# TAIL OVER FOOD & TRAVEL MAGAZINE

ISSUE 2 – APRIL 2012 WWW.LATINLOVER.US

## PORFIRIO DIAZ

THE ULTIMATE LATIN LOVER MEET JONATHAN BARBIERI

MEET JONATHAN BARBIERI

### A TASTE OF MEXICO

ROAM THE STREETS OF MEXICO CITY THROUGH CHEF

### JULIAN MEDINA'S

**FAVORITE RECIPE** 

RIVIERA MAYA:
WHERE THE PAST LIVES
IN THE PRESENT

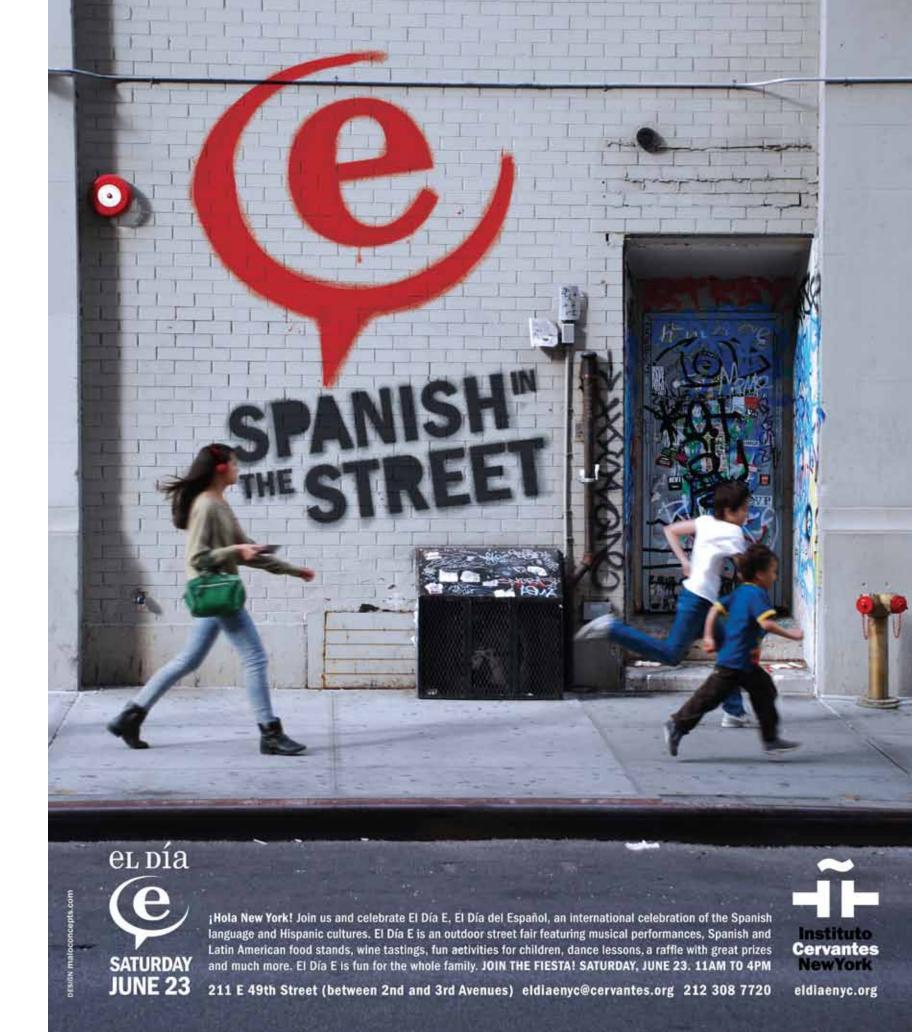
DIVE INTO THE HIDDEN ISLAND OF HOLBOX

FROM VENEZUELA
WITH LOVE:
CARACAS
AREPA BAR

SALUD!

@AMARU:
THE FIRST PISCO BAR
IN NEW YORK





# A TASTE OF MEXICO



PLACE OF DEPARTURE Story by Margarita Larios



RIVIERA MAYA: WHERE THE PAST LIVES IN THE PRESENT Story by Jessica Solt



HOLBOX-MEXICO: THE DOMINO EFFECT Story by Melissa Franchy



MADE IN MEXICO:
EMBARK ON AN
IMAGINARY TRIP TO
MEXICO CITY THROUGH
CHEF JULIAN MEDINA'S
FAVORITE RECIPE
Interview by
Margarita Larios



THE ULTIMATE LATIN LOVER Story by R.E. Toledo



Children teased our older sizeer when she brought it to school for lunch because they said it looked like she was enting napkins.

8: Leise is also known as Viking Bread and is what our father equates to Morwegian tottilias. Leise comes dried and will last torewer.

LAS HERMANAS SUGGEST:

Norwegian Meatballs

with a side of Mangu2

Tres Leches Cake

with Cloudberries1

is the Spanish term

the coasts of Norway

Preserved three times,

to the New World.

feature a fish from

as this cod is

for dried, salted cod-

Much of this fish is from

especially well-suited to be fully salted, dried and cured.

Spanish & Portuguese explorers

This is how traditional dishes

in many Latin American countries,

including the Dominican Republic,

including the Dominican Republic.

Spanish and Portuguese explorers

porp wore versatile to cook with

with cardamom and sea salt

dasva jelly and white cheese

LAS HERMANAS SUGGEST:

Fried Sweet Plantains

иотмедтви рапсакев мітр

and more suitable for long journeys.

prought it to the New World.

Klippfisk

became popular in many Latin Countries,

This is how a fish from Northern Norway

it was fully salted, dried and cured, making it

The production of salt cod dates back at least

is the Norwegian term for dried, salted cod.

200 years, and unlike fish that was simply dried,

acalao

brought it on long journeys

Northern Norway, Klippfisk.

Bacalao

6: As children, it we wanted to be excused from the dinner table, we would say to our mother, "Takk for maten," which means, "Thenks for the food." 7: Our dad often jokes that Morweyian food has no color and is only brown or white. His theory is exemplified by this recipe.

2: Ont wow need to wake these for brace on Meskends of for dimmer it our had wee of town

RECIPES BY BODHILD: I use Progresso "red kidney beans" first sauté (fry till soft): 1/2 onion chopped up some garlic cloves chopped up (2-4) add the can of beans with all the liquid in the can add an extra can of water 2 bullion cubes (could be beef, chicken or vegetable) 1 tsp. tomato paste some parsley stir well, bring to boil and let simmer at least 1/2 hour -the more the better it should thicken to a nice gravy consistency it thickens while it sits without cooking as well. so cooking it ahead of time is always good Cook white rice Some people like the beans on top of rice, other people eat it on the side 1-1/4 1b ground beef (or chicken, turkey) some chopped onion and garlic sauté onion and garlic in little oil add beef, stir it, brown it, stir it -keep stirring till it is in tiny pieces salt, pepper to taste sprinkle of parsley dash of oregano brown and add small can of tomato sauce (good with rice and beans) MANGU: (Mashed Plantains) 3 green plantains (for 2 people) Cut plantains in half and peel boil in water - water should cover pieces add some salt when boiled (about 45 minutes, when fork enters easily it is cooked) separate most of the water, you will use it in the mashing start mashing the plantains, add some of the separated water as needed. mangu must be eaten as soon as it is mashed, otherwise it gets hard and need more water I like mangu with sausages, bacalao\* they are on Third Avenue среу тубът ваче росато тегяе ав мелл lefse: the kind you wet 20 min. before you eat it rake a ride to wordic Delicaresen a pick up westlands refae: (Viking Bread) If, a extra good if put some sour cream in the gravy Serve with a brown gravy made with beet broth ITY them in margarine until browned on all sides mix it all by hand and make into small balls salt, pepper and allspice to taste an egg to make sure it all sticks together

S LICELE WASEL Well ground bread crumbs or regular flour Equal part ground beet and ground pork KINLLKAKER (Norweglan Meatballs)

Done should not be more than 1/8 " thickilli turn it around and "color" other side. smidgen of butter on top, amosp it stound to cover bottom тисств рассех ти пос беи" ITEE1e precer (swidden) you can write OLE on top of the batter. tyer when you hold up the whisk, nufit if is futck enough stir in enough all purpose flour

gdd 2 cups milk р едда реагец hynnekyken: (notwedten benceyes)

KECILES BY BODHILD:

2: If your mom calls, asking what time you will be home for dinner because she is making Nangu: Heware, do not be late.

3: Cloudberries are extremely coveted in Norway and according to our mother, each family has their own top-vectet cloudberry patch from-which they harvest.
4: Rlippfisk "fish dried on the cliffs. Traditionally, it was dried only by the wind and the sun, hanging on wooden scaffolding or lying on clean cliffs or rocks near the seaside-

Drying and salting are ancient techniques to preserve nutrients and the process makes the codfish tastier.

### POSTER DESIGN BY LAS HERMANAS IGLESIAS

"As some of our work has explored the idea of mash-ups or fusions, we also thought it would be interesting to think about overlaps in the cuisine and what Norwegian-Dominican fusion food might

### **CONTENT**





Story by Benny Chueca



ABUELA'S RECIPE: TRINA BARDUSCO. SHARES HER ABUELA'S RECIPE Photos by Juan Ayora



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DISCOVER PRIORAT'S WINE Story by Alexandre Surralles



FEATURED ARTIST: LAS HERMANAS IGLESIAS Interview by Laura González



### TERRITORIES FOR OUR MAPS

Founding Editor-in-Chief Chris Yong-García

> **Associate Editors** Melissa Franchy Suzanne Oboler Brian Waniewski

**Consulting Editors** Jorge Ochoa Camila Valdeavellano

Art Direction & Graphic Design Eyestorm Design Studio

> Producers Melissa Franchy Chris Yong-García

Translation Melissa Franchy Margarita Larios The images of Mexico, lindo y querido, are so many that everyone has his or her own beliefs and personal maps about this ancient and big country. But "the map is not the territory," observed Alfred Korzybski, to caution us that an abstraction drawn from our beliefs is not the thing itself. Through the pages of our second issue, Latin Lover has created a territory for various food & travel maps of Mexico.

We explore Mexico from the hidden treasures of Holbox Island to the Riviera Maya and Oaxaca, with a photo-stop in today's Tenochtitlan and then back to New York, where chef Julian Medina introduces us to his favorite recipe, tacos de suadero, a knockout version of a Mexico City street-food classic.

We also bring you a portrait of the talented American-Dominican-Norwegian Hermanas Iglesias, a grandma's delicious coconut risotto recipe, authentic Venezuelan arepas in Manhattan and more. While drawing your own maps, you can taste a Catalonian Priorat or surrender your soul to a Pierde Almas.

Buen viaje!



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### MICHAEL BERMAN

Michael Berman is a food-focused photographer and writer whose work has appeared in the *New York Daily News*, *The New York Times*, and the *Edible* magazines of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens; as well as in advertisements and materials for PNC Bank, Peter Luger Restaurant, and Pio Pio restaurants. His photography can be seen at www.msbphotography.com. His food blog is www.pizzacentric.com.

### BENNY CHUECA



Benny Chueca is a Peruvian journalist currently based in New York City, where he completed an MFA program in Creative Writing in Spanish at New York University. He reports for newspapers and magazines in his country and is also finishing his first novel. Set in Lima, Peru, it follows two teenagers who are squandering their chances to make a future for themselves while trying to have some fun during the violent final years of the 1980s. He also teaches Spanish in prestigious New York institutions, such as NYU, Cervantes Institute and Queen Sophia Institute.

### PAKO DOMINGUEZ

Pako Dominguez is an experienced photographer who takes enormous pleasure in being part of your special day. He will document your exceptional moments with candid, lively, artfully-crafted photographs. Pako has photographed weddings and events internationally and offers excellent, personalized services in English, Spanish or French. www.phototeka.net

### **MELISSA FRANCHY**

Melissa Franchy is a photographer, traveler, foodie, scuba diver and art lover, who is passionate about exploring the world broadly and authentically. Her travel research has taken her from swimming with whale sharks in Holbox, Mexico to learning how to cook Vietnamese food on an authentic junk boat over Halong Bay, Vietnam to camping in carpet tents on the Moroccan desert tasting tagine made by her nomadic Berber hosts. Born in Peru, Melissa moved to NYC 12 years ago. She has studied International Business and Photography. Her love for food, travel and global culture drives her to always crave her next travel adventure.

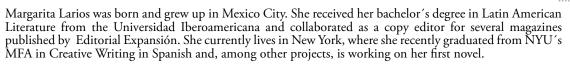


### LAURA GONZÁLES



Laura was born and raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and moved to the cold American northeast in 2007. Based in New York City, she is a contributing writer for several arts publications, specializing in contemporary art, artists and events. As a cataloguer at Phillips de Pury & Company, she oversees the production of the auction catalogues for contemporary and Latin American sales.

### MARGARITA LARIOS





### CONTRIBUTORS

SUZANNE OBOLER

Suzanne Oboler is Professor of Latin American and Latina/o Studies at John Jay College, of the City University of New York. She is Founding Editor of the academic journal, Latino Studies. Her research centers on human rights with a focus on Latino immigrant incarceration, and on race, immigration and belonging in the Americas. She is the author of Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States; editor of Latinos and Citizenship: The Dilemma of Belonging and Behind Bars: Latino/as and Prison in the United States; and co-editor of Neither Enemies nor Friends: Latinos, Blacks, Afro-Latinos. She is also co-editor in chief of The Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinolas in the United States (4 volumes) and of the forthcoming 2-volume, Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in Contemporary Politics, Law and Social

**JORGE OCHOA** 

After working as a Photojournalist in newspapers and magazines in Perú for 10 years, Jorge moved to New York to study Photography at the International Center of Photography. He then worked as a master color printer for top fashion photographers. Today, Jorge is a freelance portrait photographer and is developing personal art photography projects. He's also learning Digital Design to complement his skills as an image-





### MIOZOTIS PUMAROL

Miozotis Pumarol is a Jill of all trades having worked in mediums such as fashion design, illustration, styling, jewelry making, photography and film production. A native New Yorker, she is a first-generation American from a Dominican family. She is a proud advocate of uptown, Spanish rock and sensuality. Harnessing a passion for the aesthetics of desire, her work always comes across as beautiful and alluring. The underground culture of urban Hispanics has been a defining influence, implementing itself as a controlled chaos that can be seen in a lot of her work. Miozotis is also known artistically as miopuma, but most of her friends call her mio. Presently working on personal projects, and is residing happily in the hills with her lover and two dogs.



