

An international palate

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The purpose-driven globe trekker



By the time you read this, Mireya Mayor will likely be in Madagascar. The venturesome anthropologist/primatologist returns in September to this massive island off the coast of Africa that's had a sizable impact on her life and career.

Fourteen years ago, Mayor and colleague Ed Lewis co-discovered a new species of primate, the mouse lemur, in Madagascar. It would take several more years for the island to establish a national park to protect the lemur. Mayor played a role in the park's creation by, among other things, presenting her findings about the lemur to Madagascar's prime minister.

"That was definitely a pinnacle," Mayor says about the primatological discovery. But if the past is any indication, she's destined to pull off more feats of such caliber.

The vicarious explorers of the world came to know Mayor during her stint as a wildlife correspondent (the first female) for National Geographic Television's "Ultimate Explorer" series. She has hosted other Nat Geo shows and specials, and appeared in the History Channel's "Expedition Africa: Stanley & Livingstone" series. Her expeditions provide access to previously unexplored regions of the world, where she works with indigenous people and studies creatures of all kinds. She also shares her experiences with audiences during appearances like the one she made in Los Angeles in spring 2014.

The presentations "are meant to inspire people to care more about the planet," says Mayor, and "to follow your dreams. I also talk about my favorite moments in the field, (and) my work with some of the most incredible and precariously endangered animals.

"The feedback from the (Los Angeles) audience was remarkable. It was one of the most heavily attended events by young girls... whose mothers had brought them." Feedback from the crowd included "beautiful comments" from moms who thought it was good for their daughters "to see a girly girl who (once) played with Barbies and (now) explores the backwoods ..."

Those young audience members in Los Angeles might be surprised to learn that Mayor had no such role models. The daughter of Cuban immigrants, she grew up in Miami's Little Havana. Hers was a sheltered childhood – she was not allowed to join the Girl Scouts due to her family's fears that the experience would be too dangerous. Evidently her passion for animals was less of a concern; she's described her childhood home as a zoo filled with dogs, cats and a chicken.

After taking an anthropology class as an undergraduate at the University of Miami, Mayor developed a fierce affinity for primates and a career as a scientist. She earned a doctorate in anthropology from Stony Brook University and became a Fulbright scholar. She's detailed her extensive accomplishments (including her stint as a Miami Dolphins cheerleader) in her book, "Pink Boots and a Machete."

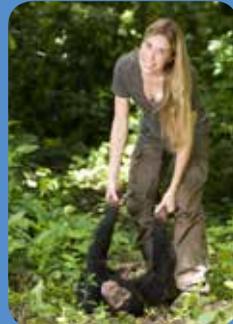


Photo by Jeffery Salter

After returning to Madagascar in fall 2014, primatologist Mireya Mayor heads to Rwanda to work with mountain gorillas.



Photo by Philip Anema

A wife and mother of five, Mayor eventually wants all of the children, ages 1 to soon-to-be 9, to join her on an expedition. For now, her eldest, Emma, is the only sibling who has accompanied Mom in the field.

Which exotic locale did the young explorer visit?

Madagascar, of course.

A match made in digital heaven



Hispanics are smitten with tech gadgets, and companies are determined to woo them with a growing number of products and services.

In the 2012 Hispanic Mobile Consumer Trends Study, Roberto Orci, chair of The Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies, is quoted as saying Hispanics are “more likely to have mobile devices and spend significantly more time on them as they connect with family and friends ...” By 2017, the study said, one out of every five tablets and smartphones in the U.S. will be purchased by Hispanics.

According to BIA/Kelsey’s Consumer Commerce Monitor study in September 2013, Hispanic consumers are outpacing non-Hispanics in their adoption of mobile, social and online sources for local shopping. Nearly half (48.5 percent) of Hispanic consumers use mobile devices for local shopping, compared with 32 percent of non-Hispanics. Among mobile Hispanic consumers, 52.5 percent report using their tablets and 42.5 percent report using their smartphones daily for local shopping.

