LATINLOVER

THE RECONQUISTA

SUPERGOOD, SUPERYOU! ISSUE 7 – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2014

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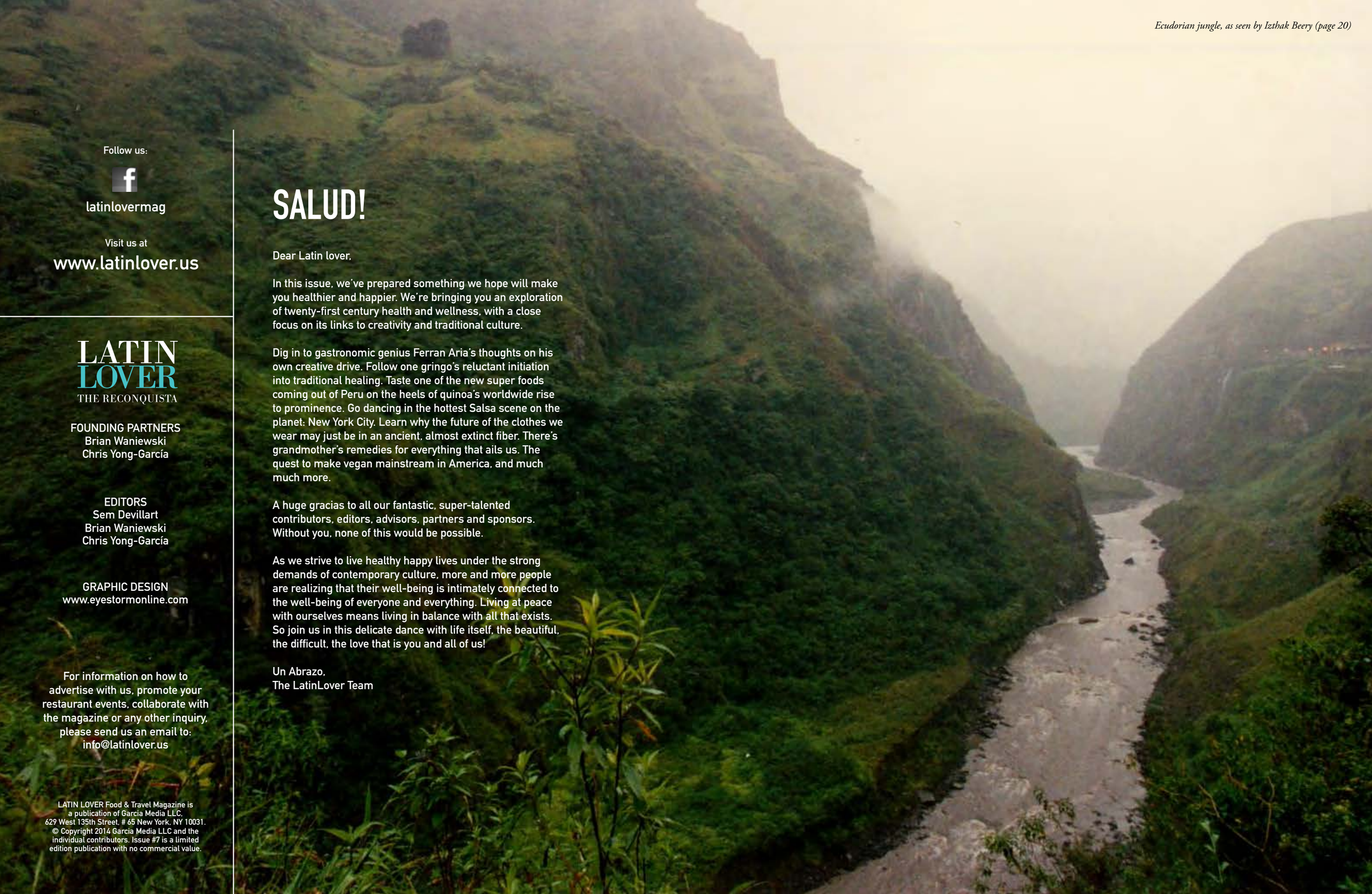
SUPERGOOD, SUPERYOU!

Cover photo by Chasi Annexy

Photo by Pako Dominguez



Ecudorian jungle, as seen by Izthak Beery (page 20)

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SALUD!

Dear Latin lover,

In this issue, we've prepared something we hope will make you healthier and happier. We're bringing you an exploration of twenty-first century health and wellness, with a close focus on its links to creativity and traditional culture.

Dig in to gastronomic genius Ferran Aria's thoughts on his own creative drive. Follow one gringo's reluctant initiation into traditional healing. Taste one of the new super foods coming out of Peru on the heels of quinoa's worldwide rise to prominence. Go dancing in the hottest Salsa scene on the planet: New York City. Learn why the future of the clothes we wear may just be in an ancient, almost extinct fiber. There's grandmother's remedies for everything that ails us. The quest to make vegan mainstream in America, and much much more.

A huge gracias to all our fantastic, super-talented contributors, editors, advisors, partners and sponsors. Without you, none of this would be possible.

As we strive to live healthy happy lives under the strong demands of contemporary culture, more and more people are realizing that their well-being is intimately connected to the well-being of everyone and everything. Living at peace with ourselves means living in balance with all that exists. So join us in this delicate dance with life itself, the beautiful, the difficult, the love that is you and all of us!

Un Abrazo,
The LatinLover Team

CONTRIBUTORS

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Former Managing Director of Institute of Play, Brian is working on new forms of organizational life that engage and support the fullest flourishing of human potential. Brian was trained as a poet and has worked as a management consultant, a literature professor, a cook and a gardener. He is currently on a crash course in Latin culture thanks to his Brazilian-Peruvian wife and baby daughter and divides his time between Rio de Janeiro and New York City.

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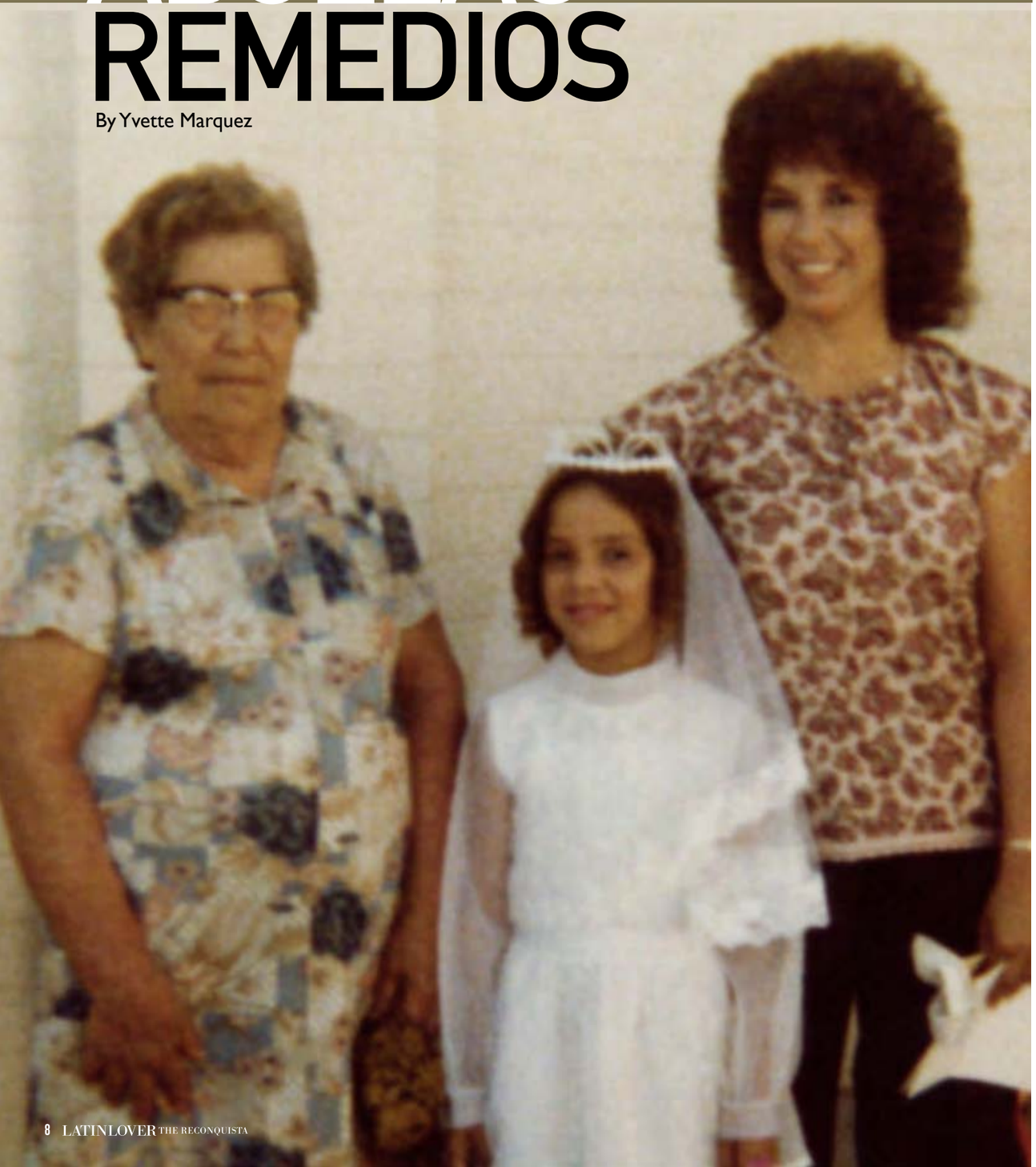
ABUELA's REMEDIOS

By Yvette Marquez



My maternal grandmother passed away at 98 years old. She lived a long and healthy life. I never heard her complain of any aches and pains. She was a very strong woman.