Born in Boston but raised in chaotic Mexico City, Jessica Solt would choose a good taco al pastor over clam chowder any day. When she's not making a living typing furiously on her keyboard, Jessica muses about life, food and other weird things at www.chesterwrites.blogspot.com. The most important goal in her bucket list is to travel around the world. She likes spinning—bikes not bottles—books and wine. She lives in New York.





### ALEXANDRE SURRALLÉS

Alexandre Surrallés holds a PhD in Anthropology by l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) Paris, in 1999. He is a resident researcher at the Centre National de la Recherché Scientifique (CNRS) and member of the Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale, Collége de France, Paris. He teaches Anthropology at EHESS and has been a visiting scholar at various European and American universities. His various books include Au coeur du sens; perception affectivité, action chez les Candoshi (Paris, MSH-CNRS, 2003, Spanish translation 2009) and the co-edited anthology, The Land Within: Indigenous Territories and Perception of Environment (Copenhagen, IWGIA, 2005).

R.E. TOLEDO

Was born and raised in Mexico City, graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 1994 with a B.S. in Communications and an M.A. in Spanish from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 2002. R.E. has contributed for the Spanish Newspaper Hola Tennessee and for Revista Esperanza in México City. Her poem Chilancana was recently published in the Spring 2012 Issue of Label Me Latina/o. In 2010 she hosted "De Todo un Poco" a Community Service Spanish radio show. R.E. coedited Imanhattan 3, the 2012 issue of the magazine for the MFA in creative writing in Spanish at NYU.





### **CAMILA VALDEAVELLANO**

Born in Lima in 1973, Camila has a degree in Interior Architecture & Object Design at École Camondo in Paris. She has created set designs for dance, theatre and film productions; illustrated publications, and designed commercial and industrial products. Memorias de Salmo Trutta (2007), her first stop-motion animation film, co-directed in NY with Cayetana Carrion, was exhibited in diverse international film festivals and has won two awards in Peru. Currently, she is living in Rio de Janeiro with her husband and daughter.

**NEAL PATRICK** 



Neal Patrick is from the mid-west and raised in Minnesota not far from where Bob Dylan was born. Traveling and music brought Neal Patrick to the camera. Moving to NYC after a science degree in photography at Daytona Beach, Florida in 2000, Neal has been photographing in Strawberry Fields and had his first exhibit in London at Intoxica Gallery in 2004. More recently, he has traveled extensively in India over the past five years and plans on publishing his first book.



### **BRIAN WANIEWSKI**

Brian Waniewski is a poet, futurist and management and marketing consultant. He is cofounder and managing partner of the global future forecasting firm, Popular Operations, where he helps top organizations identify emerging opportunities, develop new visions and strategize to create new possibilities within existing structures. He also serves as managing director at the Institute of Play, a New York-based non-profit innovating at the intersection of games and learning. Brian studied history and literature in the US and Berlin and is currently on a crash course in Latin culture thanks to his Brazilian-Peruvian wife and baby daughter.

# PLACE OF DEPARTURE

By Margarita Larios Illustration by Miozitis Pumarol

> After putting my shoes back on, I wave him goodbye from the other end of the magnetic band. The security officer asks me to move aside so other travelers can come through. The old woman that watched us say our goodbyes is now standing next to me and throws me an empathetic smile.

> The bag where I carry my family's things is heavy: dad's useless requests, a couple of things for my sister, something my mother needs... I feel my arm becoming weaker every moment. Shortly after, I learn that the gate where I'm supposed to board is at the farthest end of this terminal.

When I finally get there and take the last available seat, a woman asks me to please fill out a survey. I'm about to reply when I look at her face, and her watery gaze strikes my chest: I change my mind.

Struggling against the gravity imposed on her face, she does her best to smile. The grin barely drawn on her face reveals that lethargy still pending from hope's thread. I take the sheet and



scribble through the paper's inquiries: Name(s), Last name(s), Age, Gender... And then, a complete blank: Place of departure. I rest the pencil's tip on the paper: sitio de embarque. I look up and wait. There is nothing in particular to watch or gaze upon, but I'm looking for the answer. After a moment I look down again. One more thorn: Duration of the trip. Blank... I'm in New York. I'm going to Mexico. Only for 13 days. I haven't left New York for over a year. Yes, logic leads only to one conclusion, and yet I refuse to answer based solely on facts. I won't write down that which would utterly refute what for me is the truth. Printed on a piece of paper: vacation in Mexico. Even the word to designate the place sounds odd for the first time... I think of so many foreigners spending their holidays in Mexico: clashing colors, minds convinced of the warmest weather, an exoticism epitomized, feared spices and discovered flavors; a trip to remember. I have never lived in that place. The green of the buses or the baby's sneakers hanging from the rear-view mirror - our own particular glimpses interpreted as surreal—never seemed anything other than common to me, to all of us. In my mind, it is the same place I saw with daily eyes and a somewhat yellowish optic effect - so similar to a picture taken in the 70's. How is it then that this round trip is bound to end in La Guardia Airport? Round: to close a cycle, echoes in my mind. My sister's voice pop's up: "Here where?", she asked me on Skype that time - I start to feel my head recoiling from my neck - when I was talking about the place we were at. For a moment, I had actually been fooled and felt she was next to me, that we were together and that I could say here. Very similar to those times when she watched me try to find and kill a water bug, or when I went to the grocery store and almost brought back the cheese she needed for the recipe I had just given her. She was here: laughing at me while I took refuge on top of an ottoman and used a broom as a paddle -and a weapon; waiting, inside my apartment while I went to the store on the corner; even when we stopped talking

and kept doing other things with the camera on. We could still see each other (she always loved to stare at aquariums). I try to decipher while I recall these things, but my memory starts to fade. Only a static image of a created memory plays inside my head. My friend, whose girl was on the other side of the world, asked her to leave the computer on at night. She would go to bed, and so he would stay: in front of the screen, writing, and trying to hear – or perhaps to imagine – her breath, or the sounds of her body twisting and turning against the sheets. I can't help spiraling down: I never sleep the night before I travel. My hands remain tight, trying not to let the pencil drop.

"Her grandmother did exactly the same. Except that she left without telling anyone, and came to the city with my father. She had nobody here. Not even her children. She didn't have someone from her side. But that was the choice she made, you know?"... My mother tells Alex something he decides to believe without having the same blood; what somebody remembers as if it were an experience of their own; what I realize to have known even since before.

### - Oh, I'm sorry! I think this is yours...

The boarding process has started, and a woman who has stumbled on my legs, wakes me up and returns my pencil. I take it and look for its owner, to also return the survey sheet. She is nowhere to be found around the gate. While I get in the line, I still look around to see if I can spot her and ask her the correct answer for those questions.

To be continued...

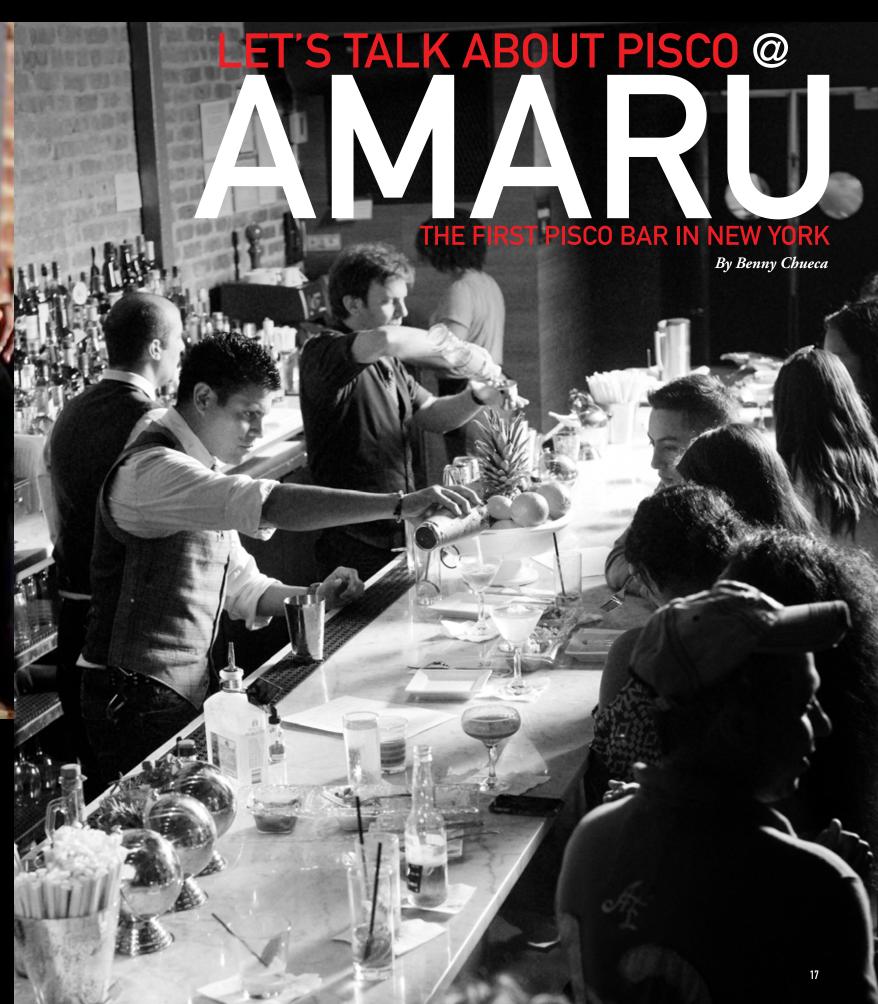
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AMARU'S MIXOLOGISTS

Photos by Michael Berman

www.amarubar.com



"Amaru means snake in Quechua and is a word that is very much in the Peruvian imaginary because of Tupac Amaru II, the leader of the greatest indigenous uprising against the Spanish crown in 1780 –Didn't I say that it's impossible to avoid talking about history?-- His name means fire serpent and has been adopted as an icon for various political and artistic causes in Peru, although his aura has transcended national borders. In the U.S., the popular rapper and actor Tupac [Amaru] Shakur took this revolutionary's name, and now Queens has a bar with his name too."







been living in New York for over two years now, which as a Peruvian, adds up to approximately 800 days of living with the constant threat of thirst. Because it's not easy to find Peruvian pisco in New York. And it's even more difficult to find the kind of Peruvian piscos that move you. In this city with its thousands of bars, in which some touch the sky while others are swallowed by the earth, thirst is, in fact, a reality as daunting as a half empty glass.

One night, when I was still a newcomer to the city, I remember catching a glimpse of the typical tall-necked bottle shape of the Viejo Tonel pisco, in the darkness of a Brooklyn bar where Latin bands play. But my excitement lasted even less than the shot: The bartender poured the last drops from the bottle for me, telling me I was the only person who had ordered pisco in months. On another occasion, when I was visiting at a Cuban friend's house in New Jersey, he asked me if I could make him a chilcano—a popular pisco and ginger ale cocktail. He told me there was a nearby liquor store that sold pisco. We went and my joy turned into a hard-to-hide disappointment when I realized that the store only had pisco made in Chile and that they didn't even know that there was such a thing as Peruvian pisco.

Although my friend was quite aware of the continent's geopolitics, I had to explain the reasons for my disappointment to him. Because whenever you talk about pisco, history can't be avoided, I gave him an executive summary that goes something like this: Since the 1879 war between Peru and Chile, overwhelmingly won by the latter, there has always been a bitter rivalry between the two, regardless of what the issue might bepisco, for example. In this respect, Peru lays claim to both the creation and the designation of origin for this grape brandy. Historically, the port of Pisco --which is in Peru and which gives the drink its name because, among other reasons, it has been shipped from there to different parts of the world since the Spanish colonial days--has solidly supported the Peruvian position. Moreover, Chile, if not the greatest, is one of the largest importers of Peruvian pisco, which is in and of itself a recognition of its quality.

Nevertheless, the pisco scene in New York is changing, according to various media, including *The New York Times*, which devoted an <u>article</u> to the new Peruvian pisco brands that are gaining market share in this country. But as significant as it is to be able to find pisco in Manhattan's large liquor stores, such as Astor Wines & Spirits (www.astorwines.com), is being able to find it in the battlefield –that is, in places where spirits are actually put to the test through conversation. I'm referring to the bars and, in this sense, pisco has received a major boost in New York thanks to an initiative anchored by the Pio Pio restaurant chain.

Pio Pio is a very well established chain that serves roast chicken and other popular Peruvian dishes and has eight restaurants, one of them in an area of Manhattan known as Hell's Kitchen. It was there, just over two years ago, that Rodolfo Mayor and Alejandro Milligan, two Peruvians in their thirties who have lived in the U.S. for over ten years, decided to put Peruvian pisco to the test in a bar. "When we started, we knew it would be a little difficult," Mayor recalls. "We asked the bartenders to offer drinks made with pisco." For example, if someone asked for a Brazilian caipirinha, we offered to make it with pisco and if the customer did not like it, we would change it. But people enjoyed it and so the cocktails kept coming."

The results of Pio Pio's pisco bar were promising, so Milligan and Mayor decided that as part of the Pio Pio restaurant chain, it would be a good time to open (and, here, a drum roll would be in order) Amaru —the first pisco bar in New York. Located in Jackson Heights, Queens, a neighborhood made up of low buildings, wide streets and a massive and international Latino presence, Amaru looks like a trendy bar that could easily be located in Manhattan. To my surprise, the site's design doesn't resemble either the atmosphere of pisco bodegas or anything directly Peruvian. In fact, the only clue we might find about the bar's Peruvian roots is its name.

