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## Classic Ceviche

**Servings:** 4 cups, about 6 servings

Limey fresh ceviche is one of Mexico's most famous seafood dishes—often served as an appetizer or snack, yet good enough to make a whole meal from. But most who live away from the ocean are timid about making it. Very fresh fish is essential, because, like sushi, the fish never sees heat. But unlike sushi, ceviche's fish texture is more cooked than raw. The acid of lime juice, you see, changes that texture much like heat does.

And as far as freshness goes, a good fish market is the best ally. Any fish good enough for sashimi is perfect for ceviche—glistening, sweet-smelling and plump are all signs of fresh fish. To avoid potential health hazards, stick with ocean fish—nothing from fresh water.

Once you've got fish, making ceviche is a snap—and a welcome addition to any party. Lots of ceviche is juicy and eaten from sundae glasses in Mexico. Though anything but dry, this version is finished perfectly for piling on tostadas or chips, a style you find in street carts all over Mexico. To serve this version in cups, drain off less of the lime juice and replace the olive oil with about a cup of clam juice. The olives in this recipe, while not ubiquitous throughout the country, are a favorite on the Gulf coast of Veracruz.

Ceviche is best served within an hour or 2. Refrigerated leftovers, while perfectly safe to eat, lack the dazzle of the just-made bowl of ceviche goodness.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound very fresh boneless, skinless fish fillets (Spanish mackerel, called sierra in Mexico, is very common for ceviche, but any meaty ocean fish from halibut and snapper to bass, grouper and tuna can be used), all pin bones removed, cut into cubes a little smaller than ½ inch
- 1 generous cup freshly squeezed lime juice (you'll need 6 juicy, good-size limes)
- 1/2 medium (about 3 ounces) white onion, cut into ¼-inch pieces
- 1 ripe, medium (8 ounce) tomato, cut into ¼-inch pieces (or 2 cups roughly chopped cherry tomatoes)
- 2/3 cup (4 ounces) finely chopped pitted green olives (manzanillas are common in Mexico)
- Fresh hot green chiles to taste (usually 2 serranos or 1 jalapeño), stemmed, seeded and deveined if you wish, and very finely chopped
- A good handful of [chopped cilantro](#), plus some leaves for garnish
- 3 tablespoons (about 1 1/2 ounces) olive oil
- Salt
- Some sugar (If you like. I like 1 to 2 teaspoons)
- Tostadas or tortilla chips, for serving

## INSTRUCTIONS

**Marinate the fish.** In a bowl (with this much lime and fish, I recommend stainless or glass), thoroughly combine the fish, lime and onion. Each piece of fish should be surrounded by—lightly floating in—lime. Cover and refrigerate until the fish is as “done” as you like it—that could be 20 or 30 minutes for rare to a couple of hours for well-done.

**Finish the ceviche.** Tip off the lime juice into another bowl. (No need to remove it all; you’ll need at least a couple of tablespoons to season the dish.) Add the chopped tomato, olives, green chile, cilantro and olive oil, and stir to combine. Taste and season with salt, usually about 1 teaspoon, and some sugar if you want to tame some of the lime’s acidity. On the other hand, you may want to boost that acidity by splashing on a little of the reserved lime juice. Serve your finished ceviche on crispy tostadas or tortilla chips, garnished with cilantro leaves if you like.