Whenever I was sick as a child, my mother did not take me to the doctor. Instead, she took me to Grandma's house. There my grandma diagnosed and healed me with natural remedies or *remedios*. If I had a stomach ache, she would brew some *manzanilla* or *yerba buena* tea. The herbs she used were fresh from her garden—no tea bags. If I had a cold or a fever, she would smear Vicks on my chest, then soak a towel in homemade rubbing alcohol and rub it on my body and forehead. The homemade alcohol had herbs floating inside the bottle, marijuana and yerba buena. If I had a cough or a sore throat, she would make a tea of dried oregano, she would have me gargle with salt water, and for dinner I knew delicious *caldo de pollo* would be on the menu.

Sometimes, if I was sick for no apparent reason, my grandma would say, "*Alguien te dio el mal de ojo*." She would sweep an egg over my body and begin to pray, then she would crack the egg in a glass of water and place the glass on the floor under my bed. In the morning she would say the evil eye was gone. Magically, I felt better.

There were other times that she blamed an illnesses on *empacho*, literally meaning an "impacted stomach." She would crack a fresh egg on my tummy and roll the yolk back and forth, until it broke. Then she would smear mayonnaise or Vaseline on her hands and massage my legs to work out the knots. It was a deep tissue massage that was quite uncomfortable as a child. I remember her doing this, when I accidentally swallowed my chewing gum. She would say the gum would go down to my legs and needed to be worked out, before it caused other stomach issues.

Then there were the common cuts and scrapes that were treated with fresh aloe vera squeezed from an aloe plant accompanied by the incantation, "*sana, sana, colita de rana…*"

Of course, if I was really sick, like when I had the chickenpox in the second grade, I was taken to the doctor. I remember the doctor recommending some pink calamine lotion for my itchy body. My grandma ended up making her own concoction that relieved the itching far more than the pink stuff. I'm not sure how she made it, but it worked.

No matter what remedy Grandma tried, I knew she would always make me feel better. Now, as a mother, I make herbal teas for my kiddos and rub their chests with Vicks, and make them chicken soup, if they are sick. I even bought my children some evil eye bracelets to keep *el mal de ojo* away. I'm all about trying the tried and true first, before running to the doctor. My children love the extra attention, and I love using the simple old fashioned remedies my grandma used. I've always thought that I could write an entire book on all the home remedies my grandma had for our ailments.

She was such a wonderful healer, in many more ways than she knows.

CHAMOMILE TEA
Té de Manzanilla

There's something soothing about chamomile, and it's not just an oldwives tale.

My grandma grew chamomile in her backyard, and she always made me a warm cup of *manzanilla* if my tummy hurt or before bedtime. I continue to drink chamomile at night to wind down, and when my children have a tummy ache, I make this chamomile tea for them. Even when they were babies, I'd make them some *manzanilla* sweetened with honey and give it to them in a baby bottle. A warm cup can be just the ticket to calming your child. This is a great tea to drink after dinner, before bedtime. You can either use dried chamomile flowers or chamomile tea pouches. Chamomile is best served hot and is delicious with a bit of honey.

Ingredients

1 tablespoons dried chamomile flowers or chamomile tea pouches
3 cups water
Honey

Directions

Bring 3 cups water to a boil, pour in the chamomile, cover and let steep 5 minutes. Strain and serve. Add honey to taste.

Photo by Jeanine Thurston

CINNAMON TEA
Té de Canela

I was very fortunate to grow up with two wonderful and caring grandmothers. My maternal grandmother, Jesusita, passed away when she was 98 years old, and my paternal grandmother, Anita, recently passed away at the age of 92. Just the other day, I was thinking about the incredible lives they lived, and all they experienced. Although they only met each other a couple of times, they had a lot in common, and I have a feeling they would have enjoyed each others' company. Both of their husbands passed away young, and they were left to raise their children alone. They were both strong women, fabulous cooks and very healthy. I was starting to wonder if there was a secret ingredient in common, and then it hit me: cinnamon! Both my grandmothers drank té de canela (cinnamon tea), as well as used the aromatic spice in savory and sweet dishes. After researching, I realized there are surprising health benefits and unique healing abilities associated with this beloved spice. Cinnamon can help lower cholesterol, reduce sugar levels, treat bad breath, protect against heart disease, boost brain activity and help with memory loss, fight yeast infections, treat stomach ulcers, alleviate gas, nausea and indigestion, increase blood circulation, act as a natural diuretic, and more.

I especially love drinking té de canela with honey in the colder months, but have also incorporated this spice into my daily cooking and baking. If you're ready to start taking cinnamon as a natural remedy, I'd highly recommend you add a pinch to your tea or coffee, or sprinkle some on your wheat toast.

Ingredients

6 cups water
2 Mexican cinnamon stick, whole
Honey to taste

Directions

Place water and cinnamon in a medium-sized sauce pan and bring to a boil. Let boil for approximately 3 to 5 minutes and remove from heat. Let steep for an additional 30 minutes, or to taste based on strength desired. Add honey to taste.

Photo by Jeanine Thurston

"Whenever I was sick as a child, my mother did not take me to the doctor. Instead, she took me to Grandma's house."

Photo Courtesy of elBullifoundation

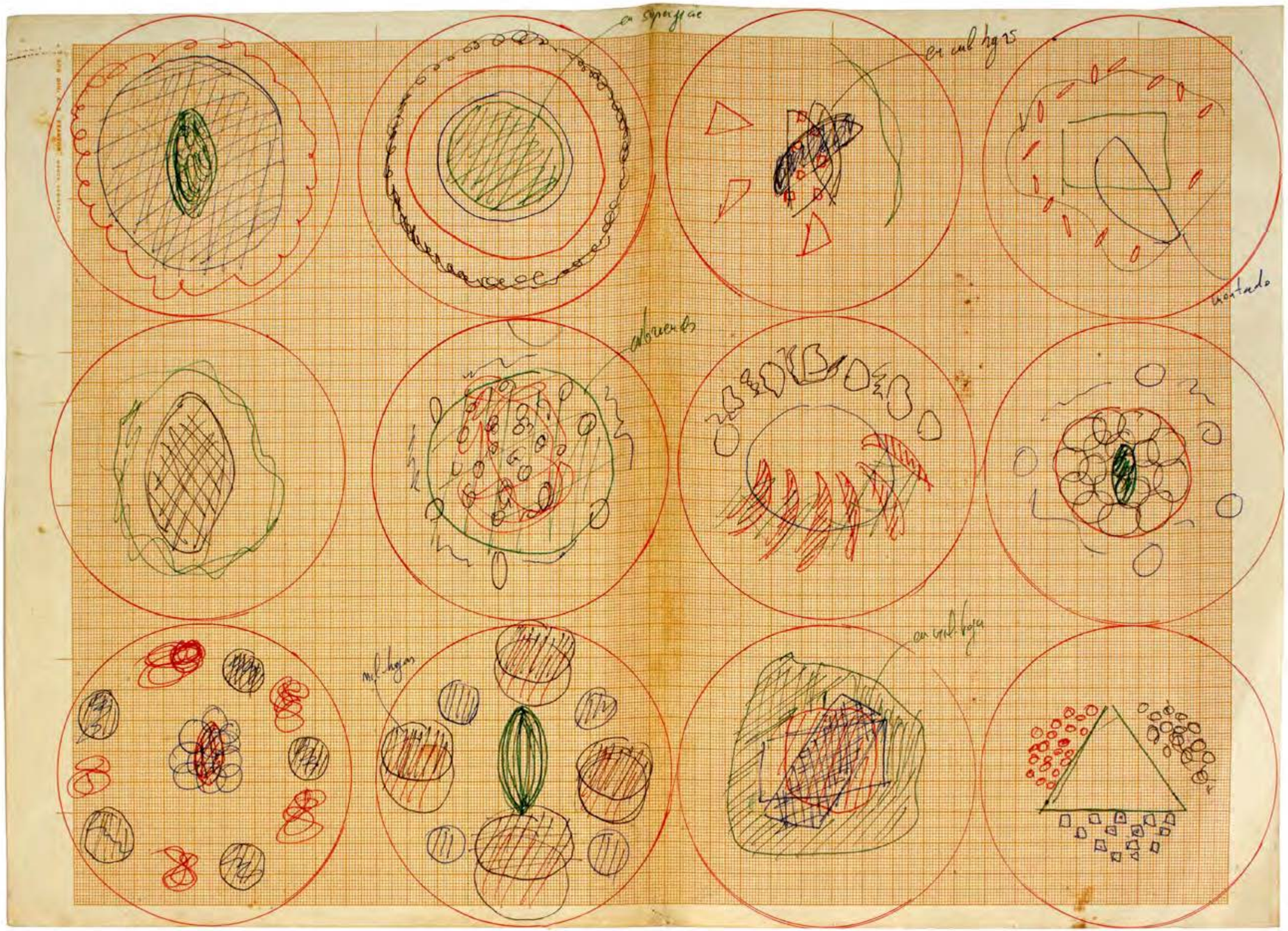
Q&A

By Sem Devillart
Translated by José Antonio Villarán

Ferran Adrià

Catalan chef Ferran Adrià revolutionized the culinary world with the gastronomic methods he put into practice at his pioneering restaurant elBulli. Adria's "Notes on Creativity" is the first major exhibition dedicated to the visualization and drawing practices of this master. The exhibition presents examples of drawings, notes, notebooks, diagrams, pictograms and prototypes by Adria and his collaborators. The exhibition, currently running at the Drawing Center in New York City, is a beautiful showcase that depicts Adria's creative process, at the intersection of science meets art. LatinLover could not resist asking a few questions!

Ferran Adrià
Plating Diagram, ca. 2000-2004
Colored pen on graph paper
Courtesy of elBullifoundation



Where did you do most of this work? How do you come up with your ideas?

