

### MOMENTS IN FOOD

Food Stories by Youth for Youth

Yamile Michael Elton Loya Sedillo Betsch

# Yamile Loya

My name is Yamile Loya but everyone calls me Yami. I grew up in the sand storms and sunset filled skies of southwestern Albuquerque, near the edge of the city limits, where I've called home for the past eighteen years. I am currently an intern with the Mayor's Creative Youth Corp and I am working on a cookbook with Three Sisters Kitchen. I've thoroughly enjoyed painting and music for most of my life. I started drawing when I was around four or five years old, and I instantly fell in love with creating art and have been doing it ever since. I started playing cello in my middle school's orchestra, and I just knew music was something I had to keep doing. I now play in a mariachi group and I hope to continue to express myself in these ways in college. I have also recently found a passion for environmental issues and try to do everything in my power to help take care of our earth.





Throughout my life, food hasn't had a lot of meaning to me. Recently, I've come to realize that food is a way to bond with not only your family but the people you surround yourself with. It also connects you with those who came before you and the place they came from. For me, one of the foods that has brought me together with my family has been chilaquiles.

Chilaquiles have been a weekend breakfast food in my family, for most of my life. I knew the chilaquiles were coming when my mom would boil red chile to make a dish like red enchiladas or "chile colorado", which is chopped potatoes and pork in a red chile soup. She would make the chilaquiles mostly to not waste the chile that was leftover from dinner the night before, but if I'm being honest, I looked more forward to the chilaquiles than dinner.

On Saturdays, my sisters and I would wake up and help my mom prepare the chilaquiles in the morning, and then we would all eat, talk, and laugh together as a family. As the years have passed, eating chilaquiles in the morning has become something my mom and I do together often. Eating chilaquiles with my mom in the mornings has not only given me the opportunity to know how to make them, even if they're not as good as my mom's, but also to have conversations with my mom that have been important building blocks to our relationship. Because of these conversations, I have been able to trust my mom with anything and everything. The most vivid memory I have of one of these mornings is me and my mom laughing. We had just finished making our breakfast, I don't remember exactly what we were talking about, but it was something that had happened the day before, and we found it funny. I won't forget the sound of my mom's laugh that morning; it was really loud and contagious. That's usually how those mornings go, and it was something that really happened unintentionally. We make the chilaquiles this way because my grandmother would eat chilaquiles this way along with a fried egg. My mom says she learned the recipe from watching her mom making them, just like my grandma did from her mom, making it a tradition that I hope to someday pass to my children. Unfortunately, my grandma passed away in 2012, but it is nice remembering her and all the chilaquiles that were shared between us. It has given me the chance to learn more about my mom as a person and connect with her over food and a cup of coffee. Having chilaquiles anywhere really reminds me of my mom, as well as my grandmother and our conversations over breakfast, and I will cherish that forever.



#### 2 servings ~ 15-45 min

#### Ingredients

Red Chile Sauce:

5-8 red chiles

water

garlic, to taste

salt, to taste

#### Red Chile Sauce:

- 1. First, take red chiles, cut the stem off, and take out the seeds.
- 2. Put chiles in a pot and fill the pot with water. (Note: To keep the chiles down, place a metal lid that is smaller than the pot on top of the chiles.)
- 3. Let the chiles boil for 20 minutes or until they are tender.
- 4. Once chiles are tender, put them in a blender, pour the water that chiles were boiled in, into the blender until it's full (about 2 cups)
- 5. add garlic and salt, to taste, and blend together.
- 6. Drain the chile with a strainer into another clean pot, to get rid of any seeds or flakes.
- 7. Or, buy pre-made chile or salsa.

### chilaquiles

#### Continued...

#### Ingredients

Chilaquiles:

3-5 corn tortillas

1 tablespoon oil

red chile, see previous page

onion, optional and to taste

cheddar cheese, to taste

2 eggs, optional

#### Chilaquiles:

- 1. Take corn tortilla and stack them on top of each other. Cut the stacked tortillas into 1-inch squares
- 2. Put the frying pan on medium heat and add 1 tablespoon of an oil of your choice. Wait until the oil is hot and add the cut tortilla squares to the pan. Cook the tortilla squares until they are golden.
- 3. Add your chile to the pan and stir lightly
- 4. (optional) Once your chile and tortilla are mixed together, you can add a little bit of onion for an extra kick of flavor and stir lightly until cooked.
- 5. Grate however much cheese you want and add it to your chilaquiles. Cover your pan with a lid to help the cheese melt, and the chilaquiles are done!
- 6. Enjoy your chilaquiles alone or with the company of eggs, cooked to preference.

# B i b i MacDougal

I'm 18 and from the UK; I grew up in Wales, but I'm originally from Scotland. I spent the last two years of my life living and studying at the United World College of the USA in Northern New Mexico and had an amazing time with some fantastic people. I am a keen lover of film and theatre and my ultimate passion lies within the arts and more specifically acting. I am in the process of moving to London to work towards building my acting resume and attending drama school either this coming academic year or next.



## English breakfast

The English breakfast, particularly after living away from Britain for so long, is a dish that has brought happiness throughout my life. It was a celebratory dish, a Sunday morning dish, a late Tuesday brunch, a special birthday meal or a quick hangover fix. The English breakfast however, is far from an everyday occurance. Unless you are aiming for a heart attack, or perhaps trying to eat like Churchill, this is not a meal to be had seven days a week.

My dad usually takes the role of chef, particular for a full English. He starts by frying up the meats; sausages, bacon, black pudding (a sort of blood sausage ... not my favorite) and some tomatoes. These take the longest to cook and can be kept hot, so he always starts there. Timing is everything in this highly complex dish. After the meat and tomatoes are done, they go into the lower drawer of the oven to be kept warm. After, we usually add in some potato scones – a square patty of sorts that can then be fried in oil and are more common in Scotland and Ireland. Once crispy, they are also left to stay warm in the oven. Once this is done, it's time for some eggs, most commonly made sunny side up.

Now comes crunch time, as the eggs are cooking, you move to ensure the toast is on, the kettle is boiling, and at this point, the baked beans enter. Heinz Baked Beans – Britain's favourite staple, a tomato sauced tin of beans. The beans wouldn't take long to heat up, and so at this point, you tend to be juggling multiple things; your eggs and beans are heating, the toast needs buttering, and the kettle is on the boil. While this is happening, out comes the meat and potato scones, ready to be served. After this it's just a matter of plating it all up; whether it's being served, or is simply laid out to be picked up, the outcome is the same.

I think the meal represents the parts of my country I most enjoy, the elements of my culture and family that I can really identify with. In addition, it's honestly just pretty tasty, regardless of what it lacks in complexity or culinary skill.

# English break fast

#### 1 servings ~ 20 minutes

#### Ingredients

1 egg

3 rashes of bacon (I prefer streaky)

black pudding

- 1-2 potato scones (hash browns can also be added, but this was never a thing in my family)
- 1 tin of baked beans
- 2-4 pieces of toast, served with butter
- 2 sausages

cherry tomatoes

mushrooms

tea or coffee (tea is usually preferred, naturally)

- 1. Fry the bacon, sausages, black pudding, mushrooms, and cherry tomatoes in a pan until ready. Place aside in an oven proof tray.
- 2. Take the potato scones and fry in the left over oil/fat for roughly 1 minute on each side. Once ready place with meats, and keep in low heated oven to keep warm.
- 3. Place bread in the toaster and put the kettle on.
- 4. Take a can of beans, open into a pan/pot and heat.
- 5. Fry your eggs go taste
- 6. When eggs are ready and beans begin to bubble, plate up taking the freshly made toast, and pour y a hot cup of English tea.

# Morgan Bakinowski

Howdy! My name is Morgan Bakinowski, I'm 20 years old. My family is from Miami, Florida and I grew up along the coconut lined beaches of Palm Beach. I'm currently an undergraduate student in the UK, studying Comparative Literature at King's College London. I enjoy making art, travelling and backpacking, shredding the gnar with a surfboard, vinyl records and 80's synth music. My favorite Floridians are Debbi Harry, Tom Petty, and Jim Morrison (and now honorarily, Phil Collins). What I love most about life is that I suspect it'll never end for me. Wherever I go, I know a piece of my heart will always be knee-deep in the Atlantic, haunting tourists like a Siren. Sure Florida may be a whacky place, but I'm proud to call it home.

# key lime pie

Growing up in Florida was a hot, sticky, mess. Due south of my childhood home, the great Everglades blew her warm breath. To my east, a mighty sea lapped at a white sand shore. Tourists and geezers, salty fisherman and gentle kooks, Disney World and ancient Seminole burial ground: Florida's unique spirit is held in both the old timers and the new, roots that run deep and folks "just passing through".

