



# Salsa

## Brief History

While Salsa is definitely more than just Cuban, a large part of the dance originated on the island. Before and around the time of World War II, the music traveled to Mexico City and New York. It was in New York where the term “Salsa” was created. In fact, the use of the word salsa for danceable Latin Music was coined in 1933 when Cuban song composer Ignacio Piñero wrote the song ‘Échale Salsita’.

Salsa's roots are based on different genres such as Puerto Rican rhythms, however the music is open to improvisation and is therefore continuously evolving. New modern salsa styles are associated and named to the geographic areas that developed them. Characteristics that may identify a style include timing, basic steps, foot patterns, body rolls and movements, turns and figures, attitude & dance influences.

## Styles of Salsa

There are 6 main styles including LA style on 1, New York style on 2, Colombian, Puerto Rican, Cuban ‘Casino’ style and ‘Rueda de Miami’.

### LA style on 1

- Danced on beat 1
- Strongly influenced by the Mambo and Latin Ballroom styles
- The key elements of this style are the forward and backward basic steps danced on a linear (in a straight line)

### New York style on 2

- Danced on beat 2
- Sometimes referred to as ‘Mambo style’- created by Eddie Torres ‘The Mambo King’
- The key elements of this style are the forward and backward basic steps where the feet pass, inside of closing, also danced on a linear

### Columbian

- Danced on beat 1
- Otherwise known as ‘Cali style’ and very popular in South and Latin America
- The key elements of this style are the fast side to side basic steps, involving lots of fancy footwork with a still upper body

### Puerto Rican style

- Danced on beat 1 – a hybrid of LA and New York styles
- New York style is strongly influenced by Puerto Rican style
- Forward and back basic step using the same timing as LA style, involves a tremendous amount of very technical footwork and ‘shines’

## Cuban 'Casino' style

- Danced on 1
- Popular in many places around the world, including in Europe, Latin America & North America
- The key elements of this style are the backward opening out basic steps, involving lots of turns danced with a constant rotation

## 'Rueda de Miami'

- Danced on 1 – a hybrid of LA style & Rueda de Cuba
- 'Rueda' in Spanish means 'Wheel'
- Danced in a circle, the moves are called out by one person and involve rapidly swapping places and moving in and out of the 'wheel'

## Characteristics and Technique

Tempo: 150-180 beats per minute  
 Rhythm: 1,2,3 (pause on 4)  
 Time signature: 4/4

Salsa is generally danced as a 3 beat step pattern in a 4 beat bar, comprising of 3 steps and a pause, tap or flick danced at the end of the bar. A pause is most common, but can be replaced with a flick or a tap at any time for progression purposes or alternative step combinations. When using a pause, the hip action is continued over beat 4 in order to give a constant flow and to maintain the Cuban motion of the dance.

To help your clients advance, you can replace the close step on beat 3 of the Mambo basic so that the feet pass each other instead. A 'sinking' movement into the knee can also be introduced on beat 5 as a further progression.

Keep the shoulder line level and do not pitch or sway the entire body. When the angle of the hips changes, you must compensate by lengthening and shortening the appropriate sides of the torso so that the shoulders remain level. The side of the torso over the bent knee must stretch and lengthen, while the side of the torso over the straight knee must squeeze and shorten.

Begin with a proud elegant posture, all weight on LF (hip to left) feet slightly apart. Release the heel of RF in preparation to step. Arms should be held naturally by your side, elbows slightly lifted in basic Latin position.

Cuban motion is used throughout the routine.

