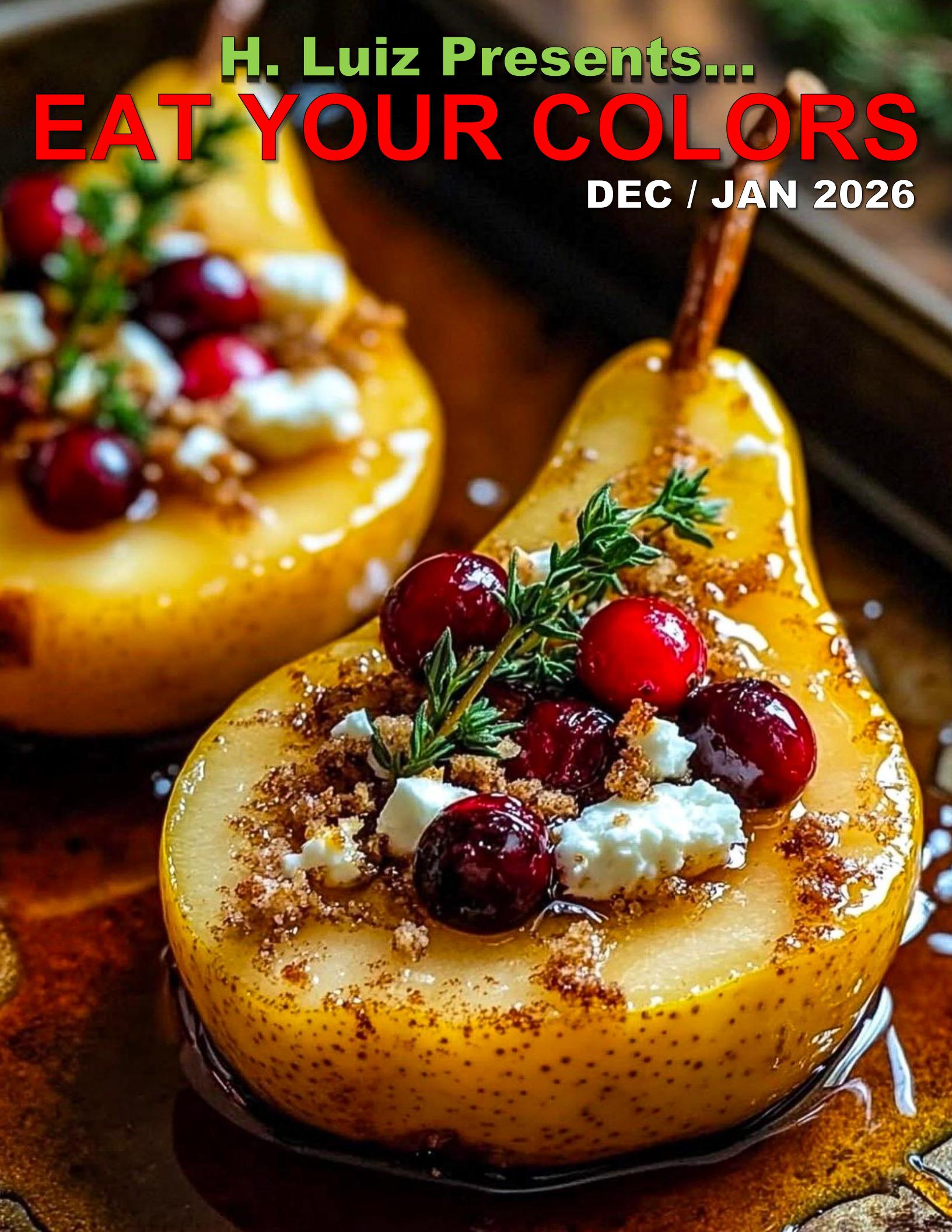


H. Luiz Presents...

# EAT YOUR COLORS

DEC / JAN 2026





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**Eat Your Colors**

\*Consult your doctor or licensed nutritionist  
before changing your dietary intake and needs.  
Any advice, suggestions and/or statements  
found within this publication is intended for  
entertainment purposes only.

# December 2025



**H. Luiz Martinez**

*Editor*

Eat Your Colors is back again after a 3 month, 2-issue hiatus. After careful consideration and restructuring, EYC will be hosted 100% on [hluizpresents.com](https://hluizpresents.com) which made the best financial sense for us.

The last few months have been just shy of overwhelming- with family obligations, personal business growth, a few setbacks, and a return to financial basics.

You know how we do- learn from the lessons, pivot, change, and move forward in positive directions. We got it!

