DINING BELLAIRE - MEYERLAND - WEST UNIVERSITY

# Rice Village bar and restaurant Under the Volcano's main ingredient is authenticity



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Under the Volcano offers South American cuisine and scratch-made cocktails made with fresh ingredients and produce. (Asia Armour/Community Impact)

It started at The Ginger Man.

Pete Mitchell met his wife and business partner Vera Mitchell at the craft beer bar in Dallas. The owner of The Ginger Man also owned a bar called The Volcano in Rice Village, and asked Pete

Mitchell to run it. The couple bought the bar from the owner when he moved back to the east coast and transformed it into Under The Volcano in September 1989.



*Vera Mitchell (left) and Pete Mitchell bought, renovated and rebranded Under The Volcano in September 1989. They aimed to celebrate Mexican holiday Dia de los Muertos authentically. (Asia Armour/Community Impact)*

## What's in a name

Under the Volcano gets its name from a novel by Malcolm Lowry, which has themes that follow the Mexican holiday Day of The Dead, Pete Mitchell said.

For Pete Mitchell, the deeper significance from the book is the English author's interest in pre-modern Mexican culture and an authentic representation of Mexico. When they opened the bar, The Mitchell's aimed to avoid stereotypical caricatures of Mexico, instead focusing on a more honest and authentic portrayal, they said.

"It [comes from] a time [when] the English were interested in finding out what real man was like before modernization, and they thought in Mexico they could find that," Pete Mitchell said.

## It's 5 o'clock somewhere



*Popular cocktails at Under The Volcano include the strawberry basil margarita ($12.25), the Red on Green ($11.75) and the Peruvian Pisco Sour ($11.25). (Asia Armour/Community Impact)*

Under The Volcano opened at a time when there weren't a lot of craft cocktail bars, Pete Mitchell said.

Through the years, they've remained committed to making all of their made-to-order drinks from scratch—following their original recipe as closely as possible and utilizing fresh squeezed juices and produce, he said.

The eclectic cocktail list draws influence from all over South America, Vera Mitchell said. Drinks include a horseradish pomegranate margarita; the Green On Red—made with silver and vanilla rum, red bell pepper, basil and citrus juices; and the Brazilian Caipirinha and a frozen Cuba Libre.




*The owners added empanadas to their menu during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their popularity among customers helped to keep them afloat during periods where businesses were shut down for in-house service, they said. (Asia Armour/Community Impact)*

## On the menu

In 2020, the craft cocktail bar expanded its food offerings to include more than just bar snacks, the Mitchell's said.

They added empanadas that follow Vera Mitchell's grandmother's recipes, which they said kept them afloat during the COVID-19 shutdown.



*The bar and restaurant's house-smoked, black peppered salmon ($14) is served cold alongside roma tomatoes, capers, a Remoulade sauce and crostini. (Asia Armour/Community Impact)$14*

Other popular menu items include a Chilean salmon dish that's smoked in-house, queso, tacos and churros. Under the Volcano also does a steak night every Wednesday.

## Diving in deeper

Under The Volcano's design elements—which include a collection of masks and colorfully-painted walls adorned with crucifixes—were chosen to emphasize the diversity of Mexico and characterize the Day of the Dead more authentically—as a vibrant celebration of deceased loved ones, Vera Mitchell said.



*The collection of masks adorning an interior wall at Under The Volcano emphasize the regional diversity of Mexico and the multitude of Day of the Dead traditions, Vera Mitchell said. (Asia Armour/Community Impact)*

"We see [The Day of the Dead] here as a morbid thing, but it's not really," Vera Mitchell said. "It's more about the way of passing to a different realm and how we communicate with the dead. [It's about] the colorful part of it, … It's not a dark holiday."

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