

- [Home](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Subscribe](#)
- [Advertise](#)



[WestView News](#)

- [Featured](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Articles](#)
- [Editorials](#)
- [Briefly](#)
- [Letters](#)
- [Calendar](#)

[Defy Landlord by Dining At Lima](#)

[Published May 2015](#)



ATTORNEY GENERAL STOPS
LANDLORD: In a rare action the Attorney
General signed a cease and desist order
against an ex cop employed to harass
restaurant owner. Photo by Maggie Berkvist

By Arthur Z. Schwartz

Something is smelly on the corner of Bedford and Christopher, and it's not the food from the corner restaurant, Taste of Lima. Taste of Lima was an East Village mainstay until ten years ago when its landlord, Steven Croman, asked them to move to the West Village so he could renovate their old space.

He gave them a ten-year lease at \$11,000 per month with a five year option to renew. Things went well. The restaurant, at 129 Christopher Street, and across from the Lucille Lortel Theatre, got a good review in the *Times* (see excerpt below), full of words like "sweetly fiery taste," "superb," and "perfectly cooked." And the crowds came, both on theatre nights and otherwise.

But late last year, as the owner, Nelida Mori, was about to exercise her option for a five year renewal, her landlord, Croman, began to attack. Seems the owner of over one hundred residential buildings has a reputation as one of New York's worst landlords, and is under investigation by State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman for using strong arm tactics to push rent controlled and rent stabilized tenants out of apartments.

Schneiderman actually won a cease and desist order against one of Croman's operatives, an ex-cop named Anthony Falconite, who forces his way into apartments, rifles through drawers, takes photos and then deliver's Notices to Cure conditions which the landlord says warrant eviction.

Seems that Croman could rent her restaurant space for \$28,000 per month, and wants her out. So he served her with a Notice to Cure, alleging that she has created conditions which violate the Landmarks Law, including a window the landlord bricked up before she moved in. And he wants her bar removed.

She acted to correct the Landmark's issue but the property owner needs to sign all applications; Croman has refused. Nelida hired a lawyer and got what is known as a "Yellowstone Injunction," which keeps her in the restaurant while she fights with the landlord. But she fears that if one thing goes wrong in court (the next scheduled court date is 5/26) she will lose her business. And her legal bills are mounting; she says she has spent close to \$100,000 over the last 6 months fighting multi-millionaire Croman.

On April 28th however, a new battle began. Taste of Lima passed its last Health Department inspection in early March 2015 with no violations. But after March she started to receive repeated visits from the Health Department, based on "anonymous complaints."

At around 6 p.m. on Tuesday, April 28, four large uniformed officers, who identified themselves as Health Department Police, arrived at her door and told her that there was a report of raw sewage leaking into her restaurant. Several stationed themselves at the door, and for the next three hours refused to let patrons in. The others combed through the restaurant with a fine tooth comb, looking for violations. Those patrons who were already there left.

At the end she got a notice that the allegation of raw sewage leakage was "Not Found/False." But they served her with five other violations, including one which reflected running several cycles of the dishwasher and then asserting that the dishwasher was out of chlorine sanitizer. If found guilty of the five violations, the restaurant could be closed by the Health Department. Then, the next day, when Nelida looked on the web, numerous web listings (Yelp,

On May 1, on behalf of the restaurant, your correspondent, Arthur Schwartz, wearing his lawyer hat, shot off a letter to NYC Inspector General Mark Peters, asking him to launch an immediate investigation of why the Health Department cops did what they did, saying “The actions of the Health Department Officers appear to be a deliberately planned witch hunts, whose sole purpose was to cause problems for the restaurant and assist the landlord in his efforts to terminate the lease.” Hopefully Peters will investigate quickly.

Think about going to the Taste of Lima for dinner, Call **(646) 854-6770** for a reservation, or use seamless.com or delivery.com to order takeout. We as a community need to give Nelida and Taste of Lima our support. Big bad Steve Croman, and his thugs, and his possibly paid off Health Department cops can't be allowed to win this one. It's our community. Let's keep this a community restaurant!

Excerpt from *The New York Times* review:

But for flavor alone, for the sweetly fiery taste of creamy, light and delicious ceviche tiradito (\$11), the place is worth the minor annoyances. It is a glorious ceviche, made of fresh strips of flounder gently marinated with an emulsified lemon sauce stained to a sunset's hue with rocoto chilies. A thick coin of yam sits at the head of the plate, sweet against the bite. That rocoto, a habanerolike heat device that is not grown commercially in the United States, is worth puzzling over for a moment. It's an extremely gentle though insistent chili, lemon's expert foil, and a crucial ingredient at Lima's Taste: the excellent plain ceviche, which is functionally the same as the tiradito minus the chilies, almost but not quite pales in comparison.

