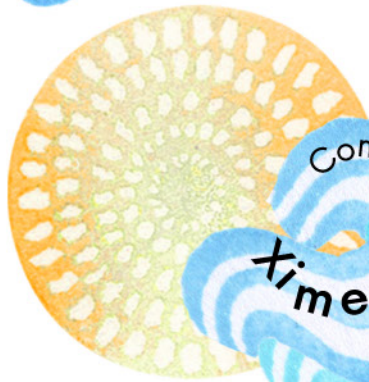




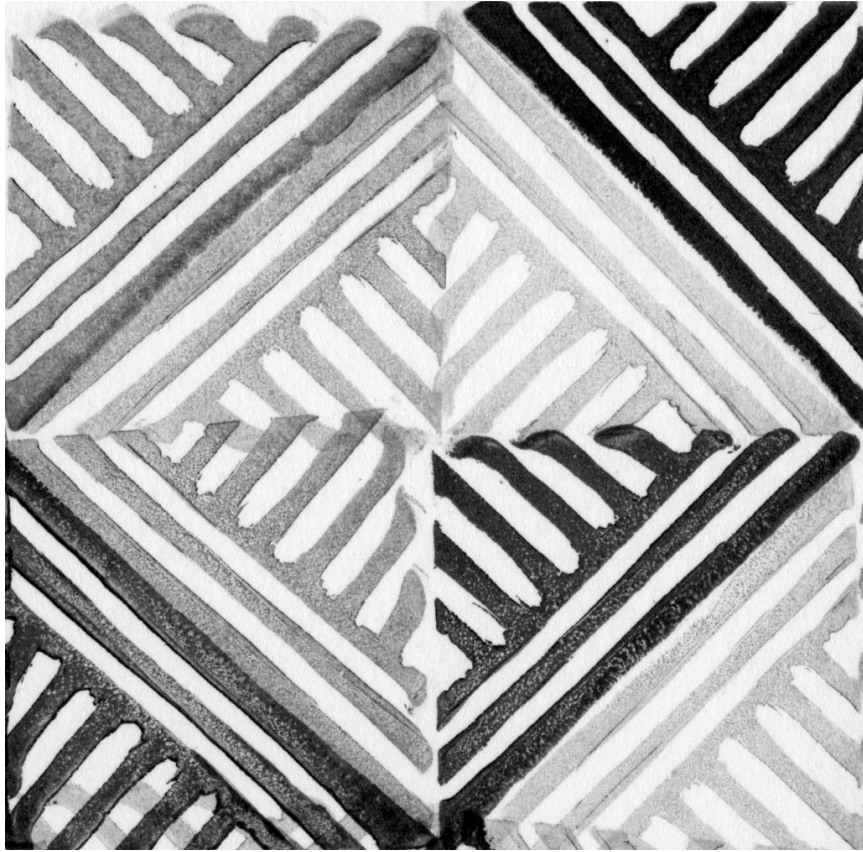
# Arepas For Peace



Thoughts, Cooking and Art  
for Refugees and Human Mobility







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# World Arepa Day



*In* over a hundred cities around the globe, and for eleven years now, #WorldArepaDay is being celebrated on every second Saturday of September. Who came up with the idea? This initiative was promoted by Rafael Mourad, Luisana La Cruz and Tony de Viveiros, founders of Venezuelans Around the World (VenMundo).

## Why do we celebrate World Arepa Day?

1. To unite the Venezuelan community, in and outside our country.
2. To pay tribute to our arepa, an ancestral tradition, our daily bread.
3. To value and promote our traditions and our culture.
4. To support Venezuelan entrepreneurs linked to our gastronomy and other areas.
5. To foster civil liability, actively participating in actions of solidarity aimed at supporting social projects in and outside our country.

## How can you celebrate World Arepa Day this year?

1. By cooking arepas at home and sharing them with your family, your friends, or by yourself; the key element is celebration.
2. By taking the role of coordinator and organize an event where you live, in order to highlight this day's relevance
3. By looking for, and attending, an event or fair about World Arepa Day in your area.
4. By getting information about arepas, by taking courses, attending workshops, conferences - through virtual and/or in person modalities, by participating in chats, forums, webinars and live events about the arepa, its history and recipes.
5. By organizing donations and aid for Venezuelan social projects.
6. By ordering take-out arepas, in areperas or other event-participating restaurants, as a means of supporting our Venezuelan entrepreneurs.
7. If you own a restaurant, an arepera or a grocery store, you can offer sales, discounts and contests during September to celebrate World Arepa Day.
8. By donating or cooperating with an NGO or Refugee Foundation.
9. By signing the Change.org petition to include World Arepa Day in the UN Calendar of Official International Days. [Here is the link](#)



### Ximena Montilla Arreaza

 @ximenamontillaarreaza  
 @claseslistas  
 @historiadelaarepa

A teacher and Magister in Management of Educational Centers. Author of the books *Soy la arepa y Arepa* (English version). TEDx Speaker. Creator of a methodology called "*Spanish as an Affective Language*". On her blog, "**Ximena con X**", she shares tips for bilingual families and teachers as she highlights the importance of teaching Spanish at home as an affective language, through reading and approaching the culture supporting the language. She has directed projects to preserve and promote Hispanic-American Culture for three years now, collaborating with Venmundo, and other foundations or NGOs.



### Laura Stagno

 @laurastagnoilustra

She is Venezuelan and studied Painting and Graphic Arts at the Armando Reveron Institute in Caracas, with a Master's degree in Animation (Musashino University of Art, Tokyo). She also studied Graphic Design in Barcelona, Spain. She lived many years in Tokyo, Japan, and has a passion for Japanese culture, paper, and patterns. Laura has illustrated more than a dozen children's books, including *Soy la Arepa* or *Arepa* (English version), and has worked as an exclusive illustrator for a design studio in Tokyo. She creates her illustrations out of paper cutouts and prints, combining manual and digital techniques. She is always exploring new materials, and yet keeping her own style. Three years ago, she began illustrating books related to multiculturalism and cultural identity to collaborate with projects and social events. She currently lives in Barcelona, Spain, with her daughter Iroma, and teaches Japanese to children and teenagers.







# Shelter

Your eyes are a shelter, without judging they stare,  
your hands reach out and offer me your bread.  
The warm and round arepa that embraces my palate,  
lovingly wraps the flavors of my city, my town, my people, a story tell.

Your verb is a shelter where no questions are asked,  
that respects my secrets and when I want to cry.  
A place where my feet can stop and relax,  
a place of silence, fairness, wellness and calm.

A shelter is a boat that sails away from grief,  
that docks in faraway lands where freedom can be breathed.

Full of trust it offers an urge to dream again,  
dreams that know no borders nor wars to wage.

**Ximena Montilla Arreaza**  
Atlanta, September 2022



## PROLOGUE



*Reinventing oneself from zero  
before the cold wins over  
the warm memory of a pumpkin  
the clean toast of a hot arepa  
the Sun that does not lie when rising  
while the barbarians exist  
I am  
a "we will be"  
that is yet to arrive.*

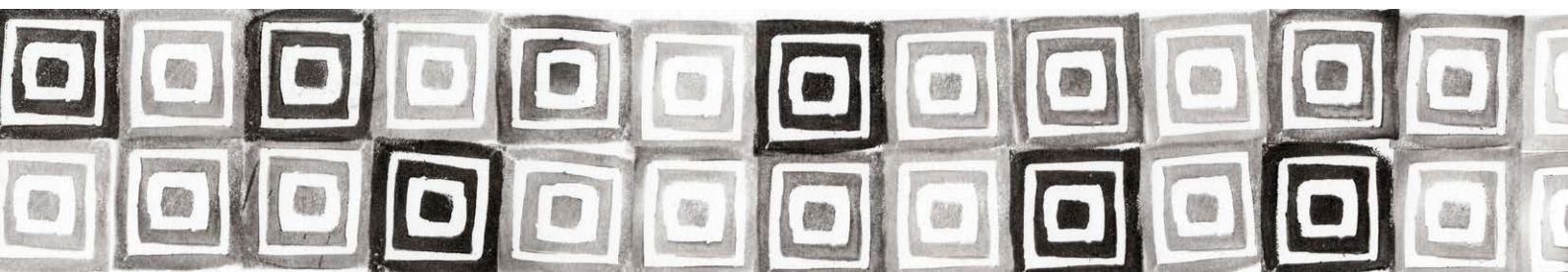
**Jason Maldonado**

*It* is said that the prologue precedes the word in a kind of “preliminary writing.” In this case, addressing these thirty-six texts, between stories and cuisine, has been poetry, tasting, delight, sensory enjoyment, emotion, and satisfaction. All those feelings are brought by these texts that portray—in one way or another—the arepa as the main character, the daughter of the “grain that breathes life”. A truly white and ineffable wrapper in which, as Job Pim rightly said... *a woman comfortably fits* with her children, her belongings, her pains, her dreams and joys, but also, with her hopes.

In neurosciences, particularly in neurogastronomy, the relationship between memory and smells is increasingly appreciated because of a complex and intricate network that allows identifying, registering, recognizing, remembering those that are significant in our lives. Taste is a part of this network which, without the help of the fine neurological foundations of smell, shares the connections with the limbic system, activating our emotional loads. Thus, the circle becomes perfect: experience, smell, taste, memory, longing, identity.

Our arepa, “Holy word”, as Bachiller Munguia used to say, is the materialization of that virtuous circle: aroma, flavor, image, meaning, profane and sacred representation that has accompanied us since ancient times, proudly crossing our country’s history and its multiple regional, local and family narratives. It is one of our land types of bread: corn flat bread, “the breadwinner of poverty”; the breadcrumb with which we learned to savor any food different from breast milk; and the common breakfast of our childhood, irreplaceable in the lunchbox for school breaks. It is the perfect lunch for working people, together with “sancocho” (chicken and vegetables soup) or any protein, and the ideal food to close a party or a wake. The arepa is a warm hug that receives and says goodbye to travelers and people passing by.

Thanks to its seminal presence in the daily sustenance, it is... *the most unanimous version of the Lord’s Prayer* in our vernacular theology, as Mariano Picon Salas rightly said. In recent years, in these dark times of diaspora and incessant migrations, it has been an inexhaustible bridge of creativity, and an active builder of peace and coexistence; an emblem of our culture, and the best of ambassadors.







With arepa, we are amazed to see that every form and content is convenient, possible and unsuspected, as well as it provides and receives various nutritional contents, along with cultural and symbolic traditions. We also witness that it expresses the interculturality of our «migrant souls», of those who, in their journey through places and languages, embrace new landscapes, foods and stories. Of those of us who are materially clinging to the homeland and beloved soil while torn between that uncertain and painful reality and the imaginative wanderings through other worlds, all the while repeatedly caressing the always new dream for a better future for all, in which we can welcome to our table and homes those people we long for today.

Arepas are infinite and unfinished, polyphonic, diverse, polychromatic, polyglot in their physical and anthropological roundness...just like the interior of each one of us is, like our original history was, like our table has been shaped, which has generously brought together and combined hearts and flavors from far away, so they can definitely become ours. The texts that we present in this book speak of that unique and diverse arepa that shows “us” to the world, and that is filled with it, with everything that is intrinsically human, that which gives meaning to the lives of many, behind the curtains of fashion and neo-globalization, between this and other shores. These texts tell us how their corn-made soul links us with pupusas, gorditas, arepuelas, nacatamales...and how, at that migratory table, their symbolic and daily presence evokes childhood memories but also remembrance of old times. Among its lines we find the need to be held by the warmth of wombs and weavers of shelter and calm; of the courage, risks and care that being a migrant, and living between nostalgia and hopes, implies. By reading these pages, we appreciate the necessary cooking of a global and resilient citizenship; they talk about having a sensory baggage that unites and strengthens us, thus allowing the adventure of renaming, recreating, reestablishing the old in the new. They tell us how there are intimate and loving family tables, tables for dialogue and intercultural coexistence, ecumenical tables in which the essential gesture of sharing bread is endlessly recreated.

I invite you to share and enjoy at this table, thanks to Ximena and to each one of those who have made it possible with her images, words and recipes. Thanks to the love that its pages transmit.

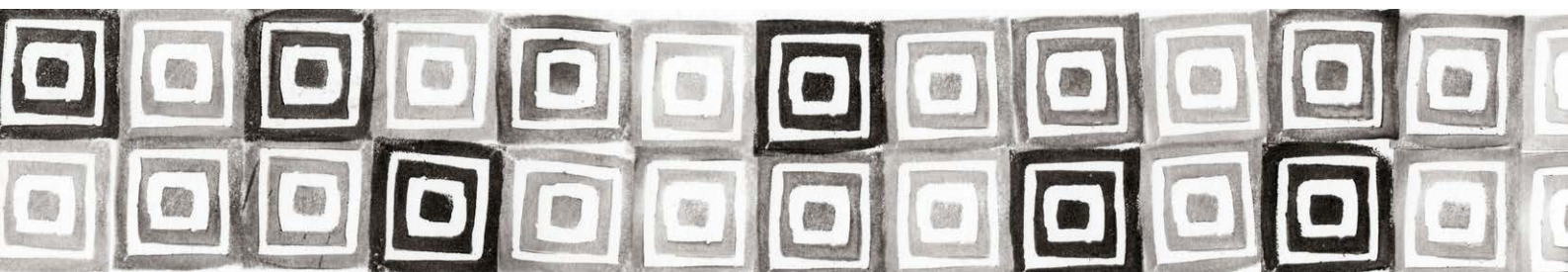


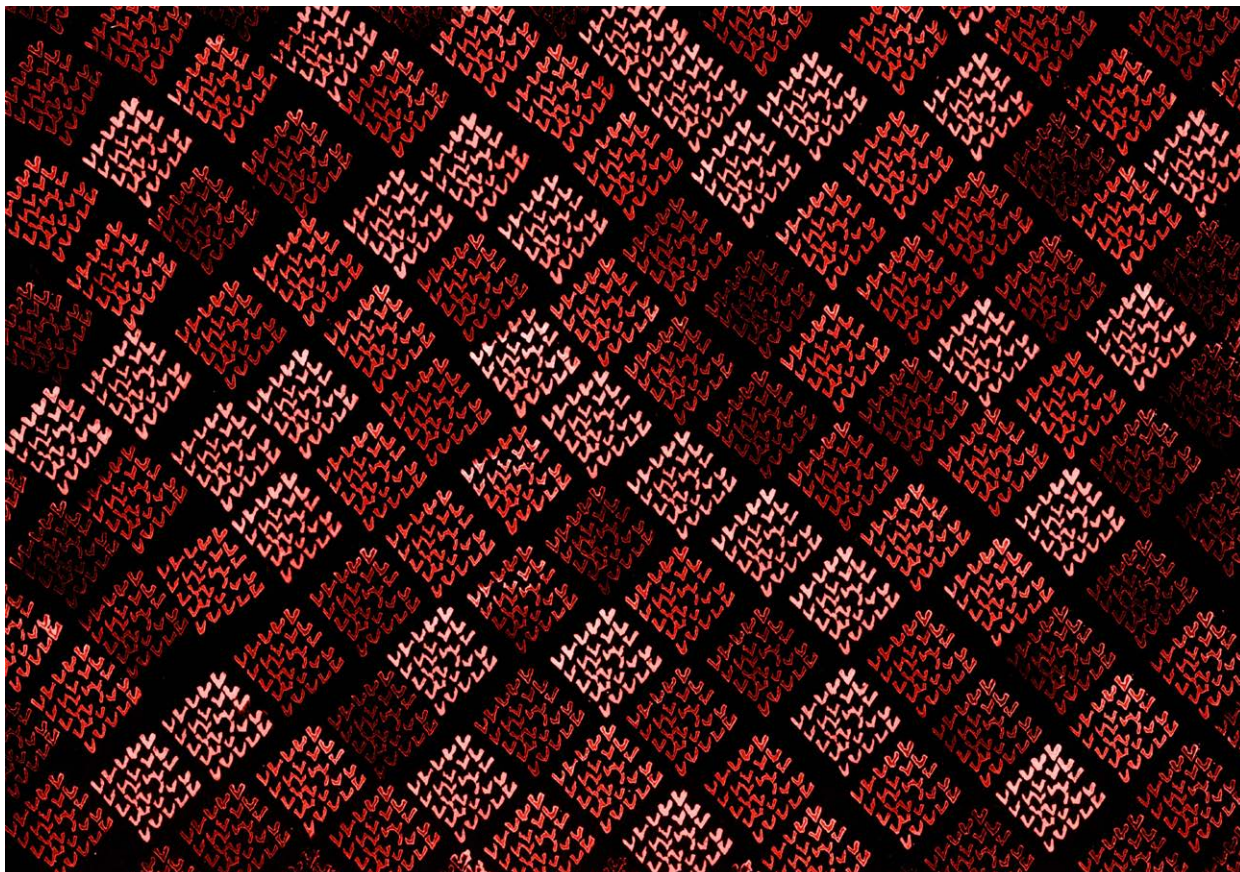
**Photo: Pablo Hernandez**

## **Ocarina Castillo D'Imperio**

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Anthropologist, with a Master's degree in Contemporary History of Venezuela, and a PhD in Political Science. She is a member of the Academy of Venezuelan Gastronomy, elected as Member of the National Academy of History a couple of years ago. She is the founder of the Samuel Robinson program and the interschool study project known as PCI (Interfaculty Cooperation Program), in addition to the Anthropology of Flavors chair at the FACES School of Sociology. She is a great connoisseur of food anthropology of our country and other Latin American countries.





# Graphic Work:

## *Weaving, Knitting and Embroidering for Peace*

**by Laura Stagno**

*When* we began to work on the *Arepas For Peace* project, an initiative about refugees and gastro diplomacy, I must say that, as an illustrator, I thought immediately of visually portraying an aspect of each culture. Certainly, there are few things that excite me more than the textures of fabrics, textiles, basketry, ceramics, tiles, embroidery and patterns of the artisan manifestations of each displaced people. I began to investigate and found an ancient world, yet new to me, full of magical symbolism in every element, every stroke and every color. That is why I decided to use the technique of linoleum engraving (stamps carved in rubber) to unify the variety of artistic media that I found along the way; interpreting, through my eyes and in my own way, what caught my attention: those repeated elements that seemed to speak of a story that was leaving its imprint and invited me to decipher it. I did not find theoretical material about all the territories concerned by the project, but the images speak for themselves, and they guided me on a very inspiring journey of color and textures.



I planned to make the engravings in the most artisanal way possible, in order to capture the simplicity of the original language used by each people. And, little by little, I carved symbols, shapes, silhouettes with the meticulous work of craftsmanship. I printed them with colored inks to generate a very rich graphic material with which I “filled” the arepas digitally. I also created a scenario in which I dared to play with the colors, taking them to the other extreme, to its opposite, creating a kind of kaleidoscopic illusion that invites you to immerse yourself in its dimension.

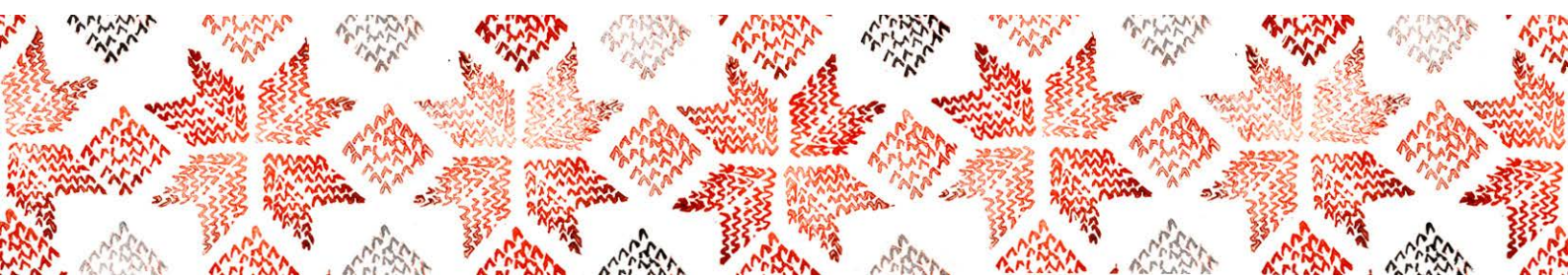
This project gave me the opportunity to technically explore things that I had wanted to do for a long time. I am very excited to share my findings through the language of illustration; particularly those around the concepts of peace, humanity, brotherhood, integration, diversity, among others, and the search of the roots, which no matter how distant and diverse the peoples are, the artistic expressions will converge in a basic element. The motifs I found in the rugs woven by the displaced people of Kurdistan, referring to abundance,



fertility, family union, protection against evil, femininity and virility, are not too different symbolically from the motifs of the traditional Ukrainian «vyshyvanka» shirts, that, since ancient times, women in Ukraine embroidered on the suits of their men when going hunting or to war. They wore them as a talisman of good luck, prosperity and protection against danger. This suit, also called “sorochka”, and normally worn on special occasions, nowadays represents the identity of the Ukrainian nation. It has become their national symbol and is a

sign of perseverance and independence.

Likewise, in Venezuela, the ancient activity of native basketry symbolizes fertility, and is associated with the feminine as well as with the union of humanity with Mother Earth. Some shapes or figures in the interlacing of the fibers represent elements of the worldview, from animals to the history of our peoples. Without a doubt, these beautiful and elaborate fabrics are part of the ancestral Venezuelan cultural identity. When you look at these pages, don't forget that behind each motif, pattern or texture there is a story that gives meaning to this wonderful project, aiming to unite peoples through the arepa, the gastronomy and the culture.



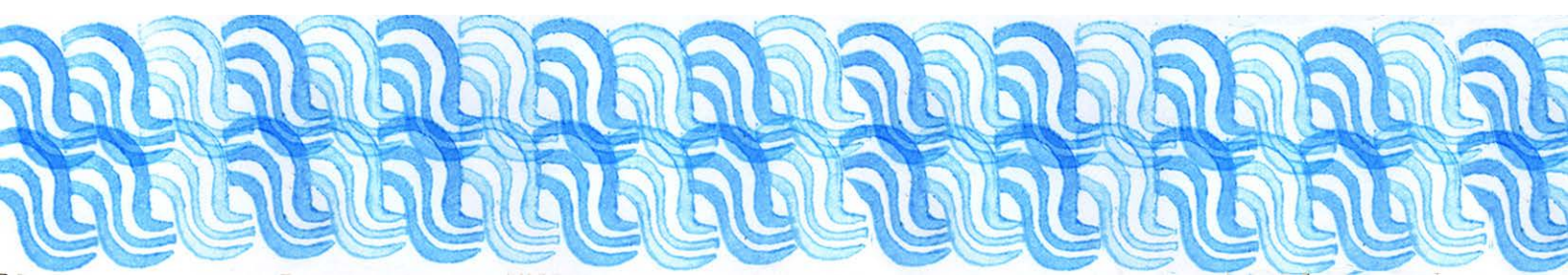


## **Borders, Spaces for «Interculturality»**

**by Cissi Montilla**

*Our* world is full of divisions. Political, administrative and all kinds of limits break humanity into pieces. Living borders are sites of encounters and disagreements between the different characters that cross each other in that space-time. They are places where people arrive carrying along their own culture, viewpoint, ways of acting, food, unique words, language, and different idioms to say the same things... It is a world of possibilities, mostly truncated due to the conditions in which these crossings occur.

One of the main challenges for cultural management is opening horizons, creating spaces where to establish those virtuous human bonds, discovering the creative possibilities that we have when coming across with different cultures and technological developments. When we talk about diversity, inclusion and the way different groups relate, we are talking about the richness we can create by promoting these links and exchanges, by fostering the relations between these different social and cultural groups, by recognizing and valuing the different contributions that these actors can make to local or universal heritage.





An infinite space for constructing knowledge, for weaving it, for enriching and reappraising it, opens up by stimulating the creation of meeting spaces: a kitchen, a picnic area, a corridor, a street, a place where many different people coexist. Knowledge grows with the contributions made by all those who enter this space, all those who have the opportunity to interact, exchange, relate and meet to co-create something from what each one of them carries inside. Cultural Management is in charge of this task; and with the help of several methodologies and technological development, it can become a process that strengthens heritage by generating a dynamic and inclusive intercultural dimension.

Understanding that a border is a space for interaction and encounter is to take a step towards knowing other histories, other lives, other cultures that existed before, other cultures that are passing through. It is becoming sensitive to the cultural elements of migrants who come from other latitudes or even, here in Mexico, from deep in Mexico; it is appreciating what these encounters plant in our culture. Without a doubt, a loving space where the exchanges can help us recreate those moments lived throughout our history, where we cook and share food, where we remember our grandmother's seasoning, where we try to replace a missing ingredient with another from our birth place, something that allows us to recover an aroma we carry in our memory... a place where collective intelligence can produce delicacies with the simplest ingredients.

Therefore, a must-do task for cultural management is to create spaces that foster real integration among all those possible actors, understanding that it must be a place of dialogue, respect, equity, fairness and inclusion.

A space where you think of everything and everyone; a space where everyone is welcome regardless of their physical or intellectual abilities, origins or preferences of any kind.



**Cissi Montilla Rugeles**

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Migrant, cook, cultural manager, entrepreneur, mother of Emiliano and Valentina, wife, lover, accomplice of Felipe Acevedo Castillo. We currently lead Latino Café Bistro Cultural Gastronomic Center in Queretaro, Mexico.





# Women of Corn

*Tales of a Migrant Woman, a Refugee Woman  
and a Woman in Human Mobility*

ECUADOR CHAPTER

by Dr. (c) Maria M. Pessina -Itriago

*I am* part of the root weavers. I walk with women who have insisted on planting origins far away from the territories that belong to their ancestors, where the wombs that gave birth to us did not dilate; where the fruits that fed us are not found. There, where words are intertwined with new forms, sounds and meanings; where landscapes are different from those that sheltered us, and the wind blows and envelopes in a different way. Here, from the depths of our nostalgia and memories within that cauldron of old feelings and other sensations, we have woven in order to savor a new home.



The decision to migrate, when assumed from this point of view, tends to entail feelings of fear and guilt, in addition to the sadness caused by separation: fear of the uncertainty of what awaits; dread of a possible deterioration of the relationships left behind... and guilt for the absence of our loved ones, those we have left back in another part of the world.

We, the women, who are part of the international migration growing phenomenon, are bound by nostalgia and hope. We linger on this dichotomy, which, regardless of time, is ever present in our new destination. In Latin America, women have been surpassing men in human mobility. For this reason, it is said that migrations are becoming feminized, that they have the faces of women and girls. Migrations have the faces of those women who have crossed borders, scenarios of a series of movements that occur daily; being their goal to establish themselves on the “other side”.

Female human mobility can originate from various causes. Some women seek better living conditions, others escape situations of violence. Moreover, such mobility can be caused by the need to find a decent job that allows them to financially support their sons, daughters, relatives, dependents. Some women have suffered persecution, or their territories have been affected by environmental degradation and/or natural disasters. To better explain these contexts, I am going to tell the story of three women who are in Ecuador. They all sought tranquility and stability in this destination, but each of their experiences is different.

I am Venezuelan. I arrived in Ecuador twenty years ago. I came for issues related to a job offer. I mean, I came with a job and opportunities that did not affect my lifestyle. My family and I have been able to cover the budget. There have been hard times and better times. I am a migrant. I decided to come here, I came by air, I have the legal documents that enable me to live in the country and guarantee all the rights.

Claudia is Colombian. She arrived twelve years ago from Nariño, fleeing from the paramilitaries and the Colombian guerrilla, who killed her husband and her father-in-law. She came walking with her eight-year-old son and her thirteen-year-old daughter. One night, she saw the insurgents enter the neighbors’ house and take their children; they were three, 9, 12 and 16 years old. They were taken by force. Neither screams nor blows, nor struggles nor despair of her mother prevented them from being snatched from her. Her whereabouts are unknown to this day.

That same night, Claudia took her children, some blankets, and decided to leave her house. She left without her papers, photos or mementos. She arrived in Ecuador by trails. Being a person displaced by an internal armed conflict in her country, she and her children were granted the status of “refugees”. This is a legal condition that allows them to live in that country with all the rights of its citizens.

She did not plan to leave; but she and her family were forced by a violent context, leaving everything behind, a trait she has in common with other refugees in the world. No refugee



has wanted to leave their home. A situation has always forced them to abandon everything without planning.

Diana, a young Venezuelan from San Cristobal, arrived in Ecuador seven years ago, with her two-year-old son, and pregnant with another child —at that time she was four months pregnant. Diana decided to migrate because she had no way of feeding her children, she could not vaccinate them, educate them; the economic crisis in her country prevented her from getting daily food. Her son was diagnosed with malnutrition and she had severe anemia that could bring her health problems that would also affect her unborn child. Andrea, Diana's friend, decided to leave Venezuela a year earlier, for the same reason, adding insecurity. She first arrived in Colombia, and then undertook her path to Ecuador because it was more profitable for her since the currency of that country is the dollar. She sent part of what she earned to her relatives in Venezuela. She told her friend about her adventures and misadventures. Due to her experience, Diana decided to cross Colombia with her two children until she reached Ecuador. She made that long journey by foot and some of it by bus. However, she often had to stay in refugee camps or sleep outdoors. She finally arrived in Quito, Ecuador.



There, as in other Latin American countries, many international organizations have been supporting Venezuelans, considering them as a population of “human mobility in need of international protection.” They are not “refugees” in many cases, because there is no armed conflict, war, or catastrophic situation. But after the great migratory flow, many organizations and countries have decided to help improve the lives of people who have left the country.

As of 2000, Ecuador becomes a multiple “mobility” country, such as emigration, immigration, people in transit, and refuge (Herrera et al. 2012 cited in Herrera y Cabezas 2019, 126). Historically, there has been a significant group of Cuban, Haitian, and Colombian migration in the country (Herrera et al. and Heads 2019). And as of 2015, Venezuelan migrants have increased significantly.

Venezuelan migration is a “migration in contexts of crisis” (Gandini et al. 2019). As stories of women show, this migration has special characteristics compared to that of other groups, due to its surprising migratory speed and heterogeneity (Herrera y Cabezas, 2019; Herrera, 2019). At first, Ecuador was characterized as a transit country to other countries of the Andean corridor. As of 2015, an increase in Venezuelan migratory flows to Ecuador begins.

Currently, there are 513,903 Venezuelans in human mobility in Ecuador. It is the third recipient country —the first is Colombia with 1,842,390, then Peru with 1,286,464 (data up to May 2022). The five provinces with the highest number of people in human mobility







from Venezuela are: Pichincha, Guayas, El Oro, Imbabura and Manabi (ACNUR, 2021). Many of them have encountered difficulties in the face of migration regulations and the promotion of discrimination. This human movement has produced a tightening of migration policies in the region in response to the high flows of Venezuelan population.

In this sense, many countries are beginning to discuss the importance of including women, girls and/or migrants, refugees or people in human mobility in need of international protection, under a principle of non-discrimination, and within a category that does not allow any type of distinction in access to fundamental rights. However, many people who move because of urgent needs not covered by their countries, find themselves in an irregular situation, without visas or documents to achieve regularization. This makes them more vulnerable to violence because their rights are not guaranteed.

In addition, migration processes are of greater vulnerability and risk for this group of people because of the effects on inequitable gender relations; in addition to the gender violence that occurs both in their country of origin as well as in their transit or destination country. Each story told by migrant women is different. Many had different reasons to leave and make the difficult decision to drag their sons or daughters out of their birth place, and a suitcase full of memories with them. In some cases, they are women who have not been able to find what they yearn for in their trajectory. Many of them have experienced, or currently experience, discrimination, violence, or are invisible to society and justice. It is a population that lacks rights, despite international treaties and laws that protect and seek to protect them.

For this reason, many organizations are now demanding that the States guarantee the rights of the migrant population —regardless of their migratory status, gender, nationality, age, religion, etc.—, thus achieving greater possibilities for these groups to easily integrate into the host society and to be able to contribute to the country, while managing to cover the needs that arise for the development of their lives and those of their dependents (Fries, 2019).

Violence has no borders. For instance, the consequences of a war do not occur only in the geographical space where the military confrontations take place. Violence spreads in the bodies of those who suffer it, and thus is embedded in any space in which people live and in which they take refuge. Eradicating and punishing violence is a principle in any State, regardless of the borders that are crossed and the migratory status. States must provide security, safety and protection guarantees, regardless of immigration status. Likewise, States must prevent, address and punish any type of violence against the migrant population.



Xenophobia is another cause of violence. It increases the perception of insecurity and generates emotional affectations to those who experience it, mainly women and people of gender diversity (CARE, 2019). It also prevents them from accessing decent working conditions and services such as health, education and housing.

In this context, many women have experienced racism, discrimination and xenophobia, but once these factors have been overcome, there are reports of successful reception and insertion processes. Refugee and migrant women are always pillars of support for communities and economies. For this reason, gender equality policies must be demanded from countries, addressing specifically the needs of women and girls, including their voices, and also sponsoring programs and projects for the empowerment of all of them.

Claudia has been able, with a lot of sacrifice, to open her Colombian cafeteria-pastry shop, after spending many years selling food on the streets and in the parks, and even cleaning houses. Diana's stay in this country has not been easy; and yet, she has been able to send her children to school, have access to health services, and now, thanks to a business proposal, she is working as a seamstress in a company, earning a little more than minimum wage. She recently managed to regularize her situation and that of her children in the country. She lives with other compatriots in a shared apartment. In my case, I am still struggling with migration dilemmas, but I know I am part of a group with privileges. After two decades, I feel like I belong here, but they keep reminding me that I am not from this country, even after giving birth to two Ecuadorian citizens. My accent, my customs, and my flavors, always end up giving me away.

On the other hand, regarding the migratory context and its causes, many of those processes can be attributed to pursuing the experience of emancipation, of liberation, of being who one wants to be. We seek shelter, refuge and peace. We look for a certain scenario to live in, in which we can resist the misadventures of the world, which are not few. The consequence of all this has been the increase in the flow of human mobility. And because of dilemmas, tensions and absences, women and girls carry with them the seed they plant to make of it a way of weaving relationships and achieving resilience, leaving traces, marking their new refugee space, where they will build new relationships and dreams. In that space they will have the opportunity to write a new story, to rediscover peace, but also to succumb to sadness; many times they will shed tears for the death of loved ones they have had to leave behind in their homelands. This is not an easy process, but it is hopeful (although it seems contradictory).

