



Celebrating Food, Art & Culture

The jazz player from
Mister Rogers' neighborhood

Scintillating ceviche

In the kitchen with
Ingrid Hoffmann

A soldier's survival story

Daisy Ramirez Motorsports



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Catch her if you can

Daisy Ramirez is a busy woman. COO of a beverage manufacturing/marketing firm (www.bebevco.com). Founder of an energy drink product. And now, she is the owner of Daisy Ramirez Motorsports. She and business partner Brian Weber decided about 21 days prior to the Daytona 2010 events in February to launch a NASCAR Camping World Truck Series team.

Daytona turned out to be quite the thrill ride. "Seeing our Koma Unwind No. 01 and Potencia Energy Drink No. 00 on the Jumbotron at Daytona running in the lead and then the finish of 10th place and 14th, this was a huge accomplishment for the team."

In late July, Ramirez was scrambling to make it to the Pocono Mountains 125 at Pocono Raceway in Pennsylvania, where two of the team's drivers, Joe Aramendia and Carl Long, competed. Prior to that race, the team was in 24th position in the points standings.

In addition to Aramendia and Long, the team's other drivers have included Carlos Contreras, Mike

Guerity, Dillon Oliver and J.J. Yeley. Maury Van Vleet is the crew chief. Notes Ramirez: "We did not buy an existing team, we are building one from the ground up."

The Honduran native has even more on her plate.

"I also have a foundation that is very close to my heart, the Juan Ramirez Foundation, that raises awareness about the need for medical supplies in Honduras hospitals. My dad passed away on June 8, 2008 and the hospital that he was at didn't have basic necessities. There are many items in this country that people consider unusable but can be of tremendous help to those in need. That hospital didn't have more than two wheelchairs for a room with 10 to 15 patients. Not only that, but those wheelchairs were made with plastic" and (had) "wooden legs with wheels."

Though Ramirez is a novice when it comes to racing, Brian Weber is not. "(Brian) has been around the sport since 1982 and is a former driver



Daisy Ramirez, owner of Daisy Ramirez Motorsports

and owner in the NASACR Nationwide series. I supported him in his efforts in 2007 at Daytona ... as well as some other regional racing he has done."

Ramirez has attended four races this year and expects to take in four or five more. She will have to wait, though, to experience another track-related accomplishment for the first time.

"I have not driven a race car," she admits, "but I will play in the off-season behind the wheel."



*Constance Holloway,
executive editor of Unity*

Let me introduce myself

Growing up in the 1960s in a relatively small town in Georgia, I knew almost nothing about diversity. Columbus was a predominantly white city, but it did have a sizable black population of which, of course, I was a part.

While my family didn't live too far away from the monumental events unfolding in Birmingham, Montgomery and Selma, my childhood, in contrast, was uneventful. I lived in a black neighborhood, was a member of a black church and attended schools with large black populations.

I later enrolled at the University of Georgia, whose black population during my freshman year topped out at 5 percent of the student body of 20,000. When I moved to Charlotte, N.C., in the '80s, the largely white city had just elected its first black mayor. Back then, most of my neighbors and colleagues at work were white.

I recount this because for about half of my lifetime, I've seen the world mostly in terms of black and white, but the world has changed, and so have the terms. They're not quite so ... well, black and white.

In my role as editor of *Unity*, which I have held since 2004, I have had the opportunity to work on hundreds of uplifting stories about a broader range of people than the ones I encountered in my hometown, on my alma mater's campus and during my early years in North Carolina's largest city. The experience has profoundly affected my understanding of human relations, and I am deeply honored to be a part of this publication from Thompson Hospitality.

Beginning with this edition of *Unity* magazine, I will take on the role of executive editor, which is a fancy title that means I'll be doing a lot of the same things but working later hours than usual making sure *Unity* continues to be a publication of excellence.

But that's enough about me. I want to hear from you. Your feedback is important to the success of this magazine. Please don't hesitate to share it. You can contact our editorial team by e-mailing marketing@thompsonhospitalityjv.com.

From Mister Rogers' neighborhood to her own jazz community

Entrée into the jazz world has, historically, been easier for men than women. But a young jazz musician named Esperanza Spalding, who burst onto the jazz scene in 2008, is changing preconceived ideas about women in jazz, and she's doing so by taking a less-than-traditional approach to the music genre.