Statistics like these are drawing the attention of Facebook. The social media giant’s trove of data reportedly indicates that Hispanics upload more photos and videos, and post more status updates, comments and “likes” than the overall Facebook

market. Not surprisingly, Facebook has launched a Hispanic sales initiative that advertisers are certain to capitalize on.

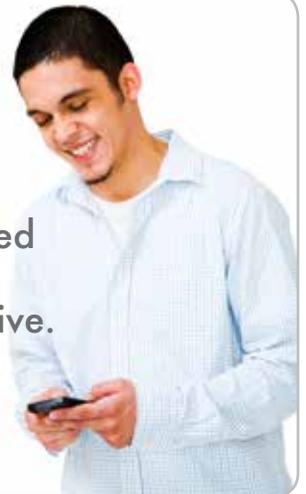
Other companies are ramping up their Hispanic-focused marketing/sales efforts. HispanicBusiness.com reported that Latum Network released Veo, a free app that connects companies with the U.S. Hispanic marketplace. The bilingual app, available for iPhone, iPod touch and Android smartphones since 2014, lets brands offer free products, promotions, recipes and giveaways to prospective customers. Brands can also send direct messages along with highly targeted product sampling and trials, and users can take part in sweepstakes. Participants in the free app at launch time included the NBA, Comida Kraft, Discovery en Espanol and General Mills Que Rica Vida.

Speaking of apps, the market for these user-friendly software programs aimed at Hispanics is booming. The 2012 Hispanic Mobile Consumer Trends Study noted that app purchases include games (48.3 percent), songs (41.3 percent), navigation and news (each 23.6 percent), books (22.6 percent), health and fitness (16.9 percent), sports (15.5 percent), travel (13.6 percent) and finance (12.4 percent).

The App Store on iTunes and the Google Play Store are prime sources of apps, many of which are free. Millions of people have discovered a cross-section of apps, from Raw Food Chef Pro Mexican (\$4.99 on the iTunes store) to Hispanic Scholarships and Grants (free on the Google Play Store).

Even the Census Bureau has gotten into the app business. Its dwellr app, available on the iTunes and Google stores, identifies the top 25 U.S. cities and towns that best fit a user’s lifestyle. The free search program uses data tables that segment info into various categories – including Race and Ethnicity data with info specific to Hispanics.

**Facebook
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Lasting impressions



For more information on our cultural fine art collection, visit www.picture-that.com.
Picture That, LLC

The work of the three artists showcased in this issue of *Unity* reflects an eclectic richness of race and cultural heritage. Each one is a tribute to a wealth of Hispanic traditions and customs.



"La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre (Oshún)" by Ricardo Muniz

RICARDO MUNIZ

Ricardo Muniz began his professional career creating educational programs and teaching at an alternative high school in the New York City area. He ended his public school career as a bilingual social worker in the Bronx and returned to his original love of art and photography. Muniz says his work draws from his background as an educator and social worker finding the beauty within his communities.

"I approach my photography much like a sculptor and puppeteer," says Muniz. "I find an image and give it a voice and life." Muniz's featured works are his modern interpretations of Catholic prayer cards that assist with prayers getting to the correct saint. These interpretations are combined with the Yoruba religion of West Africa, and religions of Caribbean and Taíno Native American origin. His piece, "La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre (Oshún)," represents the patron saint of Cuba. She is known as Oshún in the Yoruba religion. Muniz's "El Nino y la Virgen de Atocha (Eleggúa)" combines his account of the Virgin



"El Nino y la Virgen de Atocha (Eleggúa)" by Ricardo Muniz



"St. Christopher With the Ibeyi" by Ricardo Muniz

Mary and the baby Jesus. The focus is on the infant represented as Eleggúa in Yoruba, the mischievous child.

"St. Christopher With the Ibeyi" portrays the patron saint of travelers. St. Christopher is a father figure and in this interpretation, he is paired with the sacred twins of Yoruba, the Ibeyi, who are the bearers of goodwill and fortune.

