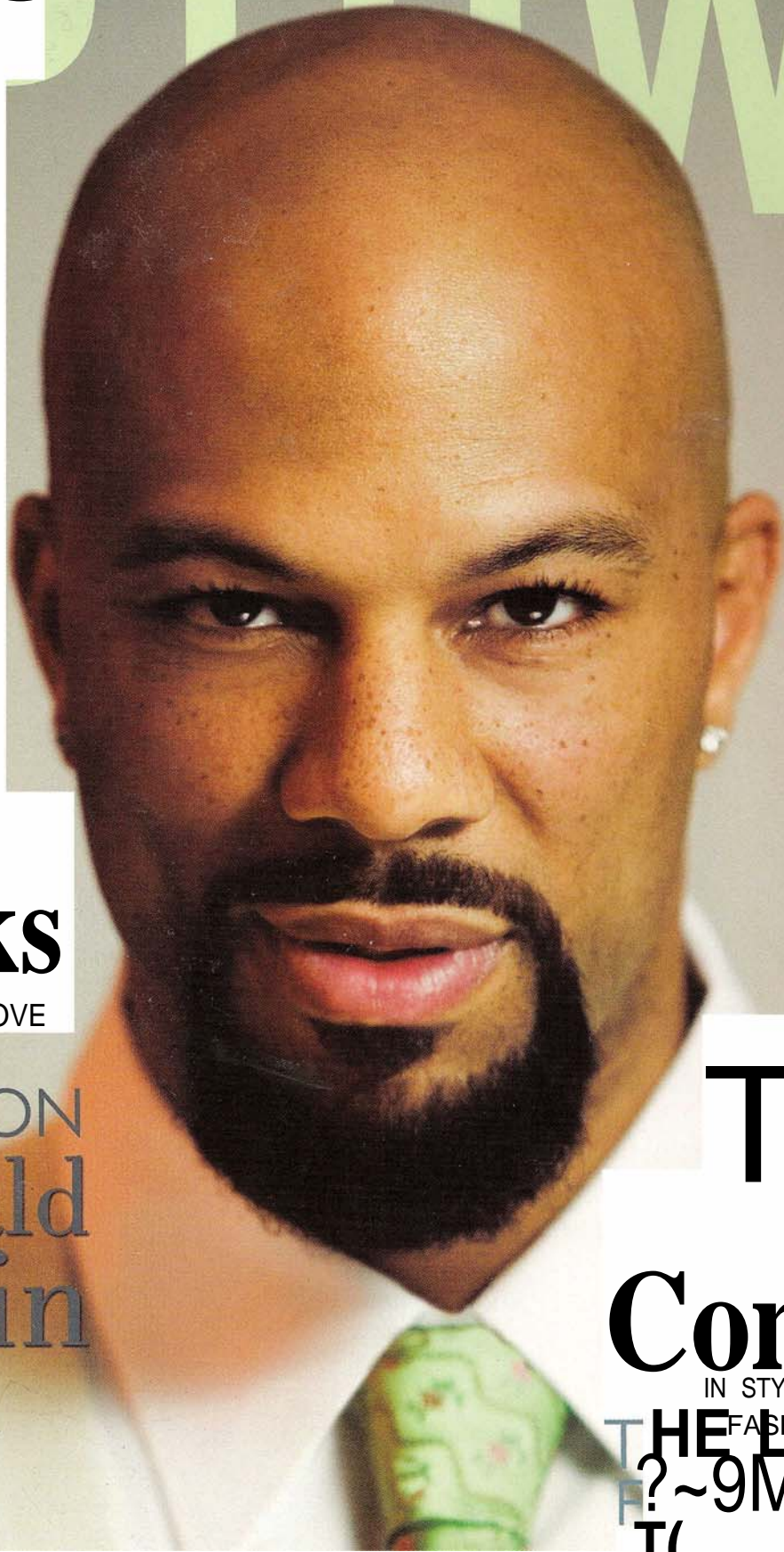


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It is common to see ceiba trees all over Latin America, from Mexico to Peru to Cuba, sometimes standing alone in a forest that has been razed, spared because they are believed to be connected to all things majestic and prized. Downtown's Ceiba is a fusion destination of flavors from those very same regions.

# Ceiba

## *A Taste of Heaven*

High-backed booths, sounds of samba, mambo and salsa, paintings of tropical birds, lush plants and pale blue skies will transport you to the tropics-until you look out the wall-sized windows at the movers and shakers as they walk by.