The aromas range from expansive orange groves creating beautiful citruses or the lush tropical jasmine supported by a jungle-like climate, to every type of fried seafood one could imagine. Cajun influences from our neighbors in the South spin a web of spices and flavors, the revered dishes hailing from Latin America add dimension and texture to the cultural fabric of our food. Just as easily, you may find the greatest empanadas your mortal soul has ever consumed in a gas station drive-by next to the Slim Jims, or be amazed by a Gumbo that has the power and strength to make you believe the sun will rise again tomorrow. On a common front, most dishes involve prized creatures from the depths of the sea being caught and consumed with the honor of fallen soldiers- bread battered, seasoned, and fried with the care and precision of an open heart surgery.

As I recall this now, a hurricane of memories and emotions wash over me. So many of my fondest memories revolve around meeting with family or friends and sitting down for a meal after a long day of fishing, surfing, or diving. The making of a main course exists in the spaces between scattered hissing of white, flakey fillets dipped into deep fryers, laughs, and chat. But, the real heart of Florida cuisine lies in the sour custard beneath whipped cream. Key Lime Pie is the finale to a gathering that makes you stop and appreciate those around you. The sweet taste mirrors the sweetness found and enjoyed in the company of your community.

#### key lime pie

#### 2 servings ~ 1 hour

#### Ingredients

#### Crust:

1¼ cup graham crackers, about 300 grams

150g butter

1 can condensed milk

3 egg yolks

4 limes, squeezed

lime zest!

1 tbsp icing sugar

extra lime zest for decor!

#### Crust:

- 1. Preheat the oven to 300°F 325 °F.
- 2. Whizz graham crackers to crumbs in a food processor (or put in a strong plastic bag and bash with a rolling pin my sister and I used to love doing this).
- 3. Mix graham crackers with 150g melted butter, and press into the base and up the sides of a 22cm loose-based tart tin.
- 4. Bake in the oven for 10 minutes. Remove and cool.
- 5. Put 3 medium egg yolks in a large bowl and whisk for a minute with electric beaters. Add a can of condensed milk and whisk for 3 minutes, then add the finely grated zest and juice of 4 limes and whisk again for 3 minutes. Pour the filling into the cooled base then put back in the oven for 15 minutes. Cool then chill for at least 3 hours or overnight if you like. When you are ready to serve, carefully remove the pie from the tin and put on a serving plate. To decorate, softly whip together 300ml double cream and 1 tbsp icing sugar. Dollop or pipe the cream onto the top of the pie and finish with extra lime zest. Enjoy with family and friends!

#### key lime pie

#### Continued...

#### Ingredients

Pie Filling:

3 egg yolks

1 can condensed milk

4 lime juice, squeezed from 4 limes

lime zest, from the 4 limes

graham cracker crust, see previous page

1¼ cup double cream

1 tablespoon icing sugar

extra lime zest for decor!

#### Pie Filling:

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- To decorate, softly whip together double cream and 1 tbsp icing sugar.
- 7. Dollop or pipe the cream onto the top of the pie and finish with extra lime zest.
- 8. Enjoy with family and friends!

# Aminn Obermayer

Aminn Josué Mercado Obermayer is 19. He is from Brazil and Paraguay



## perks of food

The ecstasy that food brings is not simply held by the flavours you taste, but by the small gifts it leaves you. I learned how to cook at the age of 14, essentially, because I was the only person in the house from the morning up until noontime. My family has always found itself quite messy when it comes to being all together in one place at the same time, not exactly by choice, but that's how our schedules worked. I went to school in the afternoons, but everyone else was either working or at school when I was home. There was not really a way to change that, and since everyone was so busy during the night, no one was able to prepare something for the next day. There was a point during the day, in which either you would not eat anything for lunch, or you would eat whatever thing was fastest to make —sandwiches or fried eggs. One day, I decided to cook something. I truly had no idea how to, so I just started to play around with the ingredients we had in the kitchen. I was captivated by the smell of onions cooking, finding a certain sense

of wonder when I started to mix different things. I did not know exactly what I was doing, but it put me in a happy place. People arrived at noon, and I remember how surprised they were when they found something on the table. I believe it was the first time we all sat together for the half-hour everyone had available. I held a huge smile seeing that something could break the everyday impossibility of bringing my family together. I believe that is how I found the magic in appreciating the simple and precious moments food can create. Food has had that impact on me ever since, and so, it has been my companion in everything.

Food is a gift that takes you to the remote areas of your memory and can teach you to appreciate the simple experiences you have with people. Every time I go back to my parents' house, I still cook for them, and food never fails to create small, beautiful moments. A dish that I cooked for them to experience something different is melanzane alla parmigiana. This dish is a gift of food wisdom that I've received and that I love to share.

#### melanzane alla parmigiana

#### 6 servings ~ 1 hour

#### Ingredients

1-3 eggplants

1-2 yellow bell peppers

2 tomatoes

tomato paste

red wine

oregano

thyme

parsley

basil leaf

Lebanese 7 mixed spices

mozzarella cheese

parmigiano cheese

olive oil

salt, to taste

pepper, to taste

water

- 1. Remove the stem of the eggplant. Make several horizontal slices on the eggplant without separating the structure of it completely
- 2. Thinly slice yellow bell peppers and 1 tomato. Place the slices inside the eggplant.
- 3. In a pan, prepare a tomato sauce; for this, use olive oil, add minced garlic and diced onion, salt and pepper. Cook until golden, add a diced tomatoes, let them cook for a bit and then add tomato paste and a bit of water, add some red wine, oregano, thyme, parsley, basil leaves, and Lebanese 7 mixed spices (this is what makes it truly special and gives it a good flavor, which is something I got from my friend's mom). Let cook for a few minutes in low flame.
- 4. After done with the sauce, pour it in a glass pan and spread evenly. Add the eggplant with the other ingredients filled inside. Add Mozzarella cheese to the eggplant filling, paint it with olive oil, add salt and pepper, and Lebanese 7 mixed spices.
- 5. Put in the oven for 45 minutes at 180 degrees celsius, take it out and add Parmigiano cheese to the eggplant, place it back inside the oven for 15 minutes. Serve it and there you go.

Note: The important thing is to add the Lebanese 7 mixed spices, it will blow your mind.



My family is from the stomach of mainland China, Shanxi province, near the mother river: Yellow River. I grew up in the cosmopolitan city of Shenzhen in the humid, tropical climate. I moved away alone to study in different places since I was 15 years old, and now I am 19, studying social sciences in a German university. If I am not working in the residential life team advocating for sexual wellness programs and inclusivity, I am challenging my friends' beliefs, cooking a good meal, or exploring my body through dance or yoga.





### pulled together

Food means heritage and exploration. I grew up eating meals cooked with what my grandparents sent to us and made dinner based on what my parents are used to eating. After moving away, cooking became a hobby rather than a chore. I picked up the habit of exploring a location, a culture, or a person through food.

I was born in the belly of the Yellow Dirt Plateau where great vinegar and alcohol are brewed, where rice struggled to live and wheat thrived. While children in some parts of the world ate refined rice porridge, my grandparents fed me what we were gifted from the yellow, grainy, almost infertile earth. Millets, corn, and most commonly, noodles and its millions of variations. Each of our family members had a specialty in using flour. Grandma made the perfect chive-filled pockets, uncle made the best shaved noodles, dad pressed the springiest HeLuo, and mom rolled the dainty cat ears. Noodles danced on the dinner table in different fashions: sauce-covered, in broth, re-stir fried, cold, boiling, leftovers... I learned the manner of noodle eating from my dad: pour a generous dash of local black vinegar, add a sprinkle of red chili flakes, take a bite from a clove of garlic, and slurp in the noodles. Once you hunch over the face-sized bowl, you don't come up until you see the "Fu" print at the bottom of the bowl.

When my parents took me and moved to the southern cosmopolitan city of Shenzhen, I grew a hatred towards noodles. Seeing my classmates with different facial features and accents eat delicate dishes with "fancy" proteins with a side of white, steamy, and fragrant rice, I rudely refused the rugged, unrefined bowls of noodles, rolled my eyes when my dad slurped noodles, and avoided my grandparents at all costs when they visited.