In this sense, the utopia of some may be the dystopia of others, a diminution of hope. The failure of man's control over the world has been evident. It has turned it into a toxic space, a nefastus place for human life. We seek to cling to other ways of life and other spaces.





Corn has not only managed to build homes for many Latin American families, to open roads and doors to sustain life, it has also been one of the main ingredients of our Latin American gastronomy, used in countries like Venezuela, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala, Colombia, El Salvador and Paraguay. The sheltered women in these countries are cultivating peace in a new fertile land, for the sake of their lives and the future of their children.

These women are like the ants of Miguel Angel Asturias, which came out of the cave with grains of corn on their backs, hoping that those grains would spread throughout the world, hoping they would be free and live in peace. Grains that will be sown and later will be harvested. Women who will not be forgotten and whose essence will possibly be buried in new lands, with new fruits, with new stories, new winds and new descendants. They are women of corn, who spread themselves in borderless lands, without visas, under utopias, longings and dreams. Women who wove and weave stories, battling against crises, absences, desires, shortcomings, despair, war, life itself, in order to have a happy ending.

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VENEZUELAN REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN THE REGION May 2022, more information available at: <http://R4V.info>



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# *Solidarity. with no Borders*

by **Maria Alejandra Bastidas**

*I* was born and grew up in a beautiful country that welcomed people from different parts of the world. Spanish, Portuguese, Colombian, Central American, Asian, German, Arab people arrived in my beloved Venezuela; in short, our land was a place full of cultures, gastronomy and international traditions.

We Venezuelans were not used to leaving our land, and little did we think that the time would come when millions of our families would be forced to leave the country of arepas, cachapas, pabellon and “queso de mano”.

My arrival in the United States was in the year 2000, and here I have seen how the political crisis has deteriorated Venezuelans quality of life, up to the point that millions had to leave everything they had built, and run away to save their lives.

Women, babies, children and also the elderly, they all went to distant lands, mostly neighboring countries, the US, and a few went to the old continent. All of them had the same need, fear, hunger, with no place to call home, without any money and with the uncertainty that

comes with living far from the beautiful Venezuela, from our traditions, from our gastronomy, and from our people.

Government statistics show that there are currently more than 6 million Venezuelans worldwide, including migrants and refugees, according to data from the UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency). The numbers continue to rise, as the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the circumstances of Venezuelan population, making it even more difficult to obtain food, and causing more evictions and more exploitation.

Here in the United States, the number of people from Venezuela has grown in recent years. We have seen caravans of Venezuelans: grandparents, babies and entire families risking their lives crossing the Rio Grande, and exposing themselves to the dangers of dealing with “coyotes”, facing armed groups and traffickers to reach this land of opportunity.

Many migrants have applied for political asylum, others applied for Temporary Protected Status or TPS, and US authorities estimate that 323,000 Venezuelans living in the United States without legal status are eligible to apply for TPS, a figure much higher than that reached by any other country. Only Venezuelans who were in the United States before March 8, 2021, are eligible for TPS, so there are still out all the migrants who have arrived in recent months.

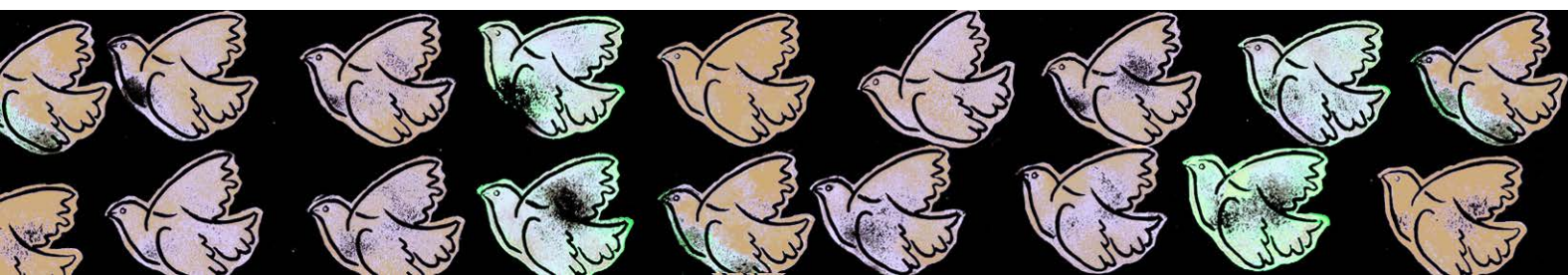
All Venezuelans, at this time, know relatives and close friends in this statistic of people displaced to the United States, Central America and Europe, who have left everything behind in search of a better quality of life.

And although it is a new concept for Venezuelans to be called asylees or refugees, since we were not part of this statistic before, there are nations like Ethiopia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Iraq, Palestine, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Myanmar, Ukraine, Yemen and Afghanistan, where war, international conflict, political persecution, hunger and poverty, climate change and natural disasters have forced millions of families to leave their land for years and decades.

According to UNHCR figures “in the first months of 2022, more than 100 million people were displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict or human rights violations”.

It is no secret that experiencing “forced displacement” and leaving everything behind is devastating. But arriving in a new country in search of economic stability, employment, schools, housing, food, clothing, medical care and transportation can be the greatest challenge in the lives of many. Added to this is the stigma and blame that follows refugees and migrants who are seen as competition in the labor market and a burden on public services.

The lack of legal documents to live or work and stay in host countries means that many refugees and migrants also do not have access to fundamental rights, according to UNHCR. And there is precisely where awareness and solidarity is needed, with those who have





been forced to leave Ethiopia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Venezuela, Iraq, Palestine, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Myanmar, Ukraine, Yemen and Afghanistan.

There is nothing better than knowing more about these nations, their customs, their populations and their food to eliminate stigma and xenophobia. That is precisely the mission of this digital publication: to expose the reality our refugees live, to create awareness of this phenomenon that affects millions of people around the world.

There is nothing better than learning through food and through a dish as traditional and delicious as the arepa, wich in this e-book called *Arepas For Peace* joins other cultures in a gastronomic version created by renowned chefs who live around the world, and who joined forces to bring unique recipes alluding to each of the populations that have suffered forced displacement, and that make up the UNHCR's list of refugees' origin countries.

Enjoy your meal. Enjoy these arepas, and share with your family, especially with your children, the importance of being humanitarian, and to offer a solidarity gesture with those who need it most. I learned to open doors and receive immigrants in my beautiful Venezuela, and I am confident that now the world will return those open arms to all Venezuelans who need them. Today it is for them, tomorrow, for you.



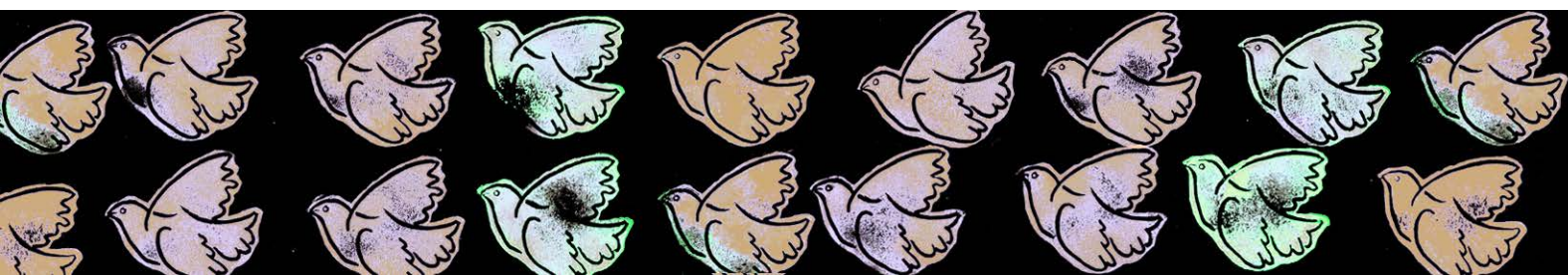
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Venezuelan. Vice President and General Manager of Telemundo Atlanta. With more than 20 years of experience as a journalist, Maria Alejandra is an expert in the digital evolution of media, marketing and advertising on social networks; and she is highly committed to the empowerment of women, and the growth of Latinas in the corporate and business world. Maria Alejandra is part of the board of directors of organizations such as EME de Mujer (a Georgia Chamber of Commerce Women's Program), HOPE (Hispanic Organization Promoting Education) and Girls Lead, uniting her passion with the vision of supporting girls, young people, women and entrepreneurs. Bastidas has been involved in the Latino community since 2000 when she arrived from Venezuela, after completing her degree in Social Communications. She lives in Suwanee with her husband and her three children.





## *To Heal our Heart, a Hug and an Arepita*

by Gabriela Reyes

*When* her mother told her they were moving out of the country, Arepita was six years old. They had never been to that country that would become her new home. The first few days, Arepita experienced great emotion. She felt as if they were going on a long vacation. She did a lot of research on the new place: What language do they speak there? How their people's eyes look like? How do their children play? What do the families eat? What time does the sun rise? At what time would she see the sunset when she arrived? She looked for pictures on the internet, and everything seemed very beautiful. Arepita was definitely... "Very, very happy" hearing the news of what her parents called "migra... migra... migration." She had been hearing that word a lot, whenever one of his school friends left the country.

One night, Arepita was lying down imagining everything she would do in that place, but other questions suddenly appeared: When are we going to return? When will I come back to my school? Will my grandparents come with us? What about my cousins? Arepita could not sleep very well that night.





The next morning she asked her mom, Mrs. Hallaca. She did not know very well what to answer, she was afraid that her daughter would turn as sad and fearful as she felt. For Mrs. Hallaca, migrating was a very difficult decision. She was leaving behind a whole life built in her country. A place where she had dreamed of seeing her children grow up with her biological family and her friends, the chosen family. All of a sudden, all those dreams were no longer possible. She had to leave her house, her job, her neighbors, her language, her favorite places and things.

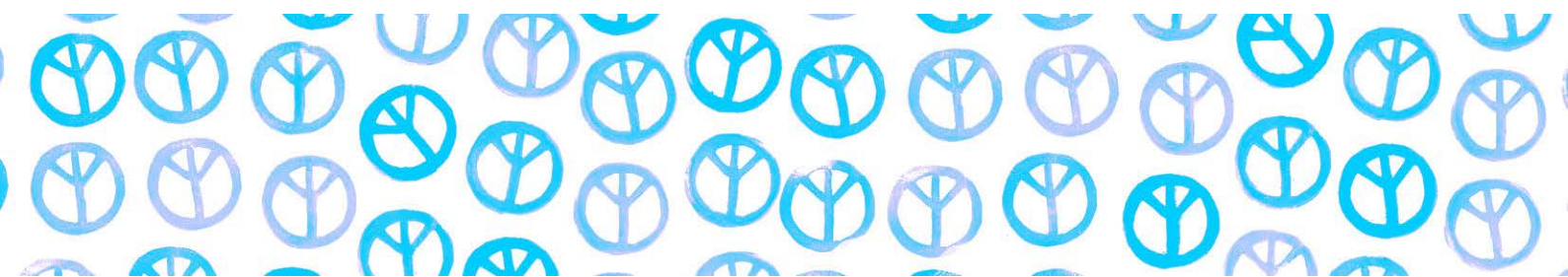
Since she didn't know what to answer, she decided to look for some help. Casabe's mother, Arepita's friend, had told her that before leaving the country they had gone to see Dr. Canela, a psychologist who accompanied the families throughout the migration process.

Dr. Canela explained that migration is a painful process for children. She said that a child not only goes through the changes that are typical of migration: duels, losses, the need to learn a new language, uncertainty, family instability —with their parents also invaded by the emotions that migration arouses for them. As if that were not enough, added to all this process is the evolutionary moment in which children find themselves. She said that children can feel fear, confusion, uncertainty, sadness and excitement. Everything mixed up inside them.

Dr. Canela also taught them that migration brings along with it the possibility of strengthening and developing many emotional resources for people, while solidifying affective ties even from a distance. She talked about the concept of adaptability and resilience, which, in a nutshell, is the ability to adequately handle difficult situations, emotions and changes. She did stressed that this does not mean not feeling fear, sadness, anger or other emotions, instead we should remember it is accepted to feel them, and it is necessary to talk about them and find a way to process them. She said: "To digest them; as our stomach does with food, the brain also needs to do it with emotions." Arepita thought that it would be like something that has been well chewed, so her stomach does not hurt.

The doctor explained to Mrs. Hallaca that the child needs to find an adult capable of accompanying, listening, and helping him digest, both mentally and emotionally, this migratory journey, in order to offer him emotional rescue; someone capable of supporting and protecting the child.

She also told them that sometimes many children experience an emotionally difficult event, but that such event does not necessarily become traumatic. What makes it traumatic is that the child is ignored, dismissed or even at the end of more violence when expressing his or her inner feelings. It is like lending the child a time machine to think and feel, and help



him/her metabolize and process what the child alone cannot do. Safety, love, care, trust and support from adults can prevent or minimize the effects of the traumatic situation.

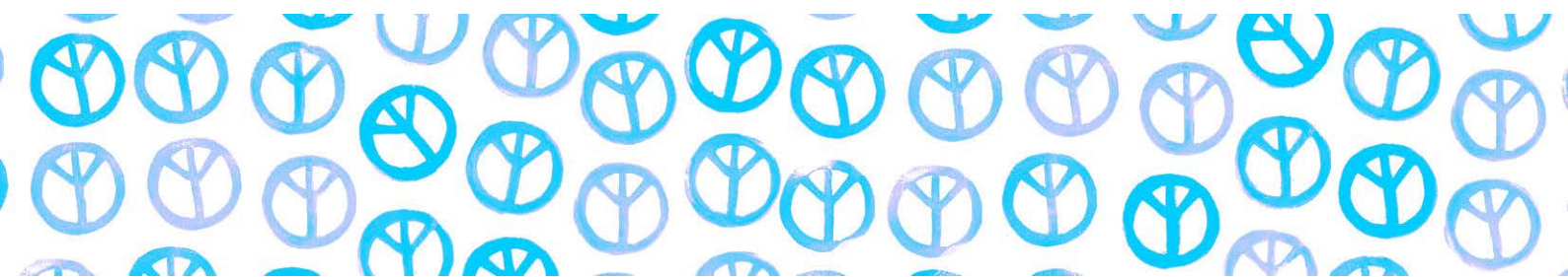
Dr. Canela went on to explain that many times fathers and mothers also have an intense mix of emotions, and talked about the benefits of looking for someone to help them and, by doing so, they will be able to support their children and the family as well. She said that sometimes this role of support can be fulfilled by someone else in the family. Arepita remembered that Casabe told her that he always spoke with his grandmother and with Dr. Canela. He said they both listened to him and translated the emotions he felt (some he had not felt before and did not know what they were called).

Casabe's grandmother understood them very well. She had also migrated when she was a child. She told them she had arrived in a very large ship from a very distant country. She told them that since she was a child she often thought of her country, but not with the sadness of the beginning, but with the joy of having two countries that she felt as home. She also explained to them that, more than a geographical location, home means the affective ties that are built. So, Arepita thought she had many houses in the hearts of all her loved ones, even though she lived many miles away. She also thought that many people lived in her heart, but that there was still room for new friends.

Finally, Dr. Canela gave Mrs. Hallaca some recommendations. However, she explained that each child is different, and so is each family system. The most important is to create the space to talk and listen to what is happening in the children's inner world, to listen to their needs and respond to them "as children would, not as adults would", she emphasized. She highlighted that playing is a way of emotional expression and processing for many children.

When they got home, Arepita and Mrs. Hallaca made a list of the recommendations that Dr. Canela had pointed out:

- It is good to always tell the children the truth. For example, if it is a temporary or permanent migration plan: What are the possibilities of returning to the country to visit in the short, medium or long term? What are the characteristics of the plan?
- Allow children to say goodbye to the places and people they want to say goodbye to. Do activities in those places or with those people. Encourage, but do not impose, the creation of activities and/or farewell rituals, for example: exchanging letters, a diary where others write to you, photos, writing down the contact details of whoever they want, etc. Remember: it is always responding to the desire and need of the children, not the parents'.
- Offer to bring along some of their most emotionally important toys or objects.
- Allow them to express their emotions, understanding that these can vary from one moment to another, and suddenly. Accept internal contradictions and emotional ambivalence.



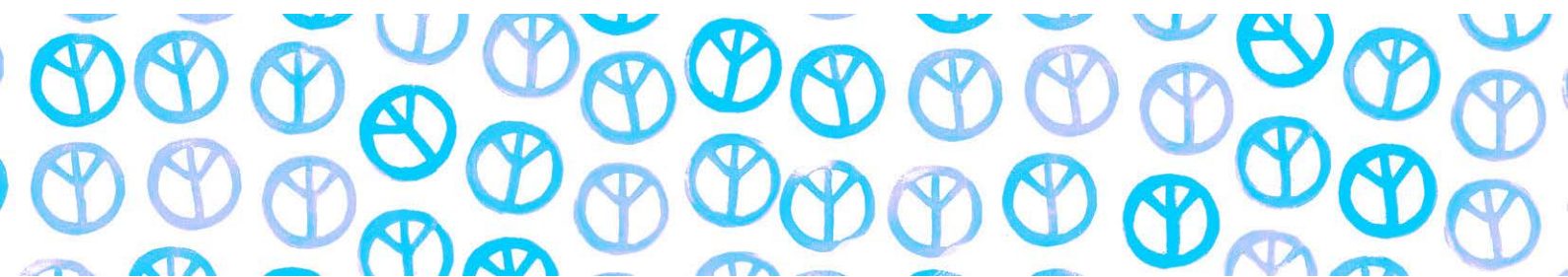


- Do not minimize or invalidate what they feel.
- Give them the opportunity to speak and ask questions. Offer them ways to unfold their inner world, such as playing, painting, etc. Encourage creativity as a means of emotional expression and processing.
- Be honest about the emotions that we, as adults, can also feel.
- Answer whatever they ask. Do not give additional information, nor hide the information they need.
- Respect their internal rhythms. Do not force them to feel or act in a way they are not ready for. For example, avoid forcing them to make new friends in the new country... it will take as long as they need. Don't forget to always give them space to understand their rhythms.
- Accept that they incorporate customs from the host country into their habits, such as the use of words, changes in food tastes, games, among others.
- Do not blame or make the child responsible for the migration decision using expressions such as "we have done all this for your future" or "do not complain about such a thing because we really had problems in our country"... or similar ones.
- Do not force them to maintain customs that are no longer part of their identity, even if they belong to the family.
- Be attentive to the appearance of symptoms such as: excessive sadness, night terrors, isolation, sleep problems, change in the pattern of attention and school performance, changes in appetite, regressive behaviors such as wetting the bed, constant appearance of illnesses. In the case of any of these symptoms, seek specialized help.

Dr. Canela explained that mental and emotional health is as important as physical health, and that just as everyone seeks a doctor when they feel physical discomfort, it is also important to seek a psychologist when there is emotional discomfort, in the child, their parents and / or in the family.

Arepita and Mrs. Hallaca understood that children are often in a very difficult position because they feel the obligation to maintain the family and cultural legacy, while integrating into the new culture. That is why it is necessary to allow them to merge both cultures in the way that they want and need to do it, without this being experienced as a betrayal of the family's cultural system, nor as a departure from the family group.

The family is constituted in the diversity of each one of its members. This will allow the child to create his / her own identity and strengthen internal resources for developing as an individual. Since then, Arepita and Mrs. Hallaca both work together to integrate cultures and have discovered that life has endless flavors to enjoy.



That was how Arepita understood what Casabe had told her one day. He, with great emotion, explained to her that in his new country they had something called “magdalenas” for breakfast, which was sweet and soft like a sponge cake, but small like a cookie. Casabe loved them, and for a long time he secretly exchanged them for his tequeños. He would keep it a secret so his mom would feel sad because he preferred the breakfast from his new country.

One day, Dr. Canela told him to talk to his mom to explain to her what he was feeling and his desire to have breakfast like his other friends. When Casabe told her mom, she shed a few tears (she first thought that Casabe would stop being like his family and would forget his country); but she immediately smiled and understood that Casabe had simply discovered new things that he liked about his new home, although he also kept in his heart those other things that he had lived in the country in which he was born.

And from that moment on, whenever Casabe felt sad, he would ask his mother for a magdalena, an arepita\* and a hug for his heart.

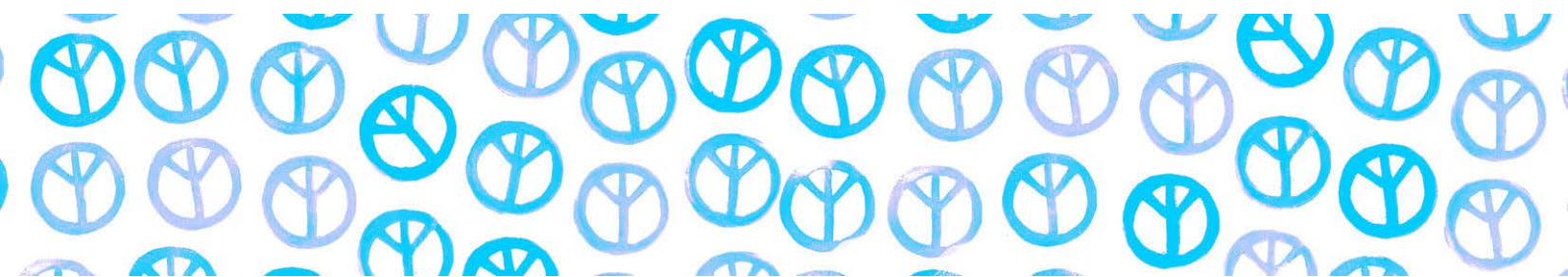
\*Arepita is an arepa smaller in size, but is also a term of endearment used by Venezuelans and Colombians to refer to arepas regardless if the size.



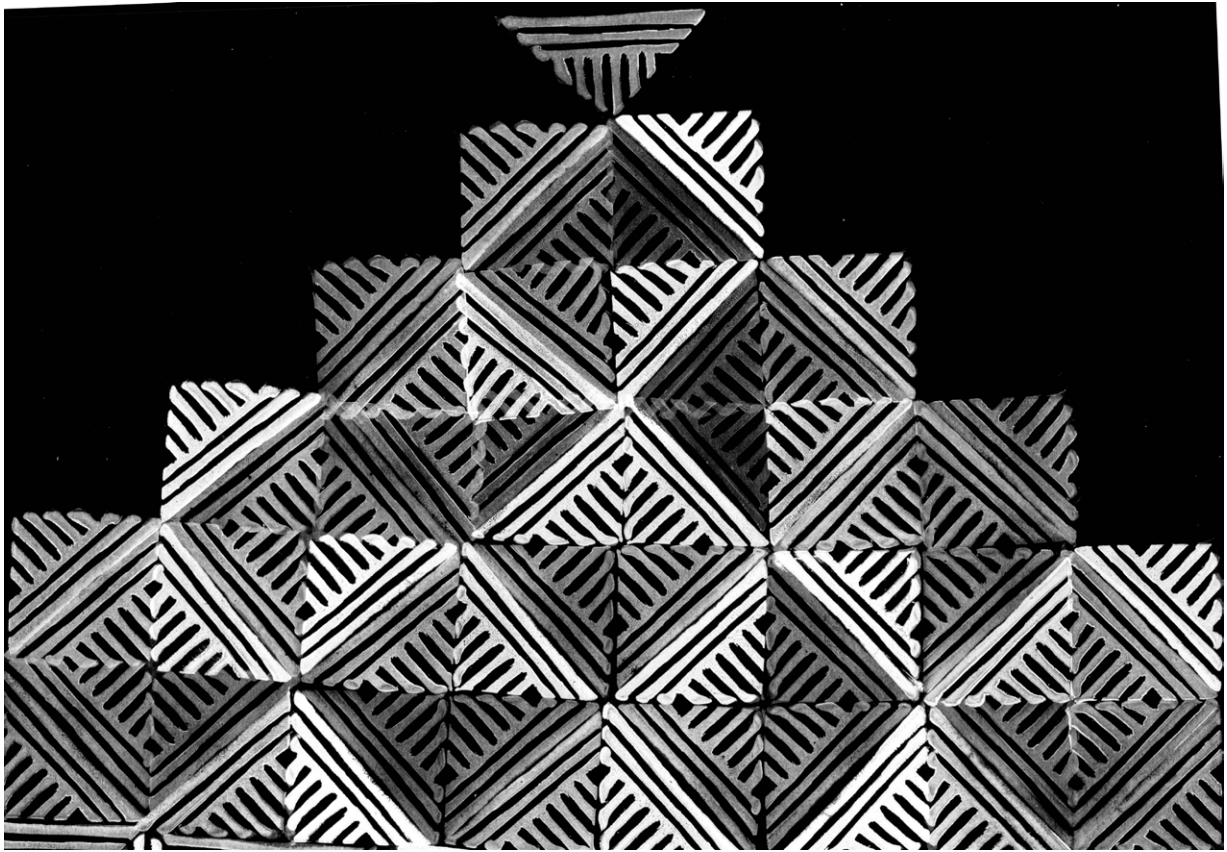
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# *The Neurogastronomy of the Arepa We All Share*

**by Merlin Gessen**

*A few* weeks before learning about this literary project, I had a conversation with a group of neurogastronomists. We analyzed how wonderful the brain can fix a memory using gastronomy. One of the participants asked me about my first memory of an arepa. I immediately tried to travel to the past, to a sea of memories, searching for that special moment. I admit that I tried to imagine myself as a child with a small plate full of arepa crumbs, accompanied by white cheese and a little butter; or with a fried arepita with its little hole in the center, stuffed with deviled ham. The truth is that I cannot attest if those are my first memories or, simply, they are tribal memories that all Venezuelans share and, because of listening to them so much, I made them mine. I can assure you that at the moment the image came to mind, I felt a deep sense of happiness and joy. My mind was trying to place me at the kitchen counter of the apartment where I lived when I was a little boy.

At some point, during the conversation, my friend tells me: “I know what my first memory of eating arepa is because, in one way or another, we, Venezuelans, all share it. It is one of the happiest memories we can share and which, in turn, is part of our idiosyncrasy”. Faced with this assumption, I ask him: “Let’s see what that memory is, according to you.” To which he replies: “The arepita wrapped in aluminum foil you ate at recess in preschool.” I can assure you that when he told me that, I could actually see myself sitting on the floor, opening my superhero-tin-made lunch-box, unwrapping the tight aluminum foil, seeing that sweaty, cold, slightly hard-as-cardboard arepita, with a characteristic concentrated smell after hours of having been prepared. I closed my eyes and could feel the pleasure of taking a first bite, very hard, tearing off a piece of it, which I would enjoy before running on the small court.

My friend was very happy to confirm his theory: I also shared that experience, with so many others. What happened next was very interesting. We sat down to analyze the particularity of this memory for a while, particularly deepening on how amazing it can be to enjoy such a fun moment, despite the fact that the food is horrible. Yes, it was horrible! I will explain why. When we refer to an arepa, we love a perfect arepa; for example, when roasted, it should be toasted on the outside, fluffy and steaming on the inside when you open it; if it were fried, then it should have a slightly caramel color, with a domed cap that cracks to the bite, to reveal a slightly compact interior. Well, when wrapped in aluminum foil to store it for a few hours, before it can be enjoyed at recess, it suffers profoundly: it loses moisture, the crust becomes hard, the crumb becomes compact, and its taste is slightly acidified. It becomes a parboiled arepa, because of the heat. It is horrible. However, it would be enough to ask any modern parent for the reason they send this breakfast to their children at school, knowing the dismal result that arises from that practice. Most of them would reply: “That’s the way my mom did it, the sense of that arepa is unique, it’s filled with a lot of emotion and I want my son to feel the same.”

In the world of applied neurogastronomy, we know that there are three main reasons why we eat the way we do. The first and most obvious is to have energy; the second, for the physical and sensory pleasure of enjoying it, feeling each bite; and the third —which seems to me the most unknown and powerful of all— is that we eat as we eat to have identity, since the memories that determine who we are occur at the table. In recent years, scientific evidence has revealed that the most important memories of our lives are fixed in our minds thanks to the sense of taste and smell, a term known as the “Proust phenomenon”. This correlates with the increased ability to activate our long-term memory when we are sharing food with our family and friends. Bare in mind that long-term memory is only activated if we are accompanied; eating alone does not activate the mechanism.





Let's put that "deplorable" arepa wrapped in aluminum foil in context. We have a child who has already spent a couple of hours in an academic day following instructions, obeying his teachers, using large energy or caloric resources to learn new concepts. By the moment recess time approaches, that child's brain is already beginning to anticipate it's time to fill up their fuel tank. He or she will do it when he or she is free to play with his or her friends; and the mind knows that the ability to learn to socialize and strengthen friendship bonds is nothing less than transcendental. This anticipation process is decisive to enjoy any food. Think for a moment: if someone invited you to an "arepa party" with multiple types of fillings, and the organizers had been announcing this activity for days, how anxious would you be minutes before arriving at this celebration?

Let's go back to the child. We see the child opening the lunch box, laughing with his classmates while opening it, and, without too much thought, comes the glorious bite, he feels the stuffing intensely, while they all share the same ritual. The tribal brain recognizes that this is an important moment in which the abilities to interact with others are at a maximum expression, responding with large amounts of happiness hormones such as serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin. This causes the experience to be privileged and labeled as a transcendental memory. It will add an emotional nuance to the events that are taking place. It expresses the love of the mother who prepares breakfast, the wonderful relationship with the little friends, and the admiration and affection the child feels for the teachers. With all this charge, the aluminum foil becomes a gift wrap, and inside it is a powerful gift: the key to a chest full of treasures.

An arepa is not just an arepa, a filling is not just a filling. Every time we start the ritual of hydrating the flour, kneading it until it reaches a smooth consistency, giving it that characteristic round shape and taking it to the heat source to then opening it, clean out the excess crumb from the knife on the edge of the plate, spreading a bit of butter on it and fill it with the flavor of our choice; every time we do this we participate in a process that every Venezuelan has learned to privilege, in the sense that —consciously or unconsciously— deep down, we are seeking to bring to the present the moments that make us feel safe, loved, pampered and, above all, full of identity.

Every time I read or hear someone defending the nationality of an arepa, I know they are defending not whether it is Venezuelan or not. They are defending moments that —for each one of us— mean much more than anyone could imagine. When we see an arepa, we do not see food; we feel our mother's warm hand on our back telling us to enjoy our meal, we see family Sundays appear, we remember the parties and "rumbas" in the early morning, the conversations at dinner time after a long day of work, the "balas frías" (quick snacks) before the workday begins. We see, feel and hear stories, we live our tricolor flag. An arepa is much more than an arepa, it is a symbol that makes us feel a deep love for what we are.





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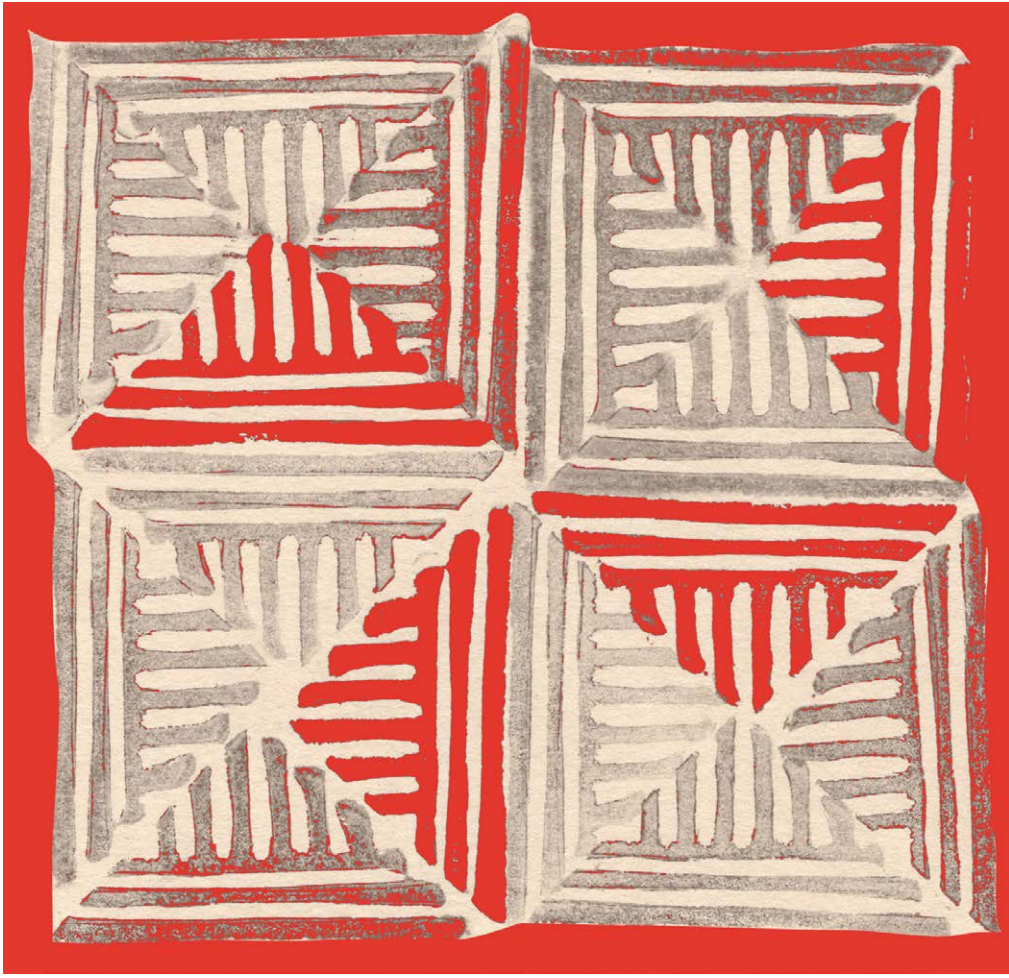
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*I have dedicated my experience to creating, developing and conceptualizing Applied Neurogastronomy, and how to apply it to the lives of each of the people and companies that are part of my professional career, aiming north towards human management.*

Graduated in Hotel and Restaurant Management, and in Tourism, at Algonquin College in Ottawa, Canada. President of the Venezuelan Association of Neurogastronomy. Director of the Institute of Neurosciences of the Americas and NeuroFood Consulting Group, and a pioneer in Latin America in Applied Neurogastronomy, he published the first book on this subject in 2021. He is an honorary member of the Association of Chefs, Cooks and Related of Venezuela. He specializes in creating multisensory and multiemotional consumer experiences with the intention of guaranteeing and increasing the satisfaction of the participants. He is also an arepa eater, souvenir hunter and flavor alchemist.