Amaru means snake in Quechua and is a word that is very much in the Peruvian imaginary because of Tupac Amaru II, the leader of the greatest indigenous uprising against the Spanish crown in 1780 –Didn't I say that it's impossible to avoid talking about history?-- His name means fire serpent and has been adopted as an icon for various political and artistic causes in Peru, although his aura has transcended national borders. In the U.S., the popular rapper and actor Tupac [Amaru] Shakur took this revolutionary's name, and now Queens has a bar with his name too.

The seemingly cold ambience at Amaru disappears as soon as you taste its cocktails and appetizers. Obviously, there's pisco sour, chilcano and passion fruit sour, a particularly refreshing variant of the pisco sour, but there are original cocktails too. The appetizers range from ceviches through salchipapas, and include Spanish tapas. All of it responds to the concept Rodolfo Mayor and Alejandro Miligan wanted to establish.

The project began three years ago, when Mayor and Milligan went to Peru with the idea of collecting information to support Pio Pio's new pisco theme. For this, they subjected themselves to the unspeakable sacrifice of visiting the best pisco bars in Lima. Among the bars they visited were Las Brujas del Cachiche, La Calesa, as well as historic bars like the Hotel Maury bar, the Hotel Bolivar bar and the Bar Inglés at the Country Club hotel. They talked to managers and bartenders --they were particularly impressed with Roberto

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Melendez, the extraordinary bartender at Bar Inglés – picking up suggestions and taking notes on recipes. Looking for the perfect pisco sour, they discovered that that discussion can take on philosophical dimensions: is perfection humanly possible? Is it necessary? With a blender or a shaker? With sugar or syrup? "No one follows the original recipe. Each bartender has his own version," Mayor understood. "But I liked the pisco sour at La Calesa the most. The bartender uses two ounces of pisco instead of three, which is the original recipe. And maybe that's why I liked it best. In New York, I'm used to drinks that only have two ounces. Three seems more aggressive," he explains.

This last point has been key to the creation of Amaru because although the theme is Peruvian pisco --and yes, it is great-- the setting is New York and that requires a different set of considerations. "Here the pisco competes with other spirits. We have the palates of people who come from all over the world," says Milligan. In New York we're subject to competition at a global level. So it's not just about being friendly. It's about professionalism: it's the way we deal with the ice, with the measurements, the glasses, the temperatures, etc. Service includes those details. And that total detail is all there in the good bars in New York, of which there are many. What is sold isn't simply a product. What is sold is a service. And part of the service is the quality of the product."

In terms of the outlook for pisco in the city, Mayor sums it up like this: "Some years ago, there wasn't much variety of pisco in New York: There was Ocucaje, Vargas and Barsol, and Macchu Pisco had just entered the market. The rest was Chilean. I would call the distributors and they wouldn't even know the Peruvian pisco. It has evolved a lot over the past two years. Pisco 100 came out. Barsol just released an Italian mosto verde and Porton, a "mosto verde acholado". Biondi has brought three of his piscos. Vargas brought two piscos and two mosto verdes. And Macchu Pisco has La Diablada and La Nusta will be coming soon. And there are others coming. Viñas de Oro in San Francisco has its entire line. We've heard they'll be coming here soon. And, Campo de Encanto is here too. The market is growing," Mayor summarizes.

And what's the goal? We asked Rodolfo Mayor. "Fifteen years ago, you went to a liquor store and the only tequila available was Jose Cuervo. It was highly sought at the time. Now you read Beverage Media, the guide for liquor coming to the United States, and you can find endless number of tequilas, and many of them are spectacular. And the same goes for mezcal. This is our competition. People come and ask, 'what is pisco; is it, a tequila?' 'No,' we have to explain. If we do it well, pisco will grow like tequila has grown," says Mayor. "The ideal would be to have pisco in every bar. Every bartender should always



have a gin, a rum, a vodka, a tequila and a triplesec. The idea is to also have a pisco, because he knows that people will order it." Milligan concludes.

As we speak on a raised platform of Amaru, I start to end the evening with a shot of La Diablada, a pisco I was introduced to in Lima several years ago and of which I have good memories. La Diablada, which is a pisco produced by the Asher sisters, is not a pure pisco; that is, it's not distilled from one grape alone. Instead, it's an acholado –which means mixed, blended. Johnnie Walker whiskeys, both red and black, for example, are blended, while the green "pure malt," is pure. The acholado can be a way to use grapes that are insufficient to complete production of pure, but it could also represent a pisco maker's way of showing how perfect his pisco is. Why is it called acholado? To explain the word cholo is almost like trying to explain the entire history of Peru.

I'm not going to try it here, but I will provide a brief summary: Cholo is a word used by whites to refer negatively to indigenous people, usually in urban settings. 'Cholear' is a racist exercise, because it places one race over another and it is especially absurd because in Peru we are all racially mixed. But cholo, chola, cholito, cholita, can also be very affectionate words, that we use with people with whom we have more intimacy: lovers, friends and family. And in recent decades, the word "cholo" has acquired a militantly positive connotation when people who use the word recognize that everything Peruvian is cholo and therein lies the difference that makes it unique and special. Then, cholo means everything: good, evil, hate, love, past and future.

Did I already say it? To talk about pisco is to talk about Peru. And that reminds me of my Cuban friend and I think that Amaru would be an excellent place to get rid of that geopolitical-alcoholic nail. And I also think that now, to a Peruvian pisquero in New York, the glass will never again be half empty, but half full. And indeed, I want mine filled up again.







From Cusco Peru near the mystical lost city of Machu Picchu, the Incas created one of the largest empires in human history. Cusqueña is an exceptional beer know as "The Gold of the Incas" because of its outstanding quality, distinctive flavor and beautiful Golden color.

Genuinely brewed at source for a century and in accordance with the German purity laws of Reinheitsgebot 1516; the highest standards of brewing on Earth. The Inca descendents have undoubtedly crafted one of the finest beers available and are once again spreading their famous Gold around the world.

# ABUELA's RECIPE

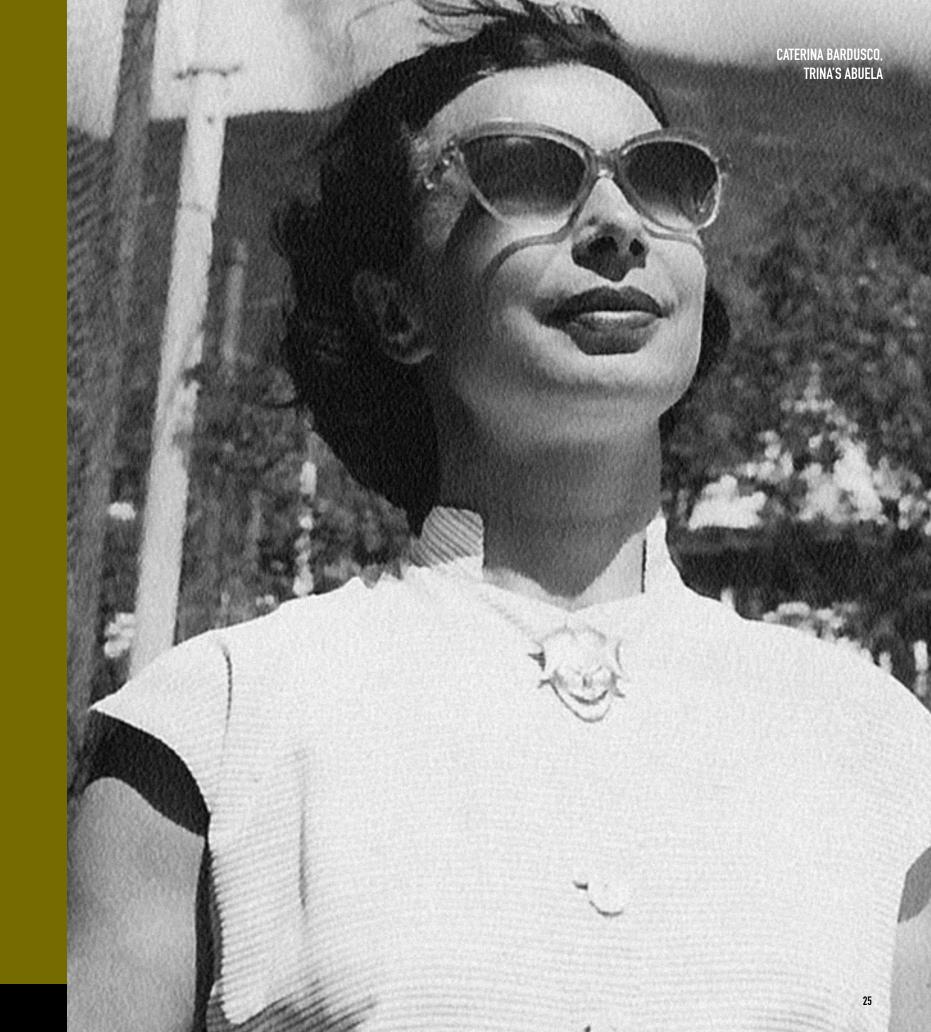


Photos by Juan Ayora

"I don't know how I learned to cook, but I do! My grandmother was a Venetian; she arrived in Venezuela when she was 44 with her husband and kids. My dad was born in Italy and came to Venezuela at age 14; at home we always used to eat traditional Venetian food ... when my grandfather died, my grandmother stopped cooking everyday, and this inspired me to start cooking myself..."

Once again, our nostalgia for special moments from the past led us to travel back in time and learn the story behind the recipe of one of our favorite dishes. It is a special recipe, coming from a very special person.

This recipe takes us to Venice (Italy), California and even Caracas, finally ending up on New York's Lower East Side. Our destination is where our host, Trina Bardusco, will open her home to us and tell us the story of her "Coconut Risotto" –an homage to her grandmother, Caterina, who taught her how to cook Italian food that Trina later "tropicalized" into her own style.



To be precise, our "Coconut Risotto" story, or rather Trina's story, began in Switzerland- where her parents (1970's hippies) met. During their travels they stopped in Caracas, Venezuela to visit the Venetian/Venezuelan side of the family, and then passed through San Francisco where Trina was born. When Trina was 9 months old the family moved to Caracas, where she lived until the age of 19, then returning to the United States.

"... My mom came to Venezuela at very young age, my parents got divorced and my Italian grandmother (my dad's mother), my "gringa" mom and my brother ended up living in the same house ... it was hilarious, because both my mother and my grandmother spoke very bad Spanish ... But somehow they understood each other so well! I think perhaps because both were foreigners living in a place far from 'home' ..."

During her studies at Hunter College in New York, Trina discovered the "Teoría y juego del duende"- an essay by Federico Garcia Lorca- that changed her life, and inspired her to find her own "duende". Soon afterwards, Trina's friendship with the legendary photographer Gilles Larrain provided a personal introduction into the fascinating and exclusive world of Flamenco in Seville, Spain. In Seville, she met the famous Paco Lira and had the opportunity to be a guest at "La Carbonería", one of Flamenco's most sacred places. Staying there allowed her unprecedented access to valuable material for her future documentaries on the Flamenco world, as well as to re-connect with one of her past passions: dance.

Upon her return to New York, she felt that something was still missing and that she had more to say creatively:

"The TV series 'Habla' started when Alberto Ferreras and I worked at HBO Latino. We felt that Latinos on TV did not express themselves authentically; on television they used a lot of the so-called "neutral Spanish". We decided to visit different cities such as Chicago, Miami, Los Angeles and Texas in search of the 'corazoncito' of each place we visited, and we learned about the specific cultures of Latinos who live here in the U.S.!...We invented a new format.... the spirit of the series 'Habla' shined a light on the different ways that Latinos here speak, this added to our appreciation of where we came from ..."

Perhaps it was her personal warmth, combined with her constant and dedicated exploration of Latino cultural roots, which made Trina's apartment so welcoming on Sunday night.

Sharing a delicious "Coconut Risotto", such a rich mixture of continents and ingredients, while hanging out with good friends, was the perfect tribute to a super cool abuela.



### Risotto de Coco

### "Coconut Risotto"

(Goes great with fish wrapped in a banana leaf or saucy seafood of any kind)

By Trina Bardusco

### (serves 6)

### Ingredients

1 1/2 cup arborio style white rice
1 cup grated coconut
1 can of unsweetened coconut milk
1 red pepper
1 yellow pepper
1 green pepper
1 jalapeño pepper
1 medium size onion
3 cloves of garlic
Salt
Pepper
A big splash of white wine

### Optional

I like the Borsari ginger-orange seasoned salt, but you can also grate a pinch of orange zest or ginger into the mix.

You can also use your favorite vegetable bouillon or other flavored salt, but not too much!

Aji dulce or sweet pepper. If you an find them, use them! They are sweet and not to be confused wit the super hot kinds (habanero) that look exactly alike in the supermarket.