## Mambo Basic

Foot Position	Footwork	Body Movement/ Amount of Turn	Rhythm	Beat value
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RF back Replace weight to LF in place Close RF to LF LF forward Replace weight to RF in place Close LF to RF	Ball flat Ball flat Ball flat Ball flat Ball flat Ball flat	Cuban hip and body motion is used throughout  Full transfer of weight is completed on pause	Quick Quick Slow (pause on 4) Quick Quick Slow (pause on 8)	1 2 3,4 5 6 7,8
<b>Notes</b>				

## Cucarachas

Foot Position	Footwork	Body Movement/ Amount of Turn	Rhythm	Beat value
RF side pressure step, transfer part weight Replace weight to LF in place Close RF to LF LF side pressure step, transfer part weight Replace weight to RF in place Close LF to RF	IEB Ball flat Ball flat IEB Ball flat Ball flat	Cuban hip and body motion is used throughout	Quick Quick Slow (pause on 4) Quick Quick Slow (pause on 4)	1 2 3,4 5 6 7,8
<b>Notes</b>				

**Open Breaks** (see above – backward pressure steps)

## Cuban Basic – Opening out (T-Step)

Foot Position	Footwork	Body Movement/ Amount of Turn	Rhythm	Beat value
RF back in O/OP Replace weight to LF in place RF small step to side LF back in O/OP Replace weight to RF in place LF small step to side	Ball flat Ball flat Ball flat Ball flat Ball flat Ball flat	1/8 turn to R Begin to turn L End facing front 1/8 turn to L Begin to turn R End facing front	Quick Quick Slow (pause on 4) Quick Quick Slow (pause on 4)	1 2 3,4 5 6 7,8
<b>Notes</b>				

## Toe Heel Swivels

Foot Position	Footwork	Body Movement/ Amount of Turn	Rhythm	Beat value
RF tap to LF without weight RF tap to RDF without weight Close RF to LF LF tap to RF without weight LF tap to LDF without weight Close LF to RF	IEB Heel Ball flat IEB Heel Ball flat	Swivel to L on LF Swivel to R on LF Swivel to L on LF Swivel to R on RF Swivel to L on RF Swivel to R on RF	Quick Quick Slow (pause on 4) Quick Quick Slow (pause on 4)	1 2 3,4 5 6 7,8
<b>Notes</b>				

## Suzy Q

Foot Position	Footwork	Body Movement/ Amount of Turn	Rhythm	Beat value
RF forward cross in front of LF Tap LF behind RF RF forward cross in front of LF LF forward cross in front of RF Tap RF behind LF LF forward cross in front of RF	Ball flat Ball Ball flat Ball flat Ball Ball flat	Shoulder turn to LDF  Shoulder turn to RDF	Quick Quick Slow (pause on 4) Quick Quick Slow (pause on 4)	1 2 3,4 5 6 7,8

**Notes**

## Side Cross Basic

Foot Position	Footwork	Body Movement/ Amount of Turn	Rhythm	Beat value
RF side	Ball flat		Slow (2 beats)	1,2
LF back in O/OP	Ball flat	1/8 turn to L	Quick	3
Replace weight to RF in place	Ball flat	Commence to turn R	Quick	4
LF side	Ball flat		Slow	5,6
RF back in O/OP	Ball flat	1/8 turn to R	Quick	7
Replace weight to LF in place	Ball flat	Commence to turn L	Quick	8

**Notes**

## Shine

Foot Position	Footwork	Body Movement/ Amount of Turn	Rhythm	Beat value
RF back	Ball flat	Cuban hip and body	Quick	1
Replace weight to LF in place	Ball flat	motion is used	Quick	2
Close RF to LF	Ball flat	throughout	Slow (2 beats)	3,4
LF forward	Ball flat		SP (½ beat)*	&
RF tap behind LF without weight	Ball	Left shoulder lead	SP (½ beat)*	5
Replace weight to RF in place	Ball flat	turn 1/8 to face RDF	Quick	6
Close LF to RF	Ball flat		Slow (2 beats)	7,8

**Notes**

## Copa

Foot Position	Footwork	Body Movement/ Amount of Turn	Rhythm	Beat value
RF back, overturned Open Break Tap LF LF step in place Close RF to LF LF forward Replace weight to RF in place Close LF to RF	Ball flat IET Ball flat Ball flat Ball flat Ball flat Ball flat	¼ turn to R  ¼ turn to L	SP (½ beat) Slow (2 beats) SP (½ beat) Slow (pause on 4) Quick Quick Slow (pause on 4)	& 1,2 & 3,4 5 6 7
<b>Notes</b>				

**Side Flair** (see above – syncopated side steps)