**LIFE with HLuiz**, my new Lifestyle Channel on Youtube is getting underway. Due to conflicting business issues, my original YT Channel “hluizpresents” (2.5K Subs) could not be utilized for my upcoming current venture(s).

I decided that LIFE with HLuiz will give me better access to the business growth I’m developing. Coupled with hosting EYC mag and a sponsorship opportunity in the works, I believe that 2026 will be a significant banner year.

Returning to (statistically) our most-popular two-month issue, December 2025 - January 2026, what better way to return to the digital newsstands and your inboxes than during the holidays?

Check out all the videos, pictures, recipes, articles, plus travel tips that you’ve come to expect.

Welcome Back & Happy Holidays!

*thm*

**LIFE with HLuiz**



January 2026

## THE COVER

My baked pears made the cover-  
they look so inviting and so yummy!  
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# STOP the Commercialization



Over 20 years ago, we were at my In-Laws house and we waited for the end of the day to discuss the up and coming changes for our holiday party at our home. We already knew our extended family were going to *over-extended* themselves (as we often did)- buying expensive gifts that created debt. They bought these gifts because they felt that they had to return the favor to us. We had to put a stop to all of it.

That's how deep the commercialization of Christmas has become. We kept each-other in this reciprocal financial burden, because it was what we grew up with and what we knew how to do. We had to make a change for all of us.

*"Let the time we spend together be the 'gift' we give each-other from now on. Let's break this cycle and over-commercialization of the holidays. Now if you feel like you must share a gift with us, please let it be something you made, baked, cooked, or share. A beautiful note and / or a warm hug is all that we could ever want. We will be returning the gesture. The gifts you'll be receiving from us, besides warm hugs, big smiles and our supportive love, will probably be some baked goods or something from the kitchen that we've made. The best gift we can give each-other is the experience of sharing a meal together. Speaking of meals, please do not bring anything to the holiday party. There's too much food to begin with and even that will be scaled down- significantly. Save your money for your needs and the needs of your children. Do not go into debt in the spirit of the holidays on our account. We will be doing the same. Just come and enjoy yourself.*

*We can't wait to see you at Christmas!"*

After that speech, there was nothing but silence. Then sighs, smiles and hugs- someone even cried. "Keeping up with the Jonses" is a real thing and we absolved each-other from the commercialization of the holidays. From then on, it was all about Family, Friends and Feel Good Holiday Food!

# Subscribe to LIFE with H.Luiz



**Life with  
H.Luiz**

**Globally or Locally,  
let's have a Great  
Culinary Adventure.**





# Baked Pears

are perfect desserts for the Winter Holidays!

In fact, December is even designated as **National Pear Month**. It's great having that extra insurance, knowing that you can find pears during the holidays.

Pears have slightly *less* sugar but contain *more* fiber than their apple counterparts. Any of the spices that go well with apples, go even *better* with pears because the flavors of the pears are milder.



I've used many varieties of pears for baking, but I've found that bosc pears hold their shape the best under the heat of the oven. It's very important to leave the stem attached- not only to help keep it from falling apart but also for the beautiful, rustic presentation it gives.

You can flavor your pears any way you like. Like apples, pears take on pumpkin spices very well but I feel that pears can also take on savory spices (black pepper, ginger, cayenne pepper) and fresh herbs (rosemary, thyme, sage).