"I shoot only when I have a story to tell or a story that should be told," says Muniz. "I like developing relationships and sometimes just like teaching; the process is more important than the product." Muniz donates much of his proceeds to education funds for young Latinos and Native Americans.



"La Llama" by Piero Manrique

PIERO MANRIQUE

Piero Manrique had been drawing since the age of 5. At the age of 13, he arrived in New York with his mother and sister as a new immigrant from Lima. He relied on his art to communicate his identity to the teachers and students in his school because he spoke no English. Upon graduating from high school, he enrolled in a local community college and eventually accepted a scholarship to Parsons The New School for Design for a degree in architectural design.

Manrique's sense of rhythm and motion, coupled with his use of abstract geometrical designs in his work, can be attributed to his experience as a salsa dancer and his architectural design background.

Manrique remembers that the landscape in Northern California reminded him of the coastline in Peru. These memories inspired "Currents," a depiction of energy flowing from a majestic mountain. "La Llama" illustrates the fluidity of land and mountains passing through a magical llama. It conveys the passion of Manrique's Peruvian heritage and the connection of the llama, a powerful symbol of ancient Inca culture. Interpreted in a contemporary, abstract way, "Runa," which means "people" in Quechua (a Peruvian dialect), is filled with the spirit and determination of the Inca people.

Manrique works with agencies in neighboring communities to assist with integrating Hispanic immigrants into the United States. In addition to painting on canvas, Manrique creates mixed-media electronic art and sculpture. His work has been exhibited in galleries in the United States and Europe.



"Runa" by Piero Manrique



"Currents" by Piero Manrique

MARIA ACOSTA ZAMORA

Maria Acosta Zamora was born in Cuba and moved to Miami with her family in the 1960s. As a self-taught artist, she read all she could about art, composition, style and oil-painting techniques of some renowned masters. Zamora says her works are influenced and inspired by her childhood experiences in Cuba. She spent a large amount of time exploring aspects of the beach and countryside. "In one way or another, my paintings tell a story using the colors and hues of that paradise island," she remarks.

"A Boa" was created from a party favor given to Zamora as she was leaving a gathering. She studied

and captured the movements of the light, feathery swirl. The colors in "A Boa" are her memories of the sea and sky of a fisherman's village in the south of Cuba.

The somber shades of grays, browns, yellows and the red in the green-blue sea of "Oil Spill and Volcano" represent the man-made impact of oil spills and the natural forces of nature. Zamora wanted to magnify the stems in "Tulips," her favorite flowers. "It is the stem that holds and sustains the flower," she says. "It was fun emphasizing the stems by making them large and impressionistic from something so small and dainty."

Zamora hopes to give younger Hispanic generations, who wonder what Cuba was like years ago, a glimpse of the magic from her childhood memories through her art.



"A Boa" by Maria Acosta Zamora



"Tulips" by Maria Acosta Zamora



"Oil Spill and Volcano" by Maria Acosta Zamora

Keen on quinoa



If you're not already a fan, you'd be crazy not to try quinoa. In the last five years, this nutritious staple has acquired the equivalent of rock star status among the grains of the world. Its profile was elevated by no less than the United Nations, which declared 2013 the International Year of Quinoa.

This superfood from South America is harvested beginning in late March. Technically not a cereal grain, according to the Whole Grains Council, it's known as a "pseudo-cereal" – a food cooked and eaten like grain with a similar nutrient profile. Quinoa is a member of the Goosefoot Family (Chenopodiaceae), which includes such plants as sugar beets, Swiss chard and spinach.

Home and commercial cooks can choose from ivory, red or black quinoa; from sprouted quinoa; from Arzu (a blend of buckwheat, quinoa, beans

and spices); or from quinoa flakes or flour. Among other things, quinoa can be cooked like rice and boiled like pasta, and is a popular ingredient in salads. It's included in a plethora of products, from breakfast cereals to beverages.