I made most of the drawings between the kitchen of El Bulli and el Taller, although in the exhibition you can see that I drew some at home and some even in a cab. I always have a pencil and paper with me, and when I have an idea, I jot it down, so I don't lose it. Most of the time I limit myself to writing the words that define the idea, but in other cases I define the idea through a drawing.

Can one learn to be creative?

I don't think so. To be creative you must be passionate about creativity, and this is difficult to spark. Passion is felt; it can't be learned or imposed. Creativity is my great passion; it comes naturally to me. What can be done, however, is to reflect about creativity, in order to be more effective, in order to optimize it.

Creative processes can suffer from blockages. How do you overcome the equivalent of writer's block in cooking? How do you keep your creative juices flowing?

Often times an idea gets blocked, and you don't achieve the expected outcome. There are different ways to approach this, but I don't force it. If something doesn't work out then I put it aside. I don't obsess over it. I try looking for a different way. And oftentimes while you're working on another idea, you'll find a response to the problem that prevented you from materializing the initial idea. The important thing is to not be discouraged. If an idea doesn't work out, go find another one. If not, you might spend your whole life trying to achieve one thing, and in the end not get any results.

What role does the balancing of opposites play in your process of creation? For instance, how do you balance rational and intuitive approaches?

With cooking, as with all disciplines, creativity is accompanied by a certain knowledge and intuition, which filter and fine tune ideas unconsciously. It's what we call "mental palate". Take an idea: we immediately analyze it mentally, and we visualize how it could make sense if applied to cooking. In this manner, when you begin to develop an idea, your mind guides the way in which you have to work in order to achieve a gastronomically interesting result.

Do you feel a form when you taste a dish, or taste a dish in the act of drawing? Do you experience any kind of synesthesia when you create?

Yes, in a certain way. I guess we could say that what we call "mental palate" encourages synesthesia. I mean, if I have an idea for example, and I imagine a dish of chocolate with violets, the taste and texture of these two items is perfectly registered in my mind, so I can mentally imagine the gustatory association it will produce. It's not 100% real, but it's really helpful to know beforehand if an idea makes sense or not.

Please fill in the blank and elaborate. The pen is to drawing and designing what the ..... is to cooking.

The pen is to drawing and designing what the brain and the hands are to cooking.

Ferran, you are a master in finding the essence, of dissecting things into their primary components. If you had to list the key components of "the Latin way," what would they be?

Joy and passion.

And "the American way"? What ingredients constitute what you would call "American"?

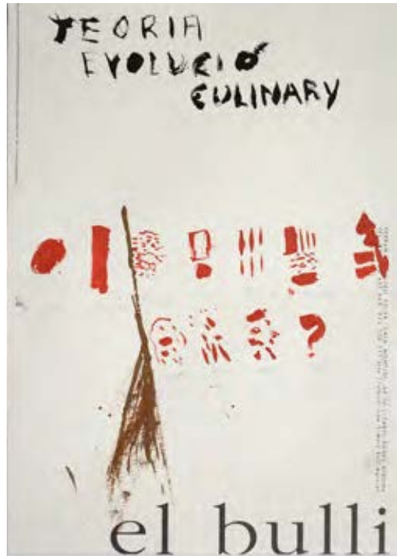
Dreaming and the perseverance to achieve your dreams.

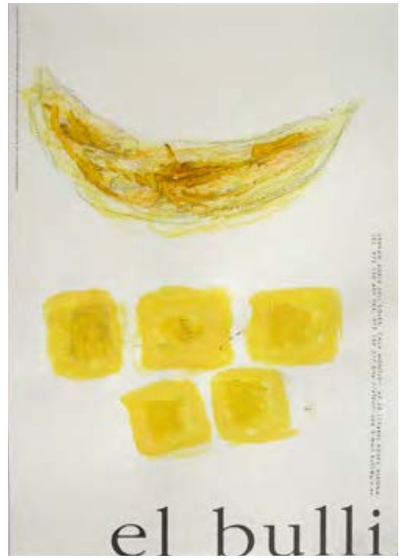
Through your Bullipedia project, you are trying to codify the culinary discipline. Is this approach transferrable to other fields or disciplines, do you think? If so, which fields and why?

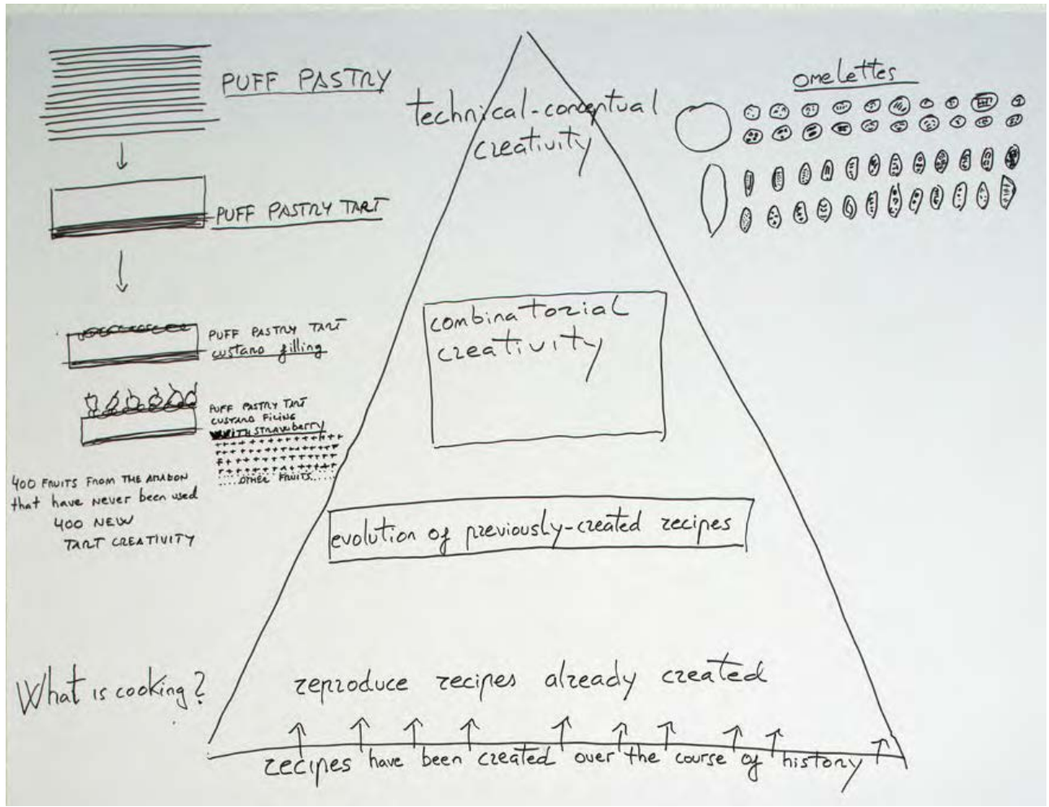
Yes, with Bullipedia we decode and organize the culinary discipline, in order to arrive at a valuable tool from a pedagogical and knowledge accumulation point of view, but also because it will be an extremely valuable tool to create. Bullipedia is an organizational tool that could easily be applied to different disciplines, it just has to be applied to each one of them with the corresponding variations.

If you were a dish? What would be the ingredients?

I would love to be a glass of water.







top
Ferran Adrià. *Theory of Culinary Evolution*, 2013
Sixty drawings, each: 11 11/16 x 8 1/4 inches.
Courtesy of elBullifoundation

bottom
Ferran Adrià. *Creative Pyramid*, 2013
Ink on paper. Dimensions variable.
Courtesy of elBullifoundation

Itzhak Beery: Keeping the Shaman's Fire

By Bryan Giemza

Photo by Pako Dominguez

Photo by Pako Dominguez

We're only fifteen minutes into the interview when Itzhak Beery spits rum in my face.

First he takes a swig—well, a *trago*—of rum.

Then he watches me closely.

Wiry of frame, glasses, and hair, Beery is undeniably charismatic, even a shade puckish. He sits relaxed in his homespun, dressed in a simple long tunic or alb, as comfortable as a businessman in his suit. There is the glint of mischief in his eye, the mischief of a man who proposes to put you off balance, if only for the sake of rebalancing you.

The sound Beery makes next is a bit like my five-year-old daughter's imitation of an elephant. And then, after a few beats, the expelled spume of atomized rum descends in a cool mist across my face, passing over me like a spirit. There follows a change of temperature, if not a change of state; the cooling effect dissipates almost at once. Beery would call it "energy cleansing," and might use it, along with smoke and flame, in the customary *limpia* cleansing ceremony that begins one of his shamanic sessions.

What remains in the mist's wake is a sense of the interrupted arbitrariness of the order that we come to expect, from one moment to the next, of daily life. Of interviews. Of ourselves. This was just one sign that Itzhak Beery was a different sort of man, and that this would be a different sort of interview.

It's no accident that the terms "trickster" and "shaman" are deeply entwined, culturally speaking. For those steeped in scientific rationalism, the relationship of the terms reflects an ingrained, instant skepticism toward the shaman's legitimacy. Ever since the earliest colonial encounters, Europeans demonized and depicted shamans as mad. Of course, other cultures revere the shaman precisely as the one who reveals the tricks played on us by what we mistake for reality.