This might be because the 25-year-old Spalding, an extremely talented bassist, singer and composer who isn't afraid to push the limits of what constitutes traditional jazz, had a less-than-traditional introduction to it. At the age of 4, she watched an episode of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" featuring Grammy-winning cellist Yo-Yo Ma. The show piqued her interest in music, and she began teaching herself to play the violin, landing a position with the Chamber Music Society of Oregon, a community orchestra in Portland. She stayed with the group for 10 years, working her way up to concertmaster. Along the way, her mother, who is a Welsh-Hispanic-Native American, taught her diligence and the pursuit of absolute sincerity in whatever she wanted to do.

"It's a good moral view to hold as you're attempting to enter the world as an artist," says Spalding. "I think people respond to that and can feel a difference when you're really being sincere. That's a really big part of who I am musically."

Spalding became hooked on the bass, an experience she has described as "love at first touch." A teacher introduced Spalding to improvisation and blues, and by age 16, she was playing on the club circuit in Portland with a band she helped to form. Soon after, with her GED diploma in hand, she left high school to pursue music at Portland State University.

Years later Spalding moved east and continued her studies at Berklee College of Music, where she earned a bachelor's degree and was appointed to a faculty instructor position — the youngest in the history of the college. She expanded her horizons yet again by working as a freelance singer and bassist, and saw her success reach an international level. The May 2008 release of her self-titled major label debut, "Esperanza," (followed by her second album, "Junjo") includes lyrics that the multilingual Spalding sings in English, Portuguese and Spanish. "Esperanza" hit No. 3 on the Billboard jazz chart and remained on the chart for 62 weeks.

Despite her success, Spalding says, "I'm really aware of a lot of my limitations and when I practice I'm really practicing to try and break through those. It's an ongoing work."

In her latest CD, titled "Chamber Music Society" and scheduled to be released Aug. 17, Spalding pushes boundaries, as she did on "Esperanza," with an original approach to her music. In this case, she applies contemporary influences to a centuries-old music genre. Chamber music gained popularity before the days of radio, bringing people together through its universality and the intimacy it created, and earning it the moniker of "the music of friends."

Spalding has created a modern chamber music group that incorporates elements of jazz, folk and world music via a group of diverse musicians — giving a classic form of music a fresh, intriguing twist.

"I've been realizing more and more that there's an opportunity to build a community," she says. "There is the potential for this vast network of musicians between jazz and classical music."



Esperanza Spalding enjoys pushing the limits of traditional jazz. Photos courtesy Montuno Productions and taken by Sandrine Lee.

"The grand overarching thing," she concludes, "is to cultivate my writing and arranging and to be very limitless and to effortlessly weave in sounds and ensembles to do justice to the grandeur that could be possible in each composition."





"Fly Little Boy Fly" and "He Who Can Not Be Named" by Carlos Bautista

Lineage forever

The weeklong recognition of Hispanic heritage was expanded to a monthlong celebration in 1988. America celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month with the cultures and traditions of a people who trace their roots to Africa, Spain, Mexico, Spanish-speaking Central and South Americas, and the Caribbean. The three featured artists speak of their lineage from Colombia, Mexico and the Dominican Republic that continues to have a major influence on their culture and perspectives. The love for their people and traditional customs permeates the viewers' soul through their art.

Carlos Bautista

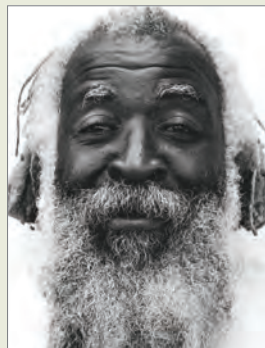
After his parents immigrated to the United States from Colombia, Carlos Bautista spent endless hours perusing his father's large collection of art books. Bautista recalls being in awe of the paintings by the old masters, which added to his vivid and active imagination. Illustration soon became his obsession. But it wasn't until his first trip to Italy that he fully realized his desire to be an artist. Bautista was determined "to create a humanistic aesthetic in his world after walking around the cultured and historical streets of Florence."

In Bautista's piece, "Fly Little Boy Fly," a young boy is positioned in front of a backdrop of a golden dusty road. His face has a cherub-like quality making his small, white fluttering wings look even more angelic. "This painting," says Bautista, "speaks of the innocence of youth." The boy's stark white shirt and pants give his presence a 3-D look against the muted shadows of hills. Bautista states that he strives to capture a "magically real" ingredient in his work. This endeavor comes to life with "He Who Can Not Be Named." The

toothless grin of the old man invites his viewer to regard him as a "wise spiritual guide — a companion through nature's process of transformation." The gentle loose drape of his shirt exudes comfort and trust as the butterfly flutters off from his hand. Bautista admits, "As a painter, I create harmonious compositions that invite the viewer into a unique world ... narratives of nature and the human spirit." All of Bautista's work, oil paint on linen, allows us access into that world.