### How to...

I'll start off by saying that the way I cook this risotto is by using the same exact methods my Italian grandmother taught me for making regular risotto. So if you already know how to make risotto, you're all set

In a large cast iron skillet or thick copper pan or whatever you've got that won't burn rice easily!
(can be deep or medium deep, but not a small rice cooker) sautee diced onions and garlic in either coconut, corn, safflower or canola oil for about three minutes or slightly brown

Then add all types of diced peppers (I like dicing long strands) for about 5-10 minutes at a medium flame

Raise the flame and add white wine

Mix in salt, pepper, when wine begins to simmer

In a separate bowl, mix the dry grated coconut with the rice and then add to skillet on stove

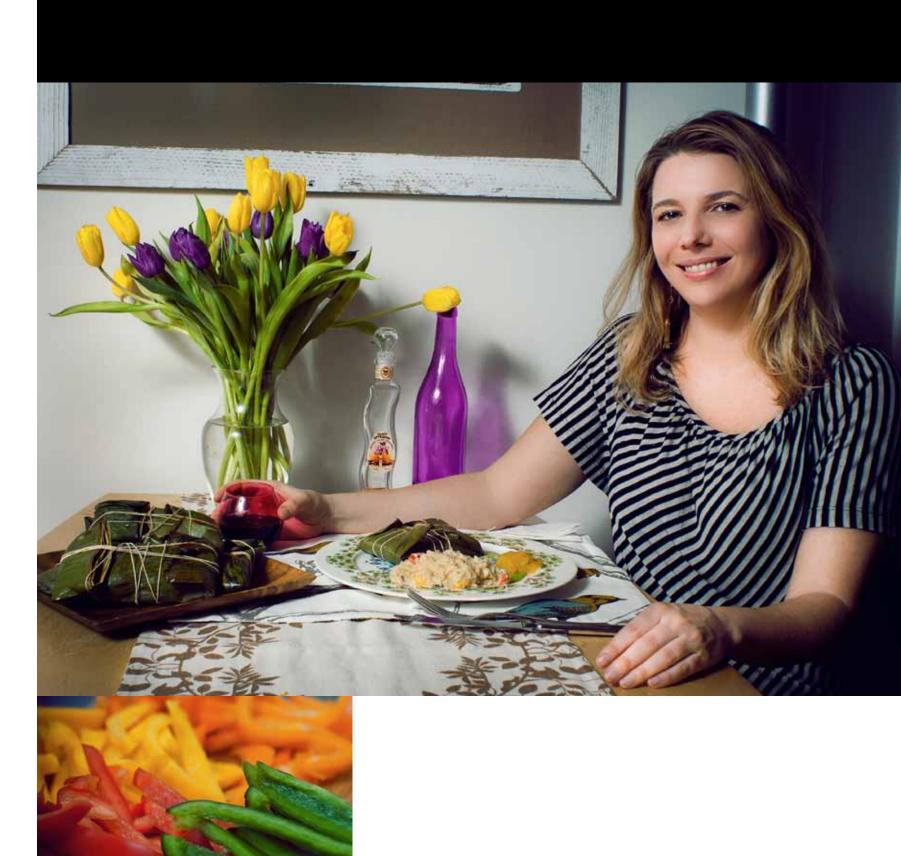
Constantly mix the rice and allow it to absorb the flavors of wine, peppers etc. Let the rice get slightly toasty, but never brown

Add half a cup of water and keep stirring (This is a good moment to add bouillon, orange or ginger zest)

Gradually add more water, little by little, and mix until the water evaporates every time. Repeat.

When the rice is still al dente but close to being done, add the full can of coconut milk for a creamy finish.

Let it get nice and creamy by stirring with a wooden spoon and then serve!



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# THE AREPA'S SAVING GRACE

By Brian Waniewski

An arepa is an unleavened, slightly puffed pillowy bun made from ground corn and water. It's grilled then baked, sliced open then stuffed. En route from hand to mouth, it releases a steamy corntinged exhalation of what's to come: in my case, black beans, grilled peppers, sweet plantains and cheese. But you should order whatever fillings suit your fancy. The minds behind Caracas Arepa Bar made an arepa for every taste and reach well beyond the smoky pulled pork, tender shredded beef and grilled chicken chunks which are staples in so many Latin cuisines. In fact, four of the eleven arepas on offer bypass meat completely, and baked tofu is on hand as a serviceable substitute for all the rest. And I cannot tell you what a relief that is to me. As a vegetarian, non-drinking gringo with poor Spanish language skills and two left feet, I tend to fall out of just about every ritual of warmth and welcome my Peruvian wife's clan plans for my benefit, which tend to involve drink, dance, meatcentered feasting and fast chatter. Finally, here is a place where we can all share a table and break bread without the usual explanations, recriminations and hurt feelings. Hurray for Venezuela! Hurray for Caracas Arepa Bar!

That the fare at Caracas is fantastic seems to be a fact well known to New Yorkers, given the wait times just to get a table. But I'd like to linger on a couple highlights from the several meals I enjoyed there.

To start, there's an array of fried goodies, featuring mild white cheeses, sweet plantains, chorizo and cinnamon-laced doughs and batters. These are perfect thirst-generators for a huge selection of rums, cocktails, beers and wines, and for a delicious lemonade-





like brew, called Papelón con limón, with its fermented finish of dehydrated cane sugar. These starters are also perfect canvases for the sauces—tangy, sweet, well spiced, syrupy—that come on the side. The strangest was the pure sugar cane syrup that accompanied battered plantains and cheese and seemed to want vinegar or salt or chile to signal that we had not fast-forwarded to dessert. The most irresistible sauce was in the squeeze bottle sitting on every table, a sour-sweet cilantro-green house-made concoction waiters seemed well versed in elevating to the status of "secret" by deflecting diners' inquiries.

You will overlook the menu's humble soup at your peril. Both the vegetable soup—with its heavy dose of corn and potato—and the butternut squash puree I had were pure simplicity, full of flavor and sweetness.

The arepas are the main event of course. But for diners who want something more than steaming hand-sized pockets full of goodness, there are beans and rice, beef or tofu, plantains and cheese-type platters too.

The dessert I would recommend is the Obleas: a pair of paper-thin flavorless six-inch round wafers sandwiched together with a spread of dulce de leche, a silken paste made by reducing milk to caramel. Church-goers will immediately recognize this divine dulce de leche delivery mechanism as the bread of life they receive weekly and wonder whether it and they have landed in heaven. It arrives at the table warm, delicately wrapped in a sheer sheet of waxed paper.

The restaurant itself was artfully designed to deliver the look and feel of the informal settlements that climb the hillsides surrounding Caracas. The walls are facaded in a bric a brac of mismatched wood boards, aluminum roofing sheets, colorful back-lit plastic panels and other materials aiming to appear re-purposed. All in all: a visually cohesive, meticulous, surprisingly calm space with pretty good sound absorption, considering the crowds it pretty constantly attracts. And it opens out into additional garden seating! Which is to say, the location in Williamsburg does. The original Caracas is in the East Village, where wife-husband owners Mirabel Araujo and Aristides Barrios first started pedaling arepas in 2003. And because that location is hardly big enough for two people to turn around in, the gestures it is able to make toward Venezuelan culture are limited to a mural of Maria Lionza—an indigenous female cult figure—and some shadow boxes stuffed with religious icons and witty kitsch.

In the summer you can find a third location of Caracas at the Rockaway Beach boardwalk. Which brings the arepa and all its associated delights back to their natural environment of sun and sand. That's where I'll be this summer, along with my wife, daughter and Peruvian clan, raising our glasses to the glorious saving graces of the arepa at Caracas. Come join us.









I remember the first time I saw a cenote. The year must have been 2003 and my sister and friends were driving a little *vocho*—the

tiny old VW beetle—along the Mayan Riviera in search of these unique oases. By the time I laid my eyes on those clear, cool waters I was already peeling off my clothes to take a plunge. This time around, we drive down the road to Tulum and explore Cenote Azul, Dos Ojos, and Cristal. The word comes from dzonot, defined by the Mayan dictionary as a "hole filled with water which is abysmal and deep". It is formed when groundwater seeps through the cracks of the limestone bedrock, creating a large underground cavern roofed by only a thin layer. Erosion causes the roof to collapse, leaving an open water-filled hole, which over the course of thousands of years collects debris, and forms stalactites and stalagmites—a feast for the senses.

There was a time, not too long ago, when hailing a taxi in the Cancun-Playa del Carmen area was cheap and affordable. Not anymore. If you want to visit the cenotes—and you should— your best bet would be to rent a car and explore them at your own pace. They're sprinkled all over the peninsula, so fitting them into your trip to Tulum or Chichen-Itza is very doable. Although the Maya believed they could communicate with the gods and ancestors by offering objects and even people into these water pits, I decide not to jump into my death just yet. A quest to find true regional food is my next mission.

Playa del Carmen, originally a small fishing town, is a charming city in the heart of the Riviera. It is a favorite spot for backpackers from all over the world and home to thousands of expatriates. *La Quinta Avenida*, or Fifth Avenue, is the busiest part of town and a place where pedestrians move freely on foot, surrounded by shops, bars,

and restaurants. This is where we find *Yaxche*, a restaurant known to preserve Maya culinary traditions while incorporating the local Yucatán flavors.

I feel reluctant to order the Margarita Maya but then I'm pleasantly surprised by the combination of cucumber, orange, tequila, chile piquin, and chaya—a green shrub that is commonly found in dishes from the area. "We offer three styles of food," says Yaxche's Executive Chef David Reyes Jaramillo, "traditional Maya cuisine, the kind that has traveled orally from generation to generation; Mestizo cuisine, which incorporates

Maya and Yucatecan flavors; and contemporary Maya, where we use modern cooking techniques to prepare traditional dishes."

The moment our food hits the table my mouth begins to water. The *Panuchos de cochinita* are tasty without being pretentious;

tortillas filled with chicken cooked in a subtle citrus marinade, topped with tart pickled red onions and silky avocado slices. I feel tempted by the tortilla chips and salsa, but have to be cautious since this is habanero salsa. Proceed only if you are brave enough to conquer the heat. The Tsic is a deep fried tortilla topped with shrimp and fish, tomato, avocado and cilantro, crunchy and refreshing. Brazo de reina, Yucatan's own unique take on tamal, is made from corn masa, egg, chaya and pumpkin seeds—another ingredient commonly found in this type of cuisine. Then we face a long yellow pepper and wonder if it is safe to dissect. "They can be very spicy," warns our server. It is called Pibxcatic, a *xcatic* pepper filled with cochinita pibil. Since it's no trip to hell, we finish it all. We move onto the

*Papadzules*, tortillas prepared with boiled eggs in a creamy *epazote* and pumpkin seed sauce, an original delight.

Chef Reyes explains he came to the Yucatan Peninsula to attend Gastronomy School and fell in love with Maya cuisine when he spent months living among Maya people doing his social service, a requirement for all Mexican college students to graduate. "I was supposed to help their communities, but they ended up teaching me the cooking techniques I use today, which is more than I could ever hope for," says Chef Reyes with a smile.

Everywhere you go people speak Maya. There are approximately 6 million Maya living today in Guatemala, Mexico, and Belize. The juxtaposition of ancient traditions and western customs confirms the fact that they belong to both worlds. It isn't hard to find close-knit Maya communities where they practice a hybrid of Maya beliefs and rituals, and Catholicism. Their houses are usually made from *palma de guano* or *xa'an*, which means "that which

offers shade", a material that provides cool living environments and a rain-resistant structure. They subsist on agriculture and farming, speak the native language, and the luckiest even enjoy the luxury of having their own cenote.

Just south of Tulum, and somewhat off the beaten track, you find the majestic *Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve*. A place that goes ignored by the average visitor maybe because it offers a raw look at nature, as opposed to Xel–Ha or Xcaret, modern one-stop eco-parks tailored for tourists. The reserve is home to the *Muyil* and *Chunyaxché* lagoons, and the *Muyil* archeological site, one

of the earliest inhabited ancient Maya cities on the eastern coast of Yucatan. The ruins feature a series of structures, which show



evidence of pre-Hispanic Maya settlements. After walking through the majestic display of architecture left behind, we venture into the jungle through a boardwalk that takes us to the lagoon. The vertigo-immune climb a wooden structure to get a viewpoint of the entire reserve, while the rest continue their journey.

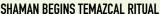
Once at the lagoon, a motorboat takes us to a canal system dredged by the ancient Maya to link the sea entrance at *Boca Paila* to the lagoons. This allowed them to trade goods such as jade, obsidian, chocolate, and chewing gum with other towns. The beautiful narrow canals are surrounded by mangrove and marshy lands. The only thing you need is a life-vest to let the subtle current drag you for a few miles until you reach the other side of a wooden path that takes you back to the boat. There is a small ruin right by the entrance of the small canal, which is believed to have been a customs office of sorts. I'm glad I don't need a visa to wander these grounds.

The next day I'm torn between excitement and nervousness. I've never been to a *temazcal* before and the little information I have about them is that the heat can be overwhelming. This type of sweat bath was born in Mesoamerica, a tradition that wasn't used for ceremonial purposes but as a therapeutic and healing instrument. We take the small road to Dos Ojos Cenote and turn right to enter a small Maya village. In spite of the few signs of modern life reaching this community, it seems as though time stands still. I spot a spider monkey chained to a rope that connects two trees and I am naive enough to salute the creature. A few seconds later, she's on my head with no intention of letting go. Panic invades me. A villager comes to my rescue, warning me about how she can bite on occasion. I'm thinking this is not the best start to the ritual I am about to experience.

Fredy, our Shaman, comes out to greet us. He has prepared an offering plants and incense on a stone table. We stand still, breathe the copal and drink a concoction made from *balché* and honey. "It has purifying effects," he explains. The taste is so pleasant that I almost want to ask for seconds. It's time to blow the conch and the Shaman has the largest one, its whistling sound so perfect. Only mute air comes out of mine. We then gather around a circle of concrete and our host salutes the cosmic Gods. There is a fire burning in the center of the circle, the atmosphere already scorching hot. He "cleans" us with a palm tree before entering the domed structure where we're supposed to get rid of evil spirits, toxins, and illness. We are asked to rub aloe all over our bodies. The gelatinous plant gives our skins a soothing sensation. Outside, his helper closes the tiny door and now we sit in a room of blackness.

Together we sing and meditate while rivers of sweat leave our bodies. The Shaman keeps feeding the herbal water to the hot volcanic rocks in the central pit, creating the steam that fills our man-made cave. "Clap twice if you need to leave," he says right at the beginning. But who would dare break the spell? The trance so hard to disrupt.







Is the Earth swallowing me alive?

I'm becoming more aware of my breathing and my pulse as time goes by. My heart would jump out of my chest if it could. I try to relax. A mix of eucalyptus, orange, basil, rosemary, copal, and epazote—intoxicating aromas—fills the air. The heat is dense (your body temperature can reach 104 degrees) and I search for a cool spot against floor—the only viable comfort aside from actually escaping through the tiny door.

The *temazcal* is pitch-dark and we are reaching the climax of the ritual, the part where our Shaman invites us to let go of our emotions. "Laugh, cry, scream, if you need to!" Fredy urges. Not a minute goes by when I hear a woman sobbing four feet away from where I'm sitting. I can't offer any consolation. The Shaman begins to throw water from his bucket in our direction, which offers unexpected relief.