Whatever gimlet-eyed scrutiny you might bring to it, you can be sure that Beery's life, to a degree unimaginable to most of us, has been a study in justifying himself to others. How else to explain the unusual position of an apparently sensible, irreligious, self-described skeptic and Israeli American who, in the dark forest of middle of life, becomes a practicing shaman? Beery first traveled to Ecuador in 1997, where he met Don José Joaquin Pineda, the Quechuan shaman who would become his mentor. It marked the first step in Beery's transformation into a "bird man": "a man who can fly like a bird to bring knowledge from the upper world." Beery prefers the Siberian origins of the word *shaman*, noting its original register as "the keeper of the fire." "And I kind of like that, because it gives a bigger role for the shaman," Beery said. "He's responsible for wellbeing of community: for songs, traditions, wealth, health." If this was the sort of pillar of the community that Beery needed to be, it was not the sort his wife and three

children might have expected in the late 1990s. They were among the mystified. Freshly returned from Ecuador, Beery was ripe with talk of visions, and of ayahuasca, the hallucinogenic tea common to many Amazonian healers. An impending identity crisis was exacerbated by his inability to "see the world in the same way again." "For the first few years, it was really tough," Beery told me. "They didn't understand why daddy was going crazy. He's nuts, he's a drug addict."

In some sense, Beery was an early pilgrim on an increasingly well-worn path. The rise of "ayahuasca tourism" over the past fifteen years or so has generated controversy, and the rising global appetite for this element of South American shamanism has apparently led to such oddities as the importation of Amazonian shamans to Costa Rica, where there exists no native precedent for ayahuasca ceremonies. A smattering of religious groups within the United States have condoned the tea's use as a means to spiritual enlightenment, reviving a debate familiar to American culture, and, for that matter, the Supreme Court.

For his part, even if ayahuasca was part of Beery's awakening as a shaman, he is quick to say that he doesn't deal with it now. "In this tradition, we don't do that, because the belief is that we train the brain to get to the same visions without any assistance. You don't have ayahuasca all the time—but you have your brain, your ability to connect with spirits."

For those who have not had an ecstatic religious experience, by whatever means, the notion of bringing spiritual order or genuine revelation to life through a boutique travel experience might sound a bit facile. But Beery would describe his engagement with shamanism as anything but easy, and says that its healing properties demand long-term commitment from the healer and the healed. The unlikeliness of his position can scarcely be overstated. Beery's own international upbringing, on the face of it, wouldn't seem to lend much support to his pursuit of shamanism. His parents came from Poland and Belarus, and lived on a kibbutz on the slope of a mountain in Israel. They raised Itzhak to be a son of Zionism, communism, and atheism. But like many sons, he seemed to find his way through his own waywardness. Notwithstanding parents who "were very much against any kind of religion," Beery would learn that his great-grandfather, Rabbi Mordechi Zundel Margolith, was a Kabbalistic rabbi and a man who, like Beery, viewed the world in terms of the forces of good and evil in contention for the spirit.

Flash forward to Itzhak's arrival to New York in the 1970s, and his travels to Ecuador in the 1990s, where he first encountered shamanism. Here, again, Itzhak Beery seems like an unlikely

participant. By his own account, shamanism pursued him (to use a culturally misleading metaphor) the way the hound of heaven might pursue a reluctant priest. “I went there a year and a half later, and I had this vision when he was doing healing for me—it was an initiation vision—and that's how I became his apprentice. Even then he was telling me, ‘You have to start doing healing,’ and I never really thought it was me. I fought it. I didn't really want it. I was afraid of the responsibility, that I'm not good enough. There are a lot of people who want to be healers. I am a healer, but I never really wanted to commit to it.”

Eventually, though, Beery acquiesced, while retaining his day job. (Shamanism cannot be described as a full-time occupation in Ecuador, either). Today Beery works not just as a shamanic healer, but as something of an emissary for shamanism to non-animists. Through his website and the classes he offers, he has become a globetrotter, with annual travels to Israel, Istanbul, Italy, Amsterdam, Zurich, and Krakow, not to mention return trips to Ecuador and Brazil.

Some part of the international interest in shamanism, Beery says, might stem from the way that modernity prompts us to lose touch with our essential humanity, and deeper memories, including our intuition of what he dubs the sixth sense. “We lose the memory. We lose the memory of our ancestors. Where we came from. And that's really what this work is about, because who you are is really not just the DNA of your father and grandfather and great grandfather and all that. It's a lot more. It's your essence, this past. And a lot of things that you do now, and the choices you make now, are related to these ancestors, and they are continuing to influence. Now if we shut this down and we think that we are one of a kind . . .” Beery chuckled. “This is what happened. I thought that I'm inventing working with evil spirits. But my great-grandfather was doing it a hundred years ago. I'm not unique. I'm just one pearl in the whole necklace. And this sense of continuation, of ancestry, is incredibly important.” That understanding, Beery says, is part of his quest “to bring people back to their own proportions,” and to help them understand, without diminishment, that they are no different, and no more important than other things in nature—whether animal, plant, or mineral.

Frequently getting back to true proportions entails a confrontation with past lives. When Beery asked me if I believed in such things, I balked. He smiled. “I don't believe in it,” he said, leaning back, “I *know* it. I experienced it. I'm a very skeptical person, cynical and skeptical. In my own experiences, if someone told me stories like this, I would probably dismiss them. But since I experienced them I have to take them as reality.” Beery explained how a vision of one of his previous lives, as a nineteenth-century woman who committed suicide in Vienna, was later corroborated in minute detail with historical materials describing the life and demise of the woman he had seen. Had been.

I asked Beery to clarify the relationship between shamanism and words that seem to connote something similar—like *curandero* and *brujo*. “Every shaman is also a *curandero*,” he explained, “but not every *curandero* is a shaman.” A *curandero* might work exclusively as a herbalist, for example, without much thought to spirit-healing. A shaman is not likely to be so specialized, though he shares the same healing aims, fulfilling a variety of functions and roles that anglos might parse as *doctor, spiritual guide and counselor*, *psychologist*. *Brujo*, on the other hand, connotes something closer to “witch-doctor” or “sorcerer,” and encompasses a type of shamanism that Beery acknowledges the existence of, but expressly rejects. A *brujo* is as capable of applying a curse as striving for healing. Beery told me of one *brujo* in particular who offered to kill his enemies for $100. Beery only works from the light, he said and added, “The danger of the darkness is that the darkness can come back to haunt you.” Beery also explained, matter-of-factly, how the expulsion of evil spirits is a matter of routine in his work, much as it had been for his teacher. And once again, when he says he sees evil spirits, red in tooth and claw, after extracting them, he means it.

How in the world does someone prepare for that experience? I asked “When I was ready to deal with it, it appeared,” Beery said. “I believe that it happens to all of us. The teaching comes when you need to learn it.” Yet Beery was also careful to explain how shamanism, so closely tied to spirit, isn't exclusively about spirit, nor is it religion in another guise. It cannot be learned instantly, and contrary to the essence of popular belief, he said, “Shamanic healing or shamanism is not a spiritual practice. It is a very result-oriented system of many proven tools that induce positive changes in a person's life. One of the tools used is working directly with spirits.” So what are the other “tools” of the shaman's trade? “Energy, sound, diet, body work, aromas, oils, prayers, hallucinatory plants, dreams, rituals, ceremonies and other natural means.”

This mash-up mentality is reflected in the accoutrements Beery keeps on his office table, from such familiar fixtures as a bottle of Agua de Florida and carnations, to Asian imports like finger cymbals. African stones are as likely to come to his hand as the volcanic rock of South America. Given that many shamanic traditions use animal sacrifice, what were his thoughts on that topic, I wanted to know. A legitimate part of the tradition, Beery said, but not one he practices, preferring to use eggs to extract and contain negative energy. Magic words? Not needful, he explained. Asked if he learned the incantations in Quechuan, per his teacher, Beery acknowledged that he “sometimes had to do different prayers. Prayers are not as important as the intention you put in. Many shamans do a language that no one speaks—just sounds. What's important is intention and vibration, and not so much the words.” Besides, he says, healing requires a personal journey not just on the part of the shaman, but on the part of the one who would be healed.

In short, a jazz aesthetic—*if it works, use it*—seems to be the prevailing ethos here, and Beery points out that this is true of his mentors, too. Likewise, Beery's apprenticeship, by his own reckoning, was more experiential than intellectual. And I was surprised that such elements as divination by candle wax and flame, and

Photos by Pako Dominguez

palm-reading, were part the inheritance of his Quechuan training, since they are more broadly familiar as the stock-in-trade of fortune telling. Other elements of what he described—auras and the like, the power of certain minerals—seemed more generically New Age. But similar elements indeed recur among the shamans of Ecuador, Peru, Brazil.

When Beery sized me up by examining my palm, he noted my potential to see spirits (I've certainly seen things I can't account for), my two children (accurate), my indifference to materialism (accurate), my defining curiosity and creative drive (accurate, but perhaps also to be expected), my captivity to a restless mind (ask my wife)—and then added that my daughter resembled me and that my son favored my wife (Google-proof, very accurate, and a little uncanny). But when he said that I was a writer, we both had a good laugh; it was the purpose of my visit, after all. Or so I thought.

Like so much of what I would come to understand of shamanism, it seemed to exist in a world between worlds, a world that could not be codified, quantified, or even described. And if shamanic healing required an intensely personal journey for the shaman, it was clear that it required much of the person seeking to be healed. As Beery would say, "Shamanism is the only spiritual practice that comes from *you*, not from anybody else. It's your connection to spirit. There's no right and there's no wrong."

As to the relationship between shamanic healing and conventional western medicine, Beery sees them both as complementary and necessary, and draws a comparison to gardening: "Like a gardener, medicine is attempting to clear the weeds from the garden by spraying chemicals or nipping the leaves and stems above the surface. Shamanic healers will look for a long-term solution by searching for the root of the illness and pulling them out from within the ground."

One of Beery's great aspirations is to "take the mystery out of shamanism, to take the primitive tug out of it, and make it available to everybody, and to really bring it back to the mass of people." Eventually he hopes to see it take its place beside acupuncture, reiki, and other alternatives therapies, once ridiculed, that are now finding acceptance in western hospitals. He cites the successes of his healing work as his point of greatest joy: "When you are in the presence of magic, of the energy shift, it's—what can you say—I can see how people shift when they stand here. It changes."