Natalie Franco

Born and raised in Alhambra, Calif., Natalie Franco began photographing at the age of 12. Her earlier works have documented people in the San Francisco Tenderloin neighborhood struggling with AIDS and drug addiction. Her intimate portraits of people have been captured in numerous countries around the world. Franco's sentiment about her work, "The black and white moments are made in a decision to capture the most basic human behavior that we make every day," is paramount in her photography featured in this edition of *Unity*.



"The Confrontation" by Natalie Franco

Franco's cover piece, "Madre," details a hemline of loosened string, folds of wrinkled skin and a look of sheer delight as the woman shared her life's story. Franco's



"Raziye" by Natalie Franco

proclamation, "I am not afraid to get close to people with my camera," holds true in "The Confrontation," that exemplifies the man's cheeks appearing as weathered leather. His wiry eyebrows, beard, mustache and hair illuminate their whiteness. The glint in his eyes portrays contentment. An exposé of old-world tradition is rendered in the piece "Raziye." Franco refers to the photograph as "truly a stolen moment ... we were staring at each other and I lifted my camera and clicked my shutter."

"It starts with a seed passed through generations," Franco states. "This ancient seed from my ancestors" — she is third generation born Mexican-American — "has sparked an entire culture and empire ... I want to immortalize that through my art."

phenomena." His embrace of the mystical world can be seen in his piece, "Moments of Inspiration 2," the second part of a diptych (a work made up of two matching parts). Celestial beings float overhead as artists from the past observe and inspire. A portrait of Tio's mother, "My Mother and Her Invisible Helpers," explores the supernatural that has become an integral part of Tio's work. Her face exudes trust as mystical images look at her with a watchful eye. Tio's juxtaposition of "light and shadow are indispensable when conveying the drama and complexities of the human body and spirit." Tio proclaims, "Each painting conveys a personal method of communicating and expressing silent words within my interior world. Each color, tint and shade stems from a complex spectrum of thoughts, perspectives and narratives."

Miguel Tio

"Moments of Inspiration 2" and "My Mother and Her Invisible Helpers" by Miguel Tio

At age 9, Miguel Tio realized he could do something not everyone else could do. "... I knew I was going to be a painter," he recounts. While attending art school, Salvador Dali was a major influence on Tio. He states that he also has a strong connection to the murals and sculptures of Michelangelo.

During Tio's childhood, his mother was influential in introducing him to the spiritual world and "understanding spiritual





In Ecuador, ceviche is served with potato chips, popcorn, sweet potatoes or kernels of corn that are about an inch long and almost as broad.

Cuisine — like wildlife — is plentiful on Galápagos

One of the most notable features of the Galápagos, an archipelago of volcanic islands off South America, is the wildlife, including a vast number of species not found anywhere else in the world. Charles Darwin, then a young naturalist and perhaps the islands' most famous visitor, arrived in the 1830s and studied the diversity of wildlife. That study would later impact his formation of the theory of natural selection.

Diversity abounds in the cuisine of the Galápagos, another notable island feature. Similar to the food of Ecuador, the cuisine relies heavily on seafood;

marine life surrounding the islands is as plentiful as the wildlife. Lobster, fish and the famed sea cucumber enjoy pride of place on many a plate. Encebollado, a tasty soup made from fish, is also popular, as are seafood dishes prepared in coconut milk, known as encocados.

But citrus-marinated seafood, known as ceviche, is the country's signature dish. The origin of ceviche remains a bit of a mystery, but many Latin American countries have adopted it, resulting in multiple versions of ceviche. Fish, shrimp, shellfish or even squid can be used as the primary

ingredient, along with onions, ketchup, herbs and lemon, though garnishes vary by country as well. Typical side dishes include fried plantains.

In addition to plantains, other fruits abound in the Galápagos, including exotic fruits imported from Ecuador. These include the tree tomato, blackberry, guanabana, passion fruit, bananas and papaya. Chicken, potatoes and corn round out the seafood and fresh fruit, and most restaurants in the Galápagos pair Western choices with local offerings, providing a treat for locals and travelers alike.

