



PROGRAM PLANNING IDEAS FROM THE GLOBAL CULINARY INITIATIVE COMMITTEE

October 2016

# Hello, World!

## THE GCI NEWSLETTER

## The GCI Latin America Issue

by The Global Culinary Initiative Committee

Latin cuisine is hot, hot, hot! The Global Culinary Initiative explores culinary trends from Latin America—a cultural entity that stretches from Northern Mexico to South America’s southernmost tip and includes Cuba and other Caribbean island nations. The region’s Latin-based Romance languages (Spanish, Portuguese, and French) are an outcome of European colonization. Fusions of Amerindian, European, and African tradition lend abundant richness to Latin America’s foods and cultures. An essential part of each country’s society is its unique cuisine—a kaleidoscope of ingredients, cooking practices, and tastes. Latin America’s influence on the global palate is expanding. We hope the soupçon of ideas presented here inspire further exploration of this culinary smorgasbord.

### Hispanic Or Latin?

◆ “Hispanic” is a U.S. resident whose ancestry descends from a Latin American area once colonized by Spain: e.g., Mexico, most of Central and South America, and Spanish-speaking areas of the Caribbean.

◆ “Latino” is a U.S. resident, not always fluent in Spanish, who descends from Latin America. Latinos can be Hispanic; but not every Hispanic is Latino; Brazilians speak Portuguese so they are considered Latin (not Latino).

### Hispanic Flavors Rising

- “[Hispanic](#) households are growing faster than non-Hispanic households, as is their average consumer spending,” says [Packaged Facts](#). The Census Bureau reports that Hispanics are California’s largest ethnic group.
- [Flavor trends](#) are shifting from mass market to regional Hispanic flavors from Mexico, Cuba, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, and other parts of Latin America, reports *Food Business News*.
- The growing U.S. immigrant population is driving the influx of authentic Latin American eateries with foods characterized by piquant peppers and bold spicing.
- *Gourmet Retailer* says Latin American cuisine tops this year’s trends and will continue to win fans. Chefs are exploring their roots and “heritage cuisines” are coming into play.
- The Culinary Institute of America offers a Bachelor’s degree program in [Latin Cuisine Studies](#).
- The National Restaurant Association’s survey of ACF chefs named Latin-inspired breakfast items among the top U.S. food trends, such as Cuban Eggs and Pork Belly Chilaquiles.
- Jessamyn Rodriguez founded the non-profit Hot Bread Kitchen in upper Manhattan’s

Spanish Harlem to train and employ immigrant women. The breads, including yellow, white, and blue tortillas made from heritage corn, are [available online](#).

- There’s an ice cream revolución in the U.S. with an influx of Latin flavors: e.g., Pierre’s Holé Molé; La Michoacana Premium’s hibiscus flower; and [San Bernardo’s](#) Guava con Queso.
- Nutty-flavored manchego with its great melting properties and cotija, “the Parmesan of Mexico,” are authentic Hispanic cheeses that are finding their way into prepared foods.
- [Diane Kennedy](#)—93-year-old Mexican cooking authority and [author](#)—is the “Brit who saved Mexican food.” Diane has lived in Mexico nearly 40 years, traveling throughout the country to painstakingly document traditional recipes. In 2002, Prince Charles came to lunch at her rural Michoacán home.

### The New Cuban Connection

- The easing of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba invites the exploration of authentic Cuban food. Hobbled by food shortages and rationing, Cuba is on the cusp of change with the growth of small business enterprise, [agro-ecology](#), and a [farm-to-table](#) movement.

- **Cuban criollo**, the traditional island cuisine, is influenced by Cuba's natural resources, complex history, and melting pot. Taino (Arawak) people had black beans, cassava, and corn; African slaves had plantain, taro root, and okra; Spanish colonists had sugar, coffee, and roasted meat; and Chinese workers introduced their rice dishes and sweet-sour flavorings.
- Popular dishes include white rice and black beans (conгри), fried plantains, tamal en cazuela (tamales in a pot without husks), grilled corn with cojita cheese, and huevos habaneros (eggs over [sofrito](#)).
- Cuba's best places to eat include [paladares](#)—private restaurants, often in homes, which the government now sanctions.
- [Nespresso](#) is selling Cuban coffee to the U.S. market for the first time. Cafecito de Cuba is from Cuban Arabica coffee beans and initially being sold in limited addition.