## Baked Pears Are Easy to Make for a Holiday Dessert

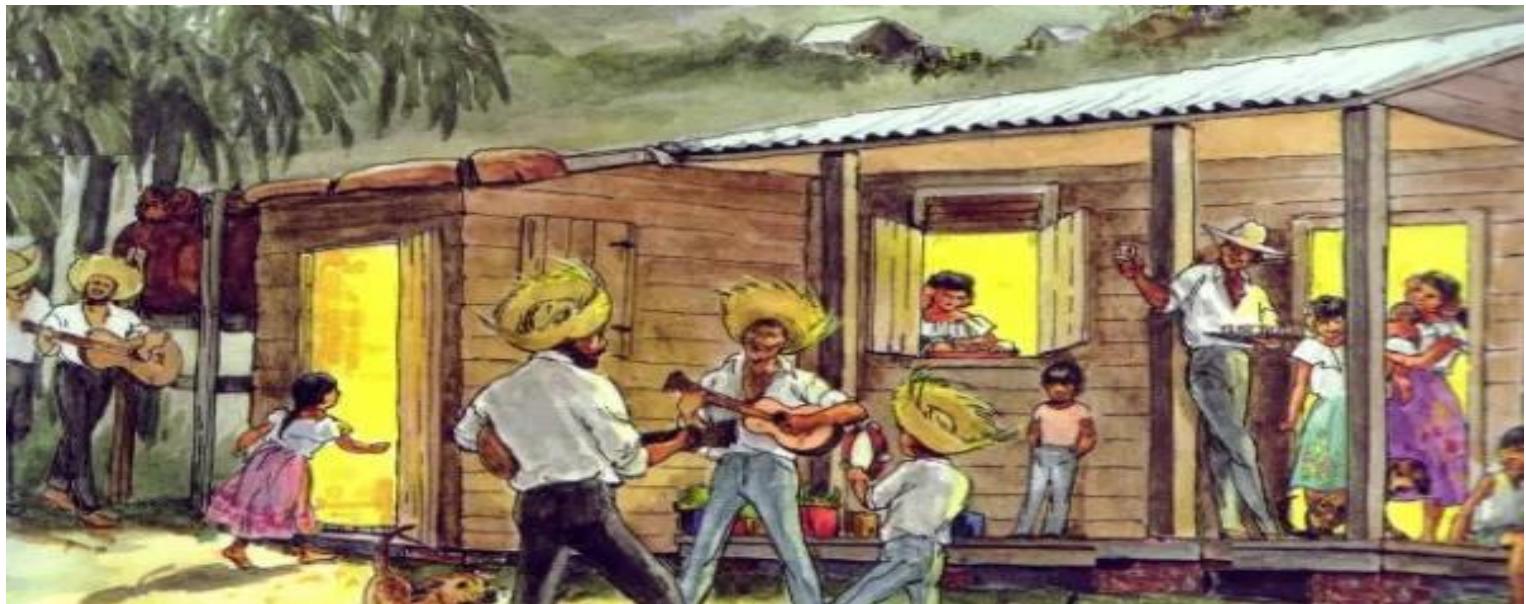
Start by preheating your oven to 375°F. Slice the pears in half and scoop out the cores with a spoon. Arrange them on a baking sheet, cut side up. A drizzle of lemon juice prevents browning and adds a touch of acidity. I like to add just a little bit of cinnamon and/or nutmeg first. Sprinkle a little bit of brown sugar, add tiny amounts of goat cheese or you can crumble on feta, and some fresh cranberries across the tops. then finish with a drizzle of honey. Bake for about 20 to 25 minutes until the pears are tender and lightly caramelized. Remove from the oven. I add a sprig of thyme for a festive holiday look with the berries.

Bake pears are so easy to make and I think they come out looking so elegant. Make baked pear desserts your own with your favorite spices, herbs and flavors. Baked pears come out so pretty that I have used it for the cover of the magazine.

Now you know just how easy it is to make your own dessert!



# Puerto Rico en Navidad



The beautiful island of Puerto Rico transforms into a wonderland during the Christmas Holiday season! It's call *Las Navidades* because the holiday season really starts early in December (some start at Thanksgiving) and usually ends the weekend *after* 3 Kings Day (January 6). Forget *silent* nights- here, the holidays are an explosion of food flavors, music, and traditions that will warm your soul long after the last season fades. Here are just a few reasons why *Las Navidades en Puerto Rico* are always so special - *pa'que lo seaaaaa!*

## **Parrandas: the Soundtrack for the Season!**

Imagine this- you're enjoying a quiet evening at home then suddenly, a lively group of people (family & friends) descend upon you, singing traditional *aguinaldos* (carols) with güiros, maracas, tambourines, and cuatros.

This is called a "parranda," and it's a simply a quintessential Puerto Rican holiday tradition.



These spontaneous musical assaults move from house to house, growing in size (usually the homes visited *join* the cheerful groups) and merriment, until the early hours of the morning at times. It's an open invitation to join the fun, dance, and celebrate with pure joy! Offering coquito, vino, and antojitos are sometimes offered and is highly appreciated. I hear of parrandas happening less and less over the years but I whole-heartedly hope that it never stops.



## Pernil Asado: A Holiday Must-have

Puerto Rican holiday cuisine is a mouth-watering spread that will have you craving seconds (and thirds!). A *pernil asado* (roast pork) the undisputed 4<sup>th</sup> King at the holiday table is the law of the land! The-roasted pork shoulder with its crispy skin (*cuerito*) and tender, flavorful meat, is a labor of love and the centerpiece of any Christmas feast. The aroma alone is enough to get your taste buds dancing! It is just everything at