



Such Great Heights

Peruvian chef Virgilio Martínez takes his trademark hyperlocal cuisine to the Andes



Virgilio Martínez has always taken diners to new heights. After all, his Lima restaurant, Central, which has been on the World's 50 Best list since 2013, is renowned for its Mater Elevations menu, in which each of the 16 courses is defined by the various altitudes in Peru at which its ingredients were sourced. For his new restaurant, Mil, which opened last year, the 41-year-old chef is at it again, but this time he's elevating things—and keeping

them there—by focusing on the peaks of the Andes.

Mil, which is located at 11,500 feet in the Sacred Valley, near Incan ruins that resemble the remnants of a UFO landing, offers a lunch-only, eight-course tasting menu that features equally otherworldly ingredient combinations. *Cushuro* algae appears with duck, black quinoa, and *sachatomate* (tree tomato) in a dish called Extreme Altitude. Fresh *chaco* clay is served with

potatoes and wild *chicho* herb in an ode to the Central Andes. *Muña* (wild mint) pairs with *tumbo* fruit and *huacatay* (black mint) in the Frozen Cordillera dessert.

"Whoever is trying our food is going out of their comfort zone," Martínez says. "We don't think that everything has to be delicious. We are more in love with the story behind the ingredients. You are eating emotions. You are eating traditions. That makes food more delicious."

While many of Mil's ingredients—freeze-dried potato *chuño*, black *maca* root, coca leaf—also appear on the menus at Central and Kjölle (the Lima restaurant Martínez's wife, Pia León, opened last August), the chef says there's a difference when they're eaten close to the source. "When we bring things to the coast," he explains, "elements change, and we must use techniques to preserve their value." In other words, the only way to go is up.



GUILLERMO VIVIANO (all photos on spreads); FRANCESCO SORREI (Navigator stamp)