Ecuadorean ceviche

The secret to ceviche is in the marinade. Each Latin American country has given ceviche its own touch of individuality by adding its own particular garnishes. So if you want to know where a ceviche dish comes from, you have to be attuned to the marinade.

Variations in the flavor of ceviche depend upon the particular citrus juice, or combination of juices, and the other ingredients used in the marinade.

In Ecuador, ceviche is served with potato chips, popcorn, sweet potatoes or kernels of corn that are about an inch long and almost as broad.

Ecuadoreans usually combine three citrus juices plus vinegar in their ceviche.

Variation 1

- 2 pounds whitefish
- Juice of 6 limes, 3 lemons, 3 sour oranges (enough for 2 cups juice)
- 4 teaspoons salt
- 3/4 teaspoons black pepper
- 1/4 cup vinegar
- 2 medium onions sliced very thin
- 2 or 3 red or yellow hot peppers, sliced

Variation 2

- 3 pounds corbina, washed thoroughly and dried with paper towels
- Juice from about 25 lemons
- 2 medium-size onions chopped
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 aji chombo, (hot pepper) cut into small pieces

Cut fish into bite-size pieces and place in a bowl. Pour juice over it. Add salt and pepper and vinegar. Let stand about 6 hours in refrigerator. Pour boiling water over the onions and drain. Add to the fish. Add slivered hot peppers and let set overnight.

A second variation of Ecuadorean ceviche uses lemon juice only. Cut the fish into bite-size pieces and place in glass bowl with 1 cup lemon juice and 1 teaspoon of salt. Let it set for 15 minutes and then drain, squeezing the fish gently. Add the remaining lemon juice or enough to cover the fish.

Add the chopped onions and stir with a wooden spoon. Let set for 15 minutes. Then add the aji and the remaining salt. Let it set for 30 minutes, cover and place in refrigerator. It may be eaten in about 2 hours.

'Professional eater' lands the ultimate gig

Lime chicken with quick avocado sauce. Caribbean salmon with mango-veggie salsa. Latina lasagna.

Is your mouth watering yet? These scrumptious dishes are all part of what Food Network star Ingrid Hoffmann calls "Spanglish" food. They are also part of "Simply Delicioso: A Collection of Everyday Recipes With a Latin Twist," a compilation of her latest recipes and entertaining ideas.

"I just love playing with food, and I love the idea of the great American classics that I've grown up eating and giving them a Latin flair," says the Colombia-born-and-bred Hoffmann, who moved to Miami in 1985 and later opened Rocca, a restaurant featuring tabletop cooking on heated lava rocks. Rocca quickly became a local sensation and a celebrity hot spot, but Hoffmann's love affair with food began years before, when she cooked alongside her mother, a Cordon Bleu chef, as a little girl.

Her love affair with television, on the other hand, did not begin on the Food Network but rather on a Miami-based show on which she hosted the cooking and style segment. From there she launched her own show, "Delicioso With Ingrid Hoffman," on Latin America's Cosmopolitan Network, which premiered on DirecTV. After an appearance on Martha Stewart's program, Hoffman got a call from the Food Network

and was soon dishing up the likes of Rum Chica Rum Chicken and Arroz con Pollo for her popular "Simply Delicioso" show.

Inspiration for her bold menus comes from her never-ending travels. "Inspiration comes from the street," she explains. "From traveling, anywhere from looking in the window of a store to looking through the window at a plate."

Textures and colors play a role as well. "Generally I get a feeling and then I know what experience I want to have for my guests," she says. Case in point: Hoffman never starts with a set plan; rather, her menus and dishes evolve from different ideas and places.

"I'm a professional eater and I travel a lot and search for all kinds of food in all different cities," she adds.

With such a full life — travel, television, books and a new cookware line set to retail this fall — Hoffmann has trouble pinpointing what she loves the most. "I love everything I do," she says. "When I wake up in the morning and get to dream up food and make it, it's a pretty good day at the office."



Ingrid Hoffmann

Stuffed Chicken Breasts With Tomato-Cumin Sauce

Serves 4

For the sauce

- 1 (28-ounce) can chopped tomatoes, drained
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 1/2 teaspoons paprika
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/4 cup olive oil

For the chicken

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 small red onion, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, finely minced
- 2 (8-ounce) packages sliced white button mushrooms (about 4 cups)
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon dry sherry
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme (or fresh)
- 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, tenderloin and excess fat removed
- 2 teaspoons achiote powder
- Thyme sprigs for garnish

Place tomatoes, garlic, tomato paste, cumin, paprika and vinegar in a food processor and pulse until well combined. With motor running, slowly add oil. Combined and season to taste. Cover with plastic wrap and set aside.