This lasted until I moved away from my family. Once in a while, I caught myself turning towards the comfort of soupy, saucy noodles. And because of this, I got to rebuild my relationship with my grandmoms. Every chance I got to pay them a visit, I forced them to give me a master class on the art of noodles. Unlike famous YouTubers who explain the formation of gluten structure, the instructions they gave were in the style of "just wing it" in their respective dialects. And I quote, "If it disobeys you just leave it alone for a bit, and when they obey, then you 'guai yi guai' (fold it over itself)." With lots of trials and errors, "feeling the dough," and "making it work for you," I managed to learn quite a few impressive techniques and spend time at my grandmother's more than I ever have. While we spent time watching over the pots, my grandma told me old tales: most of them about the different food they make or eat on different occasions. Among the deep-fried persimmon puffs and decorative date buns, my favorite is the difference between a bowl of pulled noodles and a bowl of knife-cut noodles. Grandma said whenever someone brings their "match," who they were introduced to by a matchmaker, to their family for the very

first time, the family expresses their approval, or the lack thereof, through the style of noodles they make. Pulled noodles meant "pull together," a will to bring the two families together for a strong relationship. Knife-cut noodles meant the opposite: to "cut or break apart", meaning that the parents are not in agreement with this arrangement, and they wish the two to not see each other anymore. I always liked pulled noodles for its complex mouthfeel and enjoyed watching the noodle-pulling dance when I went to hotpot restaurants. With the addition of the story, it became my favorite noodle because just like the couple in the story, it pulled my grandma and me together. I have been cooking for myself for the past year after moving to Germany, and I am always in a better mood on the noodle days. Over video chats, I was so proud to show my family the array of noodles, steamed buns, and dumplings in the freezer that I have prepared. I received the rare validation from my grandparents that I even perfected the technique more than they have. I bonded with my friends over pulling noodles. A friend from Nepal added turmeric to the flour and we ended up with noodles with a gorgeous, earthy yellow. I grew the habit of making my hosts noodles whenever I visit a place to follow my grandad's teaching on how to be a good guest, and at the same time, I show them where I come from and a part of who I am. The noodles from the Yellow Dirt Plateau continue to pull me, my family, and my friends together, ever since I was in my mother's belly up until this day.

#### pulled noodles

#### 4 servings ~ 25 minutes

#### Ingredients

3 cups of all-purpose flour

pinch of salt

1 cup water, varies depending on the environment and flour (more on this later)

#### Dough

- 1. In a big mixing bowl, add flour, salt, and room temperature water. Stir thoroughly together to minimize the mess when kneading. I like to use a pair of chopsticks, but a small rubber spatula works. A tennis ball size clump will form once it is evenly mixed. The size of the clumps determines the texture of the dough: bigger and softer is what we are looking for in pulled noodles.
- 2. Use hands to knead until the dough comes together. Do not worry if it is lumpy and not smooth. Cover the bowl with a towel, lid, or plastic wrap and let it rest for 20-30 mins.
- 3. Come back to the dough and knead until it becomes smooth and has a slightly shiny surface; this takes around 1-3 mins. Grandma instructs that you should go for "three shines": hand shine (clean), bowl shine (clean), and dough shine.

#### pulled noodles

#### Continued...

#### Ingredients

dough, see precious page

vegetable oil

boiling water, in a large pot

choice of sauce, to taste

vinegar, to taste

chili flakes, to taste

garlic cloves, a few

#### Noodles

- 1. Roll the dough into a slab that is around 2-3 cm thick. If there is a lot of resistance in the dough (if it springs back), let it rest with a cover for 5 mins and come back to it.
- 2. Once it is rolled out, generously smear vegetable oil all over the surface. Make sure there is no dough exposed to prevent the formation of a skin that will destroy the noodles. Then wrap the oiled dough with plastic wrap. Let rest for at least 2 hours, until the gluten completely relaxes, or "becomes obedient."
- 3. Keep a large pot of water boiling beside your work surface. Come back to the slab and cut 2 cm wide strips perpendicular to the long side. Take an individual piece of dough and briefly roll it on the surface into an even log. Gently hold both sides of the log and in an even and continuous motion, stretch. Gently wave your hand up and down and let the dough and its relaxed gluten work itself out. If you prefer a thinner noodle, put the two ends in one hand and stretch again.
- 4. Bounce the noodle on the surface once or twice and drop it directly into the rolling water.
- 5. Repeat with a few more strands; once comfortable with the process, try working with two at a time.
- 6. Make sure to not exceed 15 mins of pulling. Once the last strand is in the pot, boil for a minute or two more.
- 7. Dress noodles with the sauce of your choice, some vinegar, chili flakes, and a few cloves of garlic.

# Omar Loudghiri

My name is Omar; I am 19 years old and I come from Morocco. I spent the last two years in Montezuma, New Mexico for high school. I have a passion for cooking both New Mexican and Moroccan food.

Friday mornings are always the same in Morocco. The smell of the Couscous broth would fill up my nostrils every day before going to school. When I was still too young to be allowed in a kitchen, all I could do was contemplate my mom confecting this magical concoction. I knew what the ingredients were, but to me, it was magical that a batch of vegetables and some meat chops would turn out to be so succulent. As I grew up, the magic faded and somewhat transformed into disinterest. I was too caught up with whatever teenagers do, that I took the magic for granted. Going abroad for school, I missed Couscous more than I thought I would. I decided I would prepare it, but I did not know how.

I called my mom on a Sunday morning so she would show me through a video call, and after about an hour of explaining, I finally had something resembling a broth simmering. It smelled good, but not as good as in my memories. It was as if the magic I saw years earlier was real, but it could not go through a phone call. At the end of it, the Couscous was "satisfactory", even though my friends kept complimenting it, I knew something was missing.

As soon as I came back to Morocco, I was eagerly waiting for the first Friday to come so I could wake up as early as my mom and observe her craft. To my surprise, she was doing everything exactly as she described, and my Couscous was supposed to taste the same. However, she seemed never to

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As soon as I came back to Morocco, I was eagerly waiting for the first Friday to come so I could wake up as early as my mom and observe her craft. To my surprise, she was doing everything exactly as she described, and my Couscous was supposed to taste the same. However, she seemed never to measure any of the spices, just throw some in and taste. This technique seemed irrelevant at first, but as I tasted the semolina mixed with broth the same day, I could taste the magic again. The taste of curcuma and saffron mixed with the sweet smell of onions in a broth where all the veggies and the meat cooked together, everything was so homogenous yet so distinguishable. The ginger, the carrots, the smell of lamb, everything would melt on your tongue when mixed with freshly steamed semolina.

Seasoning is not a precise science, it is something that comes with the flow of the process, it is the only way mundane ingredients would become so tasty an 8-year-old would think it is magic. My mom enjoyed teaching me her art, so much that she now wakes me up every Friday to be her sous-chef. A ritual I was previously not allowed to assist with, or so I thought. It took me more than one try to learn how to properly season a Couscous, but it seems as if my mom will never get tired of teaching me her secrets.

#### 5-6 servings ~ 1 hour 30 minutes

#### Ingredients

#### Broth:

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cup olive oil or vegetable oil

- 2.2 pounds lamb or beef, large pieces on the bone
- 1 chopped onion
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon curcuma

parsley, to taste

cilantro, to taste

½ cup dried chickpeas, soaked overnight

Water, to cover meat

#### Broth:

- 1. Put the oil in a steamer pot and heat.
- 2. Cut the meat into large pieces and add to the pot.
- 3. Stir in the cut onions, salt, ginger, pepper, curcuma, parsley, and cilantros. Mix to combine.
- 4. Sear for a few moments, the meat should color slightly.
- 5. Add the chickpeas. Mix, then drizzle with water, generously covering all the meat. Cover and cook while preparing the rest of the vegetables and semolina.

#### Continued...

#### Ingredients

#### Veggies:

3 or 4 medium turnips, peeled and cut in half

8 to 10 carrots, peeled, and cut in half lengthwise if large

3 chopped tomatoes

1 small head of cabbage, cut in half or quartered

1 or 2 small onions, cut in half, and then in large strips

4 or 5 small zucchini, ends trimmed

water

wedge of pumpkin

#### Veggies:

- 1. As soon as the meat is half tender and detaches from the bone, add the turnip and carrot.
- 2. Wait 15 minutes, then add tomatoes, cabbage, onions, and zucchini. Allow to cook for 15 minutes.
- 3. In a separate pot filled with water, cook the pumpkin until it is tender.
- 4. Tip: Do not stir your broth. Check the broth often and add more water if needed to ensure that there is still broth covering the meat and vegetables even at the end of cooking. The meat must be very tender and cooked through. Vegetables must also be tender, without transforming them into mush.