Other appetizers include sweetly smokey shrimp wrapped in bacon (\$9) . More consistent was a simple, delicious Peruvian standby of papas a la huancaína (\$6.50) — a perfect boiled potato sliced into medallions and served cool beneath a blanket of peppery yellow cream sauce, white cheese and roasted garlic. Better still are papas rellenas (\$7), mashed potatoes deep-fried around a savory filling of beef, raisins and tender onions, and causa (\$7.50), a boccie ball of cool mashed potatoes set over perfect chicken salad, with avocado sauce drizzled over the top.

Cheerful clumps of chopped cilantro and loosely scattered sliced Bermuda onion accompany virtually all the appetizers in the manner of bodyguards, and make no exception for the entrees. They are thick across the top of the superb escabeche (\$13.50), a browned chicken breast served in a deeply flavored peppery vinegar sauce over fibrous yucca, and are in many ways a key ingredient in the wet, faintly smoky grilled pork ribs (\$15.50).

It's hard to dope out what, exactly, flavors the lemony, faintly soyish marinade that powers the excellent barbecued chicken (\$12). But it's easy to say what pushes its quality into excellence: it is perfectly cooked. Likewise a fat and flavorful duck breast (\$16), cooked in a deeply acidic bath of lemon and pepper, and a sweetly delicious comfort meal of ají de pollo (\$12.50), a sort of chicken à la king that is bright with peppery flavor and is served with soft rice.

Better to stick to ceviche, or to abandon lightness entirely in favor of the meltingly flavorful single marinated pork chop (\$16). A rich lomo saltado (\$14.50), with chunks of steak mixed into a kind of stir-fry of tomatoes, onions and absolutely perfect French fries (which sadly appear nowhere else on the menu), is also worth the work to finish its enormous mass.

Desserts are hard to come by; in fact, the restaurant is often out of them, even early in the evening. But a moist and pillowy Peruvian chocolate cake (\$4.50) drenched in dulce de leche seems to be a mainstay, and for a reason: it's delicious. A good deal of the food at Lima's Taste is. Despite the smoke and mirrors, sometimes that's what you want most from a meal.

—Sam Sifton

Be Sociable, Share!

[Tweet](#) 1 [Like](#) 2 [g+](#) 0 [Share](#) [+ MORE](#)

««« [Will Westbeth Be the Next St. Vincent's?](#)
 »»» [The New Whitney Museum Opens its Doors with a Block Party on May 2](#)

Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Email (required) - will not be published

Website (optional)

Search for:

Search

Leave comment

Subscribe to WestView News!

Make a donation to WestView

Donate



Recent Comments

- Jessica Berk on [Two Nice Cops](#)
- WS on [What Gynaecologists Won't Tell Women: A Call for National Outcry](#)
- Ilene Ito on [Will Westbeth Be the Next St. Vincent's?](#)

Issue Archive

- [June 2015](#) (34)
- [May 2015](#) (35)
- [April 2015](#) (40)
- [March 2015](#) (39)
- [February 2015](#) (27)
- [January 2015](#) (25)
- [December 2014](#) (37)
- [November 2014](#) (24)
- [September 2014](#) (33)
- [August 2014](#) (43)
- [July 2014](#) (33)
- [June 2014](#) (25)
- [May 2014](#) (45)
- [April 2014](#) (33)
- [March 2014](#) (34)
- [February 2014](#) (32)
- [January 2014](#) (31)
- [December 2013](#) (26)
- [November 2013](#) (30)
- [October 2013](#) (31)
- [September 2013](#) (16)
- [August 2013](#) (36)
- [July 2013](#) (31)
- [June 2013](#) (28)
- [May 2013](#) (33)
- [April 2013](#) (28)
- [March 2013](#) (26)
- [February 2013](#) (30)
- [January 2013](#) (35)
- [December 2012](#) (30)
- [November 2012](#) (31)
- [October 2012](#) (27)
- [September 2012](#) (30)
- [August 2012](#) (27)
- [July 2012](#) (39)
- [June 2012](#) (32)
- [May 2012](#) (33)
- [February 2012](#) (26)

WestView Issues as PDF

View [WestView issues in PDF format](#) on the issuu website

- [Home](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Subscribe](#)
- [Advertise](#)

© Copyright WestView News. All Rights Reserved.