# *Elusive Arepas from my Childhood in Maracaibo*

by Jacqueline Goldberg

*In* the kitchen of my childhood, the arepa did not have it easy.

It furrowed contradictions, twists and turns, multicultural conflicts.

I never saw my mother, daughter of Poles, trying to cook an arepa, but she loves them.

My dad was French, and he believed that corn was exclusively for pigs and chickens to eat. He had hard time dealing with this Creole cuisine estrangement, and particularly with avoiding to express it out loud. He almost had to eat arepas by force at home, but he enjoyed eating other people's arepas, and invariably he preferred the Reina pepiada.

In the midst of this hodgepodge, those who made the family's arepas were Colombian ladies who helped with the housework. They prepared them with drowsiness and persuasion, using their own formulas, packaged in places that were so noisy and distant as Bucaramanga,

Cali, Popayan, Sincelejo. Although they had been in Zulian territory for years, they hadn't quite gotten used to their robust crumbs, with fillings that could be as basic as queso palmito and diablito or, very occasionally, a Camembert triangle, a delicacy that returned my father to his native Paris.

Maracaibo provided us with its shocks.

Some Friday nights we would go to Tostadas El 25, where my brother and I would order an arepa with Cebu cheese and a quart of milk. It took many years for him, living in Caracas, to stop mentioning the regional Quesera brand and learn to request hand cheese when ordering arepa to go. I lost count of the waiters who looked at me as if I were an alien.

My hometown's street food has, among its emblems, several arepas that I rarely ate because they are for stomachs made of steel. There is the Cabimera, cut into triangles, with ham, cheese, vegetables, sauce and hard-boiled egg on top; the Tumbarrancho is battered and stuffed with cheese, mortadella and whatever the imagination proposes; the Agüita e sapo, is fried, stuffed with juicy pork and cheese.

Due to our proximity to the state of Falcon, they left on our table arepas peladas that a friend brought from a trip to Coro o Judibana. I remember their rustic consistency, their taste of lime, related to that of Mexican tortillas.

For practical purposes, in Maracaibo, precooked arepas were always available, almost industrially made. They came in a plastic wrapper that showed their sweat or maybe their tears; generally insipid, like boiled in a hurry and with disappointment.

When returning from the beach, one must stop at El Gato Negro, a taguara in the area of the same name, via El Mojan, where the filling made of meats was served with yellow and toasted arepas, with the black marks of the embers and a flavor that no one was capable of reproducing in the city. Not a few Sundays, my mom and I, craving, made my dad drive there just to look for those strange arepas.

From a Holy Week in Cartagena came home the taste for egg arepas. I remember that we missed the plane and had to return by road. In one of the towns we passed through, we were surrounded with trays full of a delicacy that was unthinkable for me, until then. When I explained my newly born fascination to Maria, she looked at me with horror: preparing them requires double frying, time and hands resistant to heat.

That childhood of mine, of never routine arepas, makes me value the popular Venezuelan dish, today like never before. For me it is still festive, it represents slow breakfasts, ceremonial dinners, diners of my affection. That contributed to the fact that I never learned to prepare them. I put up my trembling hands as an excuse and leave others the rite of their elusive and precious roundness.

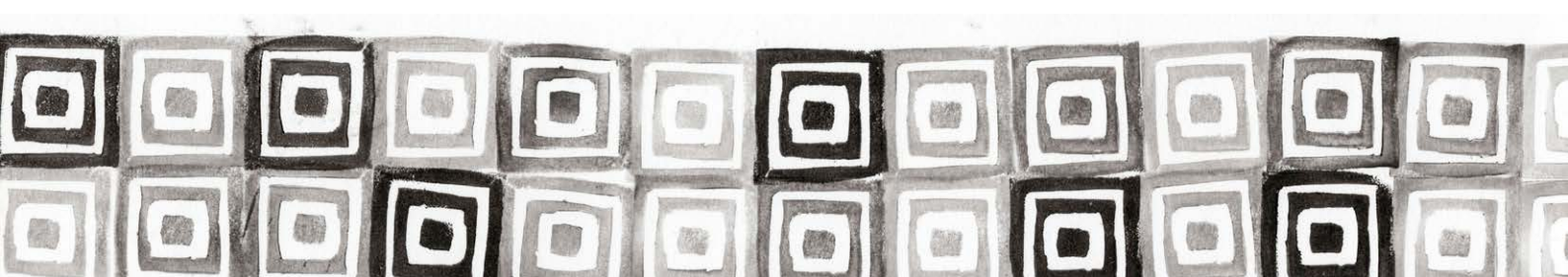






PHOTO: UMAR TIMOL, IOWA 2018

Jacqueline Goldberg



@jacgoldberg

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*I was born in Maracaibo, Venezuela, on November 24, 1966. Since the early 1990s, my work duels between literature and journalism. In more than thirty books, I cover narrative, poetry, children's literature, reports, essays, and the testimonial genre. I have a Doctorate in Social Sciences and a Bachelor of Arts. My literary work appears included and reviewed in anthologies in more than fifteen countries. In 2018, I represented Venezuela in the Autumn Residency of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa.*

Among the most recent celebrated books are the children's book *Pitchipoï* (Tragaluz Ediciones, Medellin, 2019), recognized with the 2020 Cuatrogatos Foundation Award (Miami, USA); and the Special Mention: Editorial Proposal (children's books category) of the Best Books Award 2020, awarded by Banco del Libro in Venezuela. Likewise, the poem *Limonos en almíbar* (Oscar Todtmann Editores, Caracas, 2014) with the Golden Fork Award for Gastronomic Publication 2015, Special Jury Mention, awarded by the Venezuelan Academy of Gastronomy; and her well-known novel *Las Horas Claras* (2014) with the XII Transgeneric Prize of the Society of Friends of Urban Culture (Venezuela, 2012), the Book of the Year Prize of the Venezuelan Booksellers 2014; and the Lucila Palacios International Narrative Medal (2014).







SOUTH AMERICA

# Venezuela





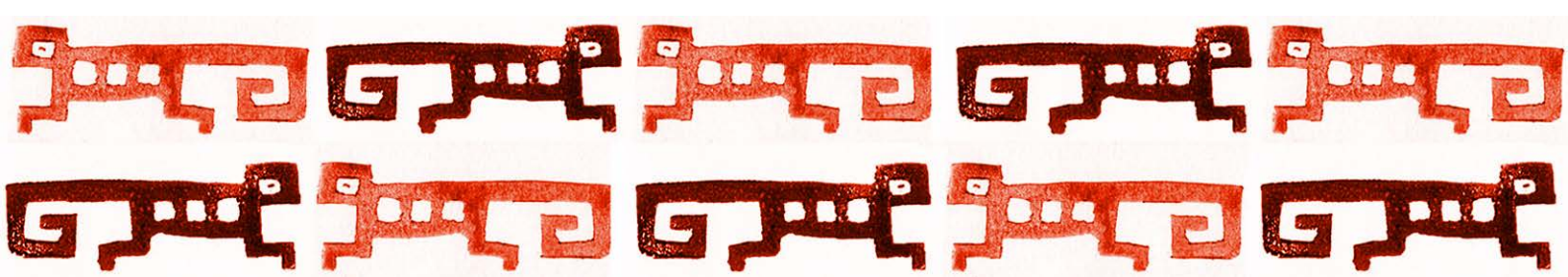
# Venezuelan Gastronomy: An approach

by Rafael Cartay

*For* many years, reading gastronomy books has been one of my hobbies; and I don't mean cooking books, which I read for utilitarian reasons, for example, when I feel like spending some time with myself.

Recipe books are written codes attached to culinary actions and procedures, which freezes an image in time, as if a picture of them was taken. Those books are beautiful, but they can barely talk. Gastronomy books are historical tales instead, filled with emotion and mystery, narrating everything that happens outside your body. They can tell you about the efforts many people make to create the food, to harvest it, to distribute it, to sell it, to eat it and to turn it into a symbol. They tell you about the conflict that lies behind it all, and the risk to be taken. Fictional characters pass through a good historical gastronomy book, let's say French cuisine —the most refined cuisine in the world. These characters perform in luxurious palace kitchens or modest country cabins, or even in uncomfortable apartments of old cities of ancestry. They move as they were acting in a play, trying to find some sense to life throughout that competitive, vague and magical world of cooking, filled with fire, smells and flavors. It all leads you to a sort of memory tunnel, where you end up discovering, thanks to the food, what you really are.

The thing is that gastronomy books now look more and more like cookbooks. I say it because I just read a book about French gastronomy that boils down to showing the kitchen as if it were a supermarket, where they only show you ingredients that are organized on the shelves of a library, or in the pantry of a home, or in the cellar of a restaurant. From there, those ingredients are transformed, almost mysteriously, into food and drinks to calm hunger or satisfy the diner's hedonism. Nowhere in those pages there is mention of geology and geography, the creative hand of God, the culture, the transforming, creative or destructive hand of the human being. Nowhere, in that book I am talking about, the economy and technology of material life are shown, nor are the emotional life of the characters who toil in the fields, the rivers and the sea to produce ingredients, nor the anxiety of the cooks to recreate the things of the world by composing dishes and drinks that are so important to nourish our body, our spirit and our soul. No matter how hard I tried, I could not discover signs of the disproportionate vanity that some essential characters in the history of French gastronomy, such as Antonin Careme, have displayed. I could not find the generosity and social commitment of Alexis Soyer, nor the obsessive perseverance of those great creators who were Fernand Point or the Troisgros brothers or Paul Bocuse. Not even the unrepentant and enlightened dreamers like Alain Passard, Michel Braso, or Jöel Robuchon



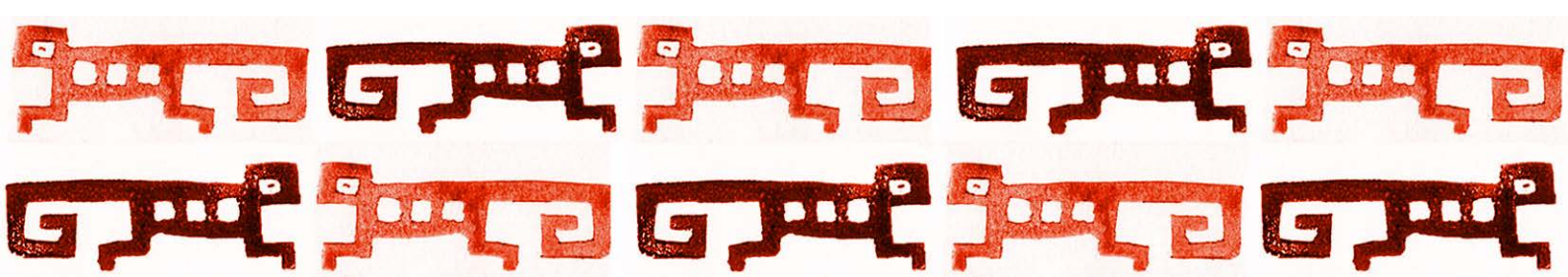
are mentioned. Those books are now simple illustrated catalogs with beautiful photographs of ingredients and culinary preparations, catalogued under the criteria of gastronomic regions, and nothing else.

In this way, the world of gastronomy has become a flat, predictable story, full of excessive simplifications. Flat, because it is presented as a bland statement in which each one assures the uniqueness of one's gastronomy, incomparable and unsurpassed, in short, the best in the world. It is also predictable because it is mired in the morass of loyalties, affections, exaggerated praise, and capital investment in grand décor. And, in the end, all gastronomic styles end up being described in the same way: a list of commonly used ingredients in cooking, and another list of foods and drinks that come from there. Those recipe books and gastronomy books are like instruction manuals or expensive store catalogs, full of impersonal recipes of unknown origin, as if they were dead or frozen in the rush of everyday life and human vanity.

The Lithuanian linguist Algirdas Julius Greimas (1917-1992) developed, in his structural semiotic studies, the concept of «actantial model». His model is a simplified structure of actants (or actors) who assume certain roles in a given story or text. These relationships follow a narrative syntax that also fulfills a function. Applying this model, a literary story can be written or analyzed. For the sake of playing, perhaps, to distract himself, Greimas once applied it to define a soup. A soup is a sort of a culinary tale, made of a series of actants' relationships, ingredients, in this case, playing some defined roles in the context of this "soup" tale, and fulfilling a nutritional function, which is oriented to restore the body (from such a function comes the word "restaurant", for instance). So, a soup can be reduced to a mathematical equation: for example,  $So = W + V + Co$ , and that can be extended by adding  $M$ . Where  $So$  is soup,  $W$  water,  $V$  vegetables,  $Co$  condiments, and  $M$  the different kinds of meat that some people add to a soup, in order to make it more substantial. It is enough for one to combine the members of that equation for the soup to appear.

Unfortunately, the sign  $S_y$  for symbol does not appear anywhere in the mathematical equation of the soup. Without that sign, the soup would only be colored and seasoned hot water; a flat story and, in a certain way, devoid of meaning if interpreted from within a culture, which is where cooking is born and made. Eating or being nurtured is, actually, beyond what happens in a kitchen, since it constitutes a human action and the social manifestation of a culture. It surpasses the simple fact of obtaining and eating food to satisfy hunger, since one consumes, at the same time, nutrients, medicines and symbols.

I would be naive if I, then, reduced Venezuelan gastronomy to the two lists I mentioned before: one, the list of ingredients, and the other one, the list of dishes and drinks from that culinary corpus, to insert them afterwards into a map with gastronomic regions or political-administrative states, pretending the flavors can be constrained by a border. That is fairly well, and I have done it several times throughout my career as a writer, urged by the rush of





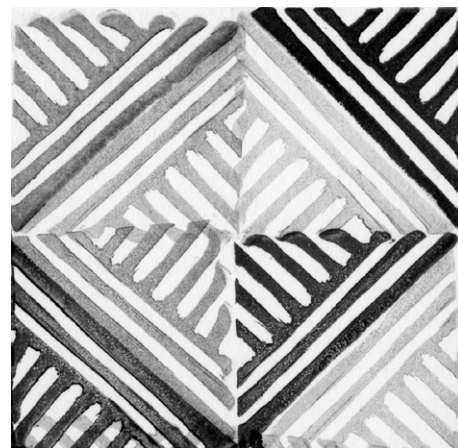
the Academy. The problem is that now I have a hard time doing it. Now I know that the list of ingredients is not the result of happenstance, but it is a “decision” made by the nature that bequeathed us an extreme degree of biodiversity: Venezuela is one of the 17 mega-biodiverse countries on the planet. A decision of nature that created a natural landscape, the territory of which human beings have been shaping, many times with great difficulties, and ended up turning into a cultural landscape and an indissoluble chapter of man’s social history. Furthermore, by occupying it and loving it; those of us who have lived in that Venezuelan territory have ended up turning that territory into a “terroir”, making it a continuation of our spirit, covering it with the invisible and intangible layers of tradition, coexistence and human solidarity. With such care, that space became identity and heritage. That culinary corpus and gastronomy that now unites us deep inside and makes us visible on the outside, representing us, is the result of an intense conflictive and consensual relationship of indigenous people, Spaniards and Canarians, Afro-Caribbeans, Italians, Portuguese, French, Colombians, Chinese, Arabs, and other ethnic groups who integrated into our “terroir” bringing their culture, their customs and their history. And it is also the result of our sociopolitical, economic and cultural events. Moments that have led the changes from a rural to an urban way of life, and from the agricultural economy to the oil rent.

Most of the ingredients, the foundations of our regional cuisines, come from that terroir, from that diversity shown by geology, geography, ecology, economy, anthropology, history and culture. Those elements are combined and articulated, somewhat arbitrarily, in gastronomic regions related to each other and derived from humanized ecosystems —a set of biotic and abiotic organisms that have interrelationships and interdependencies with each other and with the physical environment they share, and that are related to a culture—. Regions we now refer to as geographical regions: the coast, the plains, the mountains, the jungle, the metropolitan region, such as it happens in Venezuela.

With all my senses alerted and amazed, I have traveled through those regions and those states, and I have kept a taste memory of their delights, which are part of my precious intangible belongings. The belongings I carry with me everywhere I have lived: such as hand cheese, grilled meat and mincemeat from the plains; mojos and ajiceros from Trujillo; fried fish and cassava from the east coast; “cricket leg” and whey from Lara, pisca and Andean pastelitos; sweet breads from Lara and Tachira; the crineja cheese and river fish sancochos from the southern areas; stuffed arepas and pabellon criollo from Caracas; golfeados and cocadas from Vargas; cachapas and fried pork from Aragua; polenta from Montalban in the Carabobo highlands; ray-fish cake and dogfish empanadas from the island of Margarita. And, from everywhere: the arepas, in their different forms and preparations, and that Christmas combo that gives us the flavors of the country in a single dish: the hallaca, the pork leg, the ham bread, the Caracas salad, which is completed with candied unripe papaya and cabello de angel (Cabell d’àngel), and the unforgettable Ponche Crema (Venezuelan egg nog).



From that biological and cultural diversity of our communities come those ingredients that we transform into that unique work that we call “Venezuelan cuisine”. Those ingredients, which we see as products without history, such as corn, cassava, rice, bananas, potatoes, sugar cane, cocoa, coffee, beans, ocumo, yams, sweet potatoes, sweet peppers, achiote, vegetables, aromatic herbs, and the variety of seasonal fruits, and the various meats: beef, chicken, pork, goat, fish; they have, however, faces, names and toponyms, and are the result of dreams, fatigue, suffering, which we keep silent about or ignore.



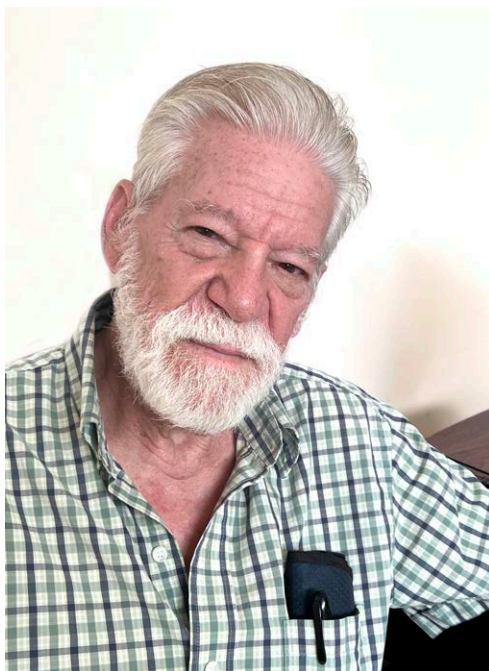
From our home kitchen, from the hands of our mothers and grandmothers, or from public restauring spaces, in charge of our popular cooks and professional chefs, come those dishes and drinks that have kept us alive and have sustained the dreams we have had. Those dishes and drinks have fed what we are as a Venezuelan community: arepas and its fillings, pabellon criollo, hallaca and bollos wrapped in leaves, empanadas, pastelitos, cachapas, tequeños, black roast, goat in coconut sauce, fried fish with fried plantains, grilled meat, «palo a pique», bollos pelones, meatballs in sauce, rice with chicken, bread ham, casabe. Or the succulent chicken stew, the cruzaos, the fish sancochos, the black bean soup with green plantain, the picadillo llanero or the Andean pisca; or the delicious cheese types: hand cheese, palmito cheese, telita cheese, trenza cheese, guayanes cheese, curated or “de año” cheese, and all the variety in other fresh white cheese. Or the candied unripe papaya, the candied fig, the icaco or cabello de angel sweets, or the mango jelly. Or drinks such as corn or rice chicha, rum, cocuy, beer, cream punch, sugar cane juice, panela water, cocada.

Thanks to that prodigious nature of ours, and that ancestral knowledge that we have accumulated, we have given meaning to an imagined and imaginary community that we call Venezuela. It is because of this energy which comes from the countryside, the sea and the river, the craft workshop and the factory, from the kitchen and from the solidarity of our people, that we have gathered strength to build our identity, value our cultural heritage, and overcome once and again all the adversities we have experienced throughout our eventful history.

In the midst of adversity, instead of dressing up in sadness, discouragement and defeat for so much loss suffered, we have wisely decided to show our talent and our friendly face to the world through food. This book fully shows what Venezuelans truly are: an ingenious, resilient and combative people, proud of its tasty cuisine.







## Dr. Rafael Cartay

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*Sharing my insights about the challenge that is to be a cook, accompanying it on his quest behind the stove and outside the kitchen to keep alive, in a certain way, the dream flame of so many young cooks, has shaped, and justified the meaning of my life as a writer.*

Cartay was born in Barinas in 1941. He is a retired professor from the Universidad de los Andes (ULA) in Mérida, Venezuela. Rafael Cartay is a reference in Venezuelan gastronomy, and a specialist in Food History, as well as a doctor in Social Sciences (EPHE-Université de Paris I-Pantheon-Sorbonne, France, 1976). He is a member of the Founding Council of the FACES-ULA Center for Agrifood Research (CIAAL), and director of CIAAL during 1996-2000.

Author of more than sixty books in the area of Economic History, Socio-Anthropology and History of Food, among which we mention: *A World in its Cup. Coffee in Venezuela* (Edit. Exlibris, 1997); *Dictionary of Venezuelan Cuisine*, (Editorial Alfa, 2016); *History of food in the New World*; *The Table of the Plateau: Gastronomic history of Merida*; *Our Daily Bread, a Chronicle of Venezuelan Gastronomic Sensibility*; *Domestic Culinary Technology in Venezuela, 1820-1980*. Some of these books are available on Amazon. Among the awards we should mention Gourmand World Cookbook Award, 2006, Special Jury mention to the best Cuisine Dictionary; the Grand Prize Fork of Gold 2011 of the Venezuelan Academy of Gastronomy (AVG). In 2012, he won the first AVG essay contest, with the text *Afro-Venezuelan Cuisine and Gastronomy*; and he was co-awarded with the National Nutrition Award (Caracas, 1994).





*We associate luxury with expensive and unattainable products...*

*But in the end, luxury is nothing more than what makes you happy, which provides tranquility, peace, comfort.*

*And that, in terms of gastronomy, should be the same.*

*We assume that a fine silver bowl with ice and a beautiful tin of beluga caviar is more elegant than a fresh sardine fillet grilled or fried ...*

*We see much more value in a wagyu beef — 100% Japanese blood — roasted on Japanese embers than in a thousand-year-old bread that has not only fed us for years, but that has also become the symbol of our idiosyncrasy...*

*And so we could make a huge list of overvalued products, ingredients and preparations, loaded with ridiculous prices, and many other that are underestimated and associated with poverty and cultural baseness.*

*Nothing further from reality!*

*In a world of immediacy and exposure, we forget that when we leave we will not take any of all those possessions and objects that we accumulate during our passage through life, but only what we have experienced, loved and enjoyed.*

*Then, the most luxurious thing will be health and time; time to live, to eat, to love and feel.*

*Leisure time,*

*idle time,*

*occupation time,*

*time full of enjoyment shared with loved ones.*

*And surely, those little food details that generated memories, in addition to full bellies, will be the ones that we will treasure until the day we leave.*

*So, why not join two "simple and not-so-valued" elements to revalue them? To show what we are, what we eat and appreciate?*

*This is why I decided to make a sardine arepa, an arepa stuffed with sardines, topped with sardines, and that would also be attractive to present, eat and, since we are in times of social networks, to Instagram!*





# Sardine Arepa

by Federico Tischler



## Sardine pate

50 gr extra virgin olive oil  
500 gr sardine backbones and heads  
100 gr white onions  
50 gr peeled white garlicks  
100 gr fresh fennel  
100 gr fresh leek  
500 gr white wine  
20 gr coarse Kosher salt  
5 gr coriander seeds  
2 gr cumin seeds  
10 gr fresh coriander

- With cold water, wash very well the sardine backbones and heads, removing any traces of blood, and leaving them to rest in cold water for a few minutes.
- In a large, heavy-bottomed skillet, sauté the vegetables together with the olive oil, until brown. Add the backbones and sardine heads and continue to brown. Cover with the white wine and cook until almost all the liquid has evaporated.
- Roast the coriander and cumin seeds until their essential oils generate aroma.





- Process all the ingredients in a blender, until a smooth and creamy pâté is achieved. Correct the seasoning. Let it rest in the fridge until use, covering it with plastic wrap to prevent a crust coming out on top.



#### **Sardine arepa (base dough)**

700 gr fresh corn dough  
15 gr coarse Kosher salt  
20 gr dry ground sweet pepper  
50 gr fermented sweet pepper  
350 gr fresh sardine pate

- Wash well a kilo of shelled corn with skin, until the water comes out clean. Place it in a heavy-bottomed steel pot together with 25 grams of sea salt, 30 grams of lime and 2.5 liters of fresh water.
- Cook over high heat until boiling for an hour, stirring from time to time to prevent it from sticking to the bottom. Once the corn is al dente, lower it from the heat and let it cool in the same pot with the cooking water. When cool, drain and wash again until the water comes out clean.
- Stretch it out on a cutting board to remove the black tip from each grain. Crush it to remove the skin. Rinse again.
- Return all the corn to the pot, cover again with fresh water, bring to a boil and cook for 20 more minutes. Remove from the heat and allow cooling in the same cooking water. Wash and drain.
- Grind it until achieving a homogeneous mass.
- Add all other ingredients until obtaining a smooth dough. Let it rest for a few minutes. Form Arepas of the desired size.
- Seal them in a frying pan or budare at medium heat, until both sides are toasted and crispy. Let them cool.
- Heat them in a round frying pan or budare to fry or roast until they are completely cooked.







### **Creole red sauce**

20 gr olive oil (extra virgin)  
10 gr coarse Kosher salt  
500 gr white onions  
500 gr red paprika  
500 gr peeled tomatoes  
100 gr sweet pepper  
50 gr peeled white garlicks  
500 gr fresh leek  
50 gr Worcestershire sauce  
10 gr coriander stems  
2 gr coriander seeds  
50 gr of grated panela

- Wash all the vegetables well, cut them into even pieces.
- Sauté all the vegetables together with the extra virgin olive oil, until they soften without browning. Add the rest of the ingredients and cook until a smooth, creamy paste is obtained.
- Pass everything through a fine mesh sieve and adjust the seasoning. Reserve it.

### **For the assembly of the arepa:**

- Fry the arepitas until golden brown. Drain them.
- Place a teaspoon of Creole sauce, as a topping on the fried arepa.
- Continue the topping with a freshly fried sardine fillet, just dipped in cornmeal to make it crispier. Once fried and crispy, season it with salt, freshly ground black pepper and yellow lemon zest.
- End it with a fine and crunchy salad of red onion, sweet pepper and fennel, all cut finely and rested in ice water. It is seasoned with finely cut coriander stems, yellow and green lemon zest, and some leaves from fresh coriander sprouts.



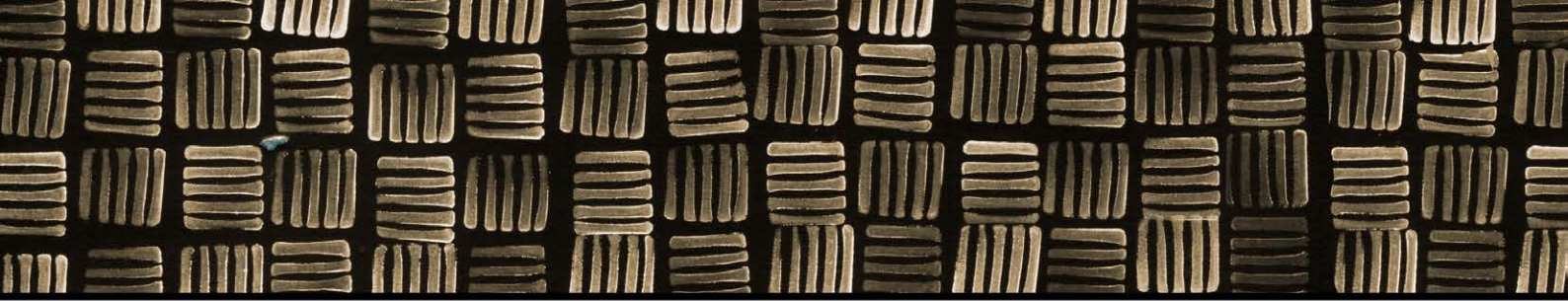
### **Federico Tischler**

**@fetischler**

He studied at the Center for Gastronomy and Health Cooked by Hand, Helena Ibarra's school. After passing through some kitchens in his country, he left to try his luck in the United States. As an ambassador of our cuisine he undertakes his project in Baltimore, the White Envelope Arepa Bar, with which he achieves in 2018 what no one had achieved before: that the Venezuelan Gastronomy Academy gave the Armando Scanonne Award to a cook abroad. He is currently executive chef at Bodegas Alpasion, Valle del Uco, Mendoza, Argentina.







CENTRAL AMERICA

# Honduras





# Honduras and its Traditional Cuisine

by Alberto Veloz

## To Export Culture and Traditions

*Throughout* the history of world migrations, those who migrate carry their traditions with them. In this sense, gastronomy is a fundamental piece that they do not forget and, during their adaptation process, they try not to leave behind the culinary customs in which the most representative dishes that have accompanied them their entire life are, and that are engraved in their memory of taste. Flavors that become the tangible link with one's land, that are part of their identity, and become links that ease not only one's adaptation to those new places that have been chosen to start a new life, but it is through the handling of those common ingredients —treasured by both the emigrant and the resident — that they manage to establish cultural and personal relationships.

When we talk about emigrants we have to include the nationals of Honduras, along with their pre-Columbian rooted recipes, a mestizo cuisine. A diversity of elaborations, typical of the “catrachos”—as the Honduran people are also colloquially known— travel with them. Corn is omnipresent in Honduran cuisine, as it happens with other American countries; it can be found in a rich variety of preparations that link this cuisine with the ones that comprise Mesoamerica: Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

Undoubtedly, corn is the most important thing that Mesoamerican cultures have left to humanity. Honduras is a part with its territory of almost 113,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Its agricultural traditions poured into culinary elaborations, where the cultivation and use of corn prevail in the first place, followed by beans, pumpkin in its variety (such as auyama and zapallo); tomato, chili or chile; cassava, avocado, sweet potato (also called boniato or camote); amaranth, peanuts, pineapple, vanilla and cocoa, among other products that the whole world knows today. Plantains and grains are also on the Honduran daily table, as they are one of the main crops in the Honduran countryside; as well as the extensive herbalism of medicinal plants.

## Corn: its Presence in the Daily Diet

Corn —a basic ingredient of American culinary— is present in many preparations, which is why it is an ingredient of daily use in the diet of the Honduran people, where pupusas and nacatamales stand out; the tortillas that are served as side dish or for the preparation of enchiladas or baleadas; ticucos, Honduran catrachas, meat pastelitos, corn rice, montucas (similar to tamales); the corn atol and the pozol, which is a traditional drink from the southern region, made with corn, milk and sugar to sweeten, are generally served with sweet



bread. Among the desserts are the Honduran totopostes, made with corn, very popular in the Mayan area, in the west of the country.

With the conquest, other ingredients from Europe came along and were mixed with their own, which resulted in new recipes.

### **Traditional Preparations**

Many other preparations stand out in the Honduran diet such as salpicón, grilled beef, canechos soup (fresh crabs), snail soup, tripe stew, capirozada soup, black bean soup with plantains and avocado, tortilla soup, unsalted meat tapado olanchano, fish tapa, chuco chicken, pork offal chanfaina, plantains with beans, plantain dough empanadas, picadillo pies and cassava with pork rinds, also known as “vigorón”.

The alcitrone stands out in the sweet cuisine section, which are candied fruits; but they also have “riots”, espumillas, rice pudding, ayote and honey torrijas, donuts, alfajores; and beverages such as Honduran horchata, chuco atol and michelada. A variety of breads accompany Honduran meals; there is cassava or mandioca casaba (flat bread), marquesote, donuts, rosquetes, coconut bread and banana bread, nougat, tostadas, semitas and quesadillas.

### **Traditional Alcoholic Drinks**

You cannot leave the consumption of alcohol aside —an ancestral tradition of the Latin American peoples— which is why in Honduras there are a series of preparations, artisanal mostly, such as the variety of chichas: fermented pineapple, calaguala, guaro, cususa, rompopo ; and the varieties of coyol, apple and potato wine. The güifiti is made from herbs, cinnamon and anise.

### **Sister Kitchens: Honduras and Venezuela**

Many of the preparations made with corn can be identified by their similarity to Venezuelan dishes such as arepa, hallaca, and cachapas de hoja, or corn bollitos. Honduran pupusas are similar to Venezuelan arepa, but they are exclusively stuffed with chopped pork rinds or queso (fresh cow milk cheese) and are served with chopped pickled cabbage and home-made tomato sauce.

The nacatamales are typical of Honduras, but they do cook them in Nicaragua too. It is a corn made dough, to which meat, vegetables and rice are added. This mixture is placed on banana leaves to be wrapped and cooked; this is why they are related to Venezuelan’s hallaca.





The montucas are similar to tamales and hallaca since they have corn as one of their main ingredients. But they contain pork, vegetables, milk, onions, ripe chili, tomatoes, salt and pepper. They are also wrapped in banana leaves for cooking.

Honduran ticucos —a typical Easter food because it does not include meat among its ingredients— are made with fresh or precooked corn dough. They basically are stuffed with red beans and chipilin, a legume plant with a lot of aroma, which is used to perfume corn preparations. To cook them, they are wrapped in tender corn leaves, and then served with pickled cabbage and sweet tomato sauce. They are similar to the leaf cachapas or bollitos precisely because of its vegetable wrapper, which is the leaf of corncob or elote (as it is known in that area).

## Worldwide Spread

It is not easy to introduce these culinary preparations to the world, embedded gustatory memories of Latin American peoples, as they are familiar to corn and beans, as well as to the combination of strong flavors in the daily diet.