Daylight and fresh air creeps in as the door opens. The sensation in our bodies is hard to describe. Our Shaman announces we are free of evil and illness—I believe him. He wants to close our pores with warm water so we meet him outside and kneel in front of him in an act that resembles a christening. I want water, in drinking form, but we are banned from this indulgence just yet. Instead, they guide us into their own backyard cenote and we dive into its turquoise waters.

For a moment I forget about my thirst, the mosquito cloud that is bound to hunt me down the minute I come out of the water, and the bats that flap their wings from one side of the cave to the other. If these were my last minutes on Earth, I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

Special thanks to Espacio Natura and Yaxche Restaurant for their amazing support during my visit. If you'd like to live your own Riviera Maya adventure visit **www.espacionatura.com.mx** 

### Insiders Recommend:

"My favorite dish is Relleno Negro, a native Maya recipe. It is a black turkey stew made with achiote, charred chiles, peppercorn and other spices." Yaxche's Executive Chef David Reyes Jaramillo

"Río Secreto is a speleologist's dream and a must-see spot when you visit Riviera Maya." Aída Ferreira, Tour Guide As a fearless and highly adventurous diver, my friend and travel buddy, Bernardo, had been raving about his marvelous underwater adventures around the globe for years, in order to convince me to learn how to scuba dive. However, having heard stories about scuba diving casualties, shark attacks, and seeing the movie *Jaws*, diving didn't particularly sound that appealing to me. Dominos changed my life!!!!

### HOLBOX MEXICO:

### THE DOMINO EFFECT

Text & photos by Melissa Franchy





High on his bucket list was to dive with whale sharks, the biggest fish in the world. Bernardo had gone to Australia and Galapagos, famous for whale shark sightings, but never saw one. Then he learned about the little hidden island of Holbox in Mexico, where these sharks' migration occurred in July and August, so he asked me to join him in his search. I asked every Mexican friend and other people I met the next few weeks about Holbox, and was really surprised about how many of them had not even heard about the island. The thought of having a unique experience sparked my interest; I saw myself on an unspoiled island with a picturesque fishing village, walking barefoot on the white sandy beaches, horseback riding, enjoying the freshest seafood right off the ocean, sailing around the Yucatan Peninsula, not even thinking that we might actually even see a whale shark.

So we headed down to Mexico --my first trip to this wonderful country. We arrived in Cancun around 11 p.m., right before an airport blackout that created a lot of confusion among disoriented travelers. Having experienced quite a few blackouts in Peru in the 1980s, we calmly headed out, using our cell phones as flashlights, finding our way to the car rental where we were able to get a car right away, avoiding the rush. On the way to Holbox, we stopped at the side of the road for our first taste of what was yet to come. We were greeted by the most hospitable lady making tacos,

a *taquera* who after seeing how excited I was about my first street taco, kindly invited me to go into the taco stand to make my own. I had an array of grilled meats to choose from, small white corn tortillas and a variety of nostril-opening Mexican peppers that totally woke us up and got us on our way to the little town of Chiquila. We arrived at 3 a.m. but our ferry to Holbox wasn't leaving until 7a.m., so we stayed at the only hotel in town. I was so exhausted that I overslept, so I quickly jumped into the shower not realizing that there was no towel around, which led me to use the bed sheets to dry off, in my rush to get to the ferry on time. This is when I knew it was going to be an unforgettable vacation.

When we reached Holbox, we got into a golf cart, the only means of transportation on the island besides horseback riding. We drove around town on white sandy streets,

passing charming and rustic bright-colored houses with palm leaf roofs, crossing paths with local fisherman walking barefoot and carrying their fishing gears, until we got to our destination and met our tour operator, Roddrigo, who calls himself "The Whale Shark Daddy", and is an American married to a local Holboxian. Already waiting for the tour was a young Mexican couple from Yucatan, an American couple who had retired at the Rivera Maya, and some scientist on an expedition. While waiting on the dock, surrounded by fishermen, boats, seagulls, pelicans and taking in the fresh sea breeze, I overheard one of the locals and our captain talk about underwater "dominos"; so I went up to them and asked why they were talking about water dominos. Was this a new game I didn't know about? After a big chuckle, our captain explained that the local fishermen called whale sharks "dominos", due to the white dots on their backs.

No whale shark has the same lineup or combination of dotted skin.

We were not allowed to use any type of sun block or lotions that would disturb the sharks. I still went with it, thinking that I would get a nice day on a boat on this beautiful sunny morning with our new found friends, not realizing that we would even see one "domino". It didn't really hit me until 30 minutes later, when our captain announced a sighting. He said that only 2 people could swim with whale sharks at a time. Before I had a second to blink, Bernardo was already sitting on the

edge of the boat, all geared up and ready to go, when the captain asked which two people would go first. I don't think anyone else had a chance. Due to the rush, I didn't pay much attention. I saw a fin at a distance, so I geared up and then, and only when I was ready to jump, I saw what looked like a 35 foot spotted submarine emerge to the surface. Suddenly it became very clear that this was not the playful type of domino effect I had initially thought; instead this was another type of effect I was going to experience, a ripple effect from the tail of this humongous gentle giant that would push us aside.

I didn't even have time to calculate how much bigger this shark was than me, and at that moment, I tried to tell myself what Bernardo had been telling me all along. This was not like any other shark or like the one in the movie *Jaws*, because it was toothless and only fed by plankton,





"I saw myself on an unspoiled island with a picturesque fishing village, walking barefoot on the white sandy beaches, horseback riding, enjoying the freshest seafood right off the ocean, sailing around the Yucatan Peninsula, not even thinking that we might actually even see a whale shark."



so I was not an appetizing dish in his diet. Suddenly I heard a splash. I turned my head and all I could see were Bernardo's fins kicking away. I had to jump now or never, so I just plunged into the blue.

The first couple of minutes, I was intimidated by his grandeur. I tried to swim as far as I could from it, but once I realized how gracious and docile the whale shark was, I was inexplicably drawn by its magnetic effect. Then it was our turn to go back to the boat for the next two people to relay us and I didn't want to leave. On my second time around, I was not fearful, but instead couldn't wait for that rush of adrenaline. Even if this wasn't a person-feeding shark, the size of its mouth was the size of my whole body. He could engulf me in a millisecond --with just one gulp I could end up like Pinocchio inside this creature's belly. But like kids at the amusement park getting off a ride and running back to

line up so they can go on it again, we swam with countless numbers of whale sharks for 3 hours. It was a life changing experience -- that very day I realized I had to learn how to scuba dive to experience the magnificent marine life I had been hearing about.

Despite the painful sunburn, back at the island I was both giddy and happy. Images of the unforgettable ride kept flashing back to me, giving a whole new meaning to the domino effect. We were all sharing our stories and the pictures on our cameras and

wanted to continue with this euphoria, so we headed out to get lunch at the main square of Holbox. The Mexican couple from the Rivera Maya recommended *Edelyn's*, I was thrilled to be hanging out with locals until I got to the restaurant. It was a pizza joint on the main square. Yes! a pizza place. Not my idea of an island lunch, until I was urged to get the house specialty: the scrumptious lobster pizza.

After what seemed to be the longest day, we went back to the Whale Shark Daddy's home to pick up our bags, and finally check into our eco palapa hotel called Xaloc, to freshen up and rest. Not longer after, we went for a walk along the beach, stopping for dips in the ocean accompanied by pelicans and other exotic birds,until we bumped into a small beach shack. We sat at the bar swings having Mexican beers, listening to reggae music, sand

between our toes. We asked if we could have something to munch on and the bar tender offered us ceviche. I looked around, but there was no kitchen in sight. Puzzled and curious, I accepted his recommendation. Growing up on the Peruvian coast city of Lima, I can be pretty snooty about ceviche and have very high standards on the quality of fish and preparation, but I took the bait. A few minutes later, I saw the bartender approach us from the dark, carrying the ceviche on the palm of his hand on a flimsy banana leaf, spilling its juices on the sand on the way to the bar; I was really stunned. I took a second look and realized there were no dishes or silverware. After all, we were in a real beach shack. I think it was because of how relaxed it was on that swing after a couple of beers, that it all felt so natural. We had to use totopos --tortilla chips--as utensils. For my first bite, I tried to get as much fish as I could onto a single totopo, juices flowing on the sides of my month, my fingers soaked in the juices.

It was perfection: Imagine this fish coming from the boat docked next to us, with the freshest, limiest, spicy flavorful taste, hot local peppers, lemon juice and onions. I asked the bartender to introduce me to the cook. After a day full of surprises and unexpected experiences, this was the icing on the cake --an experience to "cerrrar con broche de oro," as the saying goes. The cook turned out to be an Australian who came to Holbox on a vacation and fell in love with the island: the ultimate Latin Lover! He said he would cook for shelter.

So he became el cevichero –the ceviche maker of the dish I named the "swinging ceviche". This was one of the trip's finest moments. Totally unexpected. I spent my night indulging all the senses, swinging to the mellow music, enjoying the local cold beer, having ceviche right out of a fisherman's boat, and thinking of dominos!

### MADE IN MEXICO

Interview by Margarita Larios

He is the owner of four successful restaurants in the Big Apple: Toloache, Yerba Buena, Yerba Buena Perry and Coppelia. A Mexican talent brought over for his gifts in the kitchen, and an accomplished businessman, Julian Medina, a husband and a father — who is also in love with Latin American food— tells us his secret recipe for success.





Margarita Larios: When did you first realize you wanted to be a chef? How did you reach this decision?

Julian Medina: I decided right after I was done with high school, when I was 17 years old. But I always wanted to be a chef. I used to watch my grandfather and my dad, and spend time with them in the kitchen... So I decided to take the first step and get a job in a restaurant.

ML: What does cooking mean to you? What inspires you to create a dish?

JM: Cooking is my life; I enjoy cooking as much as I enjoy eating. To create a dish you need not only the knowledge you possess, but the inspiration and the epiphany you might have —or not— that day. A good mood always inspires a good dish.

ML: Do you think Mexicans and Latin Americans overall have a different relationship with food than people from other parts of the world, or is this a stereotype?

JM: I think Mexicans and Latin Americans live to eat —we're always thinking about what we are going to eat next. We enjoy and appreciate food.

ML: What about Mexican cuisine? What do think distinguishes it from others?

JM: The flavor, the use of spices, the *chiles* and herbs, and seasonal ingredients; we still keep a great deal of tradition through the ancient dishes and ingredients that we still use today.

ML: According to you, what's the most magnificent dish in Mexican cuisine?

JM: There are a lot of dishes, but I would say any dish that uses corn, Nixtamal (corn that's been cooked, soaked in lime and rinsed to make tortillas, among other things).

ML: Let's talk more about your taste. What's your favorite dish to cook?

JM: Any Mexican "street food", like a great taco, *quesadilla*, *torta*, *memelita* or a nice Oaxacan *tlayuda*.

ML: You came to New York when Chef Ricardo Sandoval offered you to work at one of his restaurants. Can you tell us how you met him? What do you think impressed him about you?

JM: I initially met the General Manager of the first restaurant he opened, Savann, and that's how I was able to contact him. I decided to call him directly, but he said he didn't need anyone at the moment... But, the next day, he called me at the hotel I was working at, and said: *I want you to come and work with me, when can you come?* It was all of a sudden! And so, I was in NYC 2 weeks after.

ML: Was it difficult to decide to relocate to NY?

JM: I didn't know where I was coming to, but that didn't stop me from achieving my goals... It was hard at the beginning, but my passion for cooking and the excitement to be in the best city ever, kept me going.

ML: When you worked with Chef Sandoval, what do you think was the most important lesson you learned about cooking and about the restaurant business?

JM: Well he is a businessman. I knew the basics, but I learned how to work the business and create dishes with him. He gave me the confidence to be myself in the kitchen, and encouraged me to make special dishes.

ML: While you were Chef de Cuisine at Maya, the restaurant earned two stars from The New York Times. The four restaurants you own and lead currently have earned critics' recognition: Yerba Buena was selected as one of the best restaurants of 2008, and Yerba Buena Perry was awarded four stars by the magazine, Time Out New York—just to name a few of your achievements. How did you get so far?

JM: A lot of work and dedication, passion for what I do... and some more work.

ML: In your opinion, what are the qualities a good chef must possess? What is the biggest virtue a dish can have?

JM: The chef has to be humble in the kitchen; a good quality is to be creative and consistent on a daily basis. The dish, on the other hand, has to be balanced. For me, an explosion of flavors in one bite is important, but one should never lose simplicity either.

ML: You have said before that you use French techniques and Mexican and Latin American ingredients. Aside from working at the Hacienda de los Morales and the Nikko Hotel in Mexico, at some point in your career you also worked as the Executive Chef at the Japanese-Brazilian-Peruvian restaurant, SushiSamba. How did these different experiences shape you as a chef? How would you define your style?

JM: I think the style of every chef is defined by the journey they go through in life. I use techniques from my experience on a daily basis, but I'm also influenced by what's happening at the time; by innovation and different preparation. I think my way of cooking is light and flavorful. I approach my cooking by using my native ingredients with different techniques.

ML: You're a big fan of Peruvian cuisine, which is your favorite dish? What other cuisines do you admire?

JM: I love a good *anticucho*, *ceviche*, *huancaina* or *lomo saltado*. Other cuisines I admire are the French, Japanese, Turkish, and American cuisines.



ML: You own and run four successful restaurants in New York City. Did you ever imagine this would be your life when you were young? How have you evolved as a person?

JM: Well, you start with the dream of being successful in what you do, of course. I look back now and see that I have worked a lot to get to where I am now. I'm confident, mature –but never feel old!—; I like to joke and be good to the people that help me run all my restaurants.

ML: You try to cook regularly at your restaurants, but do you cook at home? Do your wife or daughter have a favorite dish they ask for?

JM: We all love to eat, and I love to cook for my family. My daughter asks me for lamb "lollies" –as I call lamb chops–, and my wife does too.

ML: If you could live the rest of your life on only one dish, which one would that be?

JM: Roast chicken!

WE ASKED
JULIAN FOR ONE
OF HIS FAVORITE
RECIPES FROM
MEXICO CITY, AND
HE INTRODUCES
US TO...