#### Continued...

#### Ingredients

#### Semolina, Couscous:

5½ cups of Semolina, about 2 pounds

3 teaspoons of salt

1 tablespoon olive oil

6 cups of water

butter, to taste

broth, see previous pages

cooked meat and vegetables, see previous pages

#### Semolina, Couscous:

- 1. In a very large bowl, add the couscous, salt, and a good drizzle of olive oil. Mix with your fingers to coat the seeds.
- 2. Drizzle water little by little while mixing.
- 3. Then place the couscous semolina in the top of the steamer, which is placed above the broth container while it is boiling.
- 4. Then cover the Couscous with a lid. Cook for 15 minutes. Remove the couscous from the steamer, place it in the bowl again, and add a little bit of water while mixing it together to detach the grains.
- 5. Put back in the top of the steamer and repeat the operation 3 to 5 times after 15 to 20 minutes, as soon as the couscous is cooked. Don't hesitate to taste it.
- 6. Finally, after it is cooked, remove it from the steamer and put back in the bowl while mixing it with a bit of butter and olive oil.
- 7. Presentation: Put the Couscous in the form of a dome. Make a well in the center. Drizzle all the couscous with broth, about 3 ladles. Place the meat in the center, decorate vegetables evenly: a carrot, a zucchini, a potato. Finish with the pumpkin and chickpeas. Drizzle with broth again. Place the rest of the broth in a bowl for serving at the table.
- 8. Serve immediately, very hot. Enjoy with fermented or curdled milk.

# Alex Santistevan

My name is Alex Santistevan. I am a music education major at UNM. I am 18 years old and am dedicated to music. I play in the UNM mariachi. To me food is a branch of one's identity and can tell someone how they were raised. To me the best part about food is the final product, all the hard work coming together and making something special.



## Christmas tamales

As a kid, I grew up in Colorado Springs, Colorado, away from people that had similar backgrounds as me. Every Christmas, my family would drive back to New Mexico to spend time with my relatives. I always knew when the time was getting closer to make this trip, not by the date on a calendar, but by the phone calls my mother would make to get a tamalemaking crew of willing family members together. One particular moment, in 2016 - after we had moved back to Albuquerque, helped me realize how important my heritage was, and is. The morning started with the smell of seasoned pork slowly cooking, filling the air. While the meat cooked in the crockpot, my mom made chile to add to the pork. As I made the masa, and felt the grainy dough between my fingers, I knew that we would soon start the assembly line process for making tamales. As my relatives began showing up, we started making the tamales, smearing spoonfuls of masa on the boiled corn husks. After making the little wrapped presents of chile, pork, and masa, held together with the husks, I began partaking in the chisme that filled the kitchen. It was then that I realized that I was home. Not in the way that I was physically at my house, but because I had found the identity I had been searching for. I found my Hispanic heritage amongst the smell of chile in the air, the sound of KANW's New Mexican music playing in the background, and the sight of different family members across generations getting together to make a traditional dish. That winter, I finally found an identity that I felt like I belonged to, and I learned the importance of the little moments in life. These moments can come in any size or form, but what matters is how they affect you. This family gathering of tamale-making led me to find out more about myself and where I come from.

#### Christmas tamales

#### makes 2 dozen ~

#### Ingredients

1-2 pounds of pork (roast, loin, or shoulder)

5 tablespoons red chile powder

garlic powder, to taste

salt, to taste

1-3 tablespoons flour

1-3 tablespoons vegetable oil

milk, optional

2 dozen corn husks

6 cups masa mix

water

- 1. Place pork in a large pot and cover with water.

  Simmer until tender 2 to 3 hours. Remove the pork from the liquid (save the liquid), season the meat with garlic powder, and shred the meat with two forks.
- 2. Make red chile by combining the red chile powder with the liquid used to cook the pork (or with water) until it reaches a desired consistency and heat level.
- 3. Brown some flour with a little bit of vegetable oil (for every 1 tablespoon of flour, add 1 tablespoon of oil) and add to the chile to thicken. To mellow the heat level, add a splash of milk.
- 4. Combine red chile with the shredded pork and simmer on low heat for 5 minutes.
- 5. Combine the masa mix with water or leftover pork broth and set aside.
- 6. Place corn husks in a bowl of boiling water to soften for about 30 minutes or until easy to fold.
- 7. Take a softened husk and spread a few tablespoons of masa in the center. Then add a scoop of the chile pork mixture in the center of the masa. Fold the sides of the husk in, and the bottom of the husk up like a burrito, and tie with husk string.
- 8. Once tamales are built, place a steamer in the bottom of a large pot, fill with water and bring to a boil. Line up the tamales seam side down. Be sure to leave space between them so they can steam evenly. Cover the pot and steam the tamales for around 30-50 minutes.
- 9. The tamales are ready when they are firm to the touch the masa should not stick to the corn husks.

# Jorge Ortiz

My name is Jorge Adrian Ortiz, born and raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I am 15 years old, and an upcoming sophomore studying at Atrisco Heritage Academy High School. In my spare time when I'm not playing music, I like to play video games and solve brain activity books. My passion is music, especially playing bass guitar, and I hope to pursue a career/education in music production to eventually become an artist/producer.

# sopade fideo

Food is a basic element in daily life and a way to treat myself. Additionally, food grants the nutrition and health I need.

My favorite food memory takes me back to when my grandmother would prepare me Sopa de Fideo. When I was younger, I would visit and spend every summer with my grandma. The good food she would make, especially the Sopa de Fideo, was my treat. This dish has its own soul that connects our family. Everyone in my family knows how to make Sopa de Fideo.

This dish helped me open myself up to food. When I was a child, I did not like to eat much of anything. But, thanks to my grandma, I discovered how delicious food can be and how delectable Sopa de Fideo really is. It also brings memories of enjoying the weekends of food and family enjoyed with my cousins, uncles, and aunties that would reunite to eat as a family.

Even though this dish is simple, it can be enjoyed by many, and it is flavored with love. Sopa de Fideo is a stock-based, thin Latin American pasta dish. The liquid is a deep red with orange. It is savory and salty with an appetizing smell when warm. I absolutely recommend eating this when you are 'feeling under the weather'.

#### Sopa de Fideo

#### 2 servings ~ 30 minutes

#### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 bag of Fideo (8 oz.)
- 1 teaspoon Garlic powder
- 1 cup water
- 1 can tomato sauce
- Salt, to taste

- 1. Heat olive oil in the pot. Once hot, add the bag of Fideo to fry. Season with garlic powder.
- 2. Once the Fideo are toasty, add water, tomato sauce, and salt to taste. Cook for about 20 minutes on medium heat, stirring occasionally.
- 3. Enjoy hot!

Recipe inspired by grandmother

# Jaden Adeyemi

My name is Jaden Orisa Adeyemi, and I am a senior at Highland High School in Albuquerque. I was born in the heat of Arizona 17 years ago, but have grown up in New Mexico for the near entirety of my life. Currently, I work primarily at the intersections of arts and justice. I am employed as a Youth Leader at Keshet Dance and Center for the Arts, am working with the New Mexico Arts and Justice Network, where I also co-chair a youth leadership counsel. I am a social media coordinator - and creative writing editor - for the New Mexico African-American Tobacco Prevention Network. I am also one of the co-chairs of (what is now known as) the Centro Savila Youth Leadership Council.

I have come to understand how the arts positively impact our communities, especially as a black queer woman, and I intend to continue a lifetime of work intersecting the arts and social justice.



### Beth's onepan rice dish

Food has always been very central to my personal values. I became vegan four years ago. While it was one of the most empowering changes I have ever made, I also feel that my lifestyle choices are often met with controversy, especially from those in the black community. While I wholeheartedly respect the food culture of my community, I also recognize that unhealthy eating is something that has plagued my people, killing us at just about the same rate that we are killed by the police. And while black people, who were forced to this land against their will, established a food culture that now serves as a medium to bring our people together, I think it also becomes very easy to overlook the cultural disconnect that has been waged between us and our African ancestors.

Take the ancient West African diets for example. They were rich with nuts, grains, and hearty vegetables, but the disconnect between the black American diet and those of our ancestors is very much apparent in our overall attitude about plant-based eating. I often wonder if the black community understands that we do not have to be physically touched to experience racial violence. There is racial violence perpetuated in our food industries and healthcare industry. Plant-based diets have long been advertised and made accessible in white communities, and this is because it is well known that health is power. And as black people, our power is feared, whether physical, intellectual, or spiritual. So, the investment in our health is threatening to those who do not value black lives.

Access to healthy food was always something that my parents prioritized growing up, and I am beyond grateful for that. While I know that I can educate my community about the benefits of plant-based eating, I also recognize that access to healthy food is a major barrier when it comes to plant-based dining in majority black communities. Historically, food has served as a point for bringing my people together. One of my favorite things about food is our big family dinners, and the best part is that there's always something for everyone. During the holidays a couple of years ago, my cousins and I came together and made the most delicious, buttery vegan mashed potatoes.. It feels good to know that I don't always have to let go of my roots as a black vegan, and moments like that remind me of the unconditional support which my family has given me in that.