Our task is to spread Venezuelan arepa, which becomes versatile in the face of the innumerable fillings that it can “bear” to make it an enriched dish, both in flavor and in protein, and high in nutritional value. It is the endless possibilities of combination which makes it reach global gastronomic internationalization.

The Honduran family table prevails over the public one, so we have that migrants who are in the United States —especially in Los Angeles area— cook for their fellow citizens, generally in informal sales. It is a way of carrying the country on your back and feeling close to your traditions.



*Alberto Veloz Guzman*

 **@alberto.veloz**

 **Alberto Veloz**

He graduated as a journalist from the Central University of Venezuela in 1973. He was press officer for the First Ladies of Venezuela and the Children's Foundation during 1978–1994. Founding editor of the Barabar newspaper, specialized in alcoholic beverages and gastronomy. He is the editor of the Prestige Guide to restaurants, and the column "Impertinent Voyeur" in the magazine Label. Collaborates for the magazine Estampas —themes Sabor, and the Tourist Guide— of the newspaper El Universal. He is professor at the Culinary Institute of Caracas. He is also a Gastronomic chronicler on the web portal [El Estímulo](#).



# Pork Rinds and Cheese Arepas

by Lorena Garcia



2 cups water  
1 cup grated fresh cheese  
1 ½ cups precooked corn flour  
2 cups minced pork rinds  
Salt  
Pepper  
Olive oil  
Nata (milk cream)

- In a bowl, mix water, salt, oil and cheese. Add the corn flour. Mix and knead for two minutes. Add the minced pork rinds and knead well until incorporated into the dough.
- Divide the dough into balls of 56 grams each, or the desired size. Press them pressed with the palm of the hands until obtaining the round flat shape of the arepa.





### Cooking Method:



#### To fry:

- In a deep saucepan, add vegetable oil until it is 5 cm deep. Preheat the oil to 175°C.
- Add arepas to the pan and fry for 3-5 minutes until golden brown. Remove them from the oil and take them to a tray with absorbent paper.
- Serve immediately with nata.



#### Grilled:

- Preheat a frying pan or griddle over medium heat. Place arepas and grill for three minutes on each side, or until golden brown. Serve hot with nata.



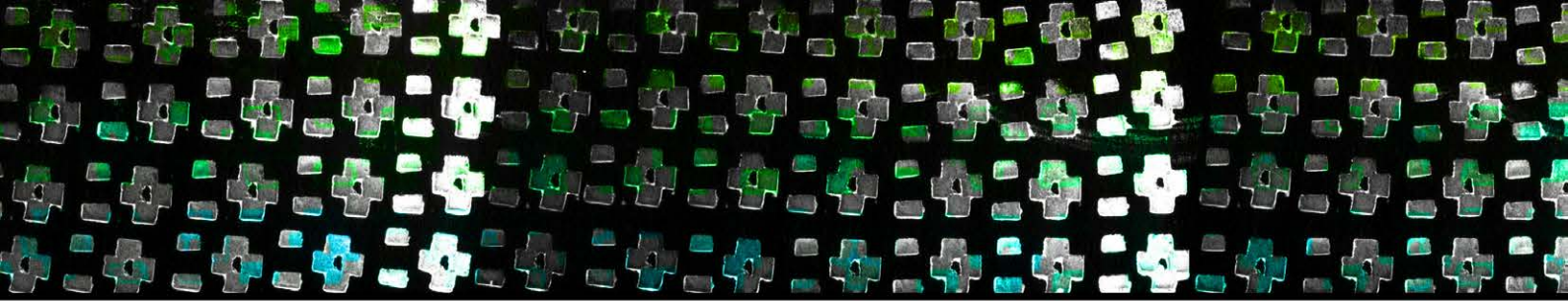
### Lorena Garcia

 @cheflorena  
 @chicarestaurants

Venezuelan cook, businesswoman, philanthropist, producer of culinary television programs, writer of cookbooks. She graduated from Johnson & Wales University (JWU) with a Bachelor of Culinary Arts—she was recently awarded an honorary Doctorate by JWU. Lorena Garcia has become one of the most recognized Latino chefs in the United States because of her role as a presenter and host of cooking series on Netflix, Food Network, Univisión, and, since 2020, on the program called Cooking with Lorena. She currently leads her most ambitious project, the CHICA Restaurant Chain established in Las Vegas, Miami, and Aspen. She also takes part of philanthropic initiatives such as No Kid Hungry, the purpose of which is to eradicate infant hunger in the United States and around the world.







CENTRAL AMERICA

# *El Salvador*





# Gastronomy: the Unifying Element that Lessens Nostalgia

by Graciela Goio

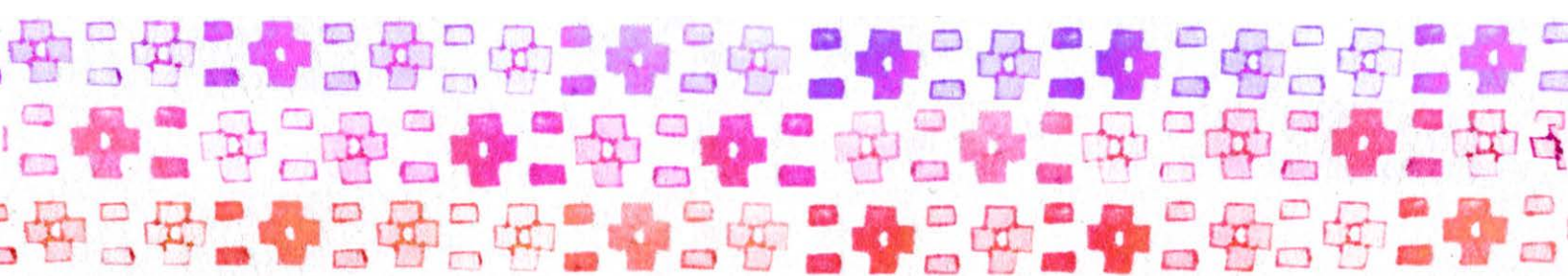
*In* the course of history, the life of mankind is characterized by migratory movements. Our young continent does not escape this phenomenon. Economic and natural factors such as hurricanes and earthquakes drive its inhabitants to undertake new and uncertain paths, in search of a better life for themselves and their families. When settling in other lands, nostalgia drives them to replicate the customs and way of life of their birth place to mitigate the overwhelming experience and to start creating new roots that will make them integrate into the new destiny.

Our life is made up of memories, many related to our senses, to the aromas and flavors of our childhood. It is from these memories that arises the assessing of our mother's or grandmother's dishes to decide which one is the best. The food and the dishes that we ate, in particular during our first years, are the ones that shape us, makes us stand. Thus, when we settle in a new environment, we seek to surround ourselves with everything that allows us to put ourselves together and move on.

El Salvador, a small American country, has seen what some organizations consider to be a third of its population come out of its borders. Most of it has emigrated to the United States, a country with very different language and customs —especially culinary ones—. Each individual, each family, has been integrating and forming Salvadoran communities that have been connecting with other communities, and the common language of gastronomy has been getting them together.

But El Salvador is also a result of European's immigration, such as the Spanish and Italians; Arabs, such as the Palestinians and Lebanese —who also had African influences—. They all joined its first inhabitants, adding other elements that enriched and diversified the dishes of its cuisine. Thus, to the products of the Central American region such as corn, beans, potatoes, cocoa, cassava, native fruits and animals produced by hunting, other products were added, such as rice, wheat, sugar cane, olives, eggplants, almonds, plums, saffron, dairy products such as milk (cream , butter, cheese, curd), and other animal species such as beef, horse, pig, chicken. Thus, pasta and pizza (with a Salvadoran variant), mozzarella cheese, Neapolitan ice cream, tiramisu and donuts, became part of Salvadoran tables.

With them, that great variety of dishes that have been considered typical and referential, such as the tamales with their great variety; the leg soup, whose ingredients are cow's leg, callos and tripas, lemon juice, chili, güisquil, green beans, cassava and corn; the Pupusa;





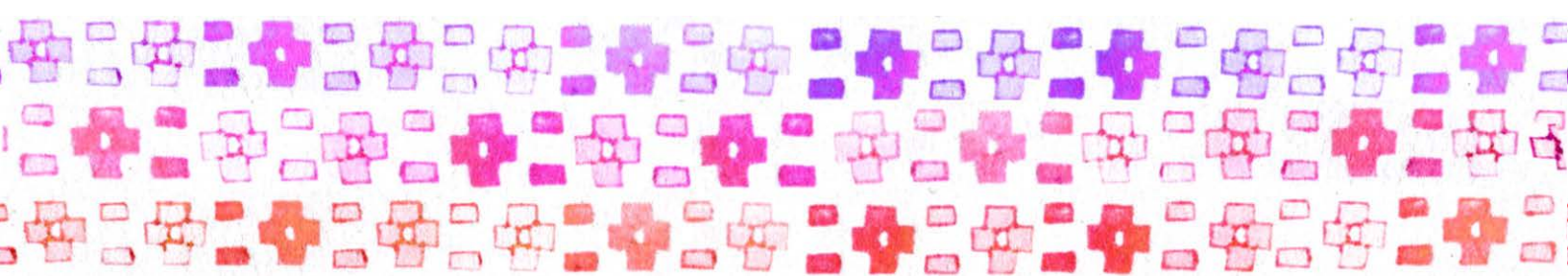
drinks such as horchata —very common on the tables of several American countries—, cocoa, coffee; varieties of sweets, are all transported by migrants along with their memories and dreams to be tasted around the world, wherever a Salvadoran is.

The main ingredients of this country are corn and cassava, which are combined with other elements creating corn tamales, bean, pork, and chicken tamales; corn or jojoto atole; pastelitos filled with vegetables or meats; sweet corn cakes fried with beans and cheese, and wrapped in banana leaves. Banana empanadas, which are made from a cooked ripe banana paste filled with ground refried beans or milk cooked with cornstarch and cinnamon. Enchiladas, which are thin corn and achiote tortillas, cooked to a crisp. La Pacaya, which are palm flowers breaded in cornmeal, and then fried and served with tomato sauce. Fried cassava, stewed chicken with vegetables, stuffed fish, pasta with a wide variety of seafood, “Indian hen” soup —the hen being raised in the open air, in the wild—. As for desserts, the quesadilla, the semita, the peperechas are made with corn or rice or wheat flour, sweet panela, pineapple jelly; nuegados, cassava-based pancakes with black honey; rice pudding, sweet bread, yolk cake. The traditional bakery is made with corn and cassava, to which French bread has been added, eaten stuffed with chicken, vegetables and broth.

The pupusa is a dish that became known in the forties, but its origins go back to the Mayan culture of Honduras and Guatemala —early migrations—. It is filled like an empanada, but is not cooked or fried in the oven. It has a round shape and its dough is corn-based. It is stuffed with cheese, beans, chicken, jalapeño, shrimp, ground pork rinds, spinach. The most popular are those stuffed with cheese, beans and pork rinds. They are served accompanied by different sauces, made from tomato, and a carrot, cabbage, onion and chili based vinegar.

The common denominator for most of these Salvadoran proposals is corn, presented in American countries through many preparations. The most popular among them are tortillas, arepas, and even hallacas. Each country brings its particularities, its references, its traditions, and its very own touch. Some similarities unite them, enriching them. Therefore, gastronomy turns out to be the unifying element that lessens nostalgia while opening cultural horizons. Finally, the dreamed Latin American union is achieved by the dishes on the tables.

Miami, 06/29/22





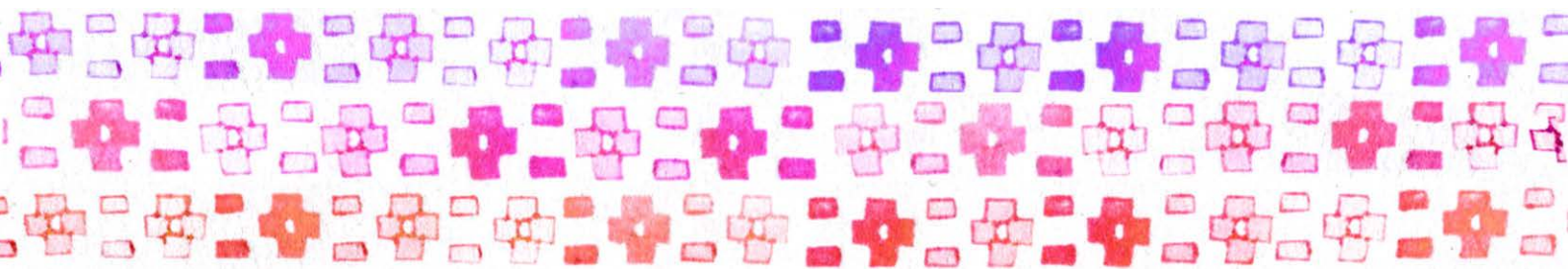


Graciela Goio

 @gragoandando

 grago72

Venezuelan writer. An immigrant, just like my father, my grandparents, my children, I have assimilated different cultures that have shaped me as a curious human being, open to new experiences. I have grown up enjoying delicious dishes prepared by my mother in the family kitchen, and when I moved to other lands, new flavors were introduced in my kitchen and in my memory. This sensory baggage traveled with me to a new destination, and became a refuge that, when shared with other people of the same origin, made me see that we are bonded like family, and accomplices, in a common past that strengthens us. I have worked in a cooking school and I have participated in the gastronomic experience of my son Federico Tischler, with which the process of food expanded and deeply involved me.



# Pork Breast Arepa in Recaudo Rojo

by Israel Montero



**For 4 people**

1.2 kg of *pork belly*



## **For the Pork Marinade:**

200 gr achiote (recaudo rojo)  
1 garlic head  
300 gr onion  
200 gr lard  
500gr sour orange  
8g bay leaf  
150ml apple cider vinegar  
3 gr oregano  
Salt

Grind the ingredients in a blender or mortar, except for the lard that will be added at the moment of cooking.



**Arepa Dough:**

½ kg of flour for arepas  
1 liter water  
5 gr salt

To half of the water, add the salt and then the flour little by little, kneading and incorporating the rest of the water and the flour until obtaining a homogeneous mixture.

**Raw red Onion and Habanero Chili Sauce:**

100 gr habanero chili  
300 gr red onion  
1 sour orange (250 gr approx.)  
2 gr oregano  
1 gr Colima salt

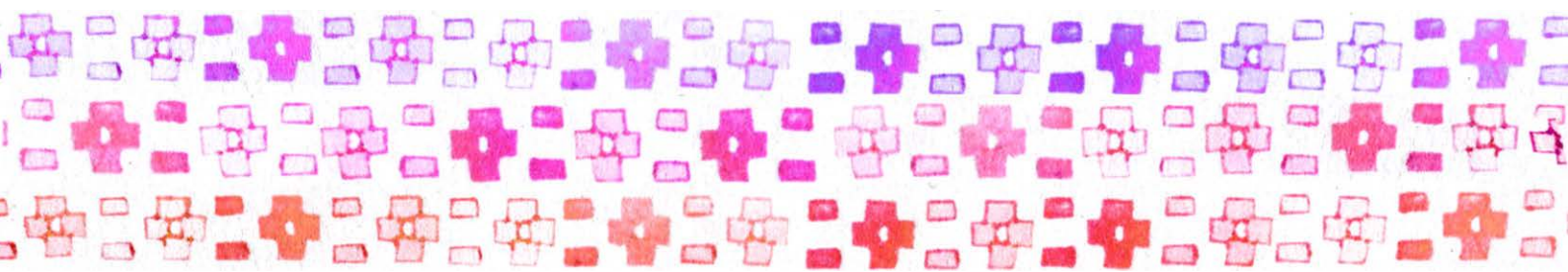
- Cut the onion and the habanero into feathers.
- Season with the juice of a sour orange, salt and oregano.

**For Cooking the Meat:**

- In a container, marinate the meat with the mixture that resulted from the achiote.
- Bake at 110° centigrade, adding the butter.
- For 5 hours.

**Cook and Serve:**

- Form arepas and cook them on a griddle on both sides until the dough is cooked.
- Once the arepa is cooked, fill it with a piece of pork on enough broth or sauce.
- Serve with raw sauce, and enjoy.

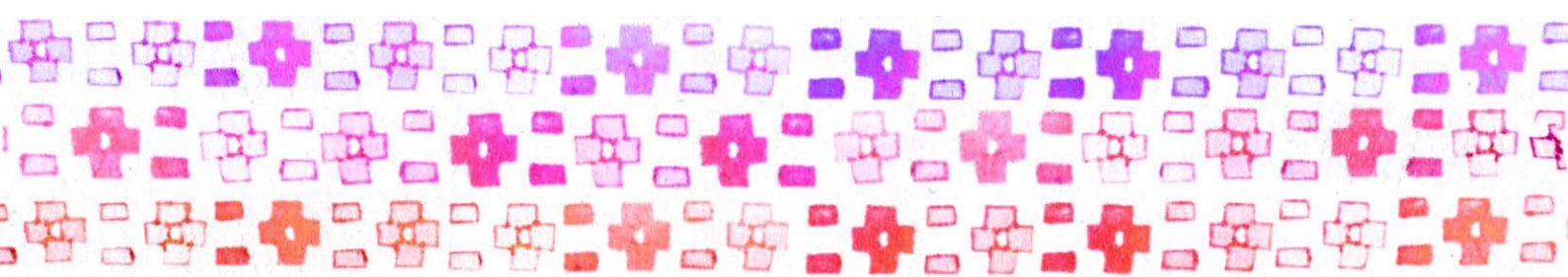




## Israel Montero

 **Siembra Tortilleria**  
 **@siembra.tortilleria**

Born in Caracas, Venezuela. He studied cooking at the Paul Bocouse Institute in Lyon, France. He began his career at La Creperie restaurant, in his hometown, from 2001 to 2003. In 2005 he moved to Zacatecas, Mexico, where he opened the Cata restaurant and La Hojaldrina pastry shop, and worked as executive chef. In 2009, he works as an intern and starting chef at Alain Ducasse's restaurant at the Hotel Plaza Athenee in Paris, which has three Michelin stars. In 2010, he returns to Mexico as executive chef of the Country restaurant in D.F. Later he would serve as executive chef and founder of the Kaah Siis restaurant, in Polanco —a well-known neighborhood in Mexico City where his Siembra Tortilleria restaurant is currently located at Isaac Newton 256, a laboratory where corn is investigated and transformed in different ways, to promote and encourage —through its consumption—the planting of Creole corn.

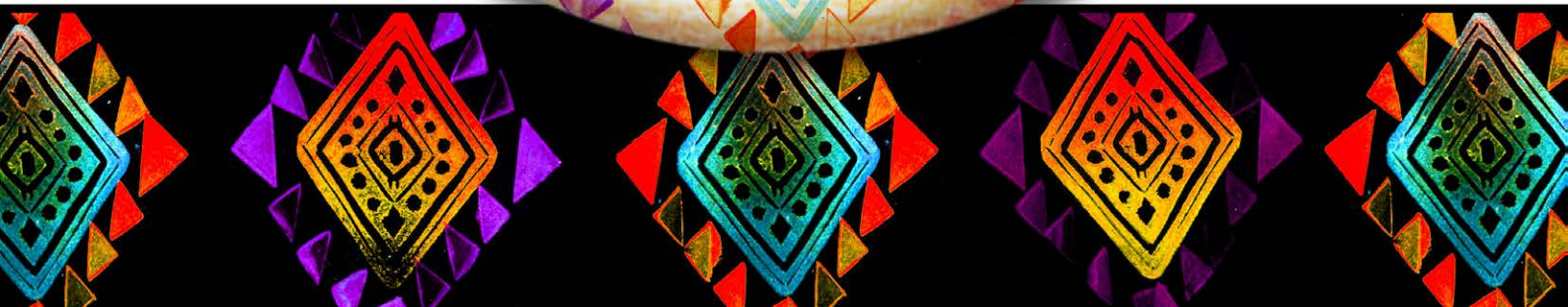






CENTRAL AMERICA

# Guatemala





# People of Corn

by Franz Conde

*When* I began my apprenticeship as a cook, under the mentorship of Armando Scannone and Jose Rafael Lovera, I very quickly understood that if there was one ingredient that defined Latin American cuisine, that ingredient was corn. Of course, there is a great repertoire of Venezuelan and Latin American dishes without corn, but the favorite preparations, the most loved ones, the indispensable ones, are those made with corn.

“While Europeans are made of wheat, we Latin Americans are made of corn,” Professor Lovera used to say in his master classes, thus gathering an essential idea of our genealogy that goes back to the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred book of the Maya, whose mythology suggests that the gods created humans from corn dough. The gods had first tried to do it with clay, but soon they found out that clay people had no intelligence. Then they tried with wood, but wooden people had no souls and no emotions. The corn people, on the other hand, possessed intelligence and a soul...

This idea of the *Popol Vuh* would be taken by the great Guatemalan writer and Nobel Prize winner Miguel Angel Asturias, to write his novel *Los Hombres de Maíz*.

We have a soul because we are made of corn.

## Tamales and Hallacas

When we say “globalization” we think of the inherent condition of the 21st century; but the truth is that the global exchange of objects, ideas and people dates back to the age of exploration, during the 16th and 17th centuries. At that time, Venezuela and Guatemala met through the commercial interests of the Spanish colonial government. A galleon was leaving Manila, in the Philippine Islands, loaded with goods bound for Acapulco, Mexico. The contents of this galleon then traveled overland to Veracruz on the Gulf Coast, and from there to Seville in Spain. Also, through minor routes, they traveled to other regions of the Colony, including La Guaira in Venezuela. It was a network of trade and cultural exchange that radiated throughout Latin America.

Professor Lovera suggests that Venezuelan hallaca, in the version we know today, has much to do with the Mayan tamale —typical of what is now Guatemala— that probably arrived on that route as food for the merchant crew. From those Mayan-Guatemalan tamales the use of achiote or onoto, the idea of wrapping them in a banana leaf, and surely something of the seasoning of the stew that fills them, was probably borrowed.

It is often said that the cuisine of Latin American nations is a melting pot of Spanish, indigenous and African gastronomy, but that is a definition that does not do justice to the complexity of influences that have been fused in Latin America. Influences from Asia must be added, which arrived aboard the mentioned Manila galleon; and influences from





Jewish and Muslim cuisines, present for eight centuries in the Iberian Peninsula, must also be added. If we want to talk about the Guatemalan and Venezuelan gastronomy, we must remember that the nations, in their geopolitical conception, their borders and names, have changed through the centuries; but their gastronomic traditions have survived revolutions and coups, conquests and emancipations. The cuisine of Guatemala with its red tamales, pepianes and broths, atoles and refreshments, will remain forever in the world culture, already incorporated into the DNA that we share as Latin Americans.

## A Mayan Arepa

If Mayans liked to boil the corn made into dough in the form of tamales; the Cumanagoto Indians of the coast of Sucre, in Venezuela, liked to cook this same dough on a hot griddle or budare. The evolution from the Cumanagotos' "erepas" to the stuffed arepas that today symbolize Venezuelan diaspora, has been enormous... and even predictable, if we follow the idea of playwright Jose Ignacio Cabrujas who suggests that Venezuelans have been the most cosmopolitan Latin Americans. According to Cabrujas, the fact that Venezuela was a General Captaincy —relatively subordinate to the great viceroyalties— allowed us to create a cosmopolitan and curious culture, willing to embrace all the good (and sometimes the bad) that came from other regions and cultures. Today, as a result of the cosmopolitan status of the Venezuelan, the arepas in the Venezuelan diaspora are filled with mozzarella or brie cheese, Peruvian ceviches and Argentine barbecue, Basque chistorras and black pudding from Burgos.

The arepa recipe that I want to share is one that goes back to the time of the "Manila Galleon", and borrows the flavors of this interwoven history between Guatemala and Venezuela. **The Guatemalan Red Recado**, interpreted by the black cooks of the former General Captaincy of Venezuela, is made more or less like this:

### Stuffing Stew:

- 1 large onion cut into small cubes
- Fresh chili to your liking, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup corn oil
- 1/2 kilo pork cut into small pieces of 1 to 2 cm
- 400 gr of tomato chopped into small pieces (can be canned)
- 200 ml red wine
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup seedless green olives
- 1/4 cup capers
- A small cinnamon stick
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- Salt



Sugar

Black pepper

Fire softened banana leaves. (A small piece of leaf to add to the stew, and the others to wrap the arepas as soon as they are ready)

Sauté the onion and chili in the oil over medium heat until wilted. Add the pork, some salt and fry until slightly dry. Add canned tomatoes, red wine, small cinnamon stick, and a small piece of banana leaf. Cover the pot and cook over low heat for two hours, or until the pork is very soft.

Open the pot, add olives, raisins, capers, Worcestershire sauce, and cook a bit until the stew is dry enough to be a dry filling for the arepa. Adjust the seasoning with salt, sugar and black pepper. The flavor must be intense.

### **Arepas**

Make arepa dough in the traditional way and color it with onoto dyed oil. Roast arepas in a budare, and then take them to the oven.

Wrap them in banana leaves when you take them out of the oven, so that the leaf perfumes the arepa.

Fill the arepas with the stew and serve wrapped in a banana leaf. It can be accompanied at the table with spicy sauce and grated cheese.



*Franz Conde*

 **@fraanzconde**

He was born in Caracas in 1968. He left Engineering to dedicate himself to cooking in 1988. He learned to cook from Magdalena Salavarria, and counts Armando Scannone, Jose Rafael Lovera, Ben Ami Fihman and Aimor Moroni among his tutors. Between 1996 and 2000, he is chef-owner, with his wife, of the Aragua restaurant, in Dartmouth, England, for which they are mentioned in the Michelin Guide and in the Good Food Guide, the most reputable British gastronomic guide. In 2007, he becomes executive chef at the Hilton Amsterdam; in 2017, he is executive chef of the Hotel Athenée Palace in Bucharest, Romania, and from 2018 to the present he continues as executive chef of the Hilton Amsterdam. Within the Hilton circuit, he has been recognized as Best Chef of the year in Europe, and third place in the Europe, Middle East and Africa area.

He has a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and Art History from the Open University in Great Britain. And since 2020, he and his wife have run an Instagram account called @psicofilmanalisis where they analyze films with hermeneutical tools of philosophy, art history and psychoanalysis.





# Arepa de maiz pilado (Crushed Corn Arepas) and Chicken Pepian

by Jose Bernardo Eizaga



## **Ground Pre-Cooked Corn Arepa (arepa pilada)**

### **For 5 arepas of 100 gr each**

250 gr crushed corn

800 ml of water.

85gr animal or vegetable fat (unsalted butter can be a substitute)

Salt

- Add water and corn in a pot, put to boil on medium-low heat for 35 minutes. It should be cooked at a moderate temperature, because if the corn grain breaks it will absorb an excess of water, and we will not have the desired result. After 35 minutes, remove from the heat in the same pot, and let it rest for 8 to 12 hours.

- For the grinding, it is necessary to have a grain mill: drain the corn and reserve a little of the cooking water. Place the corn in the mill; adjust it to a medium distance for the first grinding. In the second grinding, the mill must be more adjusted and thus obtain smoother textured dough.
- Add animal or vegetable fat during kneading and, if necessary, add, little by little, the water that we reserve from cooking the corn until we reach the desired texture. Knead for 7 minutes.
- Make balls of 100 gr each, and mold into the original arepa shape.



### **Chicken Pepian**

2 large chicken breasts  
 2 large ripe red tomatoes  
 3 cloves of garlic  
 2 dried panca peppers  
 4 green tomatillos  
 2 large white onions  
 1 slice of toasted bread  
 1 clove  
 1 cinnamon stick  
 2 tablespoons white sesame seeds  
 2 tablespoons dried pumpkin seeds  
 1 sprig of coriander  
 1 small piece of ginger  
 Salt, the necessary  
 Oil, what is necessary

- In a baking dish, place the red tomatoes, onions, green tomatillos, garlic, peppers and the necessary oil.
- Take to the oven, preheated to 200°C and put to tatemar\* for half an hour. Pay attention so they do not burn completely.
- In a pot, boil the chicken in water with the necessary salt, ginger and ¼ onion. After it is cooked, drain and reserve the chicken broth.
- In a frying pan over low heat, roast sesame, cinnamon, cloves and auyama seeds. Be careful for they burn easily. Then grind the seeds and spices in a mortar until pulverizing.

### **The Pepian:**

- In a blender, place all the vegetables already roasted with the mixture of spices and ground seeds, the toasted bread, and the coriander sprig. Blend and add chicken broth in small quantities, until a sauce is obtained.
- Cut the chicken into pieces or shred it—in this case, I shredded the chicken. In a separate preheated pot, place the prepared Pepian together with the chicken. This preparation can be used as a filling for the arepas or simply to accompany them.





\*What is “tatemar”? It is a word with a Nahuatl origin. It is a cooking technique, which consists of cooking directly on the fire, or in a comal, an ingredient to bring it to the point of burning. You use this technique with meats, vegetables and fruits such as chile. The intention is to enhance flavors.



**José Bernardo Eizaga**

 @zagacook\_

 @proyecto\_maizpelao

Born in San Carlos, Cojedes state. Venezuelan chef since 2007. Creator and director of the Maíz Pelao project, in charge of searching for Creole corn in Venezuela and Argentina, in addition to promoting its use to make arepas in a traditional way. *In his words: It all came about when I realized that we Venezuelans always eat the same arepa, in other countries of the region the cereal is better used, since they did not fully industrialize corn, while in Venezuela they did. For Venezuelans, the types of arepa varies by the type of filling; but it should not be so. The type of arepa should be by type of corn, for corn is the heart of the arepa.*







WESTERN ASIA

# *Palestine*





# Palestine

by Alonso Núñez

*Julio Camba*, that chronicler with a quick and clean line who vilified garlic when writing phrases like “we Spaniards cauterize our palates with garlic”, tells in his masterful and humorous *Casa de Luculo*, the story of how Prospero Merimée decided in “the romantic year of 1830» that he should to make a trip to Dalmatia, one of the regions of present-day Croatia. The object of his journey was to add to the Scottish ballads and Castilian romances, so fashionable at the time, something of the popular Dalmatian poetry. So he began to research the subject thoroughly, and to go to libraries —the Wikipedia of that time— to prepare for his visit. And then he remembered that he had no money.

“Well”, Merimée said to herself then, “if I don’t have the money to go to Dalmatia and write a book describing it, I’ll write my book first; and with the money I make, I’ll go to see to what extent Dalmatia fits my descriptions...”

Indeed, his work was published with great success and, Camba says, for a long time Merimée was considered to be a great connoisseur of Dalmatian literature.

I mention this anecdote because unlike Camba, who said he did not need to go to his own “Dalmatia” to support his gastronomic writings, I will have to visit the Palestinian territory one day to check if the picture that I propose in the next few paragraphs corresponds to the drafted object, which comes mainly from my imagination. At this point we begin to border territories, or should we say, erase their borders, precisely because we are beginning to take into account that Palestine is in many places around the world, and is not confined solely to that conflictive physical space located on the map of the Middle East.

I was living in London when they were still cheering for *house* electronic music of Detroit, and the most advanced DJs were already playing complete sets of Amazonian cumbia and African beats. There, upon leaving a dance club after an alcohol-induced night, the spicy aroma of shish kebab called from every corner of the surroundings of Hoxton Square in East London, replicating the narrow and cobbled streets of Bethlehem with the appropriate adjustments of traveling cuisine. This preparation, along with fish & chips and curry, are part of the culinary heritage of the United Kingdom. This is a good example of how cuisine —that which seeks to rename in order to later be able of recreating and refounding— is amalgamated with local culture, and, in an exchange of codes that passes through the crucible of adaptation, addition, subtraction or substitution, creates the paradox of a product that is new and yet old at the same time. It is that which specialists in social sciences catalog as “syncretism”, which is none other than a phenomenon of communication and social



relationship of migrant peoples who seek to gather around the maternal womb represented by the fire.

In my native Caracas, I tried for the first time the knafeh, older cousin of the baklava, which beats it by adding that kind of mixture between ricotta and feta that is the nabulsi cheese, and consanguineous brother of the muttabaq, from which it differs by substituting the *phyllo* dough by scented semolina.

This cake was introduced to me by Ahmad Hamsi, a Palestinian refugee confectioner in Venezuela. Hamsi spent months sleeping in the underground room of the swimming pool machines at a private club where he worked as a gardener, and from which he dreamed of opening one day —as indeed he did— his own premises. It was there that I met him, it was from that kitchen that kilos of Knafeh cake were dispatched, covering the olfactory landscape of Caracas with rose and orange blossom water in the same way that his grandparents, also cooks, did it in the mornings through the streets of Nablus. Astonished, I would eat cake while searching for a logical explanation for so much technical perfection, for such a level of pleasure. In each slice, in each grain of semolina, I saw, with the typical blindness of an ignorant, the streets of ancient Jerusalem, the walls of that city unknown to me. And, since this was only the dessert, I wondered what the rest of the seasonal collection would be like. “Palestine, Palestine...” I repeated. And then I saw how the map, when folded, covered the streets of my city with dates, spices and olives.



*Alonso Nuñez*



@nunezalonso



@nunez\_alonso

He is a nomad, by decision, curious by nature, cook by conviction, reader by birth. He writes the column *Cooking out loud* on the last Sunday of every month, in the Venezuelan newspaper El Nacional.