# ...TACOS DE SUADERO A KNOCKOUT VERSION OF A MEXICO CITY STREET-FOOD CLASSIC!

### INTRODUCING MEXICO CITY (AKA D.F.)

"Like any great metropolis, Mexico City presents a mosaic of scenes. One moment you're knocking back tequila at a grand old cantina, the next you're grooving to world-class DJs on a rooftop terrace. Breakfast on tamales and atole (a drink made from corn) from a street corner vendor, dine on fusion cuisine by one of Polanco's acclaimed chefs. After an afternoon spent sharing the anguish of artist Frida Kahlo, watch masked wrestlers inflict pain on one another at the lucha libre (wrestling) arena downtown..." Lonely Planet



### TACOS DE SUADERO

### BOHEMIA-BRAISED BRISKET, TOMATILLO SALSA WITH HORSERADISH CREMA SERVES 4

By Julián Medina

### **INGREDIENTS**

For the Tomatillo Salsa: Serves 1 quart

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5 medium-large tomatillos, husks removed, then quartered

1 small Spanish onion, quartered

2 jalapeño peppers, stemmed and seeded, then each half

sliced into quarters

½ cup cilantro leaves

2 cloves garlic, peeled

1 avocado, peeled, pittted, cut lengthwise into 12 wedges

¼ cup water

### For the Brisket:

2 pounds of lean brisket 1 cup celery, diced 1 cup Spanish onion, diced 1 cup carrots, diced 5 garlic cloves 2 tablespoons chipotle puree 2 cups canned tomato puree 5 sprigs of fresh thyme 1/4 teaspoon dried cumin 1/4 teaspoon dried Mexican oregano 1 bay leaf 1 bottle Bohemia beer Water, to fill pan 1/4 cup canola oil Cracker black pepper to taste Kosher salt to taste

### Additional:

8 corn tortillas
½ cup Tomatillo Salsa
1 tablespoon horseradish
½ cup Mexican crema
½ cup red onion, chopped
¼ cup cilantro, finely chopped
2 limes, cut into wedges

### HOW TO

For the Tomatillo Salsa

1. Place the tomatillos, onion, jalapeños, cilantro, avocado, garlic and water in a blender or food processor, purée until smooth. Season with salt to taste then set aside at room temperature.

### For the Brisket:

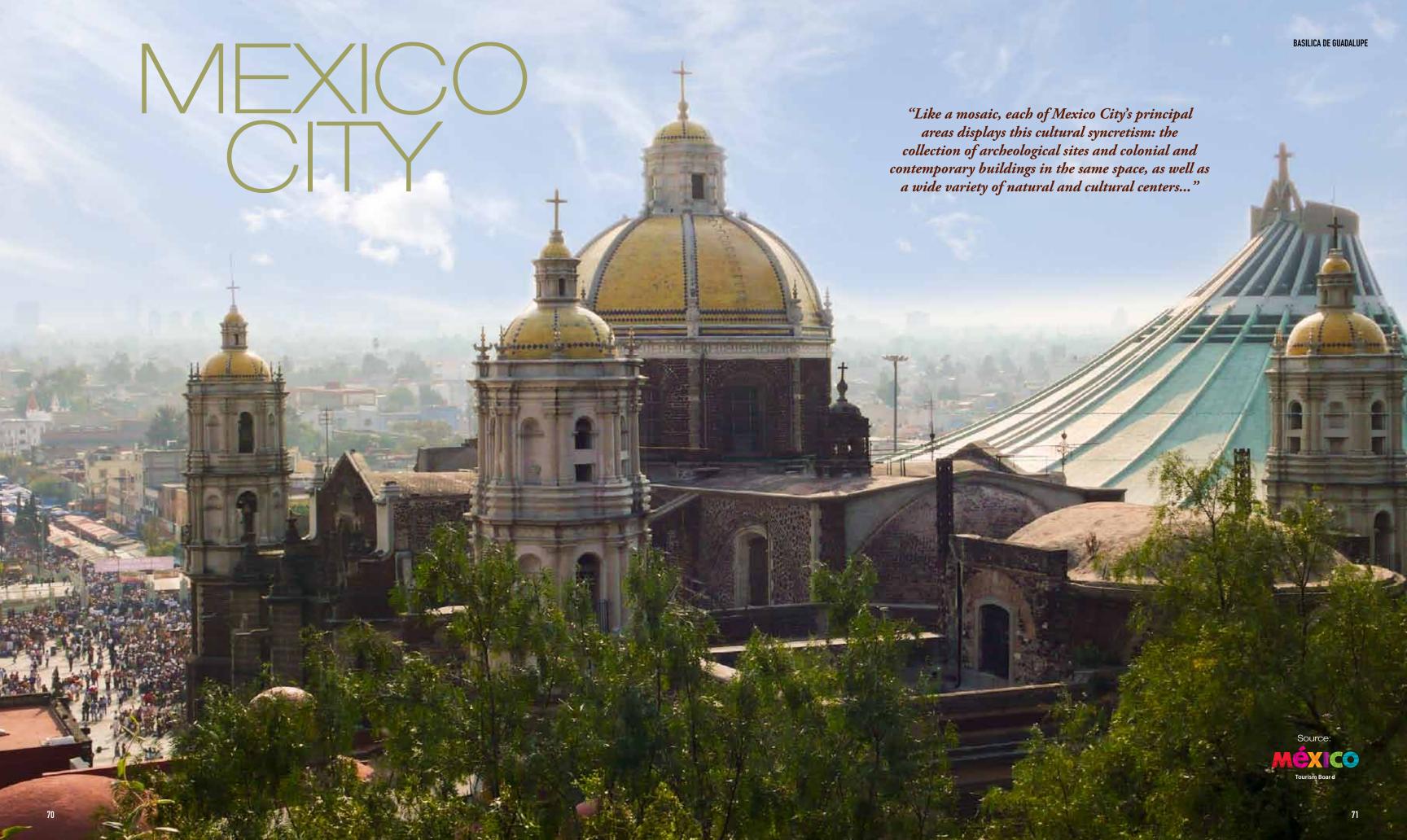
- 1. Set oven for 325°F.
- 2. Season the brisket with cracked black pepper and kosher salt. Ready oil in a dutch oven on high heat, place the brisket in the pot and sear on all sides. When meat is browned remove from the pot and set the brisket aside, then reduce the heat under the pot.
- 3. Add to the dutch oven pot the onions, garlic, celery, carrots, chipotle, tomato puree, thyme, cumin and bay leaf; sauté the ingredients together. Once the ingredients have cooked down add the Bohemia beer.
- 4. Return the brisket to the pot and pour in the water until it covers the meat. Cover with aluminum foil and place meat in the oven for 2-3 hours, or until thoroughly cooked and tender. Remove from the oven, let meat rest and cool in the braising liquid.
- 5. Once cooled, remove brisket from liquid and cut into slices, set aside. Pour the braising liquid into a blender, or food processor, and blend until smooth. Then pour the braising liquid back into the pot and re-heat over medium temperature. Return the sliced meat to the pot and let it re-heat in the sauce.

### To Assemble and Serve:

- 1. Heat the griddle to a medium heat, warm the tortillas until soft.
- 2. In a small bowl combine the horseradish and Mexican crema to make a horsradish sauce.
- 3. Per each taco place a generous portion of the brisket meat in the center, then drizzle over about 1 teaspoon of the Tomatillo Salsa and 1 teaspoon of the horseradish cream. Top the taco with onion and cilantro. Serve with lime wedge.

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Mexico City is settled in one of the main lake areas of pre-Hispanic Mexico and is known as the "City of Palaces."





It was founded in 1525 by Spaniards after defeating the Mexicas. The new city was built on the ruins of the Aztec city of Tenochtitlán.

Mexico City, also known as Federal District, is located on the Central Plateau at an altitude of 7,350 feet above sea level, which is rare for a city of such size. The weather in Mexico City is mild year-round. In addition to being the country's economic center, it is the capital of Mexico and where the federal power of the Union sits.

The Federal District has two areas declared World Heritage Sites by UNESCO: the Historic Center and Xochimilco Ecological Park. Visiting the first is a journey through different historic periods all sharing the same area. There are colonial-era buildings such as the Metropolitan Cathedral and National Palace; the pre-Hispanic ruins of the Templo Mayor (Great Temple); contemporary buildings like the Palace of Fine Arts and the Torre Latinoamericana, which, with its antenna, reaches a height of 669 feet.

The Xochimilco Ecological Park is considered by many the "Venice of Mexico" because of canals connecting its chinampas or "floating gardens," which can be reached by trajinera (a large punt boat). Trajineras give visitors an idea of transport in pre-Hispanic times, how the chinampas function, and how goods were traded in that era.

Like a mosaic, each of Mexico City's principal areas displays this cultural syncretism: the collection of archeological sites and colonial and contemporary buildings in the same space, as well as a wide variety of natural and cultural centers. There are also numerous museums, including the National Museum of Anthropology, considered to be one of the best in the world; the National Art Museum; the Casa Azul of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera; and the Museum of Modern Art.

Coyoacan, a former village and now one of the 16 boroughs of Mexico City, is an historic center. It is a popular place to visit, especially on weekends, because many of the original layouts, plazas, and narrow streets have been preserved and date from the sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries.



COLEGIO SAN ILDELFONSO

"Those who make Mexico City a destination won't be sorry. A visit here is a full-sensory experience a vibrant mix of old and new, rich and poor, sacred and profane. The food, whether tacos on the street or gourmet croissants worthy of Paris, is among the world's best, and art can be found everywhere, even in the subway, where Aztec artifacts are displayed..."

Conde Nast Traveler

POLANCO

Another popular place to hang out is in La Condesa, located just south of Avenida Chapultepec. This area began as lands owned by two countesses in the colonial period. Comparable to Soho in New York City or the Latin Quarter in Paris, the area today is fashionable and attracts young businesspeople, students, and artists. Its avenues are wide and tree-lined and although primarily residential, it is filled with restaurants, cafes, boutiques, and galleries. To the north of the city, be sure to visit the Basilica of Guadalupe.

One of the most visited religious shrines in the world, it is where the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared before San Juan Diego on the summit of the Cerro del Tepeyac. It is an obligatory stop for those wanting to learn more about the city's customs and traditions. Mexico City offers a wide range of activities inherent to a modern city, from shopping in bazaars and crafts markets in neighborhoods such as Coyoacán and San Angel, to exclusive boutiques and shopping malls like those found in the Santa Fe and Polanco districts. The luxury, glamour, and comfort of these areas match international standards.

Mexico City, or the Federal District as it is known, is located on the Central Plateau at an altitude of 7,350 feet above sea level, which is rare for a city of such size. The weather in Mexico City is mild year-round, and, in addition to being the country's economic center, it is the capital of Mexico and the seat of federal power of the Union.

#### CUISINE IN MEXICO CITY

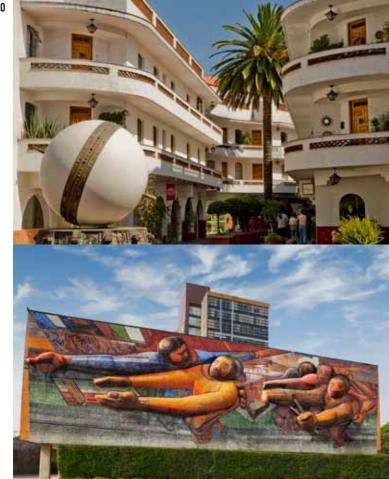
The wide variety of ingredients, flavors and textures make Mexican cuisine unique

The aromas and flavors that identify Mexican traditional food are born from a wide variety of gastronomic influences that are combined with original ingredients to offer visitors' palates an infinity of traditional dishes, including pre-Hispanic cuisine, from different parts of the country.

Be sure to sample tacos, quesadillas with handmade tortillas, or traditional tortas in any of the numerous Mexico City restaurants. Generally, corn, chili, squash, nopal (prickly-pear) cactus, tomato, avocado, among other ingredients, are used in pre- Hispanic cookery, which when combined, create mouth-watering delicacies.

Without a doubt, Mexico City is a multicultural and cosmopolitan place. On its streets you will find countless top-level international restaurants that offer the highest quality dishes to satisfy the most sophisticated palates.

Sweet or savory, cuisine in Mexico City always offers a touch of tradition to seduce the palate with its amazing flavors and variety, easily confirmed at any of its markets, diners, or restaurants.



UNAM

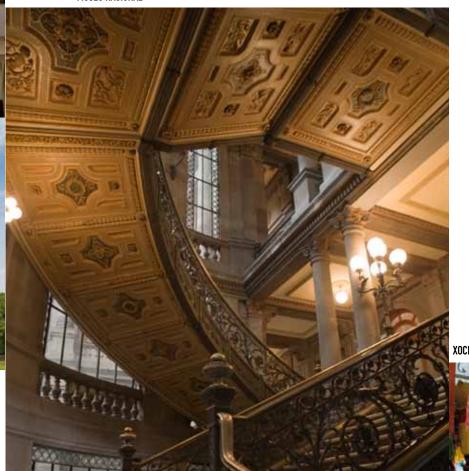
#### NIGHTLIFE IN MEXICO CITY

The traditional mariachis and modern nightclubs await you when night falls

Nightlife in Mexico is world-famous, and different musical rhythms abound in Mexico City's fast-paced nighttime ambience. When the sun goes down, its numerous discos, bars, clubs, restaurants, and cantinas come to life, inviting both city dwellers and visitors to an unforgettable evening full of music, dancing, and fun.

Emblematic areas to enjoy fun-filled nights include Polanco, Santa Fe, the Zona Rosa, the Historic Center, and the Condesa, Roma, Coyoacán, and San Ángel neighborhoods; these are the areas most frequented by city dwellers looking for fun while the rest of the city sleeps.

#### MUSEO NACIONAL



On avenues such as Insurgentes (running north to south) and Paseo de la Reforma, there are numerous Mexico City nightclubs that offer everything from relaxed bohemian evenings to neverending nights of dancing with friends.