If it works, why should Beery be choosy about what constitutes an "authentic" Latin shaman? His borrowing, he said, came from respect, and of course, authenticity itself has a certain rationalist aroma about it. Beery has no qualms about it, seeing shamanism not as cooption, but as a global and democratic phenomenon. He is also plainspoken about the legacies of racism and colonialism, and the way that they have opposed shamanism in native culture with genocidal ferocity. And he hopes to play some part in healing the vestiges of colonialism: "These are the keepers of the wisdom, and what I'd like to really do is to have the young generation of shamans adopt that. That they would not be so disappointed with their parents. If we show appreciation for that, if we adopt that, it will encourage the indigenous people there to practice it. Their work is to save us all from the destruction of a culture." Ultimately, Beery says, what we owe South American shamans is, foremost, gratitude: "Gratitude for those people who refused to die. That they kept these secrets in hiding for so many years. They kept the connection between the heart and the sky. They understood the magic of that. The essential part. Of not being disconnected."

The territory we explored was not the stuff of small talk, and the otherworldliness of it was matched by the curious world of Beery's studio. In the mild light of an Greenwich Village office full of the artifacts of Beery's careers and travels—original artwork from advertisements, an astonishing sun-shaped shield made of tropical feathers, a set of handmade spears—the depths of his eyes were intermittently rendered a dull, indeterminate shade of hazel by the unsparing lightning of flash photography. The effect was similar to the moment when the lights are turned on in a barroom, and the flatness, the everydayness of things is laid bare. And then shaded again.

Why, I wondered, did I have this strange sense of having met Beery before, this nagging sense of acquaintance? I told myself it owed simply to the fact that in appearance and manner, Beery reminded me of no one so much as my Polish-American ancestors, from the angles of his face right down to his accented English. But at other times—and this is where it becomes unaccountable—in his familiarity he seemed someone else altogether, and I had the fleeting impression, however indistinct, of being seated before the Ecuadorian healer who had taught him. I could not put my finger on precisely why. It might have been his perfect comfort with human physicality. Or his matter-of-factness about how entirely mistaken most of us are about the true nature of reality. Even more difficult to express: the sense that he was, both entirely present, yet quite literally not altogether there, a comforter looking at you from across the threshold of an altogether different realm.

CONTRIBUTOR CONTEST • WINNER •

As a contest winner, Bryan will be flying anywhere he likes in Mexico or to a select destinations in Latin America. Look for an article about Bryan's journey in LatinLover's upcoming issue. Contest sponsored by Aeromexico.

Photo by Jorge Ochoa

Just to Have Fun, in the Salsa Scene of New York City

By Natalie Maniscalco

Photos by Chasi Annexy/SALSEEK.com

Her right arm extends gracefully, the tips of her fingers slightly lifted, as he leads her across the dance floor. Her hips swivel, and shoulders roll. The base of her neck arches. Her lush hair sweeps through the air. An undulating energy stream, the song's rhythm, connects the pair. Eyes meet, sly sexy smiles. The movement of their bodies is intoxicating!

Photo by Jorge Ochoa

"...You don't think about your job, your work, your school, your ex, your drama; you just dance and connect to the music, move, feel, forget and recharge!"

Many people admit that, at some point in their lives, they've said, "Oh, I would love to learn Salsa!" How could you not? The passion of the dance and the energy of the people are infectious, from Tito Puente, Celia Cruz, Hector Lavoe and Ray Barreto, to today's icons, like Marc Anthony, Frankie Ruiz, Jerry Rivera, Willie Colon and even shows like Dancing with the Stars! The Mambo King himself, Tito Puente, once said, "If there is no dance, there is not music!"

With its sensual rhythm and soulful beats, the sounds and steps of Salsa regularly spice up dance floors all over New York City, long considered to be the mecca of the dance. A fusion of Cuban and Afro-Caribbean influences, Salsa made its way here in the 1950's and 60's. And soon it was spreading to cities throughout the country and the world, including in Latin America, Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, and even Japan.

Salsa is a way life, a culture and a ritual to connect mind, body and soul in a way you've never done before. "One of the best therapeutic lessons you can take is a dance class," says Angel Ortiz, international guest Salsa instructor. "Live through dance movement. Your life will love you for it!" Salsa will make you feel incredible, as you build confidence and a style of your own. It also benefits your body. "It's an activity, a workout to lose weight, shape up and tone. It's also a mind-body connection," says Shani Talmor, a professional dancer and instructor in New York City. "When you dance Salsa, you are free! Your body is moving and is in the most relaxed and joyful place, which really benefits your soul. You don't think about your job, your work, your school, your ex, your drama; you just dance and connect to the music, move, feel, forget and recharge!"

I myself became fascinated with Salsa the first time I saw the movie Dirty Dancing. As a child, I took ballet, tap and jazz, but gave dance up to play soccer and stayed away for over 15 years. It wasn't until four years ago that my fascination resurfaced, and I started taking classes at Salsa Salsa Dance Studios in Brooklyn. On the first day of class, my instructor warned, "Once you catch the salsa bug, there is no turning back!" Boy, was he right! I started taking classes three times a week for six hours. And after 8 months of instruction, I danced almost every week night of the week. I bought special clothes, dance shoes and even red lipstick! Then I took it one step further and launched SALSEEK.com, a digital magazine showcasing the essence and beauty of Salsa. When people ask me what I do, I laugh and smile. They do too: salsa just has that effect. I never would have imagined Salsa would become such a part of my life. I encourage anyone and everyone to at least try a class. We are fortunate to have so many wonderful schools and instructors in New York that can offer a taste of the scene.

First and foremost, Salsa is about feeling and understanding. But it's also a dance that has specific steps to be learned. Most people in New York dance on2 or New York style Salsa, which requires different steps than what most people see in movies and TV shows. Created by Eddie Torres, the on2 style has spread worldwide and can easily be learned. Once you allow yourself to shine and drop your inhibitions, your confidence will certainly be noticed, and then you can truly feel the passion and essence of the music. "When you learn how to dance," says Melanie Torres, a world-renowned dancer, instructor and owner of On2 Dance Studio in Manhattan, "There's an air of confidence that is gained, that not only remains in the dance, but starts to bleed into your regular life."

Jazz Biancci, former student and performer of On2 Dance Studio, attests to the incredible social benefits the dance provides. "I have met the most exceptional, diverse, loving, joy-filled people over the years," she says. "It doesn't matter who does what for a living, or where they are from. There is an endearing quality that resonates from the heart of those who move through the world of Salsa. And I, for one, am so grateful to have stumbled into such a spectacular, sizzling, Salsa world!" So if you have any doubt or hesitations, I suggest you follow Melanie Torres' advice: "Give yourself permission to embrace your own true definition of self, and, at the end of the day, just dance. For those three minutes of a song, we're not here to save the world, just to have fun!"

Photos by Chasi Annexy/SALSEEK.com

Illustration by Clair Rossiter

Ancient Fibers, Organic Future: Native Cotton in Peru

By Patricia Codina

Western consumers over the years have become increasingly aware of the relationship between food production practices and health, both human and environmental. They have come to understand that cheaper and faster foods are not better, and that, in order to achieve a healthier body and world, they must invest in "slower" and "greener" foods. Though the organic food movement has really taken off in the new millennium, the organic clothing movement has not enjoyed the same boom. It even seems as if the appetite for cheaper and "faster" clothing continues to grow at rapacious speed, especially when it comes to cotton.

Cotton is the world's most important non-food agricultural product, accounting for half of the global demand for fiber. Perhaps part of the problem is that cotton has the reputation of being a natural and pure fiber, despite the fact that more insecticides are used in conventional farming of cotton than any other single crop in the world, according to the Environmental Justice Foundation . According to the Indian Textile Journal, just 2.4% of the world's arable land is planted with cotton, yet it accounts for 24% of the world's insecticide market and 11% of the sale of global pesticides, making it the most pesticide-intensive crop grown on the planet. Pesticides applied on fields can seep through the soil and contaminate groundwater and other sources of drinking water, the Environmental Justice Foundation claims. And such pesticides have been found in rainwater and traveling through the ecosystem with widespread negative effects on wildlife.

The effects on human health are equally pervasive. Studies around the world have shown that cotton workers routinely exposed to pesticides suffer symptoms that range from neurological and vision disorders, to the development of different forms of cancer and leukemia. These effects can be transmitted to children during gestation and lactation. The World Health Organization estimates that at least three million people are poisoned by pesticides every year and twenty to forty thousand more are killed.

Still, though we are willing to pay the extra dollar for a pint of organic strawberries, we are not as willing to do the same for an organic cotton t-shirt. "It is very different when we talk about organic food," says Dr. James

Vreeland, pioneer of the organic and Native cotton industry in Peru. "The increase in demand for organic food in the global market has been continuous for 30 years," he explains, "while the decline in demand for organic cotton is a worldwide trend. Since the economic crisis, people have not been willing to pay more for organic clothing." Peru, despite its long tradition in organic cotton, has not managed to buck this trend.

The cultivation of organic cotton in Peru began over 5,000 years ago and has never died out. Today it has the oldest surviving tradition of organic cotton cultivation on an industrial level in the world and is the leading producer of organic cotton in Latin America. As organic cotton production has been declining in recent years, Peru has seen a resurgence in a specific type of cotton which grows naturally in a variety of colors – the organic Native Cotton of Peru. Dr. James Vreeland, an American anthropologist with well-established roots in Peru, is the man behind this movement, and his passion has helped change the course of the Peruvian cotton tradition.

Dr. Vreeland's fascination with Native cotton started in the early 1970's, when he first stumbled across organic cotton in natural colors. He was an archeologist studying pre-Columbian textiles on the northern coast of Peru, when he noticed that the ancient fibers he was observing under the microscope appeared to be naturally pigmented, not dyed. The existence of colored cotton had been all but forgotten and was really only known to local peasant farmers of that region. Thus, Dr. Vreeland "rediscovered" the Native cotton and this breakthrough started him down an entirely new career and life path. He established himself in Peru and started the Native Cotton of Peru Project to rescue and disseminate the original Native colored cotton cultivar.