*Miguel, the paternal great-great-grandfather of my granddaughter Afeni, arrived in Bolivia from Bethlehem at the end of the 19th century with a Turkish passport, since it was the time of the Ottoman Empire. We don't know what he brought inside his suitcase, but we do know what his taste memory came with, and so, Juan, my husband and Afeni's grandfather, grew up among Chilean, Bolivian and, of course, Palestinian flavors.*

*When Juan arrived in Venezuela, mango and papaya were strange flavors to him, but now he is as Venezuelan as the arepa. The trans-culturated arepas of this book are meant for him, these arepas with some flavors of his Chilean-Palestinian childhood: lapis lazuli zaatar arepas, hummus arepas, and some very thin ones like pampuras caroreñas, with parsley and beluga and pink lentils.*

*Our life as a family has always revolved around the table... It is one of the first things that Juan and I discovered when we met: that throughout our life stories, we would talk about lunch while we had breakfast, about dinner as we had lunch and the next meal at dinner time... and so on. Our sons and daughter, Rodrigo, Andres and Fernanda act the same way we do in this matter, and our grandchildren are what we called in Creole "buen diente (hearty eaters)". They learn about geography and history by means of food.*

*In our family of immigrants (my parents were born in Nicaragua) many stories and flavors intersect; but today, as I write, I can savor the perfect «kupecitos» (kibbeh) from La Nena, my immortal mother-in-law, her beautifully stuffed vegetables: tomatoes, potatoes, zucchinis, eggplants, and perfect little grape leaves.*

*At Juan's house they snacked at eleven, as in every Chilean house, but the bread was eaten with zaatar and olive oil; his childhood was nourished by kneaded bread and mote with peaches, but also by chusbarak, a soup with tortillas stuffed with lamb in a broth with dry yogurt balls; and the palestinian rice — deliciously cooked by Miguel (the older brother, not the great-great-grandfather)— was as important at the Christmas table as hallaca is for a Venezuelan.*

*All this goes on our now transhumant table.*

*For some years, we have lived scattered around the world, and I do not lie when I say that on each continent someone from the family is waiting for us. Some with dual nationality, others without a valid passport, some unable to leave where they are while waiting for a humanitarian visa; but we continue to be linked by the best fabric, woven since our childhood: that of a taste memory that lives in our kitchens, and that makes us feel at home wherever we are.*





# Palestinian Arepitas

by Tamara Rodriguez



*These recipes recreate a family table with dishes from different regions of Palestine, in which traditional wheat flour bread is been replaced with corn arepas. To the different versions of our arepas, we have incorporated spices or ingredients that are common in my mother-in-law's, Elena de Sara, kitchen.*

*It is a festive table featuring Makloubé (Palestinian rice with lamb and chicken), stuffed aubergines, zucchini, and cabbage leaves —with rice, ground beef and lamb, and spices. Grape leaves were a real surprise, because we replaced the rice of the filling with arepa dough and they were really delicious. The shakshusa is like Mexican Huevos Rancheros but, in addition to onions and tomatoes, it also has peppers and cumin. And, of course, there are olives, yogurt, cheese, and hummus of two kinds. The musakhan, which we describe below, was love at first sight, like that of my husband Juan's and mine. The rest is story and work.*





### Beluga and Pink Lentil Arepas

*Musakhan is an emblematic dish of Palestinian cuisine. It consists of a roasted chicken thigh with onion, sumac, guayabita pepper (all spice), saffron and pine nuts; served on unleavened o taboon bread, which we replace with a telita arepa of beluga lentils (round, black) and pink lentils.*



#### For 4 Telita Arepas:

- ¼ cup pink lentils
- ¼ cup beluga lentils (round black)
- 1 cup precooked cornmeal
- 1 cup water
- ¼ cup tahini (sesame cream)
- 1 teaspoon salt

### Preparation of Lentils (Belugas and Pink)

- The two types of lentils are soaked separately for half an hour. They are cooked separately, only with water, until they are al dente. Drain and reserve.

### Preparation of the Dough

- Place water in a deep container with salt. Add precooked cornmeal while stirring until dough consistency is achieved. Add the tahini and knead well. Add lentils of both colors, so that the dough is dotted with lentils as if it were a polka dot fabric. (If there are any lentils leftover, they will be used for a salad with olive oil and lemon dressing.)
- Let the dough rest, and then make four balls. Place them between two plastic-covered boards and then flatten them into a large, thin dough.
- Cook on both sides on a hot griddle and serve with a piece of roasted chicken.

### Lapis Lazuli Arepas

*Lapis lazuli, an Arabic word, is the national stone of Chile, where my mother-in-law and her nine children were born. It was Chile who welcomed the Palestinian grandfather when he had to leave Bolivia because of health reasons. Miguel Sara Alan never imagined that his transhumant family would later migrate to Venezuela.*



- 1 ½ cups bluebell flowers infusion (*Clitoria ternatea*).
- 1 cup precooked cornmeal
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons zaatar\*
- 1 tablespoon black cumin seeds (*Nigella sativa*)

\*Zaatar is a mixture of spices: white sesame, sumac, oregano, thyme, marjoram and salt.

- To make an infusion, bluebell flowers are boiled in water, and left to stand for about twenty minutes so that the color is intense. Mix a cup and a half of this infusion with the zaatar which will take on a purple color due to the acidity of the sumac, the salt, and the precooked cornmeal. Knead well and let it rest.
- Form balls to make arepas. Pass one side of the arepas through the black cumin seeds before roasting on the hot griddle.





### **Parsley Pampuras**

*Pampuras are thin, baked and crunchy arepas, typical of Carora, Lara state, in central-western Venezuela. It is a region known for the excellence of its dairy products and for its different types of goat cheese.*



- 1 ½ cup water
- A small bunch of parsley
- ½ teaspoon of salt
- 1 cup of precooked cornmeal

- Blend water and parsley. Incorporate salt and flour, knead well. Place the ball of dough between two boards or plates covered with plastic, flatten well and bake on wax paper or, better yet, a silpat (silicone baking mat). Bake at 160° C until crispy. The secret of the pampura is to achieve a not too dry and not too watery dough for a perfectly roasted result.

### **Hummus Arepas**

*In this recipe we replace part of the water with hummus (sesame cream, ground chickpeas, cumin and lemon). We cover some arepas with black cumin. The dough is a little creamy. These arepas are delicious with a creamy goat feta cheese and olive oil.*

- 1 cup precooked cornmeal
- ½ cup (or a little more) water
- ½ to ¾ cup hummus

- Mix the hummus and water, and add the cornmeal slowly while kneading. The dough remains watery, so it is better to mark them on a hot griddle, and finish cooking in the oven for about ten minutes. They are crispy on the outside and creamy on the inside.







## Sweet Puffed Arepitas

*As there cannot be a table without dessert, we include sweet rounded arepitas, seasoned with candied oranges as well as anise. We ate them with Arabic braid cheese and dried figs. Next time I'll make them with dates and hopefully I will get some mano cheese!*



- 1 cup precooked cornmeal
- 2 tablespoons wheat flour
- 1 ½ tablespoons sweet anise seeds
- 1 ½ tablespoons candied oranges cut small or jam
- Salt to your liking
- ½ cup spiced sugarcane syrup with cinnamon, sweet pepper or guayabita and cloves
- ½ to ¾ cup water

- Put together all the dry ingredients. Dissolve the sugarcane syrup in half a cup of water, and knead with the rest of the ingredients, until smooth dough is obtained. Put it to rest.
- Form balls and flatten them between two boards or plates covered in plastic; the finer they are, the better they are pumped. In a pan with oil, fry while pouring hot oil on top so that they are well pumped. Then drain on absorbent paper. Oil must reach 180° C, but then it should be lowered to medium heat, so arepitas are well cooked, without burning.



**Tamara Rodríguez**

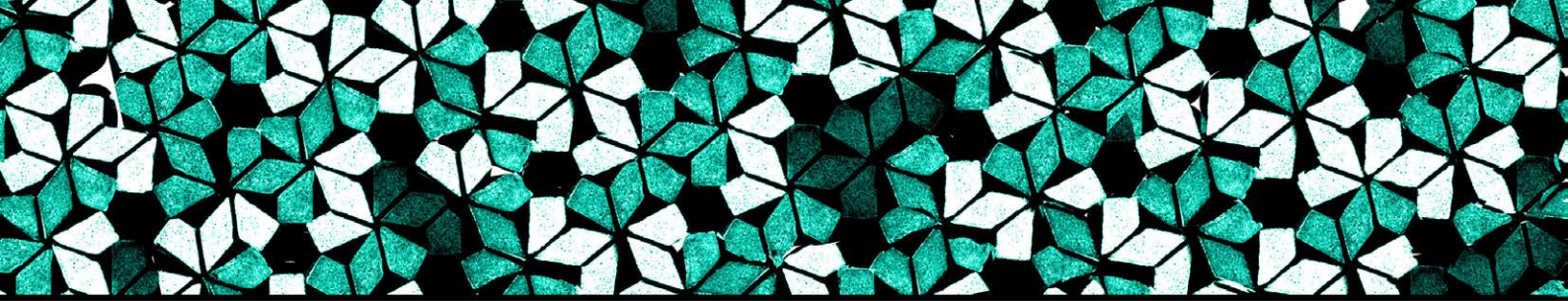
 **@saboresdeparia**

Venezuelan cook, of products and words. I have three children, five grandchildren and Juan. I am a journalist with a botanical soul. I was born and loved living in Caracas, I chose to be a Pariana, and lived in Kingston, San Juan de las Galdonas, Rio Caribe, Kuala Lumpur and now in Perth. I am a traveler. Cocoa and books take me everywhere, as I tell you at: [www.pariasabeachocolate.blogspot.com](http://www.pariasabeachocolate.blogspot.com)

**NOTE:** The credit of my personal photo is for Peter Tan, and the one with the dishes is for Juan Sara.







WESTERN ASIA

# *Syria*





# The Damascus Budare

by Nidal Barake

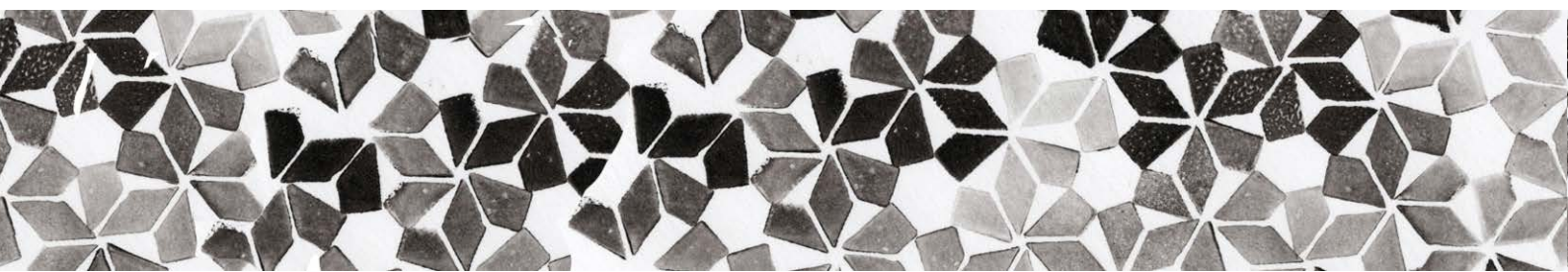
*The* similarities between Middle East and Venezuelan's culture were easily revealed to me as a young boy, since I was born in Venezuela: in Maracaibo, to be specific, and having a Lebanese mother and father. Within the Middle East there are different cultures, just as it happens in Latin America when, for example, we compare Venezuelan culture with Peruvian's or Chilean's peoples. However, there are cultures that have more in common than others because of geographical, historical or migratory reasons, to name a few. The same is true for the Middle East; perhaps the Syrian and Lebanese cultures have more in common with each other than with the rest of the region.

But when comparisons are established beyond geographic, language, and even religious issues, it is more difficult to find those similarities. However, Venezuelans and Syrians have more in common than one would think. They are happy, family cultures; Syrians, like Venezuelans, are friendly, and many gatherings take place around a table.

This connection makes me wonder what would have happened if nature had given Syria, just as it did with Latin America, the corn with which we make our arepas. I am sure that Syrian people would have adopted corn and included it in its pantry and diet. And as a consequence, I am sure that there would be some version of our "areperas" as meeting places, as a destination at any time of the day, whether for a "champion's breakfast", or the last bite before going to sleep after a long night. Therefore, it is easy to imagine what an arepera would have been like in Syria, in the middle of some high-traffic avenue, a place called "El Budare de Damasco" (Damascus' Budare Restaurant).

Imagine any given Friday night, in which a group of friends arrive at Damascus' Budare Restaurant to eat something so as not to sleep on an empty stomach, and to reduce the effects left by several glasses of arak. Just as they sit down, Nadim —a tall, skinny waiter— greets the group as if they were lifelong friends and, without asking, places an arguile on one side of the table, with apple-scented tobacco, so that his new clients and friends start smoking by passing the arguile hose (in this fictional world of areperas in Syria, there is no COVID). One of them reads the menu and comments that he believes they increased the prices again, since he was in the same arepera a couple of weeks ago and the prices are now at least 10% higher; to which another person in the group replies that if things continue like this, added to the political instability, he will seriously consider seeking better fortune in another country. In the middle of the conversation, one of them calls the waiter and asks for a round of cold Afamia beer, another person in the group interrupts by saying that he prefers a Lebanese Almaza.

While one part of the group continues discussing political issues, another part walks towards the display case with all the fillings for the arepas, both fresh and cooked. On one side of the display case there is akkawi cheese —the same one used for manouche— kashkawany cheese, and Syrian string cheese: a fresh, braided mozzarella-style cheese with a





type of seed very similar to cumin seeds, called caraway. Also, on that same side there is shanklish mixed with tomato and onion; and Babaghanoush and Hummus creams. A little further to the left, before the hot food section, there are thin slices of basterma, and pickles.

The hot stuffing section starts with makanek, tiny, slightly spicy sausages, and sujuk, a red Armenian sausage. There is also chicken and lamb cooked shawarma style, sliced and put in the “chefandies”. There are also little balls of kafta, falafel; and white and green “baby bottles” with Tumuna garlic sauce, and Taratur, a tahini sauce with lemon and a touch of garlic, respectively.

As this part of the group returns to the table, they notice the conversation has shifted from politics to criticizing the new coach of the national soccer team, indicating that the way things are going, he would never qualify for a World Cup, no matter how well Omar Khribin is playing. A few days before, they lost to Saudi Arabia 3-0, in a game in which “they played like never before, and lost like they always do”.

Then, Nadim approaches the table to take the order, which consists of two servings of falafel with taratur in the center of the table, a meat-shawarma arepa with hummus, one chicken-shawarma arepa with plenty of tum, one arepa of babaghanoush with pickles, and one “cheese pot” arepa with grated akkawi and string cheese. The arepas arrive with another round of beers, and they thank Nadim for remembering that one of them is having Almaza. At once, two of the diners order a second round of arepas, one of kafta and another of makanek, with hummus on a separate plate. After devouring the food in record time, they ask for the bill. As they pay, they complain in unison about how expensive everything is, and that a year ago, they would have spent the same in one of the best restaurants in the city.

As they return to their cars, the one who loves party the most suggests to go to another bar for “one for the road”, another one answers he prefers to go to sleep, since he leaves early the next day for a family weekend at the beach in Latakia.

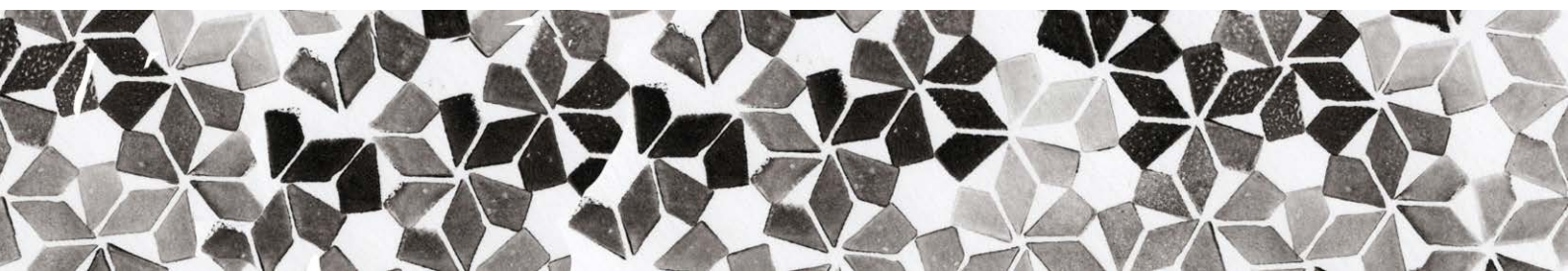


*Nidal Barake*

 @nidalbarake

 @nidalbarake

He is an Economist with an MBA from the University of Delaware; and also an Entrepreneur in technology and media industry. Nidal is founder and director of Gluttonomy in Miami, Florida; an innovation agency that reinvents the future of food companies, building and implementing conceptual and business strategies for chefs, restaurants and brands. Nidal complements his taste for the culinary world by collaborating in various publications with articles about his gastronomic experiences and travels. He also combines his work and passion by attending food conferences around the world, speaking about innovation, food technology and entrepreneurship.



# Arepa for *Siria*

by Mercedes Oropeza



For 4 arepas



## For the Dough:

- 2 cups fried eggplant, in small cubes
- 1 cup precooked cornmeal
- 1 ¼ cup drinking water
- ½ tablespoon salt

- Wash the eggplants and cut them into small cubes —approx. 1cm wide —. Fry them in a frying pan or cauldron with corn oil. Reserve it.
- In a bowl, put the water, the salt and the eggplants. Slowly add the cornmeal, mixing and kneading everything. The dough must be soft and easy to work with. Reserve at room temperature, covered with a cloth.





#### **For the Smoked Chicken Filling:**

Coal  
4 cardamom pods  
3 sprigs of chives  
2 chicken breasts  
 $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon salt  
2 tablespoons corn oil

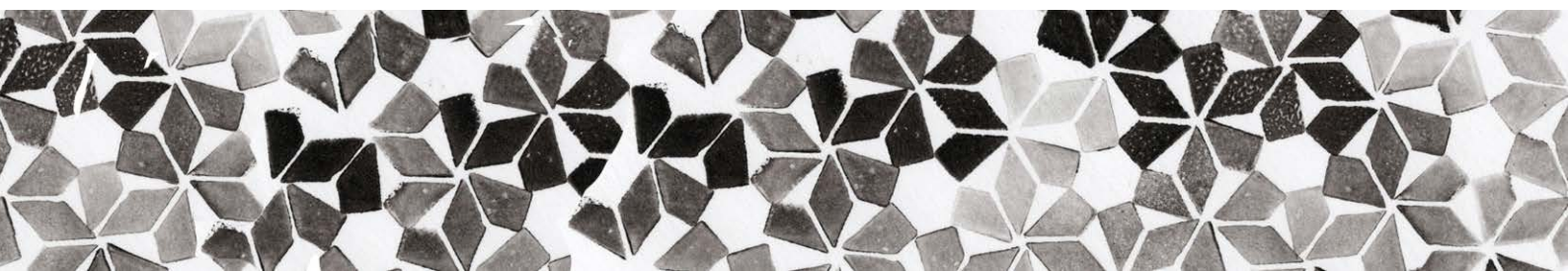
- Lit the coals of a grill to get embers.
- Marinate the chicken breasts with salt and oil, reserve. Once the embers are ready, put the chive branches on them, and the cardamom pods on top. Put the chicken breasts on the grill and cover them to smoke. The chicken is left on the grill until cooked.
- Once cooked, remove the chicken breasts from the grill and let them cool. Once cold, shred them and add dressing. Mix well and reserve.



#### **Seasoning for the Chicken:**

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup tahini (sesame or sesame paste)  
2 cups drinking water  
1 tablespoon lemon salt  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon regular salt  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon black pepper

In a bowl, combine the tahini in a bowl —tahini is sesame paste— with the water, lemon salt, salt and black pepper. Reserve until the arepas are ready to be filled.



### **Cooking and Assembling the Arepas:**

- Once the smoked chicken filling is ready, cook the arepas.
- Shape arepas in the desired size. Fry or roast them in a budare (or its equivalent). Stuff them, and serve hot.

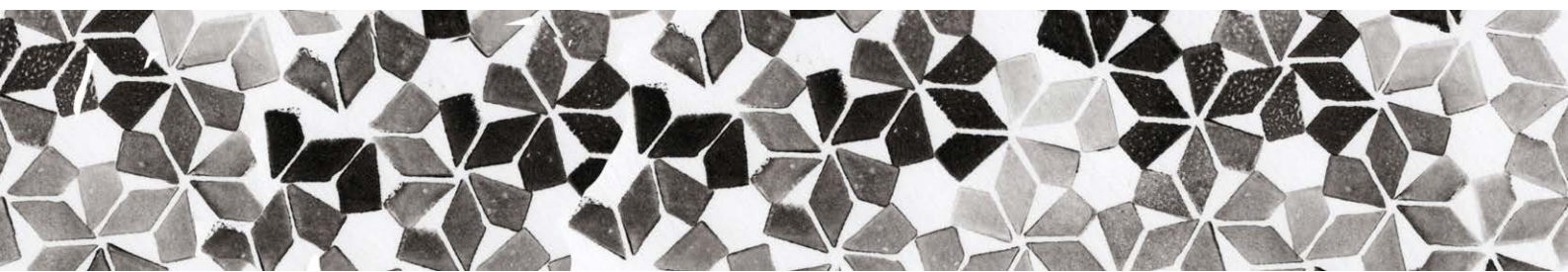


**Mercedes Oropeza**

 [@unavainita](#)

 [@unavainitasaludable](#)

She belongs to Venezuelan gastronomic excellence, and has always bet on Creole cuisine. Her grandmother was born in Rio Caribe. She cooked well and lived very close to her house, so when Mercedes misbehaved, she made her cook, which forced Mercedes to discover magic in action. Since then, a love for the job is something that characterizes this tireless cook. She currently runs the catering and packaging service for Una vainita organica. She was awarded the 2005 Gold Fork and the 2009 Armando Scanonne award, both by the Venezuelan Academy of Gastronomy.





WESTERN ASIA

*Iraq*





# Iraqi Cuisine

by Luisaury Araque

*To speak* of Iraqi cuisine is to speak of history, of its origins, as stated by the Iraqi philologist and restaurateur, Pius Alibek: “Where there is history, there is cuisine and Mesopotamia is the cradle of civilization, and the first recipes of humanity, they were written there”.



Given that gastronomy is a reflection of its people, Iraqi cuisine is not exempt from this premise but rather fully complies with it, since it reveals the history of its people, everything lived and accumulated, which in its case is a lot. Indeed, Iraqi cuisine dates back to 10,000 years. How many countries can say that about their culinary tradition?

It was in the Golden Age of Islam (750-1258) that Iraqi cuisine reached its peak. Today, the cuisine of Iraq reflects this rich heritage in its strong influence on the culinary traditions of neighboring Iran, Turkey and Syria. But look, so you can learn more about this kitchen, I am going to tell you the story of Lucia and Akram, two friends who share their love for cooking.

Lucia, a Spanish engineer residing in Dubai, met Akram during a work meeting for the start-up of a new project in her company. That day, during a break in the meeting, Akram approached Lucia with curiosity and said: “Nice to meet you, my name is Akram. I come from Iraq and I will be here for the duration of this project. I think we will be working together for a long time”.

The weeks passed, and between talks, Lucia and Akram realized that they had in common a great passion for gastronomy and for trying new things. Lucia made one of those Spanish omelettes that leave you sighing, and she took it as a gift to Akram, who was stunned by the homemade flavors this omelette had. He simply fell in love with such a gesture of kindness and deliciousness.

A week after Akram tasted that delicacy, Lucia, as usual, was heading to her apartment, exhausted after a long day of work. When she got out of the elevator, she noticed that there was a large gift box on her door: it was a wooden box, with a bow made of beige fabric. The box had a small card that said: “To Lucia”. She, a little surprised, opened the door and took the box inside. She put it on her dining room table to open it. As soon as she removed the strap and uncovered the box, she felt this intense aroma of a mixture of spices, between sweet and salty. Then she finds out the box has a cloth that covers all the content with a label that says: “Because we love to share love in bites”. Lucia, still astonished, but very excited and intrigued, removes the label, then the cloth to start discovering the contents of the box.





The first thing she finds is a set of five spices: Baharat, Mahleb, Zaatar, Cinnamon and the “Seven spices” mixture; dried herbs, seeds and tea; ten jars, fully filled with aromas that expanded to the entire dining room. Then there was a set of six very colorful round plates, three wooden teaspoons and four bowls. There was also a tablecloth to match the crockery, and a bottle of olive oil along with two aprons. At the bottom of the box there was a large card. Opening it, Lucia found the following lines:

*After that delicious potato omelette, and after our numerous talks about gastronomy and your desire to know more about Iraqi cuisine, I have decided to share with you part of my roots and culture through a sensory experience that begins with this Gourmet Gift Box. Let me tell you...the spices\* you find in here are very important for our cooking; I could tell you that they are the great power-tool for Iraqi cuisine and our great treasure; they fulfill a double function, since they both preserve and enhance the taste of the dishes. There are very few recipes in Iraqi cuisine that lack any spice, which makes the cuisine very aromatic, seductive, but also very simple and easy to prepare. Meals in Iraq generally begin with a selection of appetizers and small plates, known as meze, hence the colorful plates and bowls. In them you can enjoy dishes such as Baytinijan Maqli (a cold dish consisting of fried eggplant with tahini, lettuce, parsley and tomatoes, garnished with sumac and served in pita bread), Fat-toush (a salad made of different vegetables and fried toasted pieces of bread), Tabboule (a parsley-mint-based salad, tomato, onion and other herbs with lemon juice, olive oil and various seasonings), Hummus (you probably know it but ours is the best), Falafel (a fried ball or croquette made with spiced chickpeas or broad beans) and Kubba (a dish made of burgul, minced meat, and spices). We will put all this food on your table, right after placing the tablecloth that matches the tableware to give it that characteristic touch of our food.*

*All this is accompanied by a rich spiced black tea that will enhance the flavors even more and by one of our favorite desserts in Iraq, the Baklava, a cake made with layers of phyllo dough filled with crushed nuts and honey; a simply impossible to forget delicacy.*

*You will wonder how you are going to prepare all that food if there is no recipe book or guide with instructions. Don't worry, I told you it's a sensory experience that starts with this box, but soon will come the next part, getting down to work and teach live all the preparation (hence the two aprons, because I need you as an assistant), you just tell me the day and I'll take care of the rest.*

*Lucia, the cuisine of my homeland is a feast of flavors and colors that deserves to be experienced up close, and this is the best way to share with you my culinary roots, and how much I appreciate that you have been interested in getting to know them. Thank you for being the reason that motivated me to reconnect with dishes that I miss so much and that I know you will enjoy.*

*See you soon*

*Akram*



Wow, wow, wow! You can imagine Lucia's face at such a display of aromatic originality, because not every day we get a surprise like this. Of course, she took her cell phone right away, and, jumping with excitement, she wrote to Akram:

*In my 34 years of age I had not received such an original and amazing surprise as this one. From the moment I saw the box outside my apartment to the last detail I found in it, my heart jumped with emotion and joy. I hope we can see each other this Friday at 6 pm to get down to business. Thank you for this experience that is just beginning.*

You may be wondering what happened next, well, I can only say that Friday was so magical, and that feast was so delicious, that Lucia and Akram decided to continue with that tradition that they share with their children today.

\*These spices are cinnamon; Baharat which includes: *allspice*, black pepper, cardamom seeds, cassia bark, cloves, coriander seeds, cumin seeds, nutmeg, dried red chillies or paprika; Mahleb which is an aromatic spice made from the seeds of the Santa Lucía cherry tree; Za'atar which is usually composed of hyssop, sumac, toasted or unroasted sesame seeds and salt...it usually has aromatic herbs also, such as: savory, marjoram, thyme, cumin or fennel. And the Seven spices mixture: *allspice*, black pepper, ginger powder, cinnamon powder, cloves, nutmeg and coriander.



*Luisaury Araque*

 @luiaraque  
 @lgourmettable

She is Venezuelan. She studied Industrial Psychology, a career that gave her structure and successful ways of proceeding in organizations. Her work took her to see Belarus and China, a country where she lived for three months, motivated by her nomadic impulse. It has been 15 years of experience that she has always combined with her love for cooking, and always linked to offering gourmet gastronomic experiences: *The first project that I finally completed was in Puerto*

*Ordaz, an English-style teahouse in the south of my country.*

After her success as an entrepreneur, people began to ask her for advice, so she started a movement for change ([www.fuerzapoder.com](http://www.fuerzapoder.com)) to support people who have incredible projects to achieve and do not know how to do it. *Right now I live in Montreal (Canada) with my daughter Danna. I'm here now, I don't know for how long, and I work from home supporting people who want to re-connect with their essence and offer the world their value from abundance, and with prosperity as a reward. I do it with enthusiasm, openness and a sense of humor.*

In addition, she continues with her entrepreneurship of gourmet experiences, now with a delivery service, in Montreal.





# Iraqi Arepa

by Victor Moreno



## For the Arepa Dough

2 cups of precooked corn flour  
2 ¼ cups of water  
1/2 teaspoon of salt (approximately)  
1 tablespoon of black sesame seed  
Oil

- In a bowl, add water and salt. Little by little add the flour and the sesame seeds. Knead until obtaining a homogenous dough. The dough must be soft, like Play-doh. Add water as necessary.
- Divide the dough and make balls. Flatten the balls using the palms of your hands and shape them into a disc of any desired thickness.
- Preheat the budare, frying pan, or cooking tray, and cover with a little bit of oil. Put the arepas and cook for some 5 minutes on each side, place on a cooling rack and then bake all arepas together for 15 minutes at 180°C.

**For the Refreshing Salad**

4 ripe red tomatoes (seedless and diced small)  
1 white onion finely chopped  
1 lemon  
1 cup finely chopped clean parsley  
3 tablespoons of olive oil  
Salt and pepper to taste

- In bowl, mix in an enveloping way, the tomato and the onion. Add olive oil and mix again. Add the lemon juice and stir. Add the parsley and mix in an enveloping way. Add salt and pepper and cover with transparent film.
- Keep in the refrigerator – preferably.

**For the Kibbe Dough:**

500 gr lamb – no fat and finely chopped  
250 gr fine wheat  
1 white small onion finely chopped  
½ teaspoon of salt  
¼ teaspoon pepper

In bowl, soak the wheat in cold water for at least 10 minutes. Drain and mix with the meat, the onion, salt and pepper, until the mix is homogenous. Reserve.

**Filling:**

300 gr lamb, fatless and finely chopped  
1 white onion finely chopped  
1 clove of garlic finely chopped  
½ teaspoon of cinnamon  
½ cup parsley cleaned and finely chopped  
Oil  
Salt to taste

- In a frying pan, pour oil, add onion and garlic and sauté. Add meat and mix. Add salt, cinnamon, and pepper. When the meat is cooked, remove from heat.
- Add parsley, mix, and reserve.

**To Assemble the Kibbe:**

- With the dough, make a half-sizeball and press with the palm of the hand. Add a tablespoon of filling and close the dough by giving it in an oval shape. Keep on a previously greased tray.
- Heat enough oil in a cauldron (or deep-frying pan). Fry the kibbes until dark brown. Drain on absorbent paper and reserve.







### To Assemble the Iraqi Arepa

- Slice the kibbe. Open the arepa in half using a knife. Add the kibbe slices and add the salad. Close the arepa and serve.



**Victor Moreno**

[www.morenocaracas.com](http://www.morenocaracas.com)

 [@geopaladar90.3fm](https://www.instagram.com/geopaladar90.3fm)

 [@victormorenoc](https://www.instagram.com/victormorenoc)

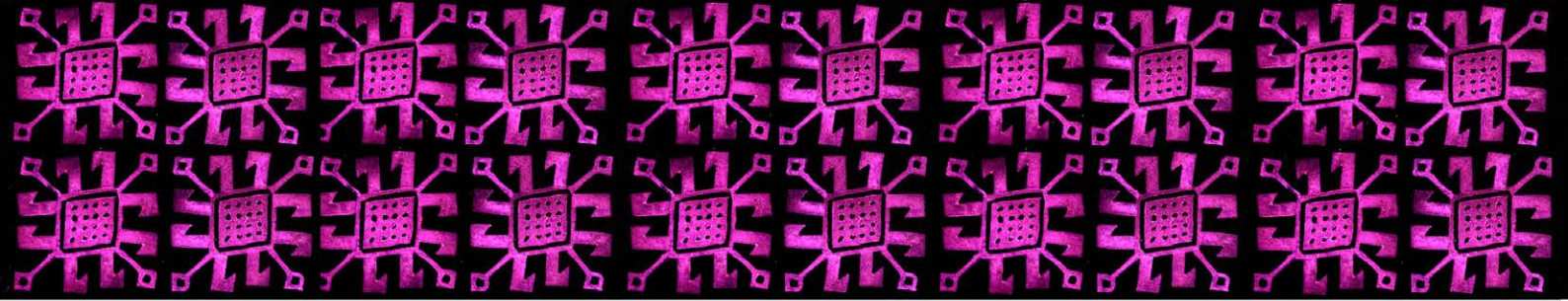
He was born in Caracas in 1979.

Formed at the Gastronomy Studies Center (CEGA) in 1998, he was a disciple of Santi Santamaria and Andres Madrigal at the El Raco de Can Fabes Restaurant, a three-Michelin stars restaurant, in Catalonia, Spain, 2001-2002. He completed his training as cook at El Señorío del Sulco Restaurant, Lima, Peru, during 2003. He returns to Venezuela and acts as CEGA professor for 6 years.

He was the chef at Portada's TV show, transmitted by Venevision, for nearly 10 years. Together with his father, he still conducts the weekly radio show *Geografia del Paladar* (Palate Geography), broadcasted by Actualidad 90.3 FM. Since 2005, he is chef editor for the magazine *Bienmesabe*. He is awarded the Fork of Gold Award 2007 by the Venezuelan Gastronomy Academy. Currently, he is the Executive Chef and partner at the restaurant Moreno, located in the Altamira Village Tourist Center in Caracas. He defines himself as an advocate of his country's culinary traditions and eternally in love with its flavours. Unconditional collaborator of the NGO Jose Andres World Central Kitchen in Venezuela. As its ambassador, he organizes and calls for people and foundations to be in harmony with the objectives of the GNO.







WESTERN ASIA

# *Kurdistan*





# Kurdistan: About Mothers and Kebab

by Ernesto Lotitto Martinez

*It is* a hot summer afternoon in Madrid. A drop of sweat rolls down my cheek as I walk into this well-cleaned place, with a spacious, modern and pleasant atmosphere, and the blessing of air conditioning.

The manager greets me with a friendly look and a slight smile. He senses that I am not going to be a, shall we say, “normal” customer. The Mahou faucet, also sweaty, but frozen, winks at me like none other. “A tap beer, please”, I ask from the counter, while I put myself in “journalist mode” to continue the investigation that led me there. “They say this restaurant is Kurdish,” I open the conversation without any delay.

“Aziz” (I will keep his real name anonymous) is in his 30s and seems to be very sharp-headed. He immediately becomes interested in my curiosity about his culture: “we are the only Kurdish kebab in the area”, he tells me.