For the chicken, heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and garlic and cook until onion is softened and just starting to brown, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to medium-low and add mushrooms. Season with salt and pepper and cook until mushrooms release their moisture, 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add sherry, thyme and coriander and cook until the mixture is dry, another 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and set aside.

Place 1 chicken breast between 2 pieces of plastic wrap and pound until 1/4-inch thick. Repeat with other breasts. Pat chicken dry with paper towels and season both sides with salt and pepper. Sprinkle the skin side of the chicken evenly with achiote powder and turn it over (this will be the outside of the roll). Place 2 heaping tablespoons of mushroom mixture in center of chicken breast and wrap the top and



bottom flaps tightly around filling. Fold sides around. Tightly wrap the stuffed breast in plastic wrap, twisting the ends like a candy wrapper. Knot ends and wrap the roll in foil. Repeat with remaining breasts.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add chicken packages and reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer for 18 minutes. Carefully remove the rolls from the water and set aside to cool slightly.

While the chicken cools, heat tomato cumin sauce in a small saucepan over medium-high heat. Using kitchen shears, cut ends off foil packets and carefully remove foil and plastic. Slice each breast into 1/2-inch discs. Place sliced rounds on a plate, drizzle with some sauce and serve.

A soldier's story

Jose Rene "J.R." Martinez and his family know all about pain and perseverance.

Martinez's mother, Maria Zavala, came to the United States from El Salvador in the early 1980s to escape the war there. One of his sisters, Anabelita, died from an illness she had had since birth.

Some 20 years later, J.R., his mother and another sister, Consuelo, faced another daunting tragedy when J.R. was gravely injured while on a tour of duty in Iraq.

Born in Shreveport, La., on June 14, 1983, J.R. Martinez grew up there and in Hope, Ark., before moving to Dalton, Ga., his senior year in high school. He had three goals: to play strong safety on Dalton High School's football team, earn a college football scholarship and eventually play in the NFL. Then, according to *The Washington Post*, he discovered he had taken too many technical courses in high school and not enough college-prep classes to get into a Division I college. Other sources, including his Website, say he suffered a sports-related injury. In either case, Martinez enlisted in the Army in September 2002.

Assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Ky., after completing basic training in Fort Benning, Ga., Cpl. J.R. Martinez was deployed as an infantryman to Iraq in March

"I told him, 'They took the pretty skin that you had, but they didn't take away the beauty God put inside of you, in your heart,'" his mother said in a 2008 Chattanooga Times Free Press interview. "He got it, right away."

Martinez has undergone 33 different surgeries including skin grafts and cosmetic surgery.

"And that's where (Brooke Army Medical Center) I recognized that you know what?" Martinez explained to CNN's Drew Griffin in a 2004 interview. "Yes, I am the way I am . . . Of course, anybody doesn't want to go through life the way they are when something terrible happens to you this way, but I realize that I was left here in this world for a reason. And that reason is to help the rest of the buddies that are coming back. And so I'm going to use my personal experience to help them overcome what they've been faced with."

Afterward, Martinez became a motivational speaker and also joined forces with different organizations that support veterans. Those

roles, and coverage of Martinez's experience in Iraq and its aftermath, led to an unexpected opportunity.

Today, Martinez is playing the part of Brot Monroe, a character on ABC's "All My Children" soap opera, who was injured in Iraq. When he first joined the show in October 2008, part of the storyline involved Iraq veteran Lt. Taylor Thompson (Beth Ehlers), who was grieving for Monroe, her



"J.R." Martinez



Martinez plays Brot Monroe on ABC's "All My Children."



2003. One month after arriving, Martinez's Humvee — which he was driving — hit a land mine in the city of Karbala. Trapped in the vehicle for at least 15 minutes, Martinez suffered smoke inhalation and severe burns to more than 40 percent of his body. Eventually, Martinez was sent to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, where he spent 34 grueling months in recovery.

fiancé. She wrongly believed he had been killed. Disfigured in the accident, Monroe, in typical daytime drama fashion, let Thompson believe he's dead.

Martinez is a tireless proponent of veterans, promoting their cause in various speeches and media outlets ranging from *People* magazine to National Public Radio. He chronicles his activities and interests on his Website, www.knowjr.com, as well as Facebook, My Space and Twitter.