"I gave up my archaeological studies, turned to ethnoarchaeology and, for the next 20 years, sought all the information I could find on naturally colored cotton in museums and libraries and at ancient sites and by talking with everyone I met," he writes. "Ultimately, the people who taught me the most were the Mochica Indians, who, some 2,000 years ago, cultivated cottons of myriad hues and who had quietly maintained some of these cultivars."

He found that colored cotton was still being cultivated on the north coast of Peru, albeit in isolated and menaced conditions. In the 1930's the Peruvian government, attempting to boost the large-scale production of Pima and Tanguis cotton varieties, declared war on Native cotton and ordered that all plants be destroyed. The Native cotton that survived was grown clandestinely by peasant communities and remained undetected by the authorities. Vreeland's team was able to collect these seeds, reproduce them in government research stations and return them to the farmers for continued cultivation. They were also able to re-supply communities which had lost their original crops. "Our goal was to go in and help people do something with the proper technology and in the right way," Vreeland explains.

In 1997 Vreeland founded Peru Naturtex Partner to be the commercial representative for the Native Cotton Project of Peru, and also to galvanize a campaign to raise awareness on the existence and importance of native cotton. As a result of these efforts, Peruvian laws have changed, and the crop is no longer forbidden. Farmers today are still farming the native cotton and the crop is, relative to recent decades, thriving.

Today Naturtex is not the only organization involved with Peruvian Native cotton; several public and private sector projects are investing relatively large sums of money to boost Native cotton production. According to Dr. Vreeland, these projects, though well-intentioned, are destined to fail, because there is no growing demand for the fiber. "In the 80's and 90's there was a shortage of native cotton, now there is an over-supply. The NGO's have acquired funding for these projects thinking there is an unlimited demand. But, aside from the artisans themselves, there really isn't," he explains. The resulting stock, bought by these NGO's, is too large to be absorbed by local demand, but is still too small to be sold internationally; the national textile industry is not interested in it either.

Most Native cotton is used in handmade crafts that, though very beautiful, are

difficult to market. They are tediously hard to make—spun by hand and woven in back-pack looms—and very expensive. "Most tourists can't understand why something they can find on the coast can be 10 times more expensive than the crafts brought down from the *altiplano* which are made of polyester and have all the bright colors that have become the stereotype of the Andean world. Native cotton crafts are just not competitive in the outside market. They are more of an heirloom product that hopefully will not disappear," says Vreeland.

Some Native cotton is used in manufacturing, and Naturtex is the only company in Peru that does this. 20% of Naturtex's production is Native cotton, 60% is organic industrial cotton and 20% is alpaca laced with copper, an organic fiber known as Qoperfina, which was invented and developed by Dr. Vreeland, and which is starting to create a market of its own. Naturtex is not an NGO and does not work with intermediaries. They work directly with three rural communities—one in the coast and two in the jungle—who supply them with natural cotton. They pay the communities a fair price for their crop and use the raw cotton to make a variety of products, from hand-knitted yarns to fine percale bedding, very soft, high quality sheets. There are many applications for native cotton, also t-shirts and apparel in general, but the market for these has not been very consistent over the years.

How is it that such a unique fiber, completely organic and environmentally friendly, untouched by harmful chemicals, and from a country with a millenary tradition of top-quality cotton production, has not taken over the market by storm? According to Dr. Vreeland, the problem lies in that the natural colors of the cotton, though surprisingly varied, are still quite limited compared to the array of colors possible through chemical processes. "The colors are not what people wear today. They are not fashionable," he explains. "In clothing, though there is not a concern for the environment. People still want to wear brands, they want their labels, their colors, their seasons. People want fashion. And the organic cotton industry

is very slow and limited in converting organic cotton into fashion without having the proper players and brands."

Though large global brands such as Nike and Patagonia have taken steps to bring organic cotton to the mainstream, this has not been enough to bring about the kind of shift in mentality to really change buying behavior. "They don't want to change their suppliers or challenge their supply teams to do anything at all," explains Vreeland. "That has nothing to do with what small companies like us do. We work with companies or brands that are 100% organic and often struggle to survive. Now that we've been in the business for over 20 years—and it has been hard to survive this long—I would say that, if we've worked with 1,000 brands over the years, probably only 20 of those are still around. Most of them last between 2 and 5 years. It's just too tough a market."

So tough, in fact, that, after a peak in 2005-2006, worldwide production of organic cotton has been in decline. This has coincided with the worldwide economic crisis, but Vreeland also attributes it to the fact that people don't place such a high value on the product. "There really is not enough demand to go around, so organic cotton tends to be used intensively only for a limited range of products: baby apparel, because women understand that it is important to have the best for their babies and are willing to pay a little extra, and underwear, where the fabric is closest to the skin. In these two areas, the demand seems to have maintained," he adds.

Aside from waning demand, organic cotton (including Native cotton) farming in Peru faces many additional challenges. The first is cost. Peruvian cotton, both industrial and organic, is all harvested by hand. There is no mechanized picking or ginning. Handpicking is very labor-intensive and extremely expensive: about a third of the cost of production comes from the harvest alone. This makes cotton cultivation viable only where labor is extremely cheap, which is usually among peasant and indigenous farming communities, where people don't understand the cost of labor in a Western way. They harvest small amounts at a time, spaced out over a number of weeks so a large family can handle the harvest with the help of neighbors.

Though the market price of organic cotton tends to be 20-30% higher

than conventional cotton, this is often not incentive enough, as switching requires additional investments that most farmers are unwilling to make on their own. Non-fertilized cotton is marginally productive, and it takes 3 years to transition from traditional to organic; all the cotton harvested during this transitional period, despite having the higher costs and lower yields of organic cotton, can only be sold as conventional. Without support, in the form of government subsidies or private sector sponsorships, switching to organic is frankly not very appealing for farmers.

External market factors also present further challenges for Peruvian farmers. "Other countries, in particular the U.S., subsidize the cost of cotton by 50% or even more," says Vreeland. "When you have subsidies that are this aggressive, it is difficult for another country to compete. For all these reasons, general cotton production in Peru has diminished from probably 250,000 hectares 50 years ago to less than 50,000 today."

These conditions paint a very bleak picture for the future of organic and native cotton production in Peru: how can companies like Naturtex adapt and survive in this environment? Dr. Vreeland explains: "After seeing that going organic doesn't seem to sell very consistently anywhere, our focus has not been on selling organic clothes. It's been on creating the best quality clothes, both socially and environmentally sustainable and in the mix, the brands get the organic and fair trade cotton. Organic and fair trade can't be the principal reason for selling a collection. It has to be a neat collection, at the right time and place, attractive and also organic. For general apparel, it's all about what it looks like, not so much how it's made."

Though this may be a fact that producers have to accept in order to survive, it doesn't have to be a truth we all live by. Perhaps it is time that, as buyers, we change our behavior and demand that attention and care also be invested in "how it's made". It may be time for our fashion sense to evolve and favor "slower" (more durable, less disposable) garments and "greener" (organic, fair trade, socially responsible) practices.

Superfoods to Restore, Revive and Reinvigorate

By Kathryn Spitzberg // Illustration by So Yeon Kim

Last year, the United Nations declared 2013 "The International Year of Quinoa," recognizing the nutritious, Andean plant and its potential to eradicate hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. The remarkable functionality of quinoa sets it apart from the everyday foods that make up our diet, casting it into the category of ingredients known as "superfoods." As the rates of largely preventable diseases like diabetes and heart disease continue to grow, so too does our interest in any foods that may hold the key to good health.

Though there is no one definition of the term, Julie Morris, a Los-Angeles based healthy food chef, natural living expert and author of *Superfood Kitchen*, defines superfoods as "nutrient-dense, benefit-rich foods found in nature." According to Morris, what sets superfoods apart from other foods is their ratio of micronutrients per calorie. Micronutrients include vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals and antioxidants. In Western society, we tend to look at our diets through the lens of macronutrients—proteins, fats, carbohydrates—placing little importance on powerful micronutrients and their potential to restore, energize and heal. According to Dr. Joel Fuhrman, a *New York Times* bestselling author and internationally recognized expert on nutrition and natural healing, "Health is normal. The human body is a self-repairing, self-defending, self-healing marvel." And Dr. Fuhrman suggests we eat nutrient-dense foods that bolster the body's natural self-healing process in order to stay in a disease-free state of equilibrium.

Among the foods Dr. Fuhrman and Morris recommend are familiar fruits and vegetables, like berries, leafy greens, and citrus fruits, easily accessible in most places and great sources of potent nutrients. Morris likes to look at a superfoods diet as an "active ideology" that is flexible and modifiable. "The most nutrient-dense foods will differ with every environment you're in," she notes, "so just pick the best foods available wherever you are." A lot of superfoods—even more exotic ones—can be found at your local health food store, and some are beginning to trickle into grocers like Whole Foods and Trader Joes. Morris gets most of her ingredients online through Navitas Naturals, where she has worked as a recipe developer. She recommends buying only organic ingredients, since different countries have different regulations regarding what can be sprayed on crops. But no matter where you purchase superfoods, Morris suggests getting to know the company on a personal level. "Email them. Ask them questions. Call their customer service line and talk to them. Find a company you trust and make them like family."