However, as a child, the fondest memories I have are of my mother cooking her one-pan rice dishes. She's always made the best rice and bean dishes, and I will always remember the warmth of the house and aroma of spices surrounding me as I would come home from the park for dinner. As a child, I've always always felt connected to my food in the sense that I was aware of what I was putting into my body. We used to have chickens, so we would collect our own fresh eggs, and it felt good knowing that we could sustain ourselves and take control of our food in that way.

I think that's the biggest thing: that food has always been a way for people to connect, but they don't really take the time to connect with the food that they're eating in the first place. As a black vegan and food equity advocate, I aim to change the narrative in the black community that black people can't care about and connect with their food in a way that benefits their health.

#### Beth's one-pan rice dish

#### 4 servings ~ 30 minutes

#### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ yellow onion, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 large carrot, diced
- ½ bell pepper, diced
- 2 cups white rice
- 4 cups water
- 1 can black beans
- 1 cilantro bunch, minced
- 1 teaspoon raw honey
- salt, to taste
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric

- 1. In an iron skillet, sauté yellow onion, garlic, carrots, and green bell peppers in olive oil on medium heat for approximately five minutes or until lightly browned.
- 2. After sautéing the vegetables, turn your heat off and add your rice, water, black beans, cilantro, raw honey, salt, pepper, cumin, and turmeric to the pan.
- 3. After adding these ingredients, turn your heat on high and bring the water to a rolling boil. Let boil for two minutes, and then turn to a low heat.
- 4. Cover the pan with lid, and let the dish cook until the water has been absorbed into the rice. Frequently check your dish to make sure the bottom does not burn.
- 5. After the rice is finished cooking, turn off your heat and let the dish rest for about 5 minutes.

# Tawanda Manika

My name is Tawanda. It's a common name in Zimbabwe, and I grew up knowing a handful of people who shared it with me. I connect my name with my family because it means "We are now many". More accurately it means that we are many from the moment we proclaim, "Tawanda."



### sadza

I fondly remember the way my mother took to calling my siblings and I when it was time for dinner. She would truncate our names in a familiar tune that stuck with me, the melody of family and home. Tawa, Tina, Shingi, and Mishi for Tawanda, Tinashe, Shingai, and Michelle. I knew on most days at least one part of the meal that awaited: Sadza, the thick porridge made of corn or millet that would sit on the plate before it sat, equally heavily, in the stomach: common comfort food that is a staple of Zimbabwean cuisine. My mother made it look easy as she churned it with power and spooned it out of the pot with the wooden spoon or 'mugoti'. As it was bland, it served primarily as a carrier for other food; you would grab it and pick other foods up in it before eating the mixture.

Of the countless sadza experiences I have had, two events stand out. At my high school, which was a private school, my friends got into a discussion one day about how frequently they ate sadza. One said that they do not eat it at all, another that they eat it on occasion and a third that eating it often would be 'gwash', an adjective we misguidedly used to disempower our traditions and make them seem backward. I sat quietly and neglected to admit that I ate sadza almost every day. My parents worked hard to provide the simple staple, and I sat with my friends and denounced it. This experience stood in contrast with the time my Belgian brother in law made our family sadza. He understood that he was marrying into a new culture, so he practiced making the dish for my sister before his first visit to his Ambhuya and Tezvara (parents in law). We ate it and I noted the fact that someone else could value this food I had taken for granted. From then I realized that I could not allow the familiarity I had with it to reduce my appreciation of it. Simple food made from the ground meal of grains: it was a symbol of family for me and I had to claim it as such even though my friends and I had convinced ourselves that there was something wrong with it.

This simple story is part of a greater challenge faced by Zimbabweans; defining our culture as a nation. Valuing our languages, traditions, and identities is a challenge for many reasons. One is the spectre of cultural whitewashing we endured under colonial rule, changing our cultures into more Christianised forms that we came to accept as our own. It has clouded our perception of who we are on a fundamental level. Another is the lack of effort in education to value the nation's cultural diversity. Young people do not learn about the 15 languages spoken on our soil and are sometimes even told to speak English over vernacular. It is only through acknowledging these macro-level problems that young people have started working to figure out how we can live more earnestly in the future.



#### 4 servings ~ 25 minutes

#### Ingredients

- 7 cups mealie-meal
- 1 cup cold water
- 3 1/4 cups boiling water
- 1. Put mealie-meal in a pot. Stir in cold water to make a paste.
- 2. Put pot on stove at medium heat and add boiling water whilst stirring simultaneously.
- 3. Keep stirring until rakukwata (it's boiling). Cover pot, reduce heat and let it simmer for 15 minutes.
- 4. After 15 minutes, add more mealie-meal bit by bit, and as we say it in our vernacular, mona sadza (mix). Be sure to do it well. When it's just about to reach the consistency you want, cover it rishinyire (loosely translated- let is simmer) for 5 minutes.
- 5. Your sadza is ready. Serve with your preferred relish.

# Britti Paudayal

Making Sel-Roti is an occasion where my identity is celebrated and ties with family members are strengthened through conversation, cooking, and spending quality time together. Household recipes, secrets, and skills are passed on from one generation to the next and the legacy of this dish is continued in Nepali households.

### sel-roti Nepalese fried bread

As I gaze longingly at the beautiful, golden brown, thick, crispy, Sel-Roti, my mouth waters. As I hold it in my hand, it is light, rough, and crumbly. I can imagine the taste and feel of it: crunchy on the outside, soft on the inside, smooth, and melting in my mouth.

A sel-roti is a large round fried dish made of rice flour. It resembles a thin puffed-up doughnut and has a crispy texture with a reddish-brown color. It is popular in Nepal as a sweet festive bread and is a must-have during joyous and festive times. It plays an important part in auspicious religious and cultural observances like festivities, marriages, and other family celebrations, and is offered ritualistically to gods and goddesses as a sacred food. Only after the offering is made is it distributed among the family members as blessed food, Prashad. This dish is widely celebrated in all Nepali households. It holds a special significance in my family as it is linked to the Parbatiya/ Khas people, the ethnicity that my family originates from. My memories of sel-roti are associated with Dipawali, the festival of lights, observed in the month of October, where extended families come together to celebrate family and togetherness.

#### sel-roti Nepalese fried rice bread

3-4 servings (10-15 pieces)~ 25-30 minutes

#### Ingredients

3 cups of white rice

½ cup sugar or to taste

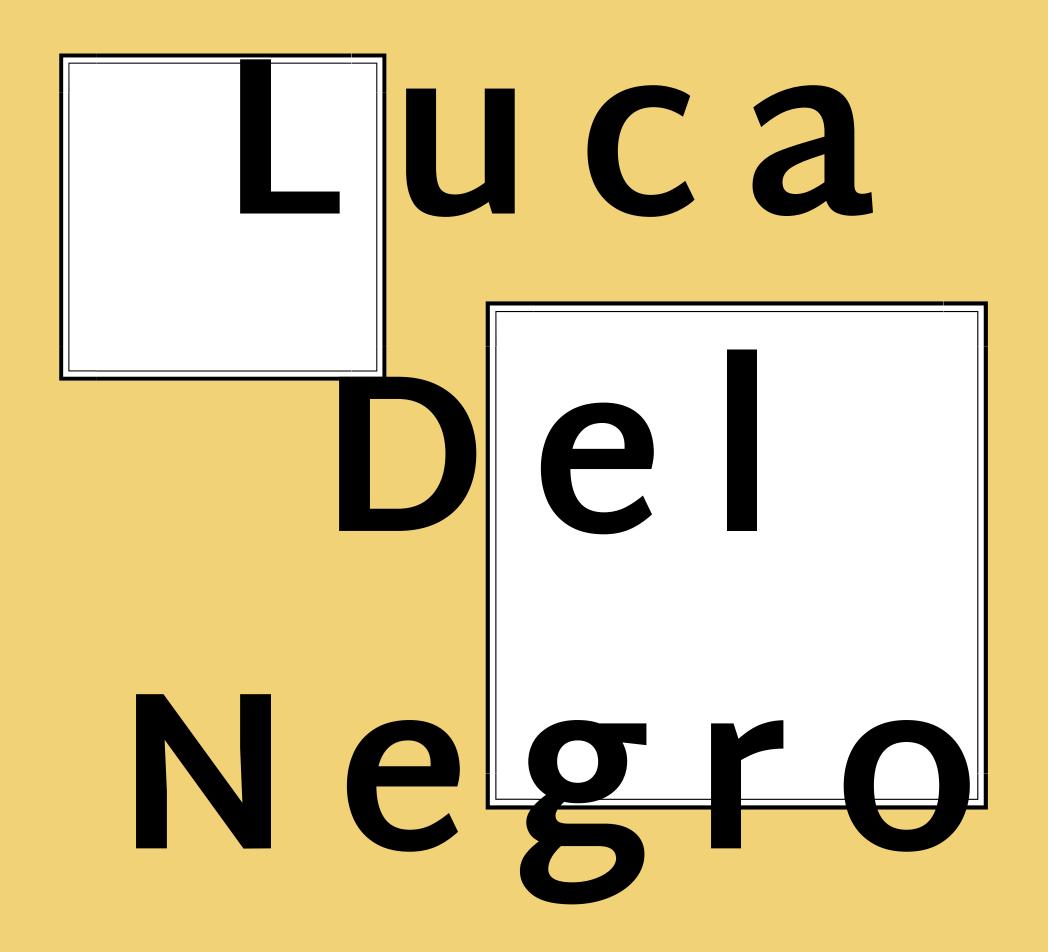
34 cup unsalted melted butter or clarified butter (ghee)

