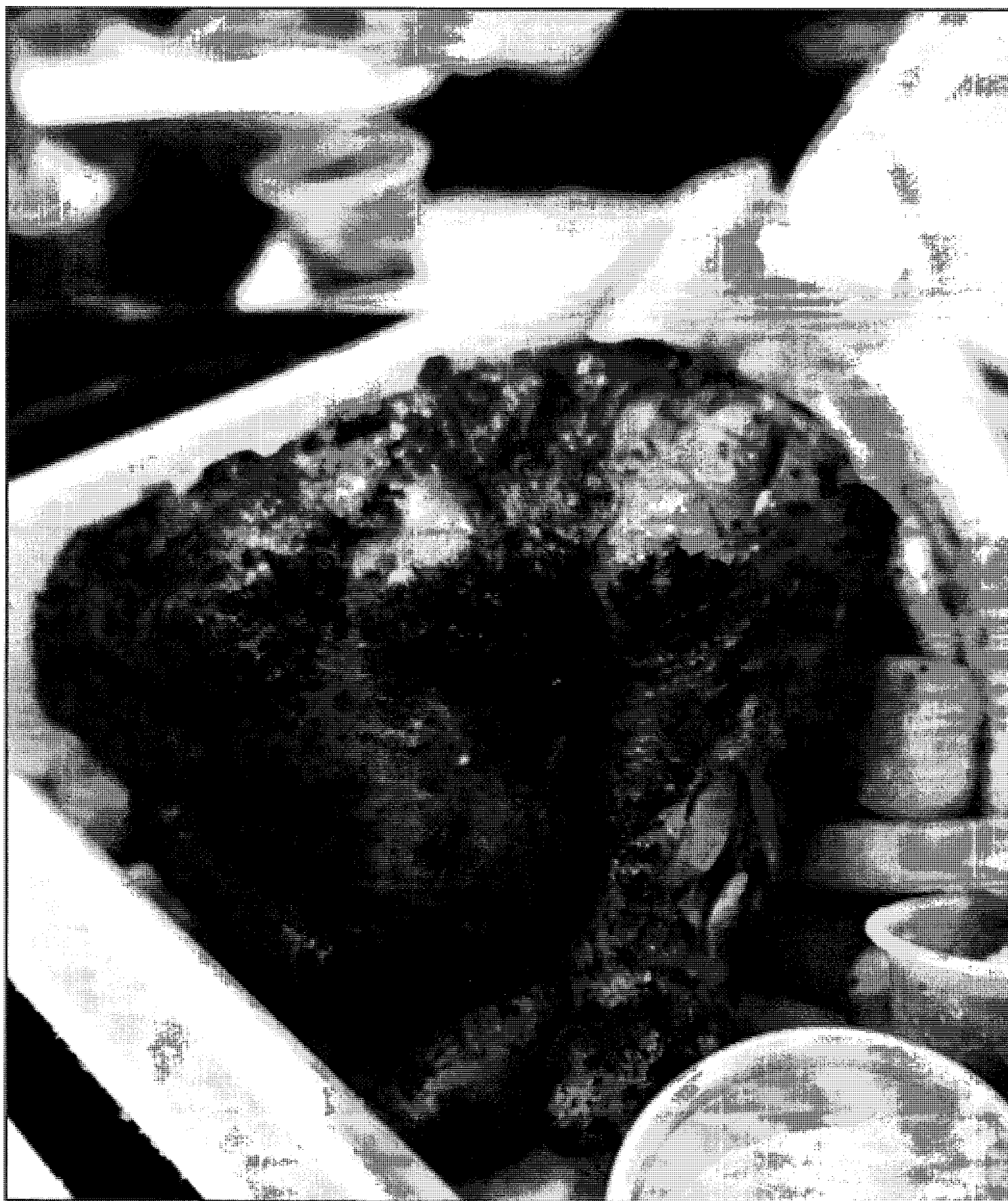


**Sarah Carothers**

*DClicious*

An exploration of the district's best and most unique dishes.

## El Pollo Rico's Peruvian chicken has them flocking in



(Sarah Carothers / NPR)

I first visited El Pollo Rico around four years ago, when my uncle who was stationed at the Naval

Medical Center in Bethesda at the time could not stop raving about it. It was “the best,” he said, and I soon saw why. El Pollo Rico serves pollo a la brasa, a style of rotisserie chicken that comes from Peru.

The chicken there is wonderfully spiced, incredibly juicy, accompanied with a unique blend of sauces, and, best of all, cheap. It’s perfect for a college student’s budget, and not bad for that of an intern, either.

Peruvian chicken restaurants can be found all over, especially in the suburbs where a larger population of recent immigrants lives. A Yelp search turns up 65 results for pollo a la brasa in the District, while Chicago has 16, and poor Boston has only half of that.

In fact, El Pollo Rico owner Italo Solano says he’s gotten requests to ship the chicken to locales that aren’t fortunate enough to have pollo a la brasa joints. One man who was stationed in DC for a while but now lives in Atlanta asked Solano to send a hen in the mail, but he hasn’t quite figured out how to do that yet. Another woman moved from DC to Hawaii, and makes a point to go to El Pollo Rico every time she comes back to Washington.

What I couldn’t figure out, though, was how a Peruvian recipe for chicken got so popular in a place where there are very few Peruvian immigrants. El Pollo Rico got its start when Solano’s father, an accountant, decided he wanted to do something different for a career, and went back to his native Peru for a few months to study the recipe. When he opened his restaurant 23 years ago, there were no other pollo a la brasa places in the city. Solano thinks there were only about five Peruvian families in the city at the time; now, there still aren’t all that many Peruvians here, but the unique recipe has become wildly popular and can be found all over the city.

Solano says his restaurant first got popular through word of mouth by Latino community. “They told their friends, their friends told their friends,” he explains. Now, his customers come from everywhere — Salvador, the Philippines, Russia. In addition to being the first, Solano thinks his pollo a la brasa is also the spiciest. The chicken itself has been rubbed in a fantastic blend of spices, but what makes it super spicy are the green and yellow sauces on the side, which work best when mixed. The yellow one is based on a creamy Peruvian sauce, huancaína, and the green one is essentially crushed jalapenos. Put them together, and you’ve got a tasty accessory to one of the city’s best (and most affordable) dishes.

Try El Pollo Rico at 932 North Kenmore Street, Arlington, VA

## Comment

1. I love El Pollo Rico! You should also try El Charrito Caminante in Clarendon. They have wonderful pupusas!

<http://www.urbanspoon.com/r/7/102056/restaurant/DC/El-Charrito-Caminante-Arlington>

— [Anne Cusack](#) · Feb 17, 04:10 PM · #

2. Thanks for the tip, Anne! I’m definitely planning on covering pupusas in the future, so I’ll give El Charrito Caminante a try.

— [Sara Carothers](#) · Feb 22, 06:17 PM · #

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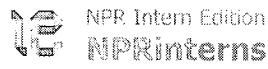
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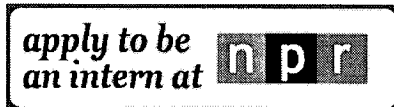
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