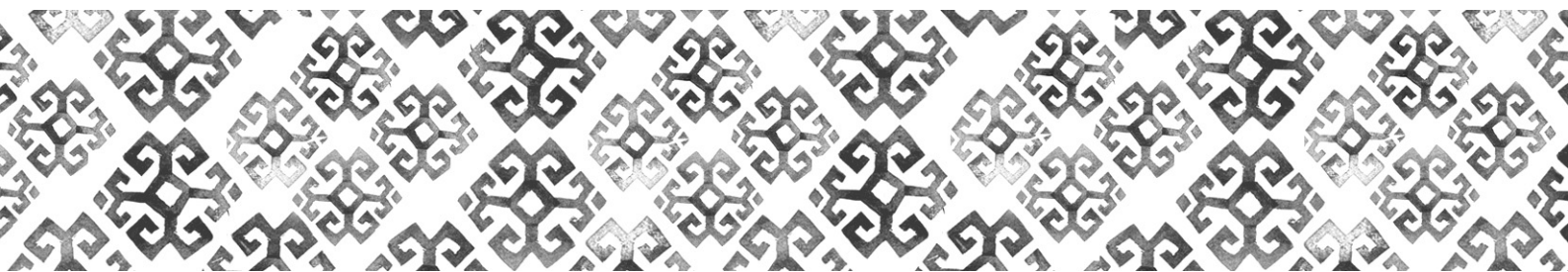
My mission was to understand more and better about Kurdistan, its culture, its people and its gastronomy through some personal testimony, but the search so far had been complex. After several frustrating calls and visits to a series of places in the capital and its surroundings —where I found mostly Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and some Colombian instead—, the conversation with Aziz was a promising one...

It is not easy to put yourself in their shoes... that is why. Kurdistan —a mountainous region that partially covers Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria— is, geo-culturally speaking, a territory with centuries (millennia?) of history, which due to the ups and downs of geopolitics, has never been officially recognized as a state.

There are three main religions in Kurdistan, he says —Christian, Muslim and Sunni— and he has two “official” passports, Syrian and Iranian, but he claims to be Kurdish, “and we Kurds are Kurds above anything else” (whether talking about it as a region or a religion), with its own identity, customs and language. “We fight together. If they mess with one, they mess with everyone”. It is different with us Venezuelans —with a history of barely two centuries—; because we have a recognized territory and have a passport of our own... But perhaps we still lack a bit of that unequivocal feeling of unity that Aziz expresses.

And how do they maintain cultural identity over time, and across generations despite distance? Aziz has no doubt: it is because of the mothers. “A Kurdish mother is a guarantee that your child will grow up with values and culture”.

He tells me there are many parents who send their adolescent children to Kurdistan, so that they learn and experience their customs first-hand, and are able to pass them on later... And I, meanwhile, cannot help remembering Sumito Estevez’s writing, in *Sweet chili: the smell of my country*:





*Mothers touch. Children smell. They smell because their mothers' hands have a smell. It is a primary, animal, wild smell. This smell we forget in time, but leave an atavistic memory. Our aromatic heritage is born from there, because the hands that caress us are the hands of a cook. (2015)*

And this is how food, mothers, hands and aromas become this sort of “guarantee” of culture, values and stories.

### **To the Kebab!**

Just as we Venezuelans take our areperas to various capitals around the world, the expansion of the kebab is due to the Kurdish community, at least in Madrid. In fact, the fourth kebab in all of Spain was a Kurdish undertaking. “Almost all the kebabs in Madrid were Kurdish, but lately Pakistanis have been buying them,” says Aziz.

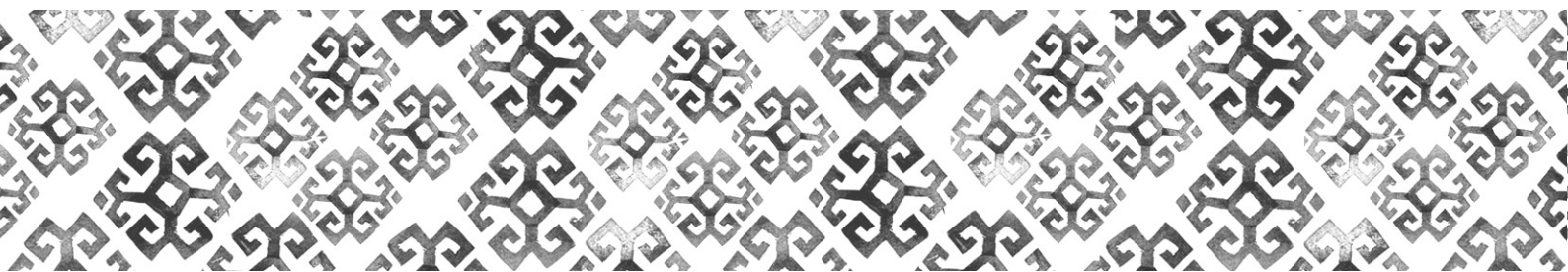
There are many types of kebab. We will focus on *döner*, which must be one of the most popular in urban centers. *Döner kebab* roughly translates to “meat roasted on a vertical skewer”. The meat can usually be chicken or beef, and it is marinated and seasoned with different spices such as coriander, cumin, pepper, cinnamon, turmeric or powdered ginger... All of which is joined together, to put it on a stick on the skewer, and let it spin!

I was lucky that —after two beers and a good chat— my first Kurdish friend decided to give me a portion of kebab to put in my arepas.

For this reason, and because of the complexity of this preparation, I offer this humble version of the Kurdish Arepa for beginners (like myself).

### **Kurdish Arepas**

1. Find a kebab place. It is better if it is a Kurdish one.
  - a) If it is Kurdish, strike up a conversation with the manager. You will surely find out something you did not know. Maybe they will even give you something on your way out.
  - b) If it is not Kurdish, strike up the same conversation. You will surely learn something you did not know. Change the name of the arepa, and that is it.
  - c) If the manager is unpleasant, there is nothing to do. Look for another kebab with a better vibe.
2. Buy a portion of meat, chicken, or mixed platter to go. They will slice it for you on the spot. You will see that it falls loosely. It is perfect for arepas.
3. Make some arepas at home.
4. Fill with kebab and, to make it a little more exquisite, add a few tomato slices and a few mint leaves. The freshness of the mint combines spectacularly well with the spice of the meat. Use a bit of “white sauce” or hot sauce to finish.





## The Special Ingredient: The Stories

As the inveterate curious that I am, I believe in the importance of personal stories behind each creation: from a sandwich to an enterprise. Stories like the ones that Aziz (or anyone who cares about his work) can tell are, without a doubt, the best seasoning behind a tasty meal.

That is why stories are the main inspiration and the driving force behind our Ruta de la Arepa, this event we invented in 2017, today more relevant than ever. I usually say this is somewhat like the new Silk Road: just like that millenary stream united the known world for centuries, our arepa is that common thread that joins together millions of people worldwide (inside and outside of Venezuela), providing the opportunity to connect with both the local and the global..., and always through people and their stories.

A good conversation allows us empathize, relate, co-create and also reflect; because we still have a lot to learn from other cultures or from stories like Aziz's... And if the Silk Road passed—among other places— through Eurasia, what better way to pay homage than by highlighting a culture as authentic as the Kurdish?

And indeed, the time will come if we apply ourselves to it, when, undoubtedly, “we will be the most influential migratory phenomenon of the century”, as well as a source of inspiration—in terms of leadership, creativity and self-improvement—for millions of creators in the world, regardless of what their passport says. Let's do it for our people, but also because we can bequeath a kinder world and also grow along the way.

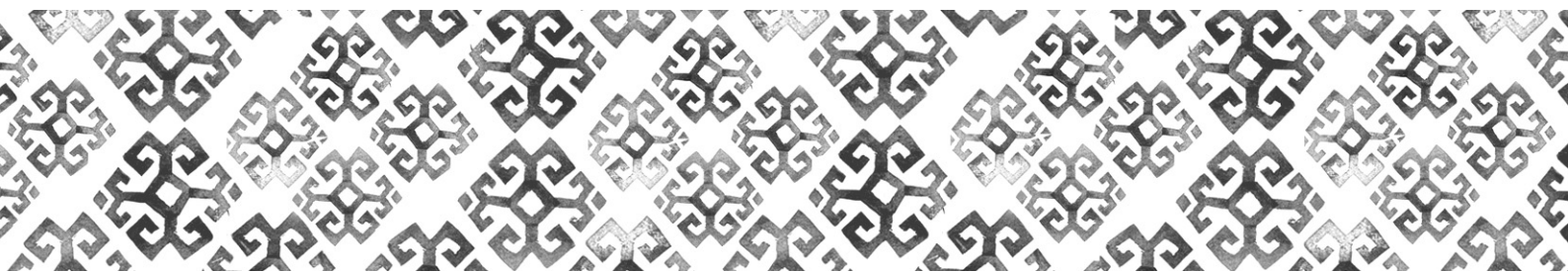
Because, more than a destination, what is important is the Road we take!



*Ernesto Lotitto Martinez*

 @rutadelaarepa  
[www.arepaglobal.com](http://www.arepaglobal.com)

Lotitto was born in Caracas from Argentinian immigrant parents. He is an entrepreneur, producer, communicator and musician. He made a career in Product the magazine, where he worked as a designer, journalist, editor and director of multimedia content. He has been in Spain for more than ten years. There he has been involved in projects of all kinds, from marketing and communication strategies to event production, and the creation of experiential concepts, focusing on the development and positioning of brands through AKARi Group—the firm he created in 2014 with his wife Maryem Sader. In 2017, the two co-created La Ruta de la Arepa® (Arepa Road), *which he describes as the first global platform with mainstream reach, which paves the way for the most powerful gastro-cultural trend of recent times.*



# Kurdish Arepa (Alpaca Kebab)

by Juan Luis Martinez



## Arepa Dough

550 ml water  
350 gr precooked corn flour  
9 gr salt

- Heat water above 80°C and place it in a bowl. Mix salt with flour, and add it to the hot water. Start to knead well for no less than 6 minutes, or until the dough is homogeneous, smooth and slightly elastic. Shape arepas with your hands.
- Seal arepas on a very hot griddle and finish cooking in the oven at 200°C.





### **Kebab Meat**

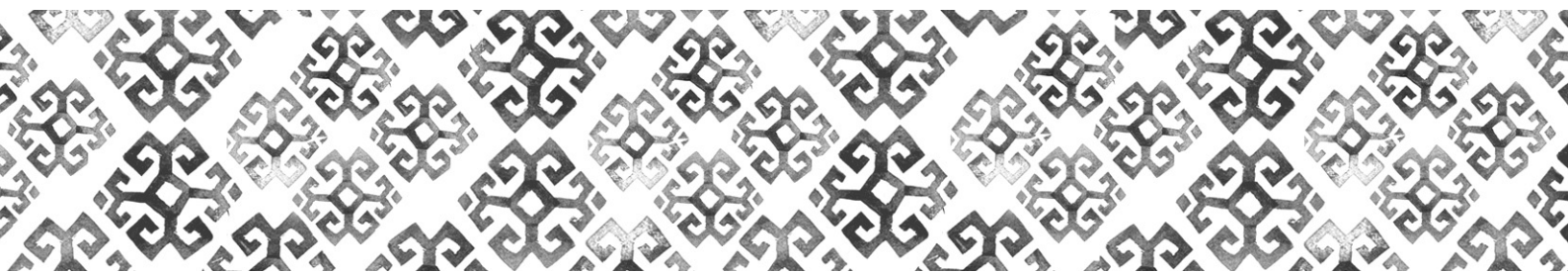
800 gr alpaca meat  
80 gr lamb fat  
30gr ground panca chili pepper, bleached, not spicy  
80 gr rocoto pepper  
15 gr Maras salt to taste  
5 gr ground cumin  
5gr ground oregano

- With the help of a knife, remove all tendon or cartilage the alpaca meat could have. Cut the meat and the lamb fat with the help of an angular Zirh (Turkish) type knife —this will help to obtain a better consistency of the meat at the end.
- Chop the meat, almost as if it were ground, even though it will have a different consistency due to the knife cut.
- Mix all the ingredients once an optimal minced meat is obtained.
- Form Kebabs on wooden or metal skewers. Roast them over hot coals.



### **Salad**

300gr tomato  
100gr onion  
150gr cucumber  
50gr coriander  
20gr of muña (Andean mint)  
30ml of olive oil



5gr salt  
10ml lemon juice

Dice onion, tomato, and skinless cucumber into small cubes. Chop muña and coriander leaves too, and mix them with the rest of the previously cut vegetables. Season with salt, oil and lemon.



#### **Guasacaca**

200gr Chinese onion (green part)  
120gr green paprika  
50gr coriander with stem  
25gr parsley (leaf)  
100gr avocado  
20gr salt  
160ml white vinegar

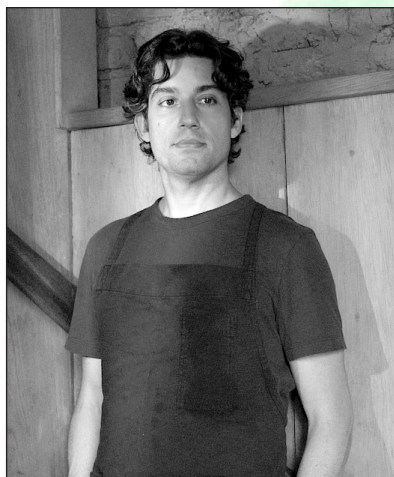
Mix all the ingredients in a blender and reserve.



#### **Cream**

100gr Milk cream  
10gr Paprika

*Mix the two ingredients. Open and assemble your arepa with a little of each preparation: Kebab, salad,guasacaca and cream.*



**Juan Luis Martinez Tizzani**



@meritorest



meritorestaurante

[www.meritorestaurante.com](http://www.meritorestaurante.com)

He was born in Caracas, Venezuela in 1979. He began cooking studies at the Casserole DuChef school in Caracas. When he finished, he did internships with Chef Helena Ibarra at the Altamira Suites; and he continued his training at the Center for Gastronomic Studies (CEGA) —where emphasis was placed on training in Venezuelan cuisine—, under the tutelage of researcher Jose Rafael Lovera and chef Victor Moreno. He completed his studies at the Ferrandi School in Paris. In 2014, he arrived in Peru and spent two years as head chef at Central restaurant of Virgilio Martinez. At the end of 2016, he visits Denmark, where he is captivated by the staging, the management of space, the architecture and the use of the endemic product in restaurants. In 2017, he returns to Peru and starts his restaurant project with chef Jose Luis Saume. In 2018, they open the doors of the Merito restaurant, in Lima; which in 2020 is listed as one of Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants.







WESTERN ASIA

# Yemen



# Yemen, a Taste for Home

by Adriana Gibbs

*A scent* takes me to the “place where the sun rises” in the Middle East. I see the reflections of the Red Sea covering the coast of Yemen on the monitor and, with my index finger on the map, I close my eyes and let the smell guide me: the Andean coffee steaming in my favorite cup may be a distant relative of that “qahw” —also known by the Ethiopians as the “wine of the prophet”— that in Sanaa, the capital of Yemen, has been enjoyed since ancient times under the name of “qishr”.

It is the famous black gold that captivates the traveler and forces him to stop his steps —and the steps of my fingers on the map— to calmly savor the style of the city that places the perfect blend of ground Arabica grains, ginger root and cinnamon stick on the lips. This infusion synthesizes the culture of a country marked by migrations, from the nomadism of its original tribes, through the different historical displacements of a population threatened by the deviations of power, up to the current diaspora that tries to survive in other latitudes in the figure of a sometimes bitter exile.

From the cup rises a slight melancholy that the Yemeni, like the Venezuelan or the Indian, can feel in Berlin, Amsterdam or Montreal. With this breath, man sweetens his coffee on the planet and begins to rebuild his house from the palate. Taste fuels his bonfire: the luminous center that radiates filial heat and promotes fraternal exchange beyond borders.

Arriving in Yemen by any of its shores is landing in the realms of smell and taste, the place where our memory is confronted with original aromas. A place where the expression «smell is undoubtedly the most complete and complex of the senses» is shown. It whets the appetite and tells us something about the quality and preservation of the product, about the components of the dish: «the product’s own smell, spices, aromatic herbs”, as Vasquez Montalban points out in *To Know or Not To Know. Essential Manual of Spanish Gastronomic Culture*. In any of its cities, cinnamon is “sweet wood” and, as in any part of the world... *it is used to flavor cakes, cookies, bread, biscuits, sweets, chocolates, soft drinks, chewing gum; ice cream, fruit, especially pears, apples and bananas. It gives an exotic flavor to certain rice dishes. It is also used to season beef, pork, poultry, lamb and fish. It goes very well with some mixtures of liquors and, of course, it is irreplaceable in the comforting canelazo, or in hot chocolate and coffee...* as Soffy Arboleda and Nasle Galat write in the book *Spices: Stories, Uses, Crops and their Best Recipes*.

By saying “cardamom” you have in your hands the “grain of paradise”. It is one of the oldest and most endearing spices in that territory, the citric and floral essence of which is useful in the preparation of different dishes and drinks. It comes from an herbaceous plant of the ginger family, with small white or green flowers, and the fruit contains the aromatic seeds.





However, throughout Yemen, olfactory memory does not fade, rather it strengthens in the face of so much wonder, and you can restore in the memory that dish that an aunt used to prepare in Puerto Ordaz to celebrate great family occasions: an exceptional curried chicken, much celebrated by all, whose recipe the cook guarded with zeal. The secret, I can now perceive it in this environment, was in that exquisite meeting of flavors that make up curry. Here the color is provided by turmeric—in Thailand, for example, there is green and red curry—and that peculiar taste is the result of an exotic mixture of twenty or more spices and herbs.

When crossing a street, you can have a flashback a few meters further, in the furniture store on the corner, where every afternoon the Turk offered his customers a coffee with cardamom and had a world of fun with the stories he invented for them when reading the cup bottoms.

Before returning from that trip to the palate of the senses, and as a gesture of friendship, I want to exchange my Caribbean arepa with the unleavened bread of these diners; both round like the world, and flat like the plain and the desert.



Adriana Gibbs

 @adrianagibbsm

Venezuelan writer. She is licensed as a Social Communicator at the Andres Bello Catholic University. She has a Master's degree in Social Psychology from the Central University of Venezuela; and diplomas in Culture of Wine & Spirits from the Metropolitan University. She is the author of *Soy Panadero*, a tribute to the artisans of bread in Venezuela (Alumware, 2019), with which she won the 2019 Gastronomic Publication Golden Fork award granted by the Venezuelan Academy of Gastronomy; *365 Days: One for each Wine* (Ediciones Punto Paladar, 2021), winner of the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards 2021 in the category of best digital wine book. And her three collections of poems: *It Looks like Autumn* (The free hare, 1993); *Of Never Saying Goodbye* (Comala.com, 2002); and *Double Journey* (Oscar Todtmann editors, 2018). Wines, distillates and gastronomy coexist on her page [www.adrianagibbs.com](http://www.adrianagibbs.com)



# Levante's Sun Arepa

by Fabiola Barcelo



## For 3 Arepas of 80 gr each

240gr precooked corn flour

30gr oatmeal

9gr anise

9gr turmeric

A pinch of salt (3 to 6 grams)

Mix water with turmeric and sweet anise, add corn flour and oatmeal. Knead very well and let it rest for about five minutes. Shape arepas and cook them on both sides over medium-low heat until golden brown.



## Perico (Scrambled eggs with Tomatoes, Onions and Spices)

*Remember we use curry powder in Venezuela, but we would like to tell you about the spices that this curry has.*



100gr tomato  
70gr onion  
1 garlic clove  
2 gr coriander powder  
2 gr turmeric  
1gr cinnamon  
2 gr black pepper  
3 gr salt  
4 eggs  
1 teaspoon olive oil  
45gr roasted red paprika  
Fresh coriander for garnish

- Heat, a little, curry spices (turmeric, coriander, cinnamon) and cumin in olive oil, just to activate the flavors. Then sauté tomato, onion and garlic. Add paprika and eggs, season with salt and pepper to taste and stir until cooked.
- Served with fresh coriander and a few pepperoncino flakes.



**Fabiola Barcelo**

 **@Fabba\_cocina**

Guyanese cook, graduated from the Cuisinart school. She trained as a Baker at the IEPAN and as a Sommelier at the Venezuelan Academy of Sommelier. She is the creator of the delicious golfeado cake “La Campeona”, an innovative and unique dessert in Venezuela whose flavor immediately transports us to our childhood’s aromas. Through her account on Instagram, she offers the classic catering service for all kinds of events, coffee breaks, breakfasts and desserts in fit and fat mode. In addition to consulting and advising for food service, food photography and styling, and menu and recipe design.







SOUTH ASIA

# *Afghanistan*





# A Technical Touch in Kabul, Afghanistan

by Daniel Nazoa

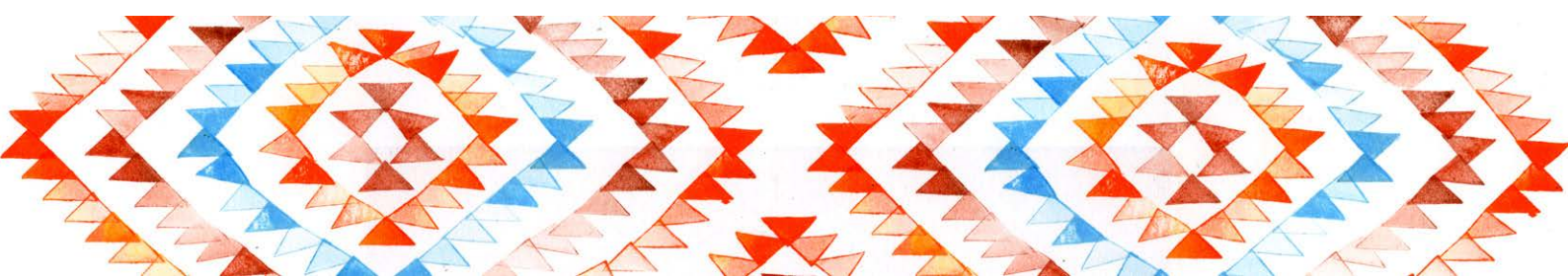
*Once*—while traveling on a plane from London to Perth, in Australia, in order to visit a couple of friends— the plane we were traveling in unexpectedly suffered a mishap, and the pilots had to divert the flight to Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. What at first seemed like an unattractive destination ended up being one of the most exciting, entertaining and fun life experiences I have had.

When the plane landed and taxied to the terminal, the more than two hundred passengers were a little disconcerted. The captain had already been kind enough to inform us that the incident did not represent a real risk for the flight, but it had to be fixed anyway. What little I understood (because of my bad English) was that a compression valve in something in the cabin was not working. Anyway, we were all evacuating the plane, since the spare part would arrive the next day on another flight.

It was barely two o'clock in the afternoon on a sunny summer Friday, when hundreds of “musafires” (this is how Afghans call tourists or foreigners) made a slow registration at the counter of the famous Kabul Serena Hotel. The airline had given us some tickets to use in the hotel restaurant. However, a group of people who had become friends in the midst of this unexpected event had already agreed to go out to the city, relatively close to us, to eat and see some emblematic places.

A hotel employee approached to offer us some pants and long dresses that would allow us to have a little more freedom within the city. The Afghans are really very friendly and helpful people, and they also try to ensure the safety of their visitors. For me it was part of the game that meant being in that place in such an untimely way. But even more unexpected was that on that same day “July 5, 2016”, Ramadan ended, the fast that ended the ninth Islamic month and Muslims observe for reflection, recollection and family celebration.

Leaving the hotel, I noticed a sweet taste at the end of my throat: there was a constant smell of cardamom and raisins. We passed by some stores where dozens of sewing machines made noises in unison, sewing garments of different colors. Each tailor had a white box next to him containing what appeared to be cookies, dozens of them. That was precisely where the smell came from. An ungainly and tall pattern of olive skin put the boxes to one side. It was a gift so that at the end of the day they would take these traditional cookies home. That day they had to sew many dresses and “chapan” (as they called the open coats that we were wearing).



That would be the first of three days in which there is no work and, on the contrary, families visit each other and eat and eat and eat a lot. Turning a corner, facing a large avenue, we came across a large market, a really very large one. I have to admit that I am addicted to Middle Eastern spices and the use of nuts in food; however, the street markets have something that I could not explain what it is, and I could not stop visiting them, because at that moment I found myself in what I baptized as “my personal paradise”. People were running around me carrying sacks that must have weighed a lot; the women, dressed in blue faded and worn burkas, carried with them bags of chick peas and others containing a kind of salty spaghetti called “simyón”. It gave me the impression of being inside a thousand-head giant, among the shouts, offerings, smells, flavors, fighting cocks, canaries and Australian parakeets. But the Afghans seemed to know how to control this giant.

My friends and I could not believe what we were experiencing. Just a few hours before we were on board a British airplane; and, as if in a dream, we now were there. We were hungry and very thirsty —something that was not difficult to solve— because there were hundreds if not thousands of small places to eat along the avenue. They were recognizable because in front of these improvised shops, in the middle of the street, there were carpets on the floor where people sat down to receive their food.

We were practically dragged along by a countryman, who, as we understood, was in charge of taking people to the restaurants. We passed a few streets following the pace of our host. Along the way they stretched out their hands full of small samples of food that I never refused. I was impressed to see a small stall where sugar cane juice was offered, which served to quench our thirst. The temperature —according to an illuminated sign in a pharmacy— was around 36°C. Among the crowd, we saw many children playing with toys that seemed new. There were trucks, machine guns and pistols, games that surely showed an underlying reality of this town. Then our friend told us that the children received gifts from their parents on these dates, celebrating the end of this famous fast.

We finally arrived at what at first seemed like a house, or the house of the man who was guiding us. When we arrived, some diners were already enjoying a bacchanal that few could imagine; now that I think about it, I did imagine ever being at a table like this. And I say “table” even though in reality the food was on the floor on a carpet onto which they had placed a large white tablecloth embroidered with threads that I thought were made of gold. Of course, the center was crowned with a Kabuli Pulao —a very emblematic and festive rice in Afghanistan. I had already tried it on a couple of occasions, but this one exceeded the limits of perfection: it was made with a very perfumed long rice (known to us as “basmati”) mixed with carrots, raisins and lamb, and arranged in the shape of a huge volcano. Around it were other dishes that accompanied the Kabuli Pulao: a Bojan salad made of spiced eggplant, Nan-i-Afghani or Afghan bread; there were also many desserts, among which there was rice pudding, the best I have “guzzled” so far; because in the face of such a banquet,





“eating” was no longer an option. This rice had something very special; I am going to tell you about it, and I have made it with my own recipe ever since. The Afghans place a raw egg yolk, once the rice is still hot, mixing constantly so as not to form lumps. The flavor and body of this dessert reaches another level, just with this ingredient. You had better write it down.

The diners who were there ended up speaking precarious English mixed with signs, but that was not an impediment to understand each other, we even made some jokes. We returned to the hotel after six in the evening, not having ingested a single drop of alcohol, but intoxicated with laughter, happiness, hospitality and very, very good food.

The next day, as the Roll Royce engines of our refurbished plane thundered down the runway picking up speed, and the landing gear was no longer touching Afghan soil, I was overcome with a feeling of happiness mixed with a sense of great injustice, why had I never decided to visit that country? How many other countries could be just as fun and interesting? Those 18 hours that I was in Kabul —out of schedule and out of any itinerary I had thought of— fed my spirit and my soul, and made me think of that beautiful quote by the Brazilian chef Alex Atala who said “I believe that cooking is the closest link between nature and culture”. See you soon Afghanistan, we will see each other again.



*Daniel Nazoa*

 @nazoa

Filmmaker and chef, he found the perfect pairing in the kitchen. He belongs to a family where art and cooking have always been present. He studied at the Academy of Culinary Arts in Caracas and cinema at the International Film and TV School in Cuba. Today he is chef de cuisine at La Sandia in Toulouse, France. And he has managed to mix his two passions, gastronomy and cinema on his channel [canal](#).



# Afghan Arepa

by Felipe Acevedo



*This was delicious! We are going to include it in the menu of the Latino Bar  
here in Queretaro, Mexico!*



**Kebab (eight skewers):**

1kg of lamb or beef diced into large cubes

**Marinade:**

Coriander seeds

1/2 tablespoon of cumin

1/2 tablespoon of cayenne pepper

1/2 tablespoon of cinnamon

Salt

Pepper

3 tablespoons of yogurt

Olive oil

½ lemon

8 bamboo skewers

1 grated onion

- Dice one kilo of lamb or beef into large cubes. Marinate with coriander seeds ground in a mortar, cumin, cayenne pepper, cinnamon, salt and pepper to taste, and three tablespoons of yogurt. Add to this marinade a few drops of olive oil and the juice of half a lemon. Spread the meat with this and let it rest for four hours in the refrigerator.
- Half an hour before cooking, remove from refrigerator and leave at room temperature. At the same time, soak eight bamboo skewers —where the skewers will be made— for half an hour to prevent them from burning. After this half hour, assemble the skewers to make the Kebab.
- Extract the juice of an onion by grating it first and then sieving it to squeeze all its juice. Mix the onion juice with a little olive oil. Once they are on the grill, paint the skewers with this liquid mixture.

**First Side Dish:**

4 Eureka or yellow lemons

4 onions

Olive oil

- Put lemon and onion quarters brushed with olive oil on the grill. Later, they will be placed to accompany the skewers on one side of the plate.

**Salad:**

4 tomatoes

2 red onions, julienned

3 cucumbers

Kalamata Olives

Fresh Cilantro

Fresh Parsley

Fresh mint

Salt

Freshly ground pepper

Lemon juice

Olive oil



- Cut several tomatoes into pieces, mix them in a bowl with julienned red onion, diced seedless and skinless, and Kalamata olives.
- Separately, mix fresh cilantro, parsley and mint. Chopped it very small and add salt, freshly ground pepper, lemon juice and olive oil. Add to the salad.



### **Arepas:**

- 1 cup precooked corn flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/4 cup warm water
- 1/2 teaspoon oil (optional)

- Make a traditional arepa dough, with flour, salt, warm water and, if you like, half a teaspoon of oil. Knead well, shape the arepas, cook them in a budare or iron flat skillet, and then in the oven until they puff up.



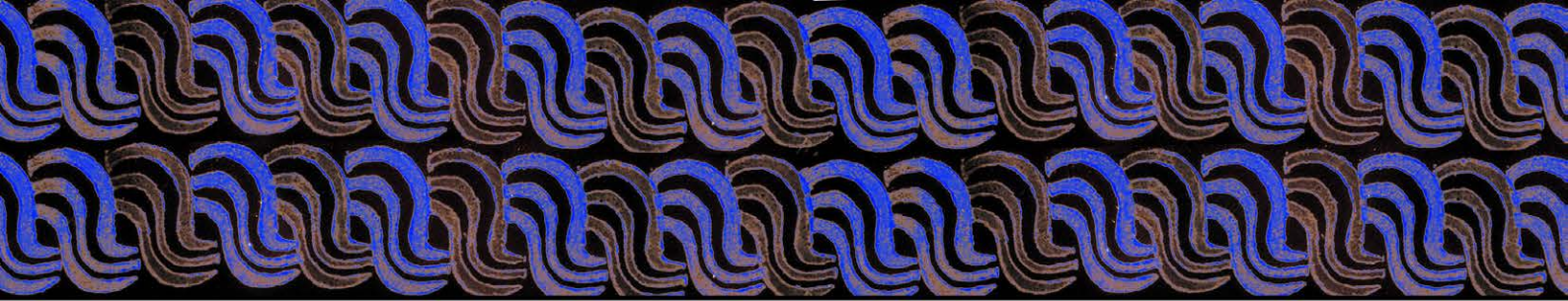
### **Felipe Enrique Acevedo Castillo**

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-  Soncompayqueretaro

Felipe is a Venezuelan musician, educator and cook. Chef at Latino Café & Bistro Cultural, an enterprise created together with Cissi Montilla in Queretaro, Mexico, where they came to land with their bones more than 20 years ago. He has been always in love with the kitchen where he does his magic when he is not playing any of his instruments. He investigates and invents with the same intensity to create delicious dishes or wonderful melodies. Musician by birth, he has been a member of the following groups: Orchestra of Latin American Instruments (ODILA), La Banda Sigilosa, Foli Vergue Taquititá, Jhony Pacheco and Hector Casanova, Grupo Madera, among others, and is currently director of Cafe Cola'o. A teacher at heart, in Queretaro he was musical director, teacher and coordinator of the Latin American Children's Percussion Ensemble; and many years before Curricular designer of the School of Latin American Popular Music-FUNDEF project, sponsored by the OAS and UNESCO.







SOUTHEAST ASIA

# Rohingyas (Myanmar)





# Rohingyas: an Intersection Table between Traditions and Religion

by Marianne Robles

*Burma* is located in Southeast Asia. It borders India, Thailand, China, Bangladesh, and Laos. In 1989, the military government resulting from a coup in 1988, changed the name of the country to the *Union of Myanmar*. Today, it is the official name of the country; however, in many environments and in Spanish-speaking countries Myanmar is still used to refer to the affairs of this nation.

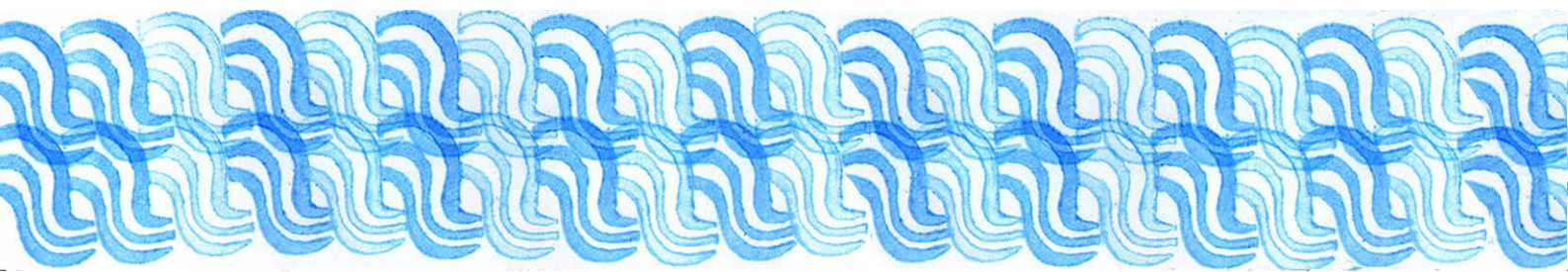
Myanmar is a very diverse country as a result of the coexistence in its territory of various ethnic groups with their respective religions and languages, in addition to a series of insurgent movements that remain in permanent conflict. The Rohingyas are a community that has lived in Myanmar since the 8th century. It grew due to the labor import processes implemented during the British Empire.

