Latin flavor in the heart of D.C.

Wandering down D.C.’s Connecticut Ave NW on a Saturday night is not an easy task—the sidewalks are crowded with lines a block long to get into some of the cities’ hottest clubs, and people spill over into the street. A faint smell of marijuana and perfume tinges the air as glamorously-dressed women clutch their designer purses, waiting to pay $20 covers to get into their favorite club. Near Dupont Circle, one club stands out, with free entry and hardly any line: Café Citron.

Walking through the door, I immediately realize that the unassuming entryway was very misleading. The dance floor is so packed, it is nearly impossible to bypass the bar area. Confetti falls from the sky as Latin music blares and men jump on the bar top to dance. In a balcony above the entryway, the DJ dances to the beat with a small group of friends. I feel at home.

Once I push my way past the bar, I come upon a small dance floor in the back of the club. The first thing I notice is how multicultural the crowd is—black, white, Asian, Latino, and Middle Eastern people all dance together to the beat. The crowd tonight is predominantly Middle Eastern. After slipping away from a few overly amorous dancers, I find a few men who want to dance salsa. The Latin beat and skillful leading of my dance partners had me smiling and spinning like a true dancing queen, without even knowing the steps.

After a while, being beleaguered by droves of overly aggressive men led me to leave the dance floor, and I found a tabletop that offered a little island of refuge for me and my friends. We got one of the handsome men dancing on the bar top to join us, as well as a beautiful Columbian/Bolivian couple. We watched from our vantage point as the bartenders jumped up on the bar, brandishing flares and pouring shots in the open mouths of waiting clubgoers.

We ran out of energy before the club even began to wind down, and I helped my friends stumble back out onto the sidewalk, which was somehow even more crowded at 2:15am than it was before. As we walked back to the hotel, the smiles lingered on our faces, as we thought about the little pocket of energy and Latin culture that we’d found in our nation’s capital.