Quinoa gets kudos for being:

- A complete protein that contains all nine essential amino acids
- A healthy serving of fiber (5 grams per cup)
- A natural, nutrient-dense supplement chockfull of iron, magnesium, calcium, potassium, folate (a B vitamin) and more
- A great option for those on gluten-free diets

And if you need more proof of quinoa's merits, consider this: NASA has proposed it as an ideal food for long-duration space flights.

Quinoa Pilaf With Spinach

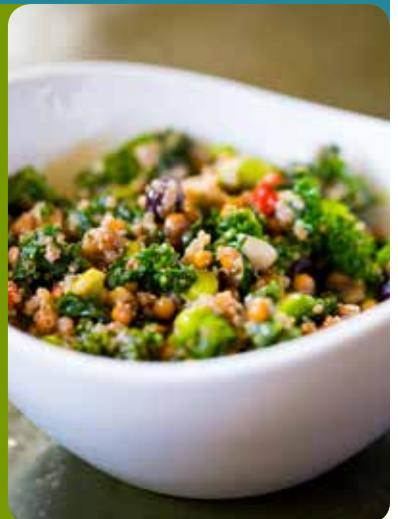
1 1/2 cups quinoa	3 cups vegetable broth
2 tablespoons olive oil	3 scallions, minced
1/2 cup rough-chopped pecans	Salt and pepper to taste
1 pound baby leaf spinach	
1 large peach, small diced	

Rinse the quinoa under cold water. Drain.

Bring the broth to a boil, add the quinoa and reduce the heat. Cover and simmer for about 15 minutes or until all the water is absorbed.

Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large pan over medium heat. Add the scallions and pecans. Cook for 2 minutes. Add the spinach; season with salt and pepper. Cover and cook for 3 minutes until wilted. Stir in the peach, and cook an additional 3 minutes.

Add the cooked quinoa to the pan, blend well and adjust seasoning.



An international palate



Chef Wilo Benet is an avid golfer and photographer.
Photo by Jose Soto

What do cilantro, cumin and shiso have in common?

They are the three spices that Chef Wilo Benet enjoys the most. Owner of Pikayo restaurant in San Juan – with its “nu + global mix” menu – Benet has an understandable fondness for ingredients that represent various cultures.

He’s a fan of cumin “because of its intensity ... which greatly reminds me of the Cuban culture” and cilantro, “the most widely used herb in Puerto Rico.” As for his third most-favorite spice, Benet says, “Nothing epitomizes the true flavors of Japan more than shiso.”

The well-traveled chef – who’s also an avid golfer and photographer – finds sources of gastronomic creativity in all aspects of his life.

“Inspiration comes from everywhere,” he explains. “I could be on a golf course, perhaps at a hot dog stand. ... (or) in a supermarket.”

Benet’s diverse approach to cuisine is also a reflection of his education at the internationally known Culinary Institute of America. His training ground has included restaurants in Florida, New York, Massachusetts and Puerto Rico. Viewers have watched him on TV shows hosted by Samantha Brown, Martha Stewart and Andrew Zimmern, and he was a guest judge on Bravo TV’s “Top Chef” competition show in 2008.

In summer 2014, Benet began working on his third cookbook, a departure from others in the genre. “In essence my book is going to be of greater photographic content (he will photograph everything).” Benet, who had initially planned for a career as a photographer, will delve into

“miniaturizing things, photographing with a whole other angle and whole other artistic perspective. He’ll employ “more theatrical-style lighting” and more close-ups along with information on cooking techniques and tools. “So it’ll be a book to inspire, I hope, other professionals in the photography industry (and) other chefs.”

Though immersed in numerous culinary pursuits, Pikayo, which opened in 1990, is Benet’s flagship project. Perhaps that’s why his fine-dining restaurant has garnered coverage from the likes of Conde Nast Traveler, Gourmet magazine and The New York Times.