One place that cannot be missed in the city is a visit to Plaza de Garibaldi, where folklore and tradition get right under the skin at the hands of traditional mariachi bands. In addition, the flavor of classic Mexican drinks such as tequila accompany revelers in a musical encounter with the purest of Mexican roots.

## MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL CENTERS ON MEXICO CITY

Mexico City has some of the most important museums in the world

History, art, and popular culture abound at the many museums and cultural centers in Mexico City. In fact, it is one of the tourist destinations with the greatest number of museums in the world. The Federal District shows national and international visitors its ancestral roots at the National Anthropology Museum, which is considered one of the best of its kind thanks to its different, specialized halls that display objects from the most splendid pre-Hispanic cultures in Mexico and Central America.

One of the places where visitors can relive Mexico's past is the National History Museum, located in the emblematic Chapultepec Castle, which, added to buildings such as the Old College of San Ildefonso, the National Art Museum, the Museum of Mexico City, the Franz Mayer Museum, the Modern Art Museum, the National Museum of Popular Cultures, the Frida Kahlo House-Museum ("Casa Azul"), the Dolores Olmedo Museum, and others offer a fascinating tour from the beginnings of the city to the present day, passing through customs, traditions, and artistic expressions that make the city a multicultural center worthy of contemplation.





# FATHER & SANTE OF THE SANTE OF

By Alexandre Surralles
Illustrations by Camila Valdeavellano



ow a venerable old man, my father, whose nearly ninety years of age can't keep him from drinking a glass of red with each meal, used to tell me years ago that wine from the Priorat region was the best. At the time, two decades ago, perhaps even more, few people would have shared his opinion. Mostly because, back then, it was an unknown wine produced in a sandy, marginal, poor and inaccessible region in the south of Catalonia, Spain. It was produced just as it was created in nature, without major enhancements, or any regulations of production or sale other than those satisfying the subsistence economy of the working peasants, owners of vineyards they inherited from earlier generations. Moreover, the wine producers of the Priorat sold their product wholesale. Sold by the gallon, it was available in small stores before supermarkets replaced them. Customers would ask for the desired amount and the store attendant, usually a big-bellied man wearing a blue robe, would open the barrel's faucet -with the word 'Priorat' written in chalk- and then fill up the five gallon glass vessel, supported by a lucerne carrier that one had to bring. During this operation, the wine the funnel couldn't swallow was inevitably shed and, along with the moistened wood, would make for the smell of confined humidity that is characteristic of cellars. The price was a few *pesetas*, an amount that would be absolutely ridiculous in today's terms.

The Priorat's red wine was sometimes offered to winegrowers from other areas at a clearance price, to increase the volume of production. Back then, it was very difficult to imagine that this long-ignored humble wine, coarse and sharp – even disdained –, could experience the mind-boggling progression it has gone through over the last 15 years, to become one of the most sought-after wines. Still, as it was usually the case –and although it was often hard for me to recognize it –the future proved my father right.

What makes the Priorat one of the most appreciated wines? The answer is best given by the enologists of the region. It seems to be a concurrence of alchemical circumstances: First of all, the warm and dry Mediterranean weather fluctuates almost twenty degrees, contributing to the grape's optimal ripening. Also, the shire is protected from the northern winds by the Montsant mountains. But, above all, it's the composition of the soil, which is made up of a grey and angular rock: a kind of slate known as *licorella*. The rocks broken into pieces help avoid erosion and allow cultivation in very slanted, well drained and sunny surfaces.

When the slopes are too steep, terraces are built to support the vineyards so they can settle their roots deeply and find the hydration guaranteed by the fragmented rocks' shadow. Since the steep relief doesn't favor a mechanical cultivation, production delivers very scarce returns: an inconvenience that nevertheless gives the wine its very special identity.



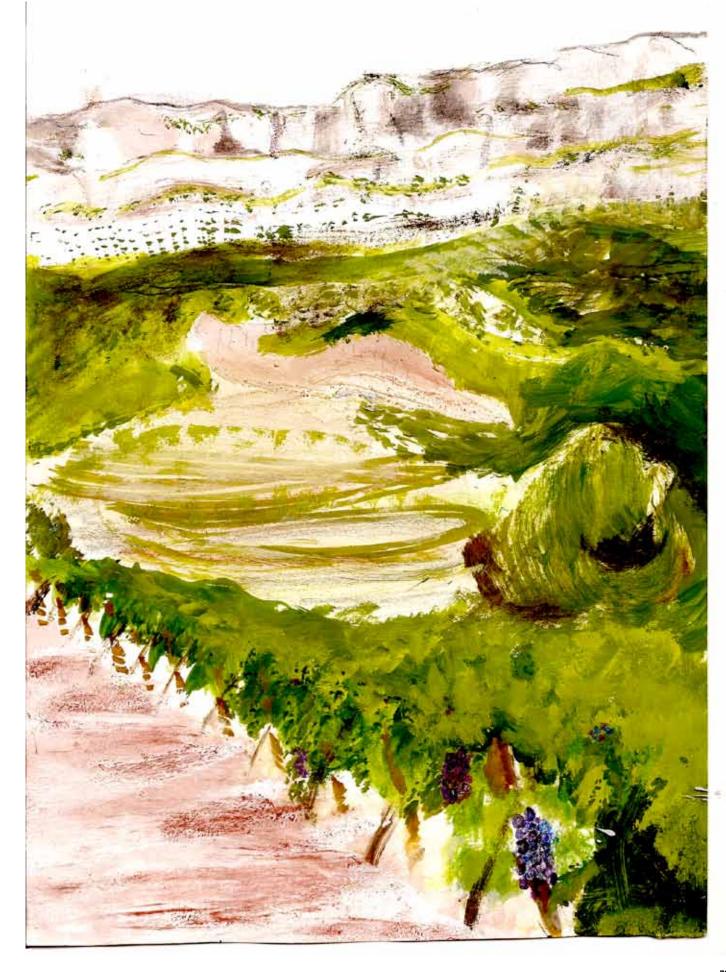


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In the 1970's, a group of expert winegrowers –some of them real celebrities– became interested in the Priorat's huge potential and decided to restore the vineyards. They planted new vines, like those of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot or Syrah, aside from the ever-present Grenache and Carignan. Years after their first investments, they harvested the grapes and the first great wines saw the light.

The result exceeds all expectations and generates unanimity: we stand before a star in the modern wine-producing universe; new, and yet the possessor of an ancient civilization's knowledge, as the monks of the Scala Dei charterhouse already produced this wine in the year 1000 (some architectonic vestiges of this charterhouse still remain in the form of a majestic renaissance-style, carved arch made of raw stone). Nowadays, the Priorat as an appellation of origin, extends to the ancient monastic vineyards, and the wine domains belonging to eleven different villages, extending almost two thousand hectares.

A little over a year ago, my father and I decided to visit this region, to which I was returning after 30 years. We rented rooms in a masia: a big house, with thick walls built three or four centuries ago, located in the midst of the forest, olive trees and vineyards; close to Porrera. During the day, we visited some of the sites suggested by the travel guide --but mostly wineries to taste wines and restaurants. Otherwise, we could always go back to the masia where the owner, Pilar, and her husband, had prepared lunch or a homemade country meal: simply exquisite. Pilar was the granddaughter of the last resident of the country house. Her grandfather had to emigrate to Barcelona's industrial belt, along with many other neighbors of the area in the mid-20th century, to find a job and overcome poverty. Born in Barcelona, she dreamt of going back -and eventually had the opportunity, thanks to the new possibilities the region offered. She rebuilt the family house her grandfather left and turned it into a lodge. I still had the memories, from my first visit three decades ago, of an extremely depressed area, where only a few old people had resisted the exodus. I reencountered the landscapes of fundamental beauty, the silence and sense of prolonged time, but it seemed as if poverty had been exiled. In the cellars and during our strolls on the streets and in the plazas of Porrera or Gratallops, my father and I found some moments of stillness for conversation and company, far from the clamor of the cities and their traffic that mark, for better or worse, our daily life. Tasting these exquisite wines -products of patience and rigor- not only did we find the pleasure of something well done, but my father, with characteristic reserve and modesty, also tasted an intimate and old conviction: these wines were certainly the best of the best. Another impression filled me with satisfaction: to see how a very poor region had developed. Now, it offers new possibilities to the residents, even to the sons of immigrants and others who restored the villages and gave them new life with businesses and stores that complement the wine-growing industry. Still, one thought wouldn't leave me: development can't be achieved without culture, in this case the wine culture --a lesson to many other places across the planet, suffering from underdevelopment because they have yet to find within themselves the source of their livelihood.





Interview by Laura Gonzáles

LISA&JANELLE

Is a collaborative

team of sisters,

the second of

four daughters and

second generation

Americans:

Norwegian / Dominican

Queens, NY natives.



## Laura González: When and why did you first decide to work together as artists?

Las Hermanas: In various ways, we've been collaborating our whole lives – we've been attuned to each other's tendencies and troubles since birth. We both came to art making seriously after college, and we turned to each other for camaraderie and critique during graduate school. We sent drawings back and forth and carried on a visual conversation. Shortly after that, we decided to officially collaborate and dubbed ourselves Las Hermanas. From the beginning up to the present, we collaborate because the process is enjoyable and challenging, and it produces work that we wouldn't necessarily make or think of independently.

## LG: How does your collaborative work differ or deviate from your individual artistic production? Does the collaborative process influence your individual projects?

LH: A defining characteristic of our collaborative work is obviously the collective decision-making process and shared fabrication techniques. When we're working solo in the studio, our decisions and makings are largely the results of our independent efforts. When we come together as Las Hermanas, we often extend our ideas into the performative or gestural realms, where we might not venture alone. It is easier to take bigger risks when we are working together—and that gives us more confidence in our individual studios as well. While our collaboration is a distinctly separate animal from our individual work, there is a free exchange of energy and ideas between all three practices.

### LG: How have your international backgrounds influenced your artistic careers?

LH: Our parentage has definitely influenced our experience of livelihood, as have other aspects of our identities – as being women, sisters, outer-borough New Yorkers, straight, fully-abled and healthy, young, documented citizens, etc. While we identify as having an international background, in many ways, we also identify with the experiences of many first/second generation children whose parents instilled in them a certain work ethic and a dis/connection to far-off places.



other, as well as with the idiosyncrasies of our Norwegian-Dominican background. We can trace certain ideas back to our curiosity of where our parents were born and raised—for example, an interest in the handmade and mended objects from our Scandinavian side, and an inventiveness of means and a love for magical realism that reflects our Latino roots.

Our collaboration very much deals with our relationship to each

In terms of the influence our heritage has had on our participation in the 'art world'... we've experienced both a welcoming from cultural communities in the art world as well as moments when some have challenged how we self-identify as though we're neither authentically 'Nordic' or 'Latin' enough to fit their bill. Lately, we've been interested in exploring this in our work. We've been looking to artists such as Adrian Piper, who created calling cards given to individuals who questioned or made assumptions about her identity.

#### LG: How does the concept of tourism figure in your work?

LH: Our projects are often a process of understanding our place or non-place within a community or landscape. For example, during our residency in Paris we hand-embroidered maps of the city and monogrammed Paris as ours. We then attempted to physically embroider the city with these designs by walking the paths delineated on the map, trailing the thread behind us as we walked.

The project involves the walk, a video of two parallel frames (one of the act of embroidery and the other of the walk), and the embroidered maps. This project was a means for us to familiarize ourselves with the topography of Paris as well as a way to connect with a city that seemed intimidating and overwhelming – it was an attempt to transform from tourists into locals.

In another project, *Tourist Photos* (2011), we made a 35mm and Polaroid camera out of the cardboard being tossed from the lodging at our residency in Tasmania (with *Six\_a Artist Run Initiative*). We took the cameras with us to popular Australian tourist destinations and used the viewfinders to form the compositions for watercolor











sketches. These watercolors reflected scenes we would have ordinarily photographed. Rather than experiencing this new place through a lens—rather than snapping a photograph and moving forward, we experienced situations and locations through drawing them. Later on, the watercolors, which were drawn on pre-cut 4x6 or Polaroid sized papers, were exhibited alongside the cameras.

# LG: You work in a wide range of media, from performance to found materials. Do you come up with a thematic idea first and then brainstorm about which medium would be best suited for it?

LH: Our process usually starts with an idea or question, and the resulting conversations, research, and bickering develop into an approach. In most cases, the approach is a necessary byproduct of the idea. We are interested in exploring different methods of collaborating.

Sometimes one of us makes the first stage of a work and the other finishes it, and other times we create something entirely together from start to finish. Our manner of communication influences which method(s) we use, depending on if we're working in the studio together or if we're collaborating over skype, email, phone or post.



#### LG: What role, if any, has food played in your lives?

LH: Like many other families, our personal family culture has really centered around food. The best example of this is Christmas, the biggest holiday in our family. Christmas Eve dinner is a Dominican feast, while the menu on Christmas morning is Norwegian. Christmas Eve includes Pernil (roast pork), rice and red kidney beans, sweet plantains, avocados, flan, homemade pastels, and maybe some dulce de leche. Each year, our father, Bienvenido, sneaks into the kitchen to eat the crispy pork skin.

For Christmas morning, our mother Bodhild orders Norwegian Viking breads like potato or flour lefse, smoked fish, cloudberries, yellow cheese, brown cheese, head cheese, boiled eggs, jams and cured meats for a big breakfast. Our stockings usually included tiny pigs made of marzipan and delicious Norwegian melkesjokolade (milk chocolate).

Shortly after our parents got married they moved to Santo Domingo for a few years, and our mom learned how to prepare Dominican traditional dishes from our father's aunts. We grew up eating Dominican meals about 2-3 times a week. It seemed completely natural to us that our Norwegian mother prepared quintessentially Latino meals. Sharing a common food history with people has always connected us to other Scandinavians and Latinos, and it has been a way for us to connect with far away relatives and family legacies.