Most of the ethnic groups that live in Myanmar are officially recognized—in 2018, UNHCR reported 135 recognized ethnic groups; that is, their members are Burmese citizens with their corresponding rights and duties. This is not the case of the Rohingya ethnic group who consider themselves to be natives of that country. Despite having lived in it for generations, the Burmese government does not recognize them and considers them foreign invaders. They are an officially unknown ethnic and religious minority.

Currently, there are 1.2 million refugees from Myanmar. They are people looking for life, trying to give their story a turn that leads them to another destination. Many efforts are made by people and organizations that voluntarily contribute something in this regard, trying to change a past of violence and resentment for a present of solutions and support that allows them to build a decent future.

The Rohingyas have religion as a reference for well-being and as a principle of social organization; their name is the same as the language they speak: Rohingya, a mixture of Arabic, Urdu and Burmese. Their status as a religious minority is due to the fact that Myanmar (formerly Burma) is a country where Buddhism predominates, and they belong to Hanafi, one of the schools of thought included in the Sunni branch of Islam. They are Muslims. Among the most important descriptors of Burmese gastronomy—of which the Rohingyas belong—are the region's own fish, rice, noodles, a wide variety of vegetables and the use of salt, garlic, onion, ginger and turmeric. In addition, various herbs and spices show the Indian, Thai and Chinese influence. Red meat, especially pork, is rare, as neither Buddhists nor Muslims eat it.

They tend to give great importance to breakfast, and this is expressed in the repertoire of dishes they eat at that time of day, which can range from noodles in milk sauce to a Thali, which is a crepe stuffed with curry, or a Mohinga—considered national dish—which is a soup of rice noodles in fish broth.





They are also consumers of salads, as an expression of their agricultural tradition. They eat them cold, hot, with meat or just with vegetables and, in some cases, with added rice or noodles. They usually eat them at lunch, a meal they consider important but less relevant than breakfast.

Burmese sweets, known as *moun*, are not eaten as dessert, but rather as an appetizer accompanied by tea in the morning or as an afternoon snack. They are not usually packed with sugar, but instead get their sweet flavors from ingredients like shredded coconut, coconut milk, rice flour, cooked sticky rice, tapioca, and fruits.

They do not have a dessert culture as the closing dish of a meal. They have a diverse repertoire of semolina, banana, sweet potato and coconut cakes, which are usually eaten decorated with sesame seeds. The most widely consumed tea in Myanmar is red tea.

At the table of the Rohingyas there is an interaction between Burmese gastronomy and the food restrictions required by Islamic law according to which accepted foods are called “Halal”. Actually, it is a broad concept that refers to both food and practices permitted or considered lawful by the Muslim religion.

“Halal food” means food permitted under Islamic law that also meets the following preparation, storage and distribution requirements:

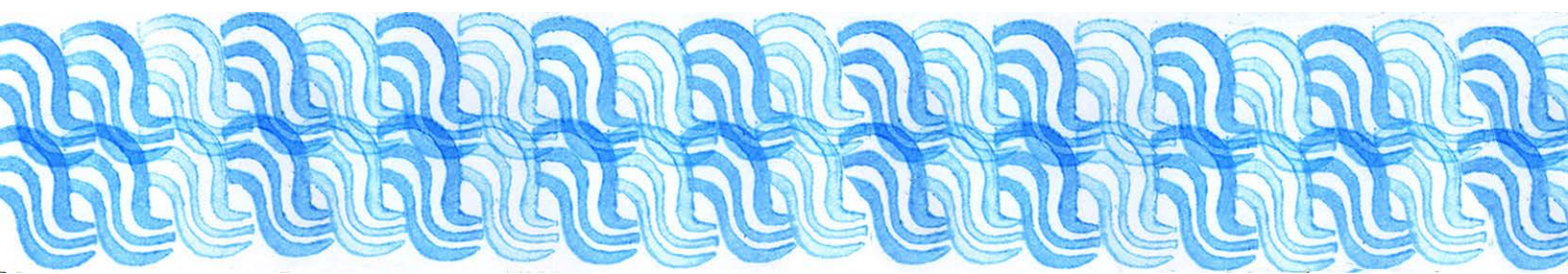
- It does not include or contain in its composition anything that is considered illegal under Islamic law.
- It has been prepared, processed, transported or stored, using devices or means that are not illegal according to Islamic law.
- During its preparation, processing, transport or storage, it has not being in direct contact with food or utensils considered illegal.

Foods that are not considered “Halal” are called “Haram” which includes the main ingredient and its derivatives. Here we try to summarize such restrictions that the Rohingyas abide by despite the adversities they face in the refugee camps where they live in.

The restricted Haram foods, according to the Codex Alimentarius sent to the FAO and the WHO, are the following:

### **Foods of Animal Origin:**

- Pigs and boars, dogs, snakes and monkeys.
- Carnivorous animals with claws and fangs (lions, tigers, bears, and the like).
- Birds of prey with claws (eagles, vultures and the like).
- Animals that Islam forbids killing: ants, bees and woodpeckers.
- Animals considered repulsive: lice, flies, worms, and the like.
- Animals that live both on land and in water (frogs, crocodiles, and the like).
- Domestic mules and donkeys.
- All poisonous and dangerous aquatic animals.
- Any animal that has not been slaughtered according to Islamic law.
- Blood.



**Vegetarian Food:**

Plants, narcotic and dangerous substances. Exception made when the toxin or the risk it possesses can be eliminated during their elaboration.

**Beverages:**

Alcoholic drinks and all kinds of narcotic or dangerous drinks

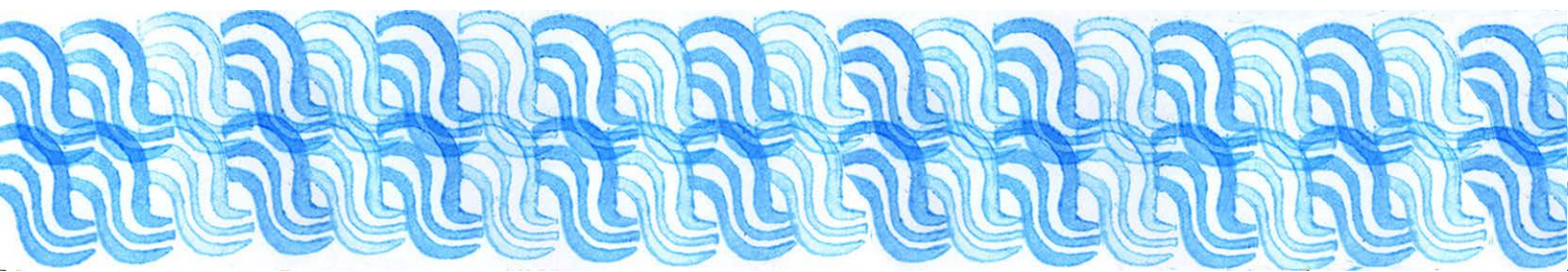
**Other Restrictions:**

- Food additives derived from the above categories.
- Land animals considered lawful must have been slaughtered following the practices established by Islamic law for fresh meat.
- Any food prepared, stored, or distributed contrary to Islamic law.
- When a claim is made that the food is “Halal”, the word “Halal” or other equivalent terms must appear on the label.

It is easy to assume that in the case of the Rohingyas who live in refugee camps, and who will eventually be forced to consume prohibited foods out of necessity, it applies the consideration provided for in the Law of Islam, in which it is established that they will not incur in sin providing such consumption is not done in pursuit of an act of disobedience to Allah.

**Heart of Arepa...**

Bangladesh and some other regions continue to request international help to maintain the large number of Rohingya refugees they shelter in their territory and improve the conditions of the camps where they inhabit and live with uncertainty and contradiction, injustice and solidarity, joy and sadness, adversity and hope in the face of permanent conflict, but also with peace as a possibility. Every day, the Rohingya, like all of us who inhabit this planet, deserve opportunities. We deserve to have a homeland and live a life in peace. Today, our hands are extended to offer them our open and generous arepa as vessel for their culture and as balm for their tiredness. An entire country fits into a hot arepa, the softness of its interior receives the flavors of memory and returns them in a bite that is like a hug that comforts and provides security. The taste memory of this people lives in each of its members. It is a place where the homeland dwells and can always be visited, without the fear of being taken away from us.





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*Marianne Robles*



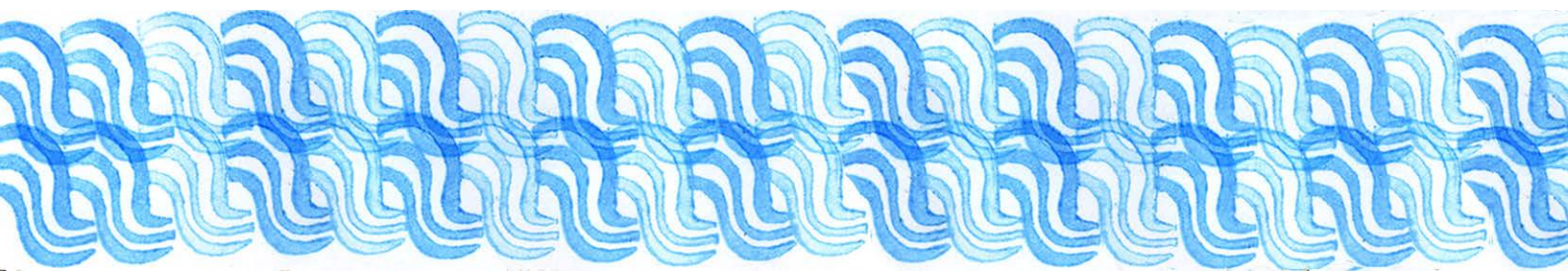
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Marianne is a Librarian, specialist in Information Services Management. She is a student of the Doctorate in Social Sciences and Humanities at the Simon Bolivar University. Thirty years of professional experience in libraries and archives, among which are the Banco del Libro Documentation Center, the El Nacional Newspaper Photographic Archive and the Monteavila University Library. She has been an active teacher at the School of Library Science of the Central University of Venezuela for 24 years, where she develops a line of

research related to the rescue and promotion of Venezuelan gastronomic documentation. She shares her teaching activity with consultancy through her own company, Grupo Biblos, and she directs a social enterprise called La Gastroteca from where she promotes and broadcasts literature on Venezuelan cuisine.





# Arepa Filled with Rohingya Curried Fish

by Yajaira Ovalles

*The kitchens of different cultures empathize and become a warm refuge for all those who, for some reason, are now away from home.*



## Ingredients

For 5 servings



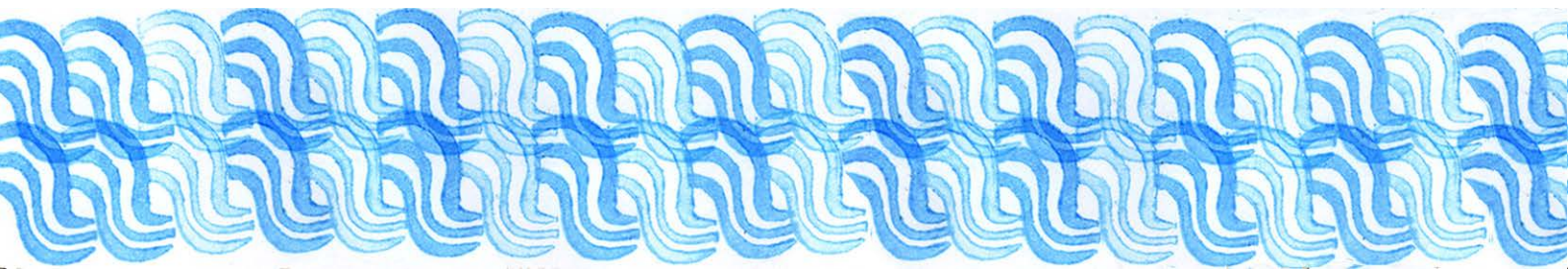
### Rohingya Curry

400 gr dried fish\*  
70 gr white onion (1 medium)  
10 gr fresh garlic (3 cloves)  
30 gr green sweet pepper (3 units)  
10 gr green chili/fresh chirel pepper  
5 gr fresh ginger

### To Desalt and Cook the Fish:

30 ml vegetable oil  
5 gr turmeric powder  
5 gr cardamom  
2 bay leaves  
80 gr fresh tomato

- In a bowl, place the dried fish and cover it completely with water. Soak for two hours; then change the water and soak for two more hours.





- Remove from the water and cook the fish in a pot with plenty of clean water for 25 minutes.
- Remove from the water and let cool for a few minutes.
- Separate the fish meat, removing skin and bones. Reserve the meat.

\* It can be substituted by fresh fish, avoiding the steps corresponding to desalting the fish.



#### **Curry Preparation:**

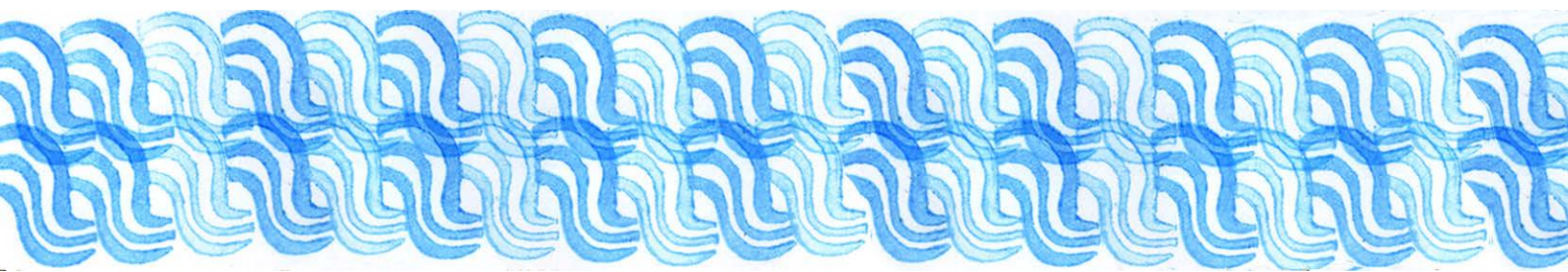
- Wash and remove the seeds of chilies and green chilies. Remove the skin of fresh ginger. In a food processor or blender, add onion, garlic, chilies, ginger, and chilies. Blend until all the ingredients are well crushed.
- In a frying pan, heat the vegetable oil over medium heat for two minutes. Add bay leaf, cardamom and turmeric and cook for two minutes stirring constantly to aromatize the oil.
- Remove cardamom seeds and add the vegetable paste made earlier.
- Cook for five minutes.
- Add fish and cook over medium heat for 10 minutes.
- Wash tomatoes, remove seeds and dice them into tiny squares to add them to the pan with the fish and curry. Cook for 10 minutes over low heat or until the liquids have evaporated. Rectify the seasoning; add a pinch of salt if necessary. Remove bay leaves.



#### **Dough for Arepas**

500 ml water  
250 gr precooked corn flour  
5 gr salt  
5 ml vegetable oil

- In a bowl, add water, corn flour and salt. With the help of a paddle, mix all the ingredients, and when the mixture is homogeneous, knead it with clean hands until you obtain a soft and smooth dough. If necessary, add a little more water until it is smooth and easy to shape. Let it rest for five minutes.



- Heat a flat pan, griddle or budare.
- Moist hands with a little water and portion dough into five balls of the same size; flatten to form a disc/round arepa.
- Cook the arepas in the hot skillet, five minutes on each side. Remove from the pan and keep covered with a cloth.

#### **For the Assembly:**

- Fresh coriander leaves
- Fresh diced tomato

Heat arepas for five minutes in the oven at 200° C. Open them in the middle and generously fill them with the curried fish, and finish with diced tomato and fresh coriander leaves.



#### **Yayi Ovalles**



@yayi\_chef



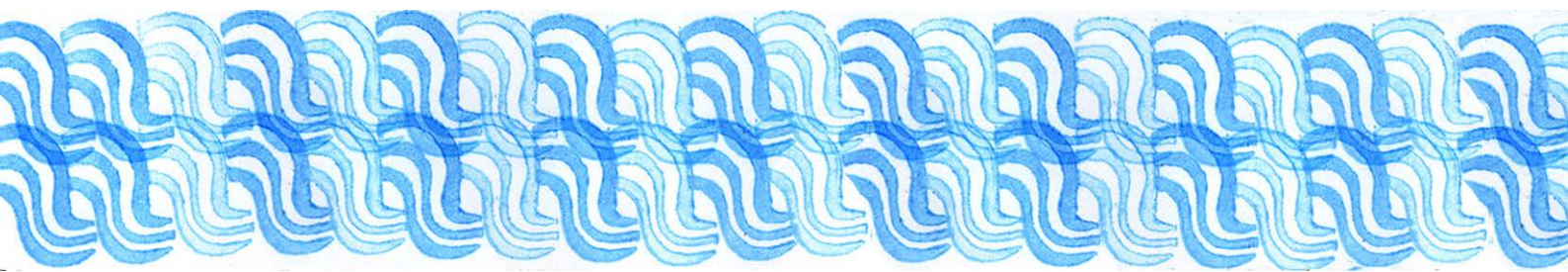
@dulceria\_caracas

*Cooking allows me to connect with my roots and most emotional memories. It is certainly a way of giving love. Being able to serve a table, invite and receive friends and accompany them in celebrations, special moments as well as difficult ones, with different dishes and flavors; it is the way in which chefs serve society.*

*In a globalized world, where there are different cultures in the same family, serving a representative dish of our culture and*

*gastronomy is what allows us to transcend time as the Venezuelans we are.*

Venezuelan Pastry Chef and Cook graduated from the Culinary Institute of Caracas (ICC) in 2009, where she has her first work experience as a cook for a year in the ICC dining room. Yayi was the exclusive chef for Inversiones Balsam S.A. during 2010-2012, She has also been a gastronomic advisor for the Bodegon Angus Premium (2014 -2016) and for Avant Bistro (2021-2022), both in Caracas. She was a pastry chef at Alto Restaurant (2009-2011), and at El Asador restaurant 2019-2021. She is currently pastry chef and director of Dulceria Caracas.







EASTERN EUROPE

# Ukraine





# Identity in a Soup and an Arepa

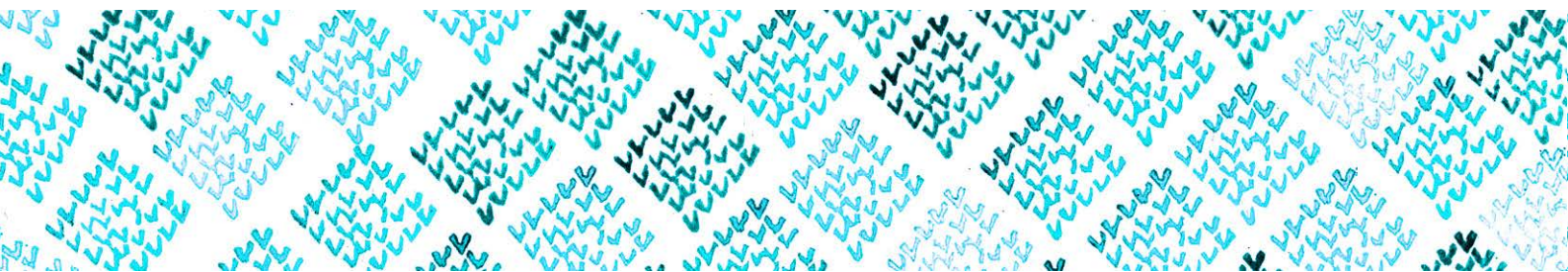
by Miro Popić

*On* July 1, 2022, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) decided to include the traditional Ukrainian Borsch soup as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on its list of protected traditional preparations. They did it to defend it from extinction in the face of the risk that it would be lost as a food value for a subjugated people, although it was clarified that “it does not imply exclusivity or ownership of the heritage.” Because Borsch soup—which many believe originates from Russia—is found in many places in that area of the world, as well as it exist in various types, in terms of ingredients, color and seasoning. No doubt this is a seemingly small, but enormous Ukrainian triumph in defense of its identity.

You are probably wondering, what can a single soup do in the face of so many bombs falling indiscriminately on that land and its people? When a people sees their territory has been invaded, their language mutilated by the oppressor, their religion sullied, the last remaining refuge of identity is food: what is shared at the daily table, what is smelled in the neighbor’s house as in ours. And, in this case, the food emblem of the Ukrainians is Borsch. This is how the great Spanish chef Jose Andres understood it, with his NGO World Central Kitchen when, arriving in Ukraine—at the beginning of Russian invasion—to bring food to civilians and troops, the first thing he did was prepare borsch rations. Because that is how we recognize ourselves, thanks to the food.

UNESCO considers that this dish is part of the Ukrainian social fabric, and that “the displacement of people and carriers threatens the element, since people are not only unable to cook or grow local vegetables for borsch, but also cannot gather to enjoy it, which undermines the social and cultural well-being of the communities”. The Minister of Culture of Ukraine, Oleksandr Tkachenko, has celebrated that Borsch is “officially” recognized as Ukrainian.

Borsch is a beetroot soup that has been prepared in Eastern Europe since the Ukrainians began cooking it in the mid-1500s, from where it spread to the peripheral kingdoms. The first world reference that is known of it is that of a German traveler, Martin Gruneweg, who in 1584 highlighted the usual preparation in most homes at the time. Since then, Borsch is not just a traditional food, it is a symbol of unity and, as *Ukrainian-recipes* portal says, “It is the basis of the Ukrainian culinary tradition, which is stronger than any modern experiment or foreign influence. Borsch is a dish of national character».





It was the Russians who made it fashionable in the West, by the time the first refugees began to arrive in Paris in 1920 after the Soviets imposed the first communist dictatorship in the world and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, USSR, raised the hammer and sickle red flag on top of the Kremlin.



The *Larousse Gastronomique* (2004) includes “borsch” in one of its entries as “Eastern European stew” and speaks of various types, including the green spinach borsch and the one made from fish. But the only recipe included is Ukrainian beetroot and beef borsch, attributed to Madame Witwicka and S. Soskine. This recipe says:

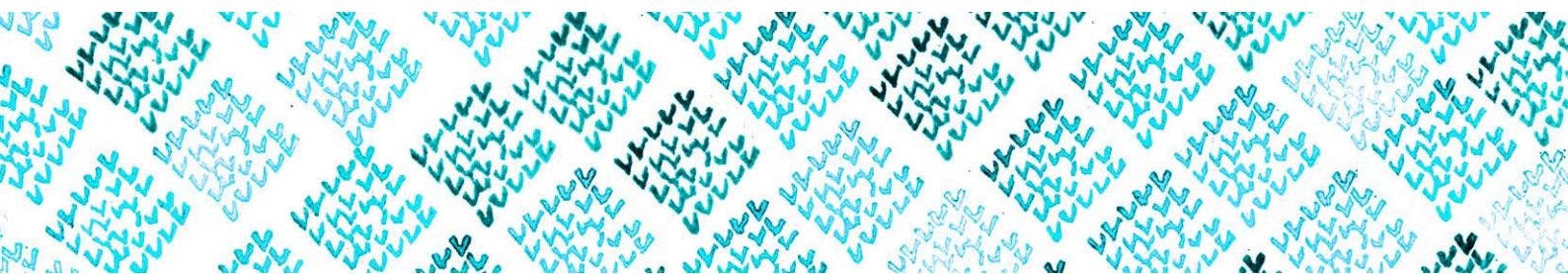
*Sauté 2 peeled and chopped onions with lard, and 200 gr of raw beetroot cut into slices, leave to cook over low heat. Bring to a boil 1 kg of beef chop meat with 2.5 liters of white cabbage rinsed with vinegar and cut into ribbons 3 carrots, 1 sprig of parsley, powder celery sprigs, as well as beets and onions. Cook 4 ripe tomatoes in very little water, strain them, add them to the stew and cook for two hours, then add some potatoes cut into quarters. Prepare a roux with lard and flour, dissolve with a little broth, pour it into the borsch with 2 tablespoons of chopped fennel, and boil for 15 more minutes before serving. This Ukrainian-style borsch is accompanied by liquid cream presented in a bowl, garlic cloves, which are bitten between two teaspoons of stew, buckwheat kasha with bacon fingers and meat, rice and cabbage pyrishky.*

This must not be the original 16<sup>th</sup> century recipe because back then they did not know tomato or potatoes in those lands.

Does this small Ukrainian victory matter? What can a simple beet soup do in the face of the atrocity of war? We can ask that great Venezuelan poet, always present, Eugenio Montejo (1938-2008). In the poem “La Mesa” from his book *Terredad* (1978) Montejo writes: *If the wine is spilled, if the bread is missing / and men become absent, / what can it do but be immobile, fixed, / between hunger and the hours, / with what are you going to intervene even if you want to?* You must judge for yourself.

To put ourselves in context, think about our arepa without the need for war —we already have enough misfortune without it. What would happen if UNESCO decided to protect arepa as Venezuelan heritage, without prejudice to the fact that it is also consumed in Colombia, Panama and other places throughout our American geography? When the diaspora grows inexorably and uprooting shrinks our hearts, what is our refuge?

Caracas, July 2022





Miro Popic



@miropopiceditor

*There are four things that identify a group of people: territory, language, religion and cuisine. What we eat is what identifies us wherever we are.*

Of Croatian origin, he was born in Chile and has lived in Venezuela for more than 40 years. Gastronomic journalist, researcher of the history of food, writer and editor of books related to the plurality and identity of cuisines on this continent, such as his trilogy *Eating in Venezuela: from Cazavi to Cassava Foam*. (2013) winner of the 2013 Golden Fork for Gastronomic Publication, a prize awarded by the Venezuelan Academy of Gastronomy (AVG); *The Cake that We Are. Identity and Cuisine in Venezuela*. (2015); *The Lord of Dressings: in Search of Lost Flavor*. (2017). There is also his book *Venezuela on the Rocks!* (2018), which was winner of the 2018 Gold Fork Award for Gastronomic Publication by the AVG.





# Borsch Arepa

by Paola Carlini

*Borsch is a beetroot soup from Eastern Europe, and one of the typical Ukrainian dishes, although it can also be found in Poland and Russia. It is a soup that can be eaten cold or hot —so it is eaten throughout the year—, with an intense red color since its main ingredient is beetroot.*

*The Borsch recipe I use as a base is from Alissa Timoshkina, friend and author of the book Salt & Time, and co-founder and spokesperson for #cookforukraine —an organization that has collected over £1,300,000 to help refugees from Ukraine to date—. The idea of this recipe is to use the soup broth as the water for the arepas dough, and the vegetables as the filling.*



## Ingredients

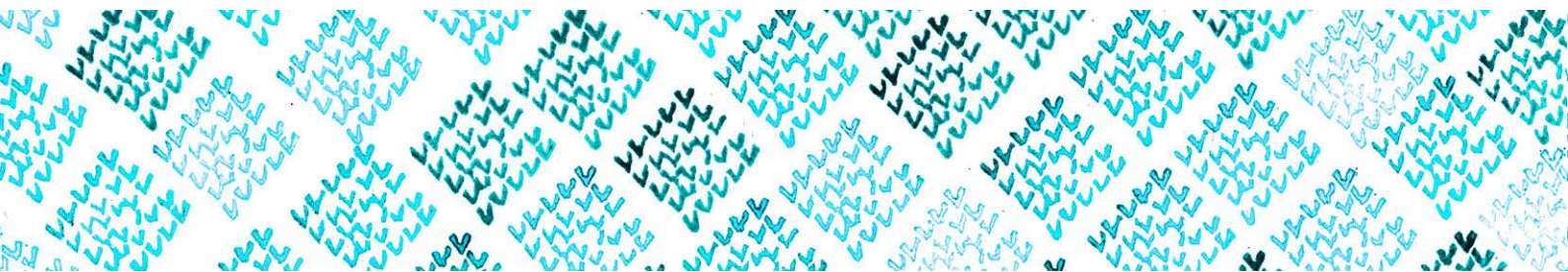


For 6 people

1 large onion  
1 medium carrot  
6 medium beets  
2 red bell peppers  
2 tablespoons tomato paste or concentrate  
2 liters water  
2 bay leaves  
1 teaspoon ground black pepper  
1 tablespoon whole coriander seeds  
1 tablespoon whole fennel seeds  
5 medium garlic cloves without the shell  
1 bunch of dill  
1 small bunch of parsley  
300 gr sauerkraut (fermented cabbage)  
A can of kidney beans —400 gr— (strained would be 250 gr)  
2 teaspoons smoked paprika  
1 medium red onion  
1 teaspoon brown sugar or cane sugar  
150 gr sour cream  
Oil to fry and roast in the oven  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Precooked corn flour (the amount needed for the number of arepas you want to make and their size)

### For the Borsch Broth:

- Cut onion in juliennes; peel and grate carrot. Heat a pot with a little oil and sauté for about 8 minutes, until onion turns golden. Meanwhile, peel and grate two of the beets, cut one of the peppers in juliennes and add to the pot along with two tablespoons of tomato paste. Season with salt and pepper and then cook for 5 to 8 minutes.
- Add to the pot two liters of water, bay leaves, all the seeds/species and 4 whole peeled garlic cloves, and half the bunch of parsley and dill, the stems can be used in this broth so that does not go to waste. Season well with salt, and bring to a boil.
- Lower the heat to the pot. Add 250 grams of sauerkraut with the liquid —reserving about 50 grams of the drained cabbage for the filling—, and let it simmer for 40 to 60 minutes.
- Turn off the heat. This broth is left to rest, ideally for about 24 hours; otherwise, a few hours will be enough.





**For the Filling:**

Preheat the oven to 160°C.

- Peel remaining four beets and cut them into half-moons. Sprinkle with a little oil, brown sugar or cane sugar, season with salt and pepper and place on a baking tray. Bake for about 20 minutes, until cooked and caramelized.
- Cut the red onion and the second pepper in juliennes, sauté with a little oil. When the onion begins to be translucent, add beans and cook over medium heat for about 10 minutes. Taste and rectify seasoning. Add the rest of the sauerkraut to this mixture and set aside.

**For the Stuffing Sauce:**

Finely cut the rest of the parsley, dill and remaining clove of garlic. Mix it with sour cream. Add salt and pepper to taste.

**For the Dough:**

- Strain the Borsch broth, reserve the liquid, and in another container the vegetables\*.
- The arepa dough is made with the soup broth —this should have an intense pink color and a sweet flavor, but all the spices and seeds should be tasted. Place the amount of broth necessary to make the arepas in a bowl. Add salt and, little by little, the corn flour, mixing well before adding more flour to avoid lumps. The dough should be moist but manageable, like clay.
- Shape arepas —as small or large, thick or thin as you like— and cook them. There are those who roast them in a budare; others brown them first in a pan and then cook them in the oven; and there are those who fry them. I cook them directly in the oven.
- Put the oven on broil at maximum temperature, and place one of the racks in the highest position. Place the arepas there —on a previously greased baking tray— for 8 to 10 minutes on one side and 5 minutes on the other; this way they will be toasted and cooked, without the need to pass them

through a pan, and faster than in a budare —credits to my great friend Moises Nevett who taught me this technique.

\*Do not waste the vegetables strained from the broth! Season them with a little lemon, olive oil, salt and pepper. The result is a rich and colorful salad. I recommend that you leave it in the fridge for a couple of hours, since it is tastier when cold.

#### **Assembling:**

*Open arepas while still hot, put a little butter inside if desired. Fill them with roasted beets, fried onions, peppers and beans, and top them with sour cream sauce with herbs.*



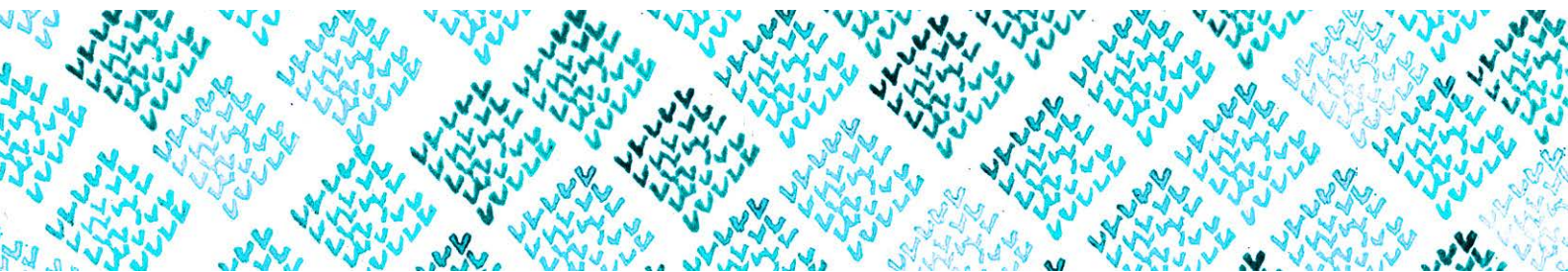
**Paola Carlini**

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*I was born in Caracas, Venezuela, and I come from a family of immigrants of very diverse origins —Italy, Spain, and Germany—, so “migration” and “refugees” are part of my personal history. I have about 20 years working professionally as a chef. I started in Venezuela, passing through Spain, and now I live between London and Miami, so moving around the world is still very latent in me. I have my own gastronomic consulting company. On the one hand, I develop gastronomic experiences of my own or for brands; on the other hand, I develop recipes, both for restaurants and manufactured products.*







EAST AFRICA

# Ethiopia





# An Arepazo in Addis Ababa

by Nashla Baez

*When* they ask you to write an article to celebrate World Arepa Day and its connections with typical Ethiopian food, you feel like you've been invited to ride on the back of a tiger: if it's difficult to get on, it's extremely dangerous to get off.