On the website for travel-guidebook series Frommer’s, Pikayo is described as “an ideal place to go for the next generation of Puerto Rican fusion cuisine. Pikayo not only keeps up with the latest culinary trends, but it also often sets them, thanks to the inspired guidance of owner and celebrity chef Wilo Benet. Formal but not stuffy, and winner of more culinary awards than virtually any other restaurant in Puerto Rico, Benet makes Pikayo all about bringing his hometown cuisine to new glories.”

For a man with a worldwide perspective on cuisine, Benet is not a snobbish foodie. When we asked what his last meal would be – if he had the opportunity to select it beforehand – Benet was quick to respond: a half-pastrami, half-corned beef sandwich from New York City’s famed Katz’s Delicatessen.

“I have not come across any other brisket on the planet that comes close ... it just never fails to just awe me in terms of how moist and delicious it is,” he exclaims.

And what is his most supreme pleasure of the sweet kind? That would be Krispy Kreme doughnuts. He likes them plain.



Chef Wilo Benet’s restaurant, Pikayo, is celebrating its 23rd anniversary this year in San Juan. Photo by Eli Samuel Santa

Piononos

- Vegetable oil for frying
- Goya olive oil (not extra-virgin) for greasing
- 6 eggs, beaten
- 6 ripe plantains, peeled
- 4 cups picadillo (see recipe)

In a frying pan, heat about 2 inches of vegetable oil to 350 degrees. Slice the plantains into 1/4-inch-thick rounds.

Add to the hot oil, in batches, and fry for about 2 or 3 minutes until golden on both sides. Remove from the oil, and set aside to drain on paper towels.

Grease 6 ovenproof individual molds with olive oil, and line the bottoms with parchment paper. Line the molds with the plantain slices, pressing well against the sides of the molds. You may have to cut some plantain slices into smaller pieces to fit any empty spaces.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Distribute the picadillo among the plantain-lined molds. Pour the beaten eggs over the piononos. Bake until the eggs are set and the piononos are golden and springy to the touch.

When able to handle the piononos, but making sure they are still very hot, run a paring knife along the edges of the molds to help loosen the piononos. Turn upside down and tap, if necessary, to help them out. Make sure to discard the parchment paper.

Yield: 6 servings

Picadillo

- 3 tablespoons olive oil (not extra-virgin)
- 1 onion, finely diced
- 1 red bell pepper, seeds and inner white ribbing removed, finely diced
- 8 cloves garlic, pounded to a paste
- 1/2 cup sofrito (see recipe)
- 1 3/4 cups Spanish tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons chopped culantro
- 1 tablespoon chopped oregano
- Kosher salt
- 4 pounds ground beef sirloin

In a large sauté pan over medium-high heat, warm the olive oil. Add the onion, and cook for about 2 minutes until it loses its raw taste. Add the red pepper, garlic and sofrito, and cook, stirring, for another 3 minutes. Stir in the tomato sauce, culantro and oregano, season with 2 tablespoons of salt and cook for another minute.

Add the meat, and cook for about 4 minutes, stirring and breaking up the beef as it cooks. Season with another tablespoon of salt, and continue to cook for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally until the meat is cooked through, the liquid has evaporated and the flavors have concentrated.

Sofrito

- 1/4 cup olive oil (not extra-virgin)
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion, roughly chopped
- 12 garlic cloves, peeled
- 3 cubanella peppers, seeds and inner white ribbing removed, roughly chopped
- 10 ajíes dulces seeds removed and roughly chopped
- 1 bunch cilantro (leaves and tender stems only)
- 30 leaves culantro
- 1/2 cup fresh oregano (leaves only), loosely packed

In a blender, combine the olive oil with the vegetable oil. Add the onion and garlic, and process for about 30 seconds to obtain a pungent white purée.

Add the cubanella peppers and the ajíes dulces, and blend for another 30 seconds to obtain a light-green purée. Add the cilantro, culantro and oregano, pulse, and once finished, scrape the sides of the blender with a rubber spatula. Process for another 30 seconds to obtain an herbed-speckled, light-green purée with a piquant taste and a pungent aroma.

Yield: 3 cups