#### LG: Has it ever influenced your art?

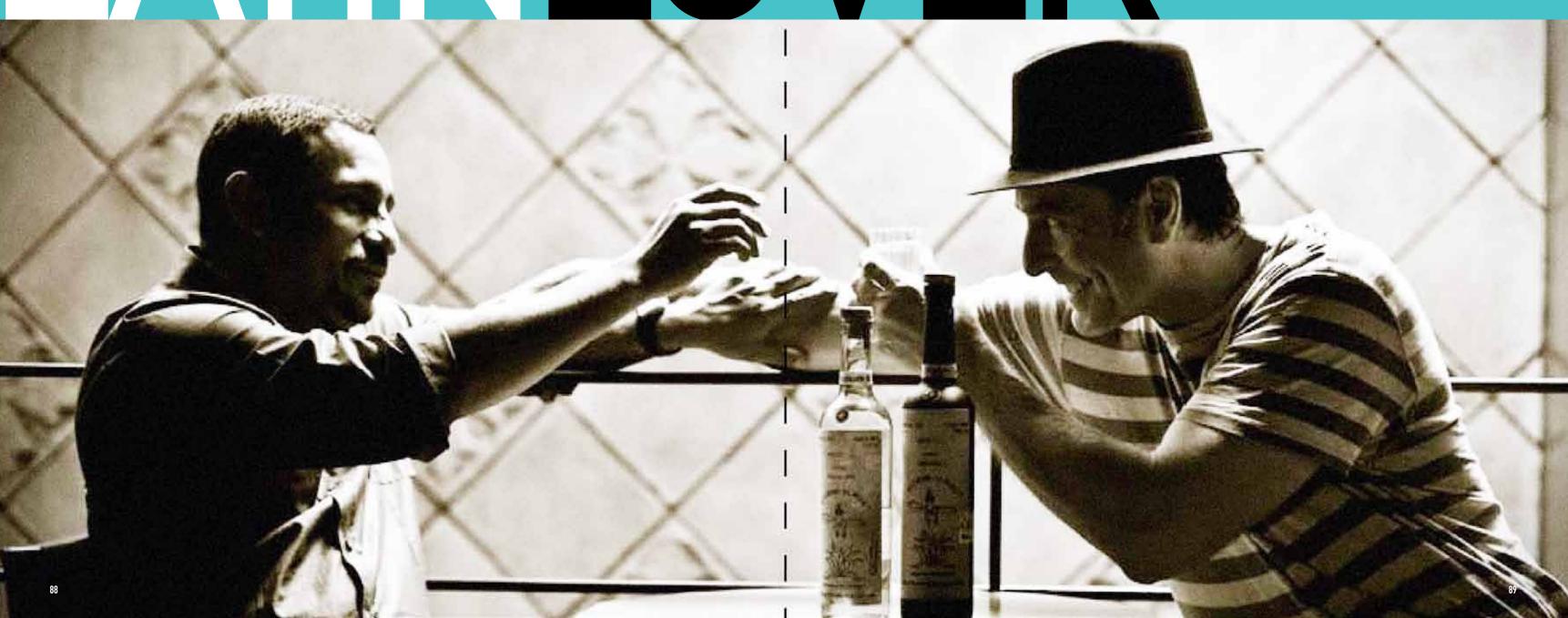
LH: Food has entered into such projects as 'Bubblegum Competition,' 'Tart Eating Contest,' 'LollipopDe-coloring' and 'Cherry Contest.' In these competitions, ingesting or interacting with food rides a line between a sensuous experience and a grotesque performance. In one of our videos 'Souvenir,' we conjure our memories while eating madeleines and drinking lime flower tea, using food as a reference to Proust's Remembrance of Things Past.

We always attempt to have potlucks or food shares at our openings, as it makes the events more festive. We see food as a tool for community building.

## LG: What propelled you to create the poster for this issue of Latin Lover?

LH: When we were first invited to contribute to this issue of Latin Lover, we thought about the poster as an opportunity to make a new piece or project in print form. As some of our work has explored the idea of mash-ups or fusions, we also thought it would be interesting to think about overlaps in the cuisine and what Norwegian-Dominican fusion food might taste like. We also wanted to immortalize our mother's recipes—in the same casual way we've inherited them. We've made posters in conjunction with other projects before, as we like the idea of an artwork that is free, easily distributed, ephemeral and recyclable.





IT IS HARD BUT TEMPTING TO LOSE YOUR SOUL. AMERICAN ARTIST, JONATHAN BARBIERI, IS HELPING US DO JUST THAT BY BRINGING THE SOUL-RENDERING, ANCIENT TRADITION OF DRINKING MEZCAL TO NEW YORK.

What does it mean to give up your soul? For whom or in what circumstances would you be willing to render it? New York seems to be the right place to lose your soul. Jonathan Barbieri traveled thousands of miles south, to the Mexican state of Oaxaca, in search for the right place and means to do it, and now he is making this experience available to New Yorkers. It is called Pierde Almas, a highly-rated, artisan-made mezcal, produced with the finest, organic ingredients. His mezcal is conjured respecting the most traditional production process.

THE INTERVIEW. I don't know if it was the fact that by the time he arrived at the dim-lit East Village Mexican bar, I was half way through a shot of Pierde Almas, or if it was his hat and leather jacket, but when I saw Jonathan for the first time I felt my soul loosening. Jonathan Barbieri is a tall, slender, middle-aged man, with grayish hair, an open smile and a firm hand shake. He makes you feel like you are catching up with a well-known family member. As it was his preference, we conducted the interview in Spanish. His Spanish still carries an echo of his English mother tongue attached to the end of some words. Jonathan arrived in Oaxaca in the eighties, in search of the right environment to paint, and this is how he came to be a Latin Lover.

A SIX-MONTH STAY IN OAXACA. In the eighties, he planned to go to Spain because Spain was more alive than ever after Franco's death, especially Barcelona, with its artistic community and all its expressionist movements. "But before crossing el charco, I thought, I am going to spend six months in Mexico". So he headed south and visited the central region of Mexico looking for places conducive to his painting. Not finding what he was looking for, Jonathan decided to go back to Oaxaca, which he had visited years earlier. "It was such a long trip", he recalls. "In those days it took more than twelve hours to get there by bus, so I had lots of time to think and to strip myself of many things -- like for example, the movies. I always liked films so much, that I was thinking while looking out through the window that I was not going to have access to movies while I was out there, and so on. Suddenly, the bus had a terrible accident with a taxi. It pushed the taxi off a cliff and I saw the people being thrown out of the car. It was a human drama, and so I thought 'No chingues ca, what do you need movies for?!' I knew then I was getting to the right place. And so, what was supposed to be a six- month trip turned into the rest of my life," he says proudly. He has been there since then. It has been twenty seven years.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH MEZCAL: A love-hate relationship. "El cariño", says Jonathan, "is part of the story. It is a love-hate relationship because when you really love a place, you see it in all its facets; you have to get into it in order to survive. One of things that was very important for me, since the beginning,

#### JONATHAN BARBIERI





MOLINO IN ACTION



MAGUEY HEARTS



was mezcal. It was a way to get to know the people of the place I was trying to make my home. You can try to see things from the other person's perspective, and say "Hmmm..." for hours, but you get to the other side in fifteen minutes if you take the mezcal road," and he laughs out loud. "But apart from that, I opened myself to the people; I went and knocked on doors, and I got to know Oaxaca, which is the root. I could have explored Oaxaca from the top down, but I did it the other way around."

Jonathan spent eleven years, painting and preparing for shows in the interior of the state before moving to the state's capital city, Oaxaca. He lived in Asunción Etla for two years and then in Reyes Etla for 9 years. "In those towns there is always something to celebrate, there is always a fiesta. It might be a quinceañera; it might be a wedding, or a funeral. So it is through these celebrations, through these events, that you really get to know people and the place youre living in, in a more genuine sense. My art was very influenced, of course, by these places, by these people, and mezcal gets its own place as part of life. Mezcal isn't only something you drink: it's a spiritual drink. It is a spirit, it means culture. Mezcal takes you on a journey where you get to know the families that have been producing it for centuries. It gives people unity and a sense of belonging because it is present in all of life's events. Tradition isn't something you get out of a drawer every year, traditions are lived every day. So what was supposed to be a six-month stay turned into a full investment of my time, of my treasure, of spirit, of everything, everything."

LET'S MAKE US SOME MEZCAL. It took him a few years to discover the palenque he is currently working (a palenque is the physical space where the mezcal is produced, with its machinery, animals, and people, etc.). "After a few years of painting and living there, I discovered that palenque. It was like diving totally into the life of the family who worked it, a family that took me in completely. Don Fausto Rasero, my founding partner got very ill at that time, so we took him to hospitals, and took care of him. I was involved in the whole process. My acceptance into this family was fundamental for me. His sons are like my brothers now. They became my family."

When they started bottling Pierde Almas they didn't have any intention of selling it or making it a business. They were only doing it for friends. "Until one Sunday..." he recalls "when we had spent the whole day handwriting the labels, because we were doing it all by hand, we realized we had to take the next step. It was a very hard step for me to take, because I had to break away from my way of living as an artist, leave my aesthetics behind, become a businessman. But since the beginning we had the same goal for producing it and the same philosophy in mind: to preserve the family tradition first and secondly, to support this family and the other families that depended on us."

He sips from his shot of Pierde Almas, and continues talking very proudly about the family's natural process and their respect for the environment. "And suddenly, I start to realize

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that this whole thing of producing mezcal has so many ramifications. There's the maguey/man relationship and the maguey/environment relationship—because we are not only bottling a liquid, we are building friendships, and fraternities with the farmers. But beyond that, there's something even bigger: we're part of a cultural tradition that has existed for thousands of years, and that is what has moved me the most: to be part of that cultural tradition."

Then he talks to me about their growth strategy. "Because one thing is to want to do it, and then there's the how to. Fortunately we had many friends that were supportive. Like Chef Alejandro Ruiz, who is one of the most recognized names in fine cuisine in Oaxaca, and Guillermo Fadenelli, a very important writer in Oaxaca. We started sponsoring cultural events, like supporting Casa Lamm, an important Oaxaca publishing house, and many other cultural events. So that's the way we started putting our name out there and, very soon, we were at the forefront of the mezcal boom in Mexico City. Then, a couple of years later, we're here in New York. We also have plans to expand to Europe, and Australia. But we have to do it by keeping our goal in mind: to produce our mezcal with the same ritualistic, natural, traditional method; so we have to be creative in order to expand."

"This year we got a grant from the Mexican Secretary of Agriculture and Fishery to expand reforestation of Tobalá, one of the maguey species we use for our Pierde Almas. And we're very excited about that. We got this grant because of the respect we have for the earth, its natural processes and the environment."

Jonathan's enthusiasm for Oaxaca, the maguey, and the mezcal tradition is not only evident, it is contagious too. His passion keeps glowing as he talks about how the labels are now printed on paper made from recycled natural fibers extracted from the maguey; or when he tells me how he personally designed the diving fly that is part of the logo, or explains how each batch has a different grade of alcohol content, just like the hand-crafted mezcal that families produce and drink. "We want people around the world to experience mezcal the same way that locals in Oaxaca do, as natural as possible, and we achieve this by baking the Agave hearts in earthen ovens for up to ten days, and mill them by using a stone wheel pulled by horses. It is a lot of work and it takes longer, but it is worth it. You can notice the difference when you drink any variety of Pierde Almas."

LA PIERDE ALMAS: He talks and talks and I don't get tired of listening, but I am truly intrigued by the name: "Pierde Almas", literally "a loser of souls". So, I ask him about it and his eyes brighten up. "I was waiting for you to ask about that, it is a great story," and he gets ready by ordering another shot. He looks as if he were drinking water. Truth is, I don't feel a bit dizzy either. Pierde Almas is strong but smooth. It awakens my awareness but doesn't mess up my mind. "In the nineties I used to spend almost fifteen hours a day painting and working. I had a very strange life. I grew my own fruits and vegetables and I killed my own animals. I had a guy that









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helped me prepare for painting, his name was Max. But Max would get lost every now and then and wouldn't come back for days, and when he did, he always came up with an adventure to get out of trouble with me. One time, after he had been lost for several days, he came back and told me, 'You are not going to believe where I've been. I was at a cantina where the cantinero is called El Pierde Almas,' so I told him that if he was going to take so long to come back he'd better take me with him, and he did.

"That place! We walked up and down rolling hills. We were around Santos Degollados, Etla. Suddenly, I see a wooden hut crowning the top of one of these hills. The path to climb up was steep and full of cactuses. I understood right then that it would take us several days to get down this hill. The inside walls of the hut were covered with newspaper to protect the place from the northern winds. There was only one room with a dirt floor and big tree trunks as seats. A hot pink dresser with golden filigree, was making do as the bar, right in the middle of the room. Behind the bar a small man was serving drinks. The "Pierde Almas," as people called him, wasn't taller than 4'6". He was crippled, missing a hand, had a hump, blind in one eye and was missing some teeth, the rest of the crowd was equally different. Each person was a story. The scene made such an impact in my mind that years later I painted a whole series of 25 paintings, on the theme of this cantina. That scene was the Comedia Profana, the exact opposite of Dante's Divine Comedy. All the vulnerabilities, all the failings, all the sins, were present there, in one room. So, this person and this place came to be the inspiration for so much of my work. I showed this collection of paintings in New York from 2000 to 2001. Later on, in 2006 I started collaborated with John Dickie, a screenwriter friend of mine on a screenplay about this cantina. It is called La Pierde Almas. Right now, we're waiting to start pre-production in August and we hope to start shooting in October. It will be a black comedy about the encounter of two cultures. John will be directing it."

The night washed away in the midst of these stories. The glasses clinking and plates clashing in the kitchen brought us back to the dim-lit East Village bar, but it was great to travel to the faraway places that Barbieri has traveled. A painter turned into business man, turned into story teller and soul catcher, all under the influence of a Mexican tradition. One thing is certain: Jonathan Barbieri has given up his soul to art and to mezcal. He has been creating art since he was five and he asserts that for him, art is a path that has given him many satisfactions: "It is a journey, and a date with destiny." Art took him to Oaxaca, a place where art and mezcal intertwine to become one and permeate life, the life of Jonathan Barbieri.



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