½ cup rice flour

% cups of vegetable oil or ghee for deep-frying

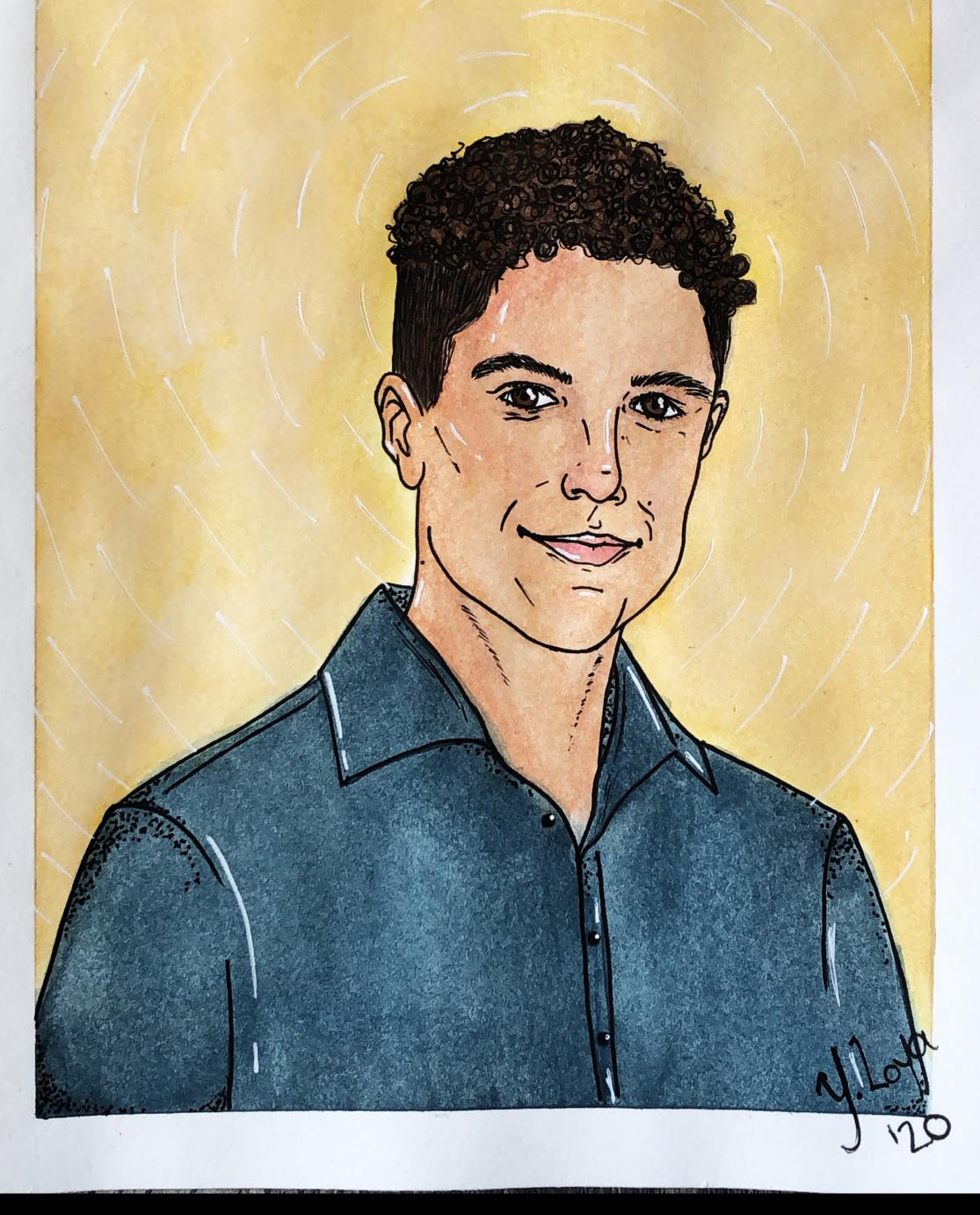
water

- 1. Start by soaking the rice for at least 4 hours or preferably, overnight.
- 2. Drain the rice and place it in a blender or food processor with the sugar, butter, and process it. Slowly add water to the batter until it makes a semi-thick puree.
- 3. Remove the batter and place it in a mixing bowl. Beat the mixture manually to make a fluffy semithick, smooth batter. Cover the bowl and set aside to rest for 20 to 30 minutes.
- 4. After the batter is well-rested, mix again until all the ingredients are well incorporated. The consistency of the batter should be similar to thick heavy cream. If the batter is too runny, add 1 to 2 tablespoons of rice flour and mix well. If it seems too thick, gradually add 1 to 2 tablespoons of water and mix well.
- 5. Heat the oil in a skillet on medium-high heat (350 to 375 degrees). Check if the oil is ready by placing a small drop of batter into the hot oil. If it bubbles and rises to the surface immediately, it is ready.
- 6. Pour about 1/4 cup of batter into the oil slowly, making a full large circle. You can use your hand, or a piping bag with a medium-sized opening to pour the batter. As the Sel-Roti puffs and rises, push it into the oil with the back of a spoon. Fry till it becomes of a reddish-brown color. Flip and fry the second side till it browns. Remove with a slotted spoon and place it on paper towels. Repeat with the rest of the batter.
- 7. Serve hot or cold. Eat as is, or pair it with a cup of hot milk tea. Enjoy!



My name is Luca. I am 19 years old, I am originally from Italy from the region Friuli, and I study at the University of Amsterdam. Food is the main feature of my local culture: its characteristics represent the humble origins of the societies living in the Alps. It is also a means to show affection and care in a familiar context.







One of the most popular and traditional meals of my local cuisine is called frico. It is a very simple dish made mainly of potatoes and cheese, two ingredients that ever since have been widely produced in this area. Back in the day, the local economy was primarily based on agriculture and farming.

The cooking of frico is often associated with special occasions, such as birthdays, familiar gatherings, fairs and countryside festivals, or even a simple Sunday lunch. Although the recipe is relatively simple, as every Italian recipe it is up for debate around the specific ingredients to add, such as bacon. It is generally considered a tasty and filling vegetarian dish.

In my life, frico has always been part of celebrations with my large family, such as Christmas or birthdays. My mother and my aunts take turns to cook it for such occasions. Sharing a slice of frico with everyone can be considered an act of gratefulness for celebrating yet another event with all the family members being there and healthy. Eating together becomes an act of appreciation for the time together through thick and thin. Frico for me has a strong feeling of home, and I consider it a unique food that only loving hands can make. I have never cooked a complete frico: I would sometimes help my mom with the slicing (and with the tasting), and I would like to make one on my own someday.



#### 6 servings ~ 1 hour

#### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil or lard
- 2 lbs potatoes
- 1 onion, minced
- 3-4 slices of bacon (optional)

Water, enough to cover potatoes

1 lb of cheese (a mix of aged and non-aged),cut into little cubes

- 1. Peel the potatoes and slice them into little cubes. Cook in a pan with oil or lard, minced onion, sliced bacon (optional), and water.
- 2. When the potatoes soften, mash them with a fork until obtaining a uniformed mixture. Then add the cheese, previously grated. Let the cheese melt and continuously stir to obtain uniformity.
- 3. Once the cheese is melted, level out the surface with a spatula, and roast both sides until an orange crust appears.
- 4. The frico is ready to be served hot!

## Mikaela Santistevan

My name is Mikaela Santistevan. I was born in Colorado Springs, CO but my family later moved to Albuquerque, NM. I am a junior at Atrisco Heritage Academy High School and I enjoy music, time spent with family & friends, and cooking/baking.