Though we are only beginning to incorporate more exotic superfoods into our diets, their healing properties are nothing new to the natives of the countries they come from. Each superfood has traditionally been used to help with everything from low libido to high anxiety. These ancient uses help illuminate potential benefits today, and how we can use these foods to fortify us to live the lives we want to lead. According to Morris, "If you ask someone today how they're doing, they'll answer 'I'm busy!' We're not eating in a way that supports our industrious careers and the pursuit of our passions. The more we learn about the average food choice, the more we learn we've gotten it wrong. We're starting to really take a look at how different foods help people in other countries. These different foods are becoming more accessible, and people are excited to be able to take charge of their own health."

It may be time that we take a tip from those who've come before us and start incorporating some of these amazing foods into our diets. Morris says we shouldn't be intimidated by these powerful ingredients, if we aren't familiar with them or if we can't pronounce them. "Superfoods are just natural things that exist in the world," she says. "We shouldn't think of them like vitamins that we have to take. Instead, they should be accessible and fun additions to our diets."

There are countless superfoods from all over the world, but the diverse micro-climates of Peru are home to some unique and powerful specimens. These superfoods have been used by natives of the Andes and Amazonian regions for thousands of years. We picked five Peruvian powerhouses in particular and asked Morris to shed some light on how we can benefit from them today and incorporate them into our diet. As these foods continue to grow in popularity and prevalence, could it be that 2014 or 2015 will be the "International Year of Maca"?

Maca

Maca is a herbaceous biennial plant of the Andes region that grows at altitudes of 8,000 to 14,500 feet. One of the only food plants in the world that is able to survive at such a high altitude, Maca was incredibly valuable during the Incan Empire, due to its high nutrition and purported ability to enhance energy and libido. So desirable was the root that is was used as a form of currency during the Incan Empire and eaten by imperial warriors before going into battle. According to legend, after a city was conquered by Incan warriors, the women needed to be protected from their unrelenting libidos and 'ambitious virility'.

Morris loves Maca powder for its energy-enhancing ability and flavor: "Maca is one of my favorite superfoods because it's super energizing, but not in a jittery way like caffeine. It also has a really beautiful, interesting, earthy butterscotch flavor. If you smell it, you can get a sense of how it will taste right away.

Though Maca can be used to enhance the nutrition of both sweet and savory dishes, Morris likes to use Maca to bring out the flavor of chocolate and adds it to anything creamy or nut-based, like desserts or smoothies. Because of its strong flavor, Maca should be used sparingly, like a spice. "More isn't necessarily better from a taste or health perspective," Morris notes.

Cacao

The cacao tree, a tree that likely originated in the foothills of the Andes in the Amazon and Orinoco basins of South America, produces a fruit that is the basic ingredient in chocolate. According to legend, the Olmec were the first to discover the cacao fruit, when they observed rats happily feasting on the almond-shaped seeds that are hidden inside rough, leathery pods. To prepare the seeds or "beans," the Olmec developed fermenting, drying, roasting and grinding processes, which required a deep knowledge of food science and biochemistry, and are still the basis of chocolate making today. The Olmec consumed cacao in the form of drinking chocolate, laden with chili powder and spices. Residue left in a small bowl in 1800 B.C. at Paso de la Amada in southern Chiapas, Mexico is the earliest evidence of cacao use known today. The popularity of cacao has soared, and cacao trees now grow in tropical areas all over the world. One of rarest varieties was discovered in Peru only a few years ago.

Called Nacional, the beans are white, not the usual purple, and are the result of mutations that occur when trees are left undisturbed for hundreds of years. The white Nacional cacao beans are said to produce a more mellow-tasting, less acidic chocolate.

Cacao has a long history of medicinal use and has been know to alleviate fever, anemia, poor appetite, low virility, mental fatigue and poor breast milk production. Chocolate with high cacao content is packed with antioxidants and essential minerals. According to Morris, it's really the added ingredients—the sugars, the oils, the dairy—that give chocolate a bad reputation. "I consider real chocolate—raw, pure, cacao—as something of a miracle food," she says. "Cacao is one of the highest antioxidant foods in the world. And by itself, it's sugar free." Cacao comes in the form of powder and nibs and is a great way to add more nutritional value to smoothies, coffee drinks, and recipes that call for dark, bitter-sweet, or semi-sweet chocolate.

Camu Camu

The camu camu berry is the most concentrated, potent botanical source of Vitamin C in the world. With 30 to 50 times the amount of Vitamin C in an orange, just one teaspoon of this powerful fruit contains nearly 1,200% of the recommended daily amount. Small and easy to carry, the Camu Camu berry has been used by Amazonian natives for hundreds of years as a pain reliever and to boost the immune system. The bark of the tree was also traditionally used in poultices to treat wounds and prevent infection.

Unlike most berries we eat, the Camu Camu berry is not sweet. "It's a very bitter berry, and has the sort of taste you definitely want to hide," says Morris. Luckily Camu Camu powder is so potent, you only need a pinch of it to catapult the nutritional content of any recipe. Because Vitamin C is heat sensitive, Morris suggests adding it to unheated sweet or savory recipes like salad dressings, frostings, jams or soups that are already finished.

Lucuma

Lucuma is a unique, subtropical fruit native to the Andean valleys of Peru, where it has been cultivated since 200AD. Once known as "The Gold of the Incas," each Lucuma tree can produce up to 500 fruits, historically providing sustenance for indigenous communities when other crops failed. Though Lucuma is extremely nutritious, containing high levels of beta-carotene and B vitamins, the fruit is most well known for its deliciously sweet flavor. "The best way I've heard the flavor described," says Morris, "is like deliciously sweet milk that's leftover after you've had a big bowl of cereal." She describes the flavor as a cross between a sweet potato and a mango. Because Lucama has a low glycemic index, it makes for a great substitute for sugar and can be added to ice creams and smoothies, and used in baking.

Though Morris recognizes the many health benefits of Lucuma, she doesn't quite consider it to be a top-tier superfood, since its main value is as a sugar substitute, and not as a source of nutrition. If you travel to Peru, you can add the sweet fruit to your diet in the form of a delicious scoop of ice cream. It's Peru's most popular flavor, outselling both chocolate and vanilla.

Sacha Inchi

The Sacha Inchi plant, or "Inca Peanut," as it is sometimes called, is indigenous to the Amazon rainforest in Peru and bears fruit capsules containing powerfully potent seeds. These seeds are one of the best sources of essential fatty acids in the world, at nearly 50% omega-3 by volume. Because the human body cannot produce essential fatty acids, they have to be acquired from the foods we eat, and Sacha Inchi is by far the most potent resource available to us. Essential fatty acids have been linked with the formation of healthy cells and the prevention of heart disease.

Sacha Inchi is believed to have been first discovered by civilizations that pre-date the Incas, and images of Sacha Inchi seeds are found on shards of pottery from the tombs of the Mochica and Chimú cultures. Because of their ability to ease aching muscles and joints, the seeds were toasted and eaten to prepare for a day of hard labor or before going into battle. Oil from the seeds was extracted and mixed with flour to make rejuvenating creams to revitalize skin, and body rubs to relieve aches and pains.

When roasted, the seeds have a very nutty flavor, and Morris suggests using them in recipes as a substitute for peanuts or wherever a recipe calls for a mix of nuts. She notes that when cooked down, the seeds have a very "umami" taste and can give dishes a really satisfying flavor, plus pack them with an amazing dose of healthy omega fats.

Sacha Inchi Buckeyes

Sacha Inchi Buckeyes

By Julie Morris from *Superfood Kitchen*

MAKES ABOUT 2 DOZEN

When I first tasted these with my friend, we instantly locked lit-up eyes—silently communicating the same urgent message of emphatic approval. Buckeye candies are traditionally made with peanuts, but I think they provide a perfect opportunity to take advantage of sacha inchi's peanut-like flavor—and deliver a daily dose of healthy omega fats, too. These buckeyes taste a lot like peanut butter cups, but are easier to make.

½ cup sacha inchi seeds
6 tablespoons coconut sugar
2⁄3 cup (packed) soft Medjool dates (about 6 or 7), pits removed
4 tablespoons raw or roasted smooth almond butter
2 tablespoons lucuma powder
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
1 batch Raw Chocolate or 4.5 ounces of dark chocolate

In a food processor, combine all the ingredients except the chocolate, and process into a crumbly dough-like consistency. Stop the machine and try rolling a sample 1-inch ball with your palms to make sure the dough is moist enough. The ball should stick together on its own, but still be on the dry side, like a confection. If the dough does not stick, blend in a little water—about a teaspoon at a time—until it's just moist enough to hold together. Transfer the mixture to a bowl, and hand-roll into 1-inch balls. Place the balls on a plate and chill in the freezer for 20 - 30 minutes.

Chop the chocolate into little pieces, and melt it into a liquid using a double boiler. (If you're making a fresh batch of raw chocolate, simply follow the recipe up to the liquid stage and don't freeze it.) Remove the chilled balls from the freezer. For each buckeye, insert a toothpick into a ball, then dip the ball halfway into the molten chocolate, and remove. Since the chocolate touching the ball will begin to solidify almost immediately, give it a quick second dip to achieve a thicker chocolate layer. Carefully removing the toothpick. Place the buckeye onto a large plate, chocolate side up. Repeat with remaining balls. Chill in the freezer for 15 minutes to ensure the chocolate fully hardens, then serve at room temperature.

Toasted Coconut & Macadamia Smoothie

By Julie Morris from *Superfood Kitchen*

Although there are a few extra steps involved in making this recipe, the results are other-worldly delicious. This is one of my favorite smoothies! Toasting the coconut enhances the flavor, and the coconut ice gives the smoothie a gentle sweetness without adding any refined sugars. In addition to its transcendent flavor, this smoothie also happens to be very beneficial for after exercise, due to the electrolyte-rich coconut water and the restorative and energizing maca root. Taste and believe.