### Quick Bites From Latin America

- Chewy, white [tapioca crêpes](#) from Northeastern Brazil can be stuffed with sweet or savory fillings. The snack is taking off as a breakfast dish in the U.S. Another breakfast treat is pao de queijo, baked cheese bread that might be filled with guava paste or cottage cheese and olives.
- [Empanadas](#)—pastries stuffed with various fillings—are popular across Latin America, and a great cross-utilization for cooked brisket or picadillo, a spicy beef mixture.
- [Chapulines](#)—crispy-fried, spicy grasshoppers—is a Oaxacan street snack found on Mexican restaurant menus. At Hugo's in Houston, they are served in blue corn tortillas with guacamole and salsa.
- [Huacatay](#) paste (black mint or Mexican marigold) and ají amarillo chile paste are addictive seasonings in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Chile. Use for pollo a la brasa (grilled Peruvian chicken), potato dishes, soups, and sauces.
- [Argentina's](#) specialties include choripán (sausage sandwich with chimichurri); provoleta (caramelized, crispy grilled cheese); and yerba mate (bitter herb drink with caffeine).
- *National Geographic* lists Peru as one of the best travel sites for food. Peru's sacred experience of [pachamanca](#), or Andean pit roast, is often undertaken during a Peruvian Harvest Festival as a thank you to Pacha Mama, or Mother Earth.
- Savvy food consumers are excited to try unfamiliar [Latin American foods](#), but want to know the traditions behind them and their regions of origin.
- French- and African-influenced Haitian dishes include rice and beans with pork, and [mais moulin](#) (cooked cornmeal) topped with [sauce pois](#), a spicy purée of beans or peas.



### Trending in Latin America:

- 2016 is the International Year of Pulses, according to the United Nations. Latin American favorites: field peas, cranberry beans, black turtle beans, lima beans, and black beluga lentils.
- Tropical Fruits: [Cherimoya](#) (custard apple) traces back to the ancient Inca. Mark Twain called it, "the most delicious fruit known to men."
- The Next Superfruit: The Peruvian [pichuberry](#) is about the size and texture of a cherry tomato and has husks like the tomatillo. The sweet-tart flavor resembles kiwi.
- [Cucamelons!](#) Native to Mexico and Central America, the new cuke (mouse melons) resembles a grape-sized watermelon but tastes like cucumber with a hint of lemon.
- Modern dishes connect with ancestral ingredients: the Aztec grain amaranth and [purple corn](#), both native to Peru; and [yuca](#)—tuberous root of the cassava plant, native to Central and South America.
- Essential Peruvian chiles: ají panca, (dried, slightly smoky); ají rocoto (resembles miniature bell pepper). Ají Amarillo—"the soul of [Peruvian cuisine](#)" looks like a yellow jalapeño.

### Program Ideas

- **Salsa Party:** Compare Latin American salsas: e.g., Argentine molho à campanha, Bolivian llajua, Peruvian ají amarillo sauce, and South American salsa criollo.
- **Wine Tasting:** Invite a South American wine expert to discuss terroir, grapes, and regional wine production.
- **Mixology:** Learn to mix national drinks: pisco sours from Chile and Peru or caipirinha (with cachaça and lime) from Brazil.
- **Green Tables Project:** Grow Cucamelons in urban gardens supported by Green Tables -GCI. For seeds, visit farmers' markets or purchase online.

- **Mezcal versus Tequila:** Plan a comparative tasting with an authentic Mexican meal. Mezcal is a smokier, darker Mexican spirit made from various agave plants.
- **Masa Harina Class:** Learn to make Mexico's basic corn flour dough for tortillas, sopes, and tamales. In the photo to the left, (page 2), masa is shaped during a Houston Chapter GCI event. (Photo: Houston Chapter).

### For Further Study

- ♦ **Bernstein, Michelle** and Andrew Friedman. *Cuisine À Latina: Fresh Tastes and a World of Flavors from Michy's Miami Kitchen*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008.
- ♦ **Gutierrez, Sandra**. *Latin American Street Food: The Best Flavors of Markets, Beaches, and Roadside Stands from Mexico to Argentina*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2013.
- ♦ **Jinich, Pati**. *Mexican Today: New and Rediscovered Recipes for Contemporary Kitchens*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016.
- ♦ **Peláez, Ana Sofia**. *The Cuban Table: A Celebration of Food, Flavors, and History*. St. Martin's Press, 2014.
- ♦ **Presilla, Maricel E**. *Gran Cocina Latina: The Food of Latin America*. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2012.
- ♦ **Sandison, Teri** and Hugh Carpenter. *Mexican Flavors: Contemporary Recipes from Camp San Miguel*. Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2014.



### GCI Hosts a Conference Breakfast

Attend GCI's breakfast program, **Culinary Diplomacy: Peace, One Plate at a Time**, at the LDEI Conference in Washington, D.C., on Saturday, October 29. The speakers will be Lauren Bernstein from the U.S. Department of State and Johanna Mendelson Forman from American University's School of International Service.

### GCI Committee

GCI Committee members are Susan Fuller Slack (Charleston) and Roberta Duyff (St. Louis), Co-Chairs; Sandy Hu (San Francisco), Advisor; Teresa Farney (Colorado); Martha Marino (Seattle); Chrissie Walker, (London).

Cover art: Top left, Teri Sandison (San Francisco); Rosemary Kowalski and (on right), Tracey Maurer (both San Antonio).