A few years ago I ate at an Ethiopian restaurant by the Latin Quarter in Paris. It was a very interesting proposal. Seated at a large round table, almost at floor level, and the seats fitted together, the waiter informed us that there was only one plate; it was huge and was enough for everyone —there were five of us at that time. It was served without cutlery, which made us a little uncomfortable at first, and along came some bowls of water to wash, because the thing should be eaten with our hands.

The “injera”, which was the name of the dish, consisted of a huge bread of those we call “Arabic”, covered with a multicolored variety of food, meats, vegetables, etc., which smelled divine, arranged in triangles about the same size. The ritual consisted of turning a huge budare on which was the so-called pita bread covered with food, while one tore off pieces of bread to use as spoons and pick up what you get in front of you. It was certainly a most interactive and fun evening.

One of the diners felt like saying that it was like an “arepada” or “arepazo” with wheat bread. Except that in arepadas hardly anyone serves the filling of the Reina pepiada or a Pelúa (juicy shredded meat with grated yellow cheese) with their hands, and the combinations are more conservative: generally two or three ingredients per arepa, although there are those who put up to four adding butter or mayonnaise. The idea of being at a table full of typical dishes of the country to use them as a source of local bread is not capricious at all.

Web surfing I found: [www.exoticca.com](http://www.exoticca.com) in Wikipedia. There they explain this bread is made by fermenting an Ethiopian cereal called “teff” for three days, which is cooked in a clay budare —what in Nicaragua they would call “comal”— and then is served as a huge flat arepa, which would be also the equivalent of a Mexican tortilla or a French *crêpe*, on which the varied selection of local dishes goes. We could say that an arepazo would be a western version for the individual consumption of injera pieces.

Certainly, serving certain fillings of the arepa —a chicharronada or a juicy black roast, for example— with your hands, without cutlery, is somewhat cumbersome. The same thing would happen if the Ethiopian cooks, men or women, had not taken the precaution of placing the various components in a very beautiful way, on the circle of teff bread, where they put everything together.





Our arepa is more of an individual meal, although the “Arepazo” party, of the collective breakfast, is unbeatable. It is also very ecumenical, I have not eaten it stuffed with the tops of the injera, but it occurs to me that they fit perfectly.

I remember a breakfast in Cabudare —perhaps it means K-budare; this is a tip for lovers of etymology— where there were three versions of shredded meat, one of them being “Pata’e grillo”, two roasted vegetables, beef, Reina pepiada, various cheeses, fresh cheese cream and buttermilk; there were about 15 varieties of fillings, for a lot of diners, and all of it to be washed down with natural juices. The dry fillings were served by hand, in the house of a very careful hostess. Of course there was more than one type of hot sauce, as is traditional in Ethiopian food.

The name of the page quoted above does not help, since once and for all it catalogs as exotic a beautiful human tradition: eating collectively. Tortillas, *crêpes* or arepas are eaten individually, although, especially in the case of the arepa, they are made with groups of diners in mind. It strikes me as a beautiful process of integration, with a lot of misgivings at the beginning, an arepada with the injera coverage placed in bowls, in a delicious Ethiopian-Venezuelan breakfast as a delicious way to enjoy World Arepa Day in Addis Ababa.



Nashla Baez

 @NashlaBaez  
 @nashlabaez

She is a Venezuelan anthropologist, president of the NGO Brigadas Azules (Blue Brigades). She is dedicated to political communication and social action, as she is constantly searching for a dialogue of knowledge between her training area and the new currents of construction of political opinion through social networks. She has a diploma in Communication for Peace from Monteavila University; and she is a thesis student specializing in Public Opinion and Political Communication at the Simon Bolivar University, in Venezuela. In the area of food, she has been an assistant to the coordination and management of social networks of the Anthropoflavors diploma, since its first class in 2014.



# Arepa Injera

*with Doro Wat Chicken Wings and Quail Eggs*

**by Ricardo Chenaton**



## **For the dough:**



1 cup precooked corn flour  
1.5 tablespoons Ethiopian millet (prehydrated overnight in the fridge)  
Warm water, as needed  
Salt to your liking

Add corn flour and prehydrated and drained millet to a bowl. Add salt and warm water, little by little, while kneading until the desired arepa texture is obtained.



**For the Doro Wat:**

- 12 organic chicken wings
- Berberere powder (hot spices) to taste
- 3 onions (the biggest ones)
- ½ teaspoonful cumin powder
- 5 finely chopped garlic cloves
- 1 large tablespoon finely chopped ginger
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 12 quail eggs

**For the filling:**

- Marinate organic chicken wings with Berbere powder and salt for 30 minutes.
- Mash onions rustically, finely chop garlic and ginger, set aside.
- Boil quail eggs for five minutes, let them cool and then peel. Set aside.
- In a saucepan, cook over low heat, the clarified butter and mashed onions until they turn gold. Add finely chopped garlic and ginger, cumin, berbere powder, and cook for 20 minutes more.
- Add marinated chicken wings and cook for 15 minutes, then add quail eggs and keep cooking over very low heat, for another 10 minutes.
- Remove chicken wings and bone them with your hands, then put chicken pieces back into the stew. Mix it and serve.





## Ricardo Chaneton

[www.mono.hk](http://www.mono.hk)

 [monohkg](https://www.facebook.com/monohkg)

 [@MonoHKG](https://www.instagram.com/MonoHKG) [@RChaneton](https://www.instagram.com/RChaneton)

He is a Venezuelan cook. He began studies at the San Antonio Center for Culinary Studies, in Caracas. After working at Le Gourmet, a renowned French restaurant in Caracas, he decides to get to know Europe, and so in 2009, he continues his training at Mirazur, a restaurant with three Michelin stars currently number one in The World's 50 Best Restaurants—where he spent seven years under the direction of chef Mauro Colagreco. His time at Mirazur instilled a lifelong reverence for the discipline of French fine dining and “seasonal food”: *following means to follow the rhythm of nature. The basis of a sustainable kitchen is to use a product in its season. Each season tells you that it is time for something to come out of the ground or fall from the sky.*

After moving to Hong Kong in 2016, at the age of 28 years old, he manages to lead Petrus' star team as executive chef at the Island Shangri-La hotel, Hong Kong, for almost four years. Attracted by the city's dynamic entrepreneurship and culinary scene, Ricardo decided that Hong Kong was the place to open his first restaurant.

Thus, with MONO, opened at the beginning of 2020—recently won the highest gastronomic honor, a Michelin star, Ricardo Chaneton returns to his roots and distills the complex South American culinary heritage, using his expertise in French gastronomy, to create a singular menu that says much about the intensity of his craft, and his ambitions for the future of modern South American cuisine. *I am delighted to be able to use my training in French haute cuisine to elevate the cuisine of my heritage and offer Asia a window into South American food culture.*







EAST AFRICA

# South Sudan





# Between Verses and Delicacies

by Nideska Suarez

*I have never felt I was home, because I never felt having left a place.*

*Bigoa Chuol Poeta sursudanesa*

*When* I think of building cultural bridges, two key elements come to mind: food and poetry. Both feed us, nourish us, help us express ourselves and make our emotions arise.

To connect with the soul of a people, it takes to delve into its myths, its language, its way of expressing itself and, of course, its way of feeding itself or, in some sad cases, of not feeding itself, as is the case of the famines caused by war conflicts and political instability.

South Sudan refers us to Africa, a continent resonating in our imagination for its greatness and its poverty, its joy and its sadness, its color and its history stained with blood. However, I do not want to make this a monologue but rather engage in a dialogue and, as an artisan of verses, I have chosen Bigoa Chuol to talk to, a South Sudanese poet born in 1991, a refugee in Australia since she was eleven years old. She is one of the lucky ones who found a safe haven; many of her compatriots have not been so lucky.

What could I say to Bigoa? To begin with, I would invite her to sit in front of an improvised outdoor stove to share food and stories that connect us. Other South Sudanese and Venezuelans would join us, surely cooks and magicians of the word to spice up our imaginary encounter.

While the embers reach proper temperature to start cooking food, I would let this young poet know that the independence of my country, Venezuela, took place four days before the independence of South Sudan, but with a difference of two hundred years. Yes, yours is the youngest country in the world, and sometimes youth hurts.

She would probably smile while watching me, kneading the corn dough for the arepas with my hands, and I would smile back while seeing her working the sorghum flour dough for the kisra, a flat bread that is usually eaten fried, but in this case we will put to roast next to the arepas. Bigoa kneads and recites these verses:

*To the children whose birth water is  
broken by whizzing of shrapnel  
This is our portion  
We know war in sunken eyes  
We know it in the jabbing hunger pains  
We know it in our heavily blistered  
callused feet*

As I shape arepas to place them on the griddle and she shapes the kisra, I tell her that we have also had wars; that we have also known what it is to chase the mirage of food behind





long lines in which we have been held by tenuous hope. I tell her that our people have also had to cross borders in search of better opportunities, taking our gastronomy along to spread it around the world.

What are we going to accompany the arepas and kisra with? She points out some eggplants to me and, showing her white teeth, she replies: “*Salata Aswad be Zabadi*”. I question her with a look, and laughing she shows me some ingredients: eggplant, tomato, yogurt and... the secret touch, peanut butter. In her eyes I can read “everything tastes better with this.” I do not doubt it.

I help her chop the eggplant and the tomato, and despite the fact that the sound of nature accompanies us, I tell her: “Don’t you think there’s some music missing?” She nods and, unexpectedly, a contagious Afrobeat rhythm begins to play. It is the South Sudanese singer Emmanuel Jal. Our guests begin to move to the beat of the music. She tells me about him: he sought refuge in a humanitarian camp when he was a child, it took him three months to get there, three hundred children left and only twelve arrived, today he lives to tell and sing about it.

The kisra is ready, Arepas must be turn to the other side. In a bowl, Bigoa mixes fried tomato, yogurt and peanut butter for the salad. I tell her: “Wait, I have another salad to accompany”, I cut slices of avocado and chop heart of palm to quickly prepare one of my favorite salads. She gets excited and tells me “*Wala wala*”. I understand that she wants to prepare another typical dish of her country: balls of millet flour, thick, starched.

And what are we going to drink? She offers me cinnamon tea and Araqi, a distilled date liqueur made by mixing dates with water and yeast, fermenting the mixture and then distilling it, it’s available on the black market; but here, in this place where our imaginary meeting takes place, there are not such a thing like illicit drinks. For me, a glass with cane juice and lemon cannot be missing.

Bigoa gets excited right after the first toast and recites:

*We say home is so far  
The same oceans are sitting between folk  
looking into each other eyes  
Our portion is silence  
They imagine home is settled soot  
They imagine country is running  
We now know refuge is both*

I listen to her slowly sipping the Araqi, the aromas of ready-to-eat food stimulating our taste buds. And what’s for dessert, Bigoa? Unexpectedly, she shows me a tempting cake and utters a single word: “*Baseema*”.



Driven by instinct we start with dessert, I taste a sweet bite with notes of yogurt and sesame oil. It is delicious.

Before night falls and the shadows blur our imaginary banquet, we dance to celebrate life, with the certainty that as long as there is someone who remembers and honors the gastronomy of the land in which they were born, they will carry a little piece of home with them, no matter how far away.

The poetry and food of our ancestors will always shorten distances, cross borders and find a way to prevent us from perishing with an empty stomach and spirit. Here's to that, Bigoa.



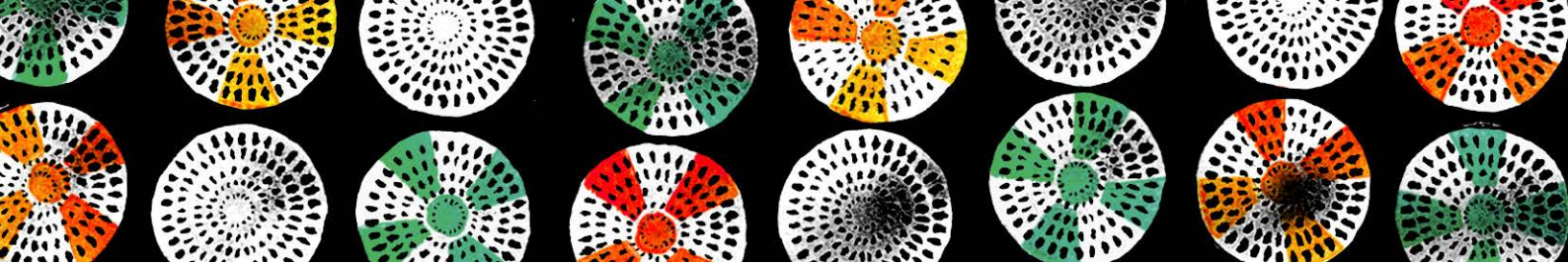
*Nideska Suarez*

 @nideskasuarez

Nideska is a Venezuelan novelist, short story writer and poet, born in Caracas. She graduated in Letters from the Central University of Venezuela. She won the 2002 "Francisco Garcia Pavon" Narrative Award in Spain for her novel *The World's Egg*, being the first Latin American writer to obtain this award. She has published the children's story *What Makuna Found* (Grupo Editorial Norma, 2008); participates in the anthology of erotic poetry written by women *On the Edge of Joy* (2007, Editorial Viento al hombro); and with the Fundacion Editorial El perro y la rana, participates in the *Anthology of Venezuelan Poetry Translated into Arabic* (2016) and publishes his poetry plaque *The Line of my Body* (2018); *Makers, a Thousand Female Voices for Venezuelan Literature* (Accomplice Reader, 2021). Her poetry book *From my Uterus* (2022), will be published soon on her website [www.micajadeletras.com/](http://www.micajadeletras.com/)







# Fuul Medames Arepa

by Ana Belen Myerston



*The cuisine of this part of our planet is quite affected by the impoverishment caused by war. Its gastronomy does not escape this reality, and it does not have a very diverse range of ingredients. Similarly, the South Sudanese are resourceful, and always find flavors that deserve to be remembered and savored.*

*Inspired by Venezuelan breakfast, based on corn arepa, we realized that we can associate it with the Sudanese breakfast Fuul Medames based on beans, tomato, pecorino cheese, onion and fresh arugula. They eat it with bread and we will eat it with arepas!*



## Arepa Dough



### For 10 arepas

1 ¼ cup precooked corn flour  
1 cup water  
1 teaspoon salt

- In a bowl, add flour and salt to the water. Mix ingredients well, and knead for five minutes. Let it rest for ten minutes, and knead it again for two more minutes, until you get smooth and soft dough.
- Portion the dough into ten equal balls. With the palms of the hands, flatten balls to give them a disk shape. Take them to the budare —a plate or flat pan typical of Venezuela— for five minutes on each side, and then finish them in the oven until toasted.
- Open and fill them to taste.



### Stuffed Fuul Medames (Sudanese bean or broad bean stew)

200 gr fresh green beans  
Sesame  
Olive oil  
A sprig of flat parsley  
Salt  
Freshly ground pepper  
1 red tomato in petals  
½ red onion, julienned  
Fresh arugula  
60 gr fresh sheep cheese

- Cook fresh beans in boiling water until they soften. Let them cool in ice water. Peel and then season them with olive oil and sesame, chop and add a sprig of flat parsley. Add salt and freshly ground pepper.
- Cut the red tomato into petals and 1/2 red onion, julienned. Place fresh arugula leaves and the fresh sheep's cheese chopped into small cubes.
- Place beans and the rest of the elements on a plate, add a splash of olive oil and freshly ground pepper. Accompany with the hot arepas.







*We made the stuffed version, which is nothing more than cutting the onion and tomato smaller, and mixing them with the rest of ingredients. Open arepa and remove a little dough if you like, fill it with the previous mixture and enjoy your meal!*



### Ana Belen Myerston

 @abmyerston  
 @jardinhermelin

Ana Belen is a Venezuelan cook and consultant for gastronomic projects. She graduated from the Hotel Escuela de los Andes Venezolanos. In 2001, she interned at the 3-Michelin-star Guy Savoy Restaurant in Paris; at Laurent Tourondel's CELLO Restaurant, then with Alain Ducasse at The Essex House and at Rocco Di Spiritu's Union Pacific, all in New York City.

She worked as Executive Chef of Restaurant MOKAMBO for ten years, during which the Venezuelan Academy of Gastronomy awarded her the GOLDEN FORK Award for Chef of the Year 2010 in recognition of her career as a cook, and her undoubted managerial capacity.

In 2012, together with the MOKAMBO Group —of which she was Operational Director since 2002— opens, in the city of Bogota in Colombia, the NOLITA Casa Cultural Gastronomica, where she will work as Executive Chef and General Manager, until its closure in July 2015.

In 2016, she advises several projects in Bogota, and is associated with a local gastronomic group, Element 4K, for the change of concept and reopening of the Peruvian Nikkei kitchen franchise, OSAKA, as Director of Operations. Since 2019, together with Elemento 4K, she has been developing the new concept for Bogota called KO Asian Kitchen Power. All this gastronomic work and performance of her as a restaurateur, she combines it with her passion for the plant world and gardening in her family business Hermelin Garden.





VENEZUELA

And, for dessert we have...



*Sweet Goat Cheese and Mango  
Brûlée Cacharepa*

by Marcela Gil



**Preparation time:** 25 minutes  
**For 6 Cacharepas**

150 gr **Precooked White Corn Flour P.A.N.**  
160 gr **Sweet Corn Mix P.A.N.**  
530 ml water  
3 gr salt  
Oil for frying

**For the Dough:**

In a container, place water, salt, **Precooked White Corn Flour P.A.N.** and **P.A.N. Sweet Corn Mix.** Do it slowly. Mix for two minutes until you get smooth dough. Let it rest for 8 minutes.

Divide dough into 8-10 equal portions, form balls and flatten with the palms of your hands to form 10-12 cm discs. Set aside.

**For the Filling:**

200 gr creamy goat cheese  
80 gr roasted pistachios cut into pieces  
50 gr honey  
1 medium mango cut into thin slices  
Sugar to caramelize mango

**For Mango:**

Sprinkle mango with sugar and caramelize it with the help of a kitchen torch. Set aside.

**For the Goat Cheese:**

Mix cheese with honey and pistachios until everything is well combined. Set aside.

**For Serving:**

- In a heavy-bottomed pan or pot, heat the required amount of oil over medium-high heat and fry cacharepas until golden brown.
- Fill them with plenty of cheese and caramelized mango slices.



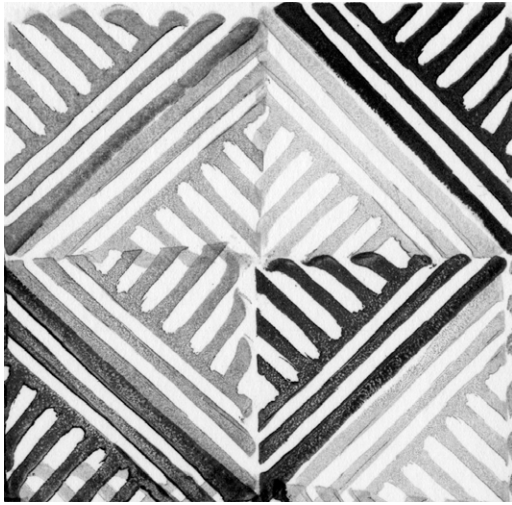
**Marcela Gil**

 **@marcelagil**

Marcela Gil works as a Specialist in Culinary Arts at Alimentos Polar. She completed her studies in Caracas at the European Institute of Bread and in Mexico and she continued her culinary studies at the Ambrosia Instituto Culinario de Mexico. She has a degree in International Studies from the Central University of Venezuela, and for 10 years she served as director and Executive Chef of her catering firm and line of sweet products and gourmet gifts called Kaleidoskopio. She was born like any other Venezuelan, with an arepa under her arm and today she tries, through her work with the P.A.N. brand, to show it to the world in its entire splendor.



## EPILOGUE



### About Arepas and Dialogues

by Ivanova Decan Gambus

*Food* is a language. Thanks to its infinite expressive capacity, its ability to blur borders, promote understanding and cultural exchange, food is “by itself” a form of dialogue. Around a table where bread is shared —or arepa, in our case— a field of possibilities unfolds to share one’s own and that of others, to reveal individual and collective identities, to discover, differ, understand, accept, get closer.

We share meals more easily than words, above all and especially when we speak different languages. Although our food represents us, speaks of our origins and integrates values of use and symbolic values of our own, it is also a way to establish bridges with others and their cultural identities. By exchanging ingredients, techniques, formulas and ways of consuming it, food serves as mediation and crossroads of cultures.

*Arepas for Peace* has reliably shown not only that food works as the clearest and most prolific of languages, but also that arepa has invaluable conditions to connect with others. That “other” is a human being, but it is also a collective, a food culture, a sense of belonging, whose ways and forms of living may be different. Experiences, testimonies, exchange exercises contained in these stories can be seen as writing and cooking laboratory for dialogue.

History shows that the most rational way to resolve conflicts has been the exchange of ideas because by sitting face to face, parties can learn to recognize others, to listen and understand their needs and interests based on their arguments. And, thus, they weigh the







costs and benefits that solving the conflict entails, without hierarchies or positions that cloud analysis. If achieving peace is the objective, it will be much more likely to reach agreements when the parties meet in scenarios that favor equality and fairness, where it is possible to open paths for debate and understanding, to dialogue as a civilizing exercise that reaffirms our human condition.

Arepa, a cultural artifact loaded with symbols for Venezuelans, has proven to be an effective tool for dialogue. Its versatility, its simplicity, its willingness to receive what is ours and what is foreign alike, are its strongest arguments. In the middle of the 20th century, when European immigrants who arrived in these lands, in search of another life and another light, filled our arepas with the flavors of the distant homeland, this longed-for tastes found shelter in the white and steaming dough of our ancestral bread, thus been incorporated without hesitation to the gastronomic repertoire of recently born areperas, where they would share both platform and preferences with

Creole preparations of the place.

Now, in the midst of diaspora and forced displacement —unprecedented in our social and political history—, when in metaphorical sense we affirm each Venezuelan left with an arepa under the arm, we are referring to what it represents as food from the terroir, of affections, of memories. The emigrant, anxious to quell hunger, but also nostalgia, tastes it with what can be found easily; and even if pisillo de cazon or guayanes cheese are not at hand, when a bite of that disk of corn is taken, not only does this event take place to savor Venezuelan-ness, but also to share it. Offering arepa to someone who has reached out to us outside of our country —or even to someone who rejects us— is an expeditious way to favor closeness and to begin to tear down walls.

Putting a simple culinary proposal on a plate, in which arepa comes into contact with ways and preparations from other food systems —as was done with this book's recipes— requires of speakers who are open to diversity. One of the greatest limitations of human beings is their natural rejection of what is unknown, of what comes from outside their borders. One feels good with what resembles us, with what we perceive as close and easy to identify. Clinging to the customs of one's land for fear of distorting what we are, or what we eat, is what is known as fear of contamination, a narrow vision that prevents us from exploring, discovering, and moving on. Food can be a great support for bonding, as long as we are open to it.



Although we do not speak the same language, although we profess different religions and have different skin colors, we will be able to communicate through food, and human and cultural exchange will flow through food which like arepas do, nourishes physically and symbolically. *If cooking made mankind*, as Faustino Cordon stated, why not believe that food and the table will always be valid spaces to promote understanding, reconciliation and peace?

Caracas, September 2022



*Ivanova Decan Gambus*

 @ivanovadecan  
 @ivanovadecan

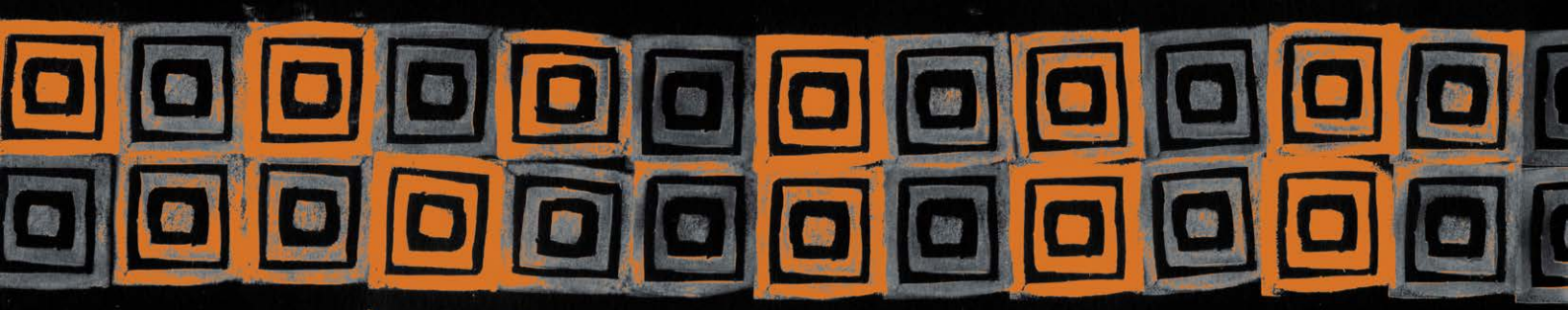
Graduated in Art from the Central University of Venezuela, she has a long professional career in the field of cultural management. Among institutions directed by her are the Francisco Narvaez Museum of Contemporary Art, the Cultural Spaces of CANTV and the Jesus Soto Museum of Modern Art.

She is a cultural manager, university professor, lecturer, communicator, consultant in art and gastronomy projects, she has published several works on gastronomic culture. She is editorial co-director and co-author of *Our Kitchen in the Manner of Caracas. A tribute to Armando Scannone's Red Book* (Balsam / Alto, 2013) and co-author of *Italy in Venezuela: Immigration and Gastronomy* (Fundavag, 2017).

She is currently a member of the Superior Council of the Francisco Narvaez Museum of Contemporary Art and the Culinary Institute of Caracas. Since 2010 she is an incorporated member of Venezuelan Academy of Gastronomy, an institution that she currently chairs.







# Song for Peace

Peace on Earth under heaven  
a thousand times I bless.  
These are the words I speak  
when waking up every morning.

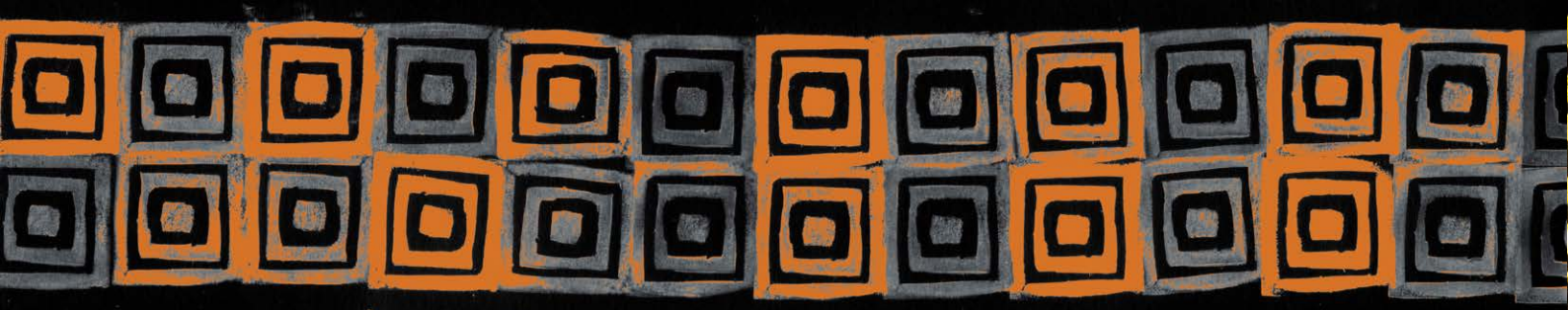
Because I know that while I sleep  
the spikes are growing  
and the ewe gives birth to lambs  
with pink skin and clean eyes  
and the lily lights up her whiteness  
of chastity, like wax  
and the wheat is reborn gold:  
flesh of Christ, bread of all  
with which the peoples feed.

Because I know that while I sleep  
children are born silently  
or with the crying, the scream  
of their innocence before the dawn.  
And we must fight for all of them,  
together with the life that unites them  
or the death that disintegrates them,  
to brighten their eyes  
and towards love shall they go singing.  
Peace on earth under heaven  
a thousand times I bless.  
Peace in the farmer's house  
who is standing since dawn arrived  
watching the sowing grow.  
Peace in the house of the humble  
shepherd who takes care of the cattle.  
In the potter's house  
who sinks his hands into clay  
and in the ranger's house  
full of orchids and birds.

Peace in the worker's house  
he who always arrives with the deaf  
and constant rhythm of the factory  
to his daily work  
and in the house of the craftsman,  
servant of all trades,  
father of all tasks.  
Peace in the miner's house.  
He who discovers  
the ever lit treasures of the earth.  
He who turns blind in mirrors  
of saline deserts.  
The one who in oil fields  
lives among yellow breaths,  
black oils, red lamps,  
with hardened hands.  
Or the one who looks for gold and diamonds  
in the mystery of rivers,  
in the bowels of jungle.  
The one who chases the emerald,  
rummaging in green holes  
or together with iron and tin  
dresses in dust and solitude.

Peace in the home of the sailor,  
of the captain and the crew  
that in their sailboats or ships  
on the sea take their course  
towards unknown horizons.  
Peace in the lighthouse keeper's house  
that ignites the soul of ports.  
And in the fisherman's house  
when he comes back with his fish.  
Peace in the house of pearls,  
amber and pink illuminated,  
and in the silence of the islands,  
always waiting for the castaways.





Peace on Earth under heaven  
a thousand times I bless.  
Peace in the artist's home  
working silently,  
with his virtue in the colors,  
with the truth of him on the stone  
or with the spirit of him in the music.  
Peace in the house of the philosopher,  
sleepless in front of a book.  
Peace in the teacher's house  
he who will create with the faith of an apostle  
dreams of life in other lives,  
and the house of the doctor and the sage,  
fraternizing in this hour  
humanity hour that brings them closer  
so that there is less hunger,  
less pain and less fear  
Peace in the brother's house  
he who without having lost joy  
believes in the gift of tenderness.  
Peace in the poet's house  
who still has love for the word.

Peace on Earth under heaven  
a thousand times I bless.  
To await with faith for the alliance  
of a just and true world.  
Instead of the evil of a new war  
that stirs hate against hate  
from brother to friend or comrade.  
Intact shall it remain as a symbol  
of freedom, ecumenical flower,  
signing all victories,  
so that finally on Earth  
no more blood is spilled  
and that the blood conceived  
with a vast love fills the future.  
So that the virgin swords  
always sleep with their brightness.

Peace on Earth under heaven  
a thousand times I bless.  
Live crowd song,  
peoples' chosen choir  
its melody is to be aroused  
in the silence of the fields,  
by the light of the barns,  
over the eagerness of the cities,  
in front of the seas and the rivers.  
For the peace of the martyrs,  
the oppressed, the disabled,  
those who were left without eyes  
touching fire in the darkness.  
For the consolation of the sad,  
of the exiled ones,  
eternal heroes of diaspora  
and of the mothers who do not have  
who to kiss under their roof.  
So that happiness reigns in homes  
and not misfortune.  
So that a son rises  
like a spike of the ages  
and the hope of the lonely  
or the vanquished is renewed.  
So that there is never a shadow  
to turn off the sun from our forehead,  
nor the truth of our hands.

Conciliating men,  
shall the love that is in its fire  
be poured by the green branch  
of the olive tree.  
And in the fullness of space,  
over the blue of the abysses,  
the biblical dove shall triumph  
with the message of its wings,  
announcing joy.

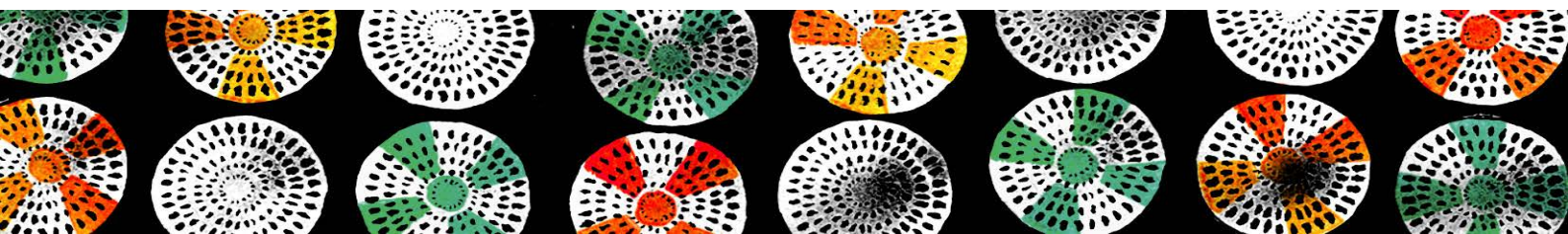
**Manuel Felipe Rugeles**  
*Golden Station, 1961.*





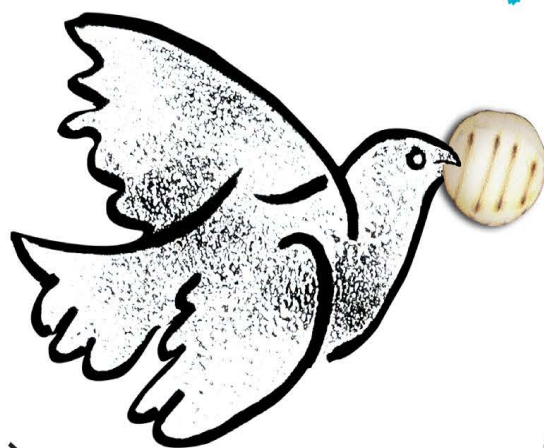


THE  
E-BOOK AREPAS  
FOR PEACE WAS PRODUCED  
AND PUBLISHED ON SEPTEMBER 10,  
2022 IN THE CITY OF CARACAS. THIS  
WAS THE DAY WHEN THE VENEZUELAN  
COMMUNITY, IN MORE THAN 64 COUNTRIES,  
CELEBRATED THE AREPA AND SHOWED  
THEIR SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE  
WHO WERE FORCED TO MIGRATE AND  
MISS THE FLAVORS OF THEIR  
HOMELAND.





Una arepa por la paz



10 de septiembre de 2022

DÍA MUNDIAL DE LA AREPA



VENEZUELA  
AFGANISTÁN

ETIOPIA

YEMEN

EL SALVADOR  
SIRIA

ROHINGYAS

PALESTINA  
IRAK

UCRANIA

GUATEMALA  
SUDÁN DEL SUR

HONDURAS

KURDISTÁN