¼ cup dried, unsweetened, shredded coconut
¼ cup unsalted macadamia nuts
2 teaspoons maca powder
1 ½ cups coconut water
2 cups ice made from freezing coconut water in ice cube trays

In a small skillet, toast the coconut over medium-high heat, stirring constantly to prevent burning, until golden (about 2 minutes). Transfer immediately to a bowl and let cool. Blend the toasted coconut, macadamia nuts, maca, and coconut water together into a creamy milk base. Once smooth, add the coconut ice and blend until frosty. Makes two 12-ounce servings.

Toasted Coconut & Macadamia Smoothie
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Photos by Jorge Ochoa

The Beautiful Belief of Candle 79

by Brian Waniewski

"Hasn't aged a day in all these years!" Bart Potenza exclaims, indicating the small Buddha statue that presides over the entrance of Candle 79, the upscale Upper East Side restaurant that he and his partner, Joy Pierson, opened in 2003. Tongue in cheek, he adds, "Must be the food." It's the sort of pat one-two punchline with which Potenza peppers the conversation, turning on a charm, a wit and a warmth that recalls an earlier New York. He's collected and published his aphorisms and affirmations in a little book he autographs and hands over at the end of the interview. If he hadn't become a successful restauranteur and pioneer in the healthy food movement, certainly he would have gone into media. "I'm a freak for the talking heads on TV," he admits. Then, with a glint in his eye, he gives us a taste of the big voice he would use to open the radio show he has always wanted, "Good morning, Vegans!"

Potenza has been a friend to New York's vegans and health nuts since 1984. At that time, he left a career as an art dealer to open the Healthy Candle, a little juice bar cum vitamin shop in a landmark location on East 71st Street and Lexington Avenue. Over the years, Candle evolved into a full-service cafe, serving all manner of soups, sandwiches, salads and entrees to all manner of guests. "We were feeding four-star families, being on the Upper East Side," he says. "They would pull up in limosines and order rice and beans. The chauffeur would really come in and pick it up." Back then, there weren't a whole lot of options for the well-heeled wanting wholesome vegetarian fare. In the late eighties, Potenza was joined by his partner, Joy Pierson, who worked as the Candle's nutritionist. Then, one Friday the thirteenth in 1993, he and Pierson played the Take Five lottery and ended up taking home fifty-three thousand dollars. Those winnings became seed capital for the sophisticated dining experience they had long dreamed of in Candle 79: a place people would seek out *not* because they were vegan, but because the food, the wine, the whole dining experience was one-of-a-kind. That dream has become a reality, with 80% of Candle 79's tables filled by people who are there just because they like it.

"It's almost moving faster than we can keep up with," says Potenza. Given the growing demand for what Candle offers, he and Pierson opened another restaurant on Manhattan's west side in 2011. Why? "It's not just about the food," Potenza speculates. "It's about healing. We're surrounded by hospitals here. Food has become crucial to people as part of their healing."

A big factor in Candle's success has been Executive Chef, Angel Ramos. He started washing dishes at the Candle Cafe seventeen years ago. Step by step, he worked his way up, and now he oversees the kitchens of all three Candle locations. All along the way he was learning, studying how to translate the tastes and techniques of other cultures and cuisines into organic preparations, no meat, no dairy. Even when he was a kid. "I used to cook a lot with my mom," Ramos remembers, "back in Puebla, in Mexico. We didn't cook nothing exciting. It was a small town." And yet that influence and inspiration found its way into the mix.

When asked whether he too is a vegan, Ramos grins and casts a side-long glance at Potenza. Potenza covers his ears showily and says, "I don't want to hear it." "Like 99 percent," Ramos replies. He still likes to try different kinds of dishes and cuisines, which may or may not include meat. It's important for him to be able to bring back that experience, that knowledge, and use it in his own cooking at Candle. Not all the staff are vegan, he adds. "They're here all the time though. So they're eating here all the time. You just kind of get into it."

Potenza looks me squarely in the eye and declares, "Anyone who's got half a brain is eating this way." And not just for health reasons, or because it feels good, or because the doctor says so. "It's a whole package," Potenza says. "When you accept the lifestyle that we have, all these other things enter your life, too. Incredible people to begin with, yoga, meditation. . . . You start going to amazing events. It's a very caring network. We're all very generous with what we're doing." Potenza pauses, then lets another gem drop. "The more generous we are, the more abundant we become."

On that he and Ramos seem to agree. And Candle 79 stands as one embodiment of that beautiful belief.

Black Bean–Chipotle Burgers

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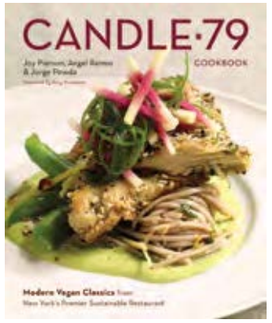

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Black Bean–Chipotle Burgers

Makes 6 to 8 burgers

1½ cups dried black beans, rinsed and picked over

1-inch piece of kombu

2 cups chopped yellow onions

1 teaspoon chipotle chile powder

3 bay leaves

2 teaspoons salt

Pinch of freshly ground pepper

1½ cups brown rice

3 cups water

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, plus more as needed

1 cup raw pumpkin seeds

1 tablespoon smoked paprika

6 to 8 burger rolls

1 red onion, thinly sliced (optional)

Avocado slices, for serving (optional)

Put the beans in a saucepan or bowl and add cold water to cover by about 2 inches. Cover and soak for at least 6 hours or overnight in the refrigerator. Drain and rinse.

Put the beans, kombu, onions, chipotle powder, bay leaves, 1 teaspoon of the salt, and the pepper in a large saucepan. Add water to cover by 3 inches and bring to a boil. Decrease the heat, cover, and simmer until the beans are tender, about 1½ to 2 hours. Most of the liquid should be absorbed by the beans, but add a bit more water if they seem too dry. Drain the beans, reserving the cooking liquid. Discard the kombu and bay leaves.

Meanwhile, put the rice and a pinch of salt in a saucepan and add the water. Bring to a boil, then decrease the heat, stir once, cover, and simmer until all of the water is absorbed and the rice is tender, 35 to 40 minutes. Remove from the heat and let stand, covered, for 10 minutes.

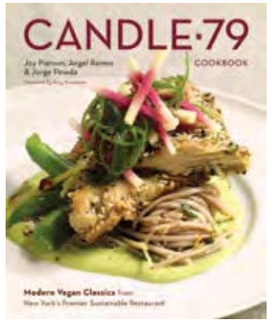
Heat the olive oil in a sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the pumpkin seeds, paprika, and the remaining 1 teaspoon of salt and season with pepper. Cook the pumpkin seeds, stirring and shaking the pan, until they are lightly toasted, 3 to 5 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Combine the rice, beans, and pumpkin seeds in a large bowl. Transfer half of the mixture to a food processor fitted with the metal blade and process until smooth, adding the reserved cooking liquid from the beans as needed to keep the mixture moist enough to stick together. Return the mixture to the bowl, mix everything together, and form patties about 3½ inches in diameter and 1 inch thick.

To bake the burgers, preheat the oven to 350°F. Brush a baking sheet with olive oil and put the burgers on it. Brush the burgers with oil and bake until browned, 20 to 30 minutes, turning the burgers halfway through cooking. To pan-fry the burgers, coat a sauté pan with olive oil and heat the pan over medium heat. Add the burgers and cook for about 4 minutes per side.

To grill the onion slices, lightly brush with olive oil and sauté them in a sauté pan over medium-high heat, 2 minutes per side.

Serve the burgers on toasted burger rolls with the onion slices and avocado slices, if desired.



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Paella

Serves 6

2 ears of fresh corn, husked

1¼ teaspoons saffron

1 cup hot water

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

½ pound oyster mushrooms, stemmed and chopped

2½ teaspoons sea salt, plus more for sautéing

Freshly ground pepper

½ cup chopped white onion

2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped

1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped

1¼ teaspoons smoked paprika

1 cup chopped cauliflower florets

1 cup chopped tomatoes

3 to 4 cups vegetable stock

2 cups Valencia or Arborio rice

1 cup ground seitan sausage, cut diagonally into 1-inch pieces

½ cup chopped scallions, white and green parts (optional)

Lemon wedges, for garnish

Using tongs, hold the corn over a gas flame and cook, turning, until nicely charred. When cool enough to handle, cut the kernels off the cobs and set aside.

Soak the saffron in the hot water for at least 15 minutes.

Heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the mushrooms, season with salt and pepper, and sauté for 5 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and set aside.

Using the same pan, heat another 1 tablespoon of the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, bell peppers, and 1 teaspoon of the smoked paprika and sauté until just tender, about 3 minutes. Add the corn, cauliflower, and tomatoes and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and add to the mushrooms.

Heat the stock in a saucepan and hold it at a simmer. Heat the remaining tablespoon of olive oil in a soup pot or traditional paella pan over medium heat. Add the rice and stir until well coated, about 30 seconds. Add the salt and the saffron water and cook, stirring, until it is absorbed. Add ½ cup of the simmering stock to the rice and cook, stirring, until the rice has absorbed it all. Continue adding the liquid in ½-cup increments and stirring until the rice has absorbed it, until the rice is tender, not mushy, and retains its bite, 25 to 30 minutes.

To get the socarrat, or caramelized crust on the rice, uncover the pot and increase the heat to high. Cook until the rice crackles and smells toasty, being careful not to burn it. Add the mushroom mixture and sausage and stir. Cook over medium heat, scraping the bottom of the pot so the rice doesn't stick, for about 3 minutes.

Remove from the heat, cover with a kitchen towel, and let rest for 10 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasonings if necessary.

Sprinkle the paella with the remaining ¼ teaspoon of smoked paprika and the optional scallions. Garnish with the lemon wedges and serve.

Paella

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El Barrio, Manhattan. Photo by Jorge Ochoa

NEXT UP: STREET, ISSUE #8

A look at that pre-eminently equalizing public space and its place in culture: street fairs, food trucks, slum chic, the corner cafe, public love +