# arroz con pollo

Arroz Con Pollo has always had a special place in my heart. It makes me feel warm and happy. My mom only makes it when someone is sick, or on cold winter days; she does not make it often. We always treat the days we do have it similar to a holiday or a birthday. It always reminds me of home no matter where it is I eat it. My mom first taught me how to make it after I had my tonsils removed. It was the only thing that I ate for a week. Food has always connected our family. Even the little things, like coming home to the smell of chicken cooking, or rolls being baked, make a house a home. When you share that food with others, like your neighbors or other relatives, it's what makes a family more than just a bloodline.

#### arroz con pollo

#### 5 servings ~ 45 minutes - 1 hour

#### Ingredients

- 5 chicken breasts
- 7 cups water
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 3 cups of rice
- 2 cups carrots, chopped
- 2 cups celery, chopped
- salt, to taste

- 1. Arroz Con Pollo is a soup, so start out by slicing the chicken into cubes and then boil on medium in a pressure cooker with 4 cups water and 4 cups chicken broth.
- 2. While the chicken is boiling, cook your rice with the remaining 3 cups of water.
- 3. Chop the carrots and celery.
- 4. Sauté vegetables on high heat.
- 5. Once everything is prepped, mix vegetables into the pressure cooker with the chicken and turn heat down to low and allow vegetables to simmer and soften. Once your vegetables are softened (you should be able to bite them without hearing a crunch), and your chicken is cooked all the way through, add your cooked rice, and salt to taste.
- 6. Serve hot.

Recipe inspired by maternal grandma

### Cristian Hernandez

Hello, my name is Cristian Hernandez. I am a Mexican American teenager born in Southern California. I don't really remember much about California, as I was raised on the hot, delicious, green chile from the Southwest in Albuquerque, New Mexico. As I said earlier, I am a teenager, but to be more specific: I am a 17-year-old student athlete, who loves to draw and read. In my spare time I like to play video games with my sister for some healthy competition. My parents have always wanted the best for me and my siblings, especially in academics, since they were not given the same opportunities and resources to help them when they were growing up. I can't say that I have had the experience of having a paying job, but I have done plenty to help better my community by giving a helping hand to my local church, schools, and Little League.

### sweet empanadas

Food isn't just a way to give you energy to get through the day. No, food has many messages behind it. It is a way to express love toward others. Smell and tastes can bring back memories. Food is an important part of my cultural identity.

I could say that family means everything to me. My grandmother's strawberry jam-filled empanadas are really special to my family, and to my roots.

This dish brings back the memory of the first time that my grandmother taught all of her grandchildren her recipe, so we could make them at home. We had such a great time learning the way she made this delicious dish. With these empanadas, it is almost as though you can savor every flavor before even taking a single bite. We learned the perfect way to cut the masa - so you have enough room to put the strawberry jam in and fold it over - to get that authentic look, and finally close it up with the forking technique.

The excitement I get from just the sight of these empanadas coming out of the hot oven with that golden brown coating on the top of them is just so overwhelming. I can't help smiling from the smell of them. Once they have cooled, they are sprinkled with a good amount of cinnamon and sugar. Enjoy them because the work is all done!

#### sweet empanadas

#### 10 empanadas ~ 1 hour 30 minutes

#### Ingredients

- 3 cups masa harina, packed
- 3 cups hot water
- 1 cup vegetable shortening
- 6 ounces light cold beer
- 1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt

favorite jam

cinnamon, to taste

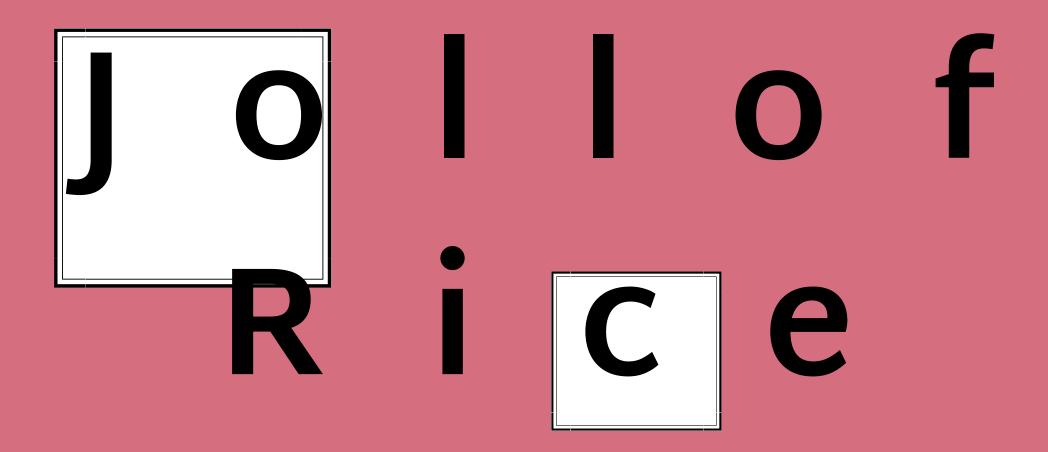
sugar, to taste

- 1. To make masa dough, in a large bowl mix the masa, shortening, hot water, cold beer, salt and baking powder, and knead into a cohesive dough, for about 2 or 3 minutes. You may need more or less water: What you want is a moist masa that does not stick to your hands, and cover with a damp towel for 30 minutes to an hour, to let the masa rise.
- 2. Once done, on a well floured surface, use a rolling pin to flatten the dough to about a ½ inch thick, and cut in 10 small circles all around the flattened dough. Cover with a damp towel to keep moist while you assemble the empanadas.
- 3. Fill the circles with two tablespoons of your favorite jam. Fold over and use a fork to pinch and seal the empanadas.
- 4. Bake in an oven preheated at 375°F for 30 to 35 minutes or until golden brown.
- 5. Let empanadas cool for about 20 minutes
- 6. Coat with a good amount of cinnamon and sugar mixture
- 7. Finally, enjoy the empanadas!

# Jasmine Ogboru

My name is Jasmine Ogboru, I am 17-years-old and I am from Nigeria and Ireland. I am trilingual, (fluent in English, French, and Pidgin) with many passions. For eleven years I attended a French International School (a Lycée Français), then in the tenth grade, I transferred to another International School (UWC USA) and graduated in May 2020. I have thirteen years of classical training: I sing, play the piano, and the violin. I've been playing competitive golf, tennis, and swimming from a young age, and for the past six years, I've been playing volleyball. My other hobbies include, cooking, baking, and horse riding. Despite the fact that I have quite a lengthy list of hobbies, my main passion has always been cooking and baking, I come from a family of talented cooks and bakers, so it was only natural that I picked up those skills and cultivated them into my own aesthetic. I have done so by exploring cuisine of multiple cultures, and exploring veganism, putting me on a path of innovation and discovery.





Even though I come from a very culturally diverse family, both my parents and I have spent the majority of our lives in Lagos, Nigeria, a colorful and incredibly diverse city that thrives both during the day and during the night, an international hub, that is home to people from all over the world.

Growing up with so many different cultures was extraordinarily confusing, but because I lived in Nigeria for the majority of my life, it was the culture I could relate to the most. The music, the art, and the food are the most incredible features of Nigerian culture, because all of them had one thing in common: they were extraordinarily colorful.

My favourite aspect of Nigerian culture is its food, more specifically, Jollof Rice. Its aroma, its colour, and the burst of flavor that you taste, as soon as you take your first bite, are what made me fall in love with it. Jollof Rice was the most defining factor of my entire upbringing, seeing that its cultural significance is what helped me grow to love Nigeria and its beautiful culture. And although the fact that I no longer live in Nigeria, this easy and accessible dish is one that I will forever hold in my heart.

Jollof Rice is a Traditional West-African dish that is native to only a handful of countries in said region. This dish traditionally consists of rice, oil, tomatoes, red peppers, onions, and garlic. It is one that my mother loves making. Every time she made it - although it always somewhat tasted the same, there was always something different, something better, like she made it with more love and tenderness, with more warmth and enthusiasm.

I had watched my mother make Jollof rice many times, but one day, she asked me to prepare the dish with her. At first, I was scared. What if I messed something up? What if I ruin the dish? What if I burn the house down? But then I realized that this was an opportunity for me to learn how to prepare this dish, so that I can one day share her artistry with others. I grabbed my kitchen stool and stood next to her by the stove.

### jollo frice

#### 7½ cups ~ 45 minutes

#### Ingredients

- 2 medium tomatoes
- ½ medium Scotch bonnet pepper
- 1 medium onion, roughly chopped
- 3 small red bell peppers, roughly chopped
- ½ cup of vegetable oil
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- 1 ½ teaspoons hot ground chile pepper
- 1 ½ teaspoons finely chopped garlic
- 2 bay leaves
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- 2 ½ cups medium-grain rice

There never was a set recipe; in Nigeria, we always cooked with feeling, we always estimated the amount of ingredients we needed, and seasoned to our taste, and although we never followed a recipe, it was always easy to come up with one, on-demand.