Start off with the spicy grouper ceviche *classico* with lime, Manzanilla olives, fresh herbs and shaved radish (\$11). Take advantage of Ceiba's two chefs of Cuban heritage, Chef de Cuisine Victor Albisu and Executive Pastry Chef David Guas-who was named the 2004 Pastry Chef of the Year by the Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington - and delight in their many Cuban-influenced offerings, such as the paella crab fritters (\$12) and the "Frita" chorizo burger with cheese (\$13). For an unforgettable entree, cut into a perfectly tender, roasted chicken breast *enfricasse* (\$20) accompanied by 2003 Blancaneaux Niebaum white wine (\$79). Finish your trip with a bittersweet chocolate mousse or key lime tart (both \$8).

Make sure to visit during Cinco de Mayo, when the weeklong festivities include a Mexican tasting menu and indigenous chilis from Peru and Mexico. Regardless of when your first trip is, it will definitely not be your last. -*Ericka Blount Danois*

*Ceiba. 701 14th Street, NW 202.393.3983. ceibarestaurant.com*

## Washington, DC: Fly Lounge

Chuck Koch, a local DJ and airplane pilot, toyed with the idea of opening a bar for years. As he spun tunes around the city at clubs like State of the Union and Dream (under the memorable moniker "Dirty Hands"), it dawned on Koch to mix his two loves: flying and DJing. Soon thereafter, Fly Lounge was born with the help of business partner Richard Eidman. The lounge is a replica of the interior of a Lear jet, complete with faux windows where clouds seem to breeze by, flight attendants milling around in short, tight dresses and tables designed to look like F-15 airplane engines. At this Dupont Circle spot, however, flying the friendly skies means going six feet under. The 2,000 square foot lounge, which holds only 150 people at a time, is located underground. To be guaranteed a seat among the see-and-be-seen crowd, you have to make reservations for one of the ten velvet-roped tables for bottle service (starting at \$100 per person). Still, when the music starts pumping, Dirty Hands himself has been known to jump on the turntables, spinning whatever gets this high energy crowd moving. Think of it as a very expensive but well-stocked basement party on wings.

*-Ericka Blount Danois*

*Fly Lounge. 1802 Jefferson Place, NW 202.828.4433.jiylounge.com*

## WASHINGTON DC PS7's

PS7's is not named for the local school system but for executive chef and owner Peter Smith and the restaurant's address. The year-old spot, in the downtown Penn Quarter area, has a laid-back, tucked away ambiance that makes it a popular getaway for celebs, including Ludacris and local politicians like Dick Gephardt.

The contrast of bold colors and subtle elegance are complimented by the lulling sounds of Ray Charles and Duke Ellington. The 130-seat main dining area was conceived as an art gallery and features mocha brown high-backed banquettes with velvet-buttoned fabrics in a soothing, soft sand hue.

While the decor is notable, the dishes, a mix of classic and nouveau American, are the real reason to come. Even with small plates, there is so much goodness to choose from that you'll waddle out satisfied. For an appetizer, try the shrimp cocktail (\$15), assembled in a wine glass with lettuce, diced shrimp and crushed ice, in a Bloody Mary sauce (the hostess will even squirt a drop of vodka directly onto your shrimp). Follow it up with the pan seared sea scallops (\$18), made with a Danish Viking sea salt infused and covered in a Don Millan sherry vinegar sauce. For dessert, the pineapple spring rolls (\$12), made with carrot mousse, raisin puree, cream cheese sabayon and spiced carrot reduction, are so good you will want to cry. Order one and then let the cool summer breeze from the newly added outdoor patio whisk away your tears. PS7's is a gem, sure to keep Washingtonians out and about.

*- Ericka Blount Danois*

*1 Street .. NW 202.742.8550 ps7restaurant.com*



## Washington, DC Perry's

Perry's, located in Adams Morgan, mixes the familiar with the unexpected, boasting a sushi bar, traditional American fare and a fierce drag queen brunch. Find head sushi chef Noriaki Yasutake on the lower level of the restaurant which features a sushi bar, a cocktail bar, and a main dining area. Start the evening off with such creative concoctions as the fish and chips roll, a twist on the classic British favorite that includes flounder, red onion, malt vinegar and olive oil in a French-fried tempura batter with wasabi tartar on the side. After 8pm, the wood-decked rooftop overlooking Columbia Road opens, with a menu of traditional American fare made to perfection. Taste the mini crab cakes with lime cilantro tartar and delicious pineapple relish or the Beef Petit Filet with garlic mashed potatoes and portobello confit. The entertainment highlight is the drag queen brunch from 10:30am-2pm on Sundays, complete with dancing on tables. (The fun is confined to the main dining room for fear that the sun on the rooftop will cause makeup to melt.) It's a guaranteed crowd pleaser for the hipsters, yuppies and middle-America families coming to get a sweet taste of DC. -

***Ericka Blount Danois***

*Perry's, 1811 Columbia Road, NW 202.234.6218*