Jollof Rice was the most defining factor of my entire upbringing, seeing that its cultural significance is what helped me grow to love Nigeria and its beautiful culture. And although the fact that I no longer live in Nigeria, this easy and accessible dish is one that I will forever hold in my heart.

- 1. In a blender, combine tomatoes, scotch bonnet pepper, and half of the roughly chopped onions. Add the bell peppers to the purée remaining in the blender and pulse until smooth. Set aside.
- 2. Heat vegetable oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add in the rest of the onions and stir-fry until they are translucent.
- 3. Add the salt, curry powder, ground chile pepper, finely chopped garlic, bay leaves, ginger, and thyme.
- 4. Add blended vegetables, stir, and bring mixture to a boil.
- 5. Stir in the rice until well mixed, then reduce to low heat.
- 6. Cover pot and let cook until rice is al dente, about 45 minutes. Check after 30 minutes; if rice is saucy, remove the lid to cook off the excess sauce. If rice seems dry, stir in 1 to 2 cups of water. Allow the rice at the bottom of the pot to char a bit to infuse it with a smoky flavor.
- 7. Serve this spicy brilliant orange rice, once it's cooked down to a bubbly glaze.

### Elton Tsuzuki Betsch

This is my name: Elton Tsuzuki Betsch. I am 19, born in an arid desert beneath the purple-blue mountains of Albuquerque, New Mexico. I have left the safety of the mountains twice now, once to Conserve School in Wisconsin, and the second to the United World College – USA in Montezuma, NM. I have become a steward, a cook, a musician, an athlete, a lover and a world traveler who ironically hates titles. Cello expands my soul and food nourishes it. As I move on to King's College London to study comparative literature and film studies in the Fall, my exploration of self and this beautiful Earth are just beginning.



## itadakimasu

As the air settles at the dinner table once everyone has found their seats, a cheery "Itadakimasu!" is exclaimed by the whole family before slurping down a comforting bowl of udon noodles. Itadakimasu (EE-tah-dah-key-MAHs) is often translated simply from Japanese to English as a "Thank you!" or "Thank you for the food!" For me, each experience I've had with the word, in conjunction with good food, has contextualized it as something far greater than a simple "Thank you."

My story of food is like a soup. As my interactions with food grow, it's like I'm throwing more ingredients in the pot, enhancing the flavors. The base of my soup, the delicious umami broth, is my Mama's cooking. She taught me to honor food. "No picky eaters in this house," I would hear her say. Food was not to be thrown away or spit out, but rather praised with an itadakimasu before I ate it. It was a rather easy job, though, when my Mama's cooking is as good as it is.

My Mama nurtured my base understanding of food; a broth to build upon and complexify. After I had left home at the age of fifteen to study environmental sciences in Wisconsin, by a simple twist of fate, I met chef Johnny Ortiz. Johnny is a young, Michelin trained chef, with his own ambitions to combine sustainability, community, and fine dining all while honoring New Mexico and the land we inhabit. He would become my mentor for the next few years, teaching me principles of fine dining and foodservice. I was the only sixteen-year-old that I knew who wanted to spend their weekends driving a couple of hours to cook for another ten. But Johnny's way wasn't conventional. Most notably, we foraged most of our ingredients from the forest. Immersing ourselves within the woods, we'd pick spruce tips, dig up osha root for tea, gather yarrow, and other herbs I had never heard of before. The experience of mise en place started in nature. Mise en place (basically meaning prep work) was a thoughtful process, and an intentional one, spending all day on one ingredient at a time. What it meant to honor food grew from here. Service was merely the end of the day; plating a ten-course meal for a single table of ten guests. The plating process was meticulous: picking the perfect young watercress leaves, perfecting their placement on fleshy, smoked trout. An inspiring experience I was lucky to have, and one I will never forget. To my base-broth, I added leafy greens, meaty chicken, savory shiitake mushrooms, a connection to nature, the experience of fine dining prep work, and the value of honoring each individual ingredient.

At seventeen, I left home again to study at an international school, United World College - USA. Here, if nothing else, I came to love tasting food from around the world. My friends would share their recipes with me in their free time. Arepas from Venezuela, brigadeiros from Brasil, and shakshuka from Palestine/Israel. My favorite, though, was the Japanese food I'd make with the Japanese family. Through school, I got a scholarship to go to Italy, in the summer, to study the Slow Food Movement. It was a five-week stay, where I interviewed chefs, teachers, and local youth in Rome, Asti, Pollenzo, Regio Calabria, and other locations, to try and understand their relationship to food. Slow Food has three main components: good, clean, and fair – basically meaning delicious food, no harm to the environment, and fair wages to workers and prices for

consumers. At its root, the Slow Food Movement is a response to American fast food, which cares little about the food itself. These simple principles were so obvious and were implemented with care all throughout Italy. I learned how to make pasta from scratch, along with many traditional Italian recipes, at a cooking school in Asti. I toured beautifully ancient vineyards and ate delicious food by the crystal ocean. A piece of my heart is trapped in that country, in that food. All the while, food became the catalyst for so many conversations and friendships, the way to create community. The concept of food here was not so simple as just looking at the ingredients. It was the whole dish. It was putting care into that dish and making sure the warmth of the food reflected the love you put into it. To my soup, Italy added the noodles, thick white udon noodles: the passion and the love that hand-crafted food embraces.

Now at home, I can make my soup for my family. Of course, I have not surpassed my Mama, nor will I ever, but I can finally cook with her. I used to have to wait on her orders, "Cut this," or, "Stir this around". This might sound strange, but now we get into a meditative state in the kitchen, where we don't say anything. The scene would surely look strange to any spectator, the silence of it, but nothing has to be said. We know what must be done and in what order. We begin with the mise en place: washing and cutting the greens, the shiitake mushrooms, and chicken into manageable pieces. We start the broth, adding the dashi seasoning, kombu (dried seaweed), dried shiitake mushrooms, our love, making sure to not let the water boil, otherwise the broth would get bitter. We slice our own ingredients at our stations, reaching over each other for wooden spoons, tasting and adjusting the seasoning as we go. Udon noodle soup is easy, you just throw the ingredients in. As we taste the final product and adjust the seasoning accordingly, our focused concentration finally breaks with "Mmm's" or "Yep! That's it." As we dish out the ceramic bowls for everyone, we sit down in our chairs with a contented, "Itadakimasu!"

This is what itadakimasu means. It's the culmination of experiences that amount to the dish you are working on at that moment. It's honoring each ingredient you've picked up along the way and each one you put into that soup. It's the reflexes of your fingers moving in practiced ways. It's the honoring of your past, the teachers, the lessons that remain in that discoverable place in your mind. It's the excitement for the food that is about to become a part of you. And above of all, it's an exclamation of love.

#### itadakimasu

#### 2 servings ~ 1 hour

#### Ingredients

#### Broth:

8 cups of water

1 package of dashi (premade kombu and bonito flake seasoning)

3 tbs soy sauce

salt, to taste

3 tbs sake

2 dried shiitake mushrooms

#### Broth:

- 1. First, get the broth going. Heat water on mediumhigh in a large pot.
- 2. Add dashi, soy sauce, sake, and dried shiitake mushrooms.
- 3. The key is to not let the water boil otherwise the broth could turn bitter.
- 4. Add salt and soy sauce to taste.
- 5. Remove the mushrooms once they are saturated and soft. They can be removed and eaten.

Inspired by my mother's family recipe.

#### itadakimasu

#### Continued...

#### Ingredients

#### Soup:

3 chicken thighs (any part of the chicken will do)

2 cups of vegetables (I like using lettuce, carrots, and shiitake mushrooms)

1 block of fish cake

broth, see previous page

2 packages of udon noodles (frozen not dried)

2 eggs

2 sheets of dried seaweed

#### Soup:

- 1. Slice the chicken and lettuce into manageable pieces, about 2-inch slices. Slice the carrots and shiitake mushrooms thinly on a bias, ¼ inch. As well, cut the fish cakes into ½ inch slices.
- 2. Add chicken and vegetables to the broth until they cook through. Don't worry about seasoning these ingredients, the broth is the seasoning.
- 3. Add the udon noodles towards the end, they only take 2 minutes to cook through.
- 4. Drop in the eggs and kill the heat, let them poach in the warm broth before serving; it should only take 3 minutes for the whites to cook. Leave the yokes runny on the inside.
- 5. Serve in a large bowl with dried seaweed.
- 6. I recommend eating with good friends on a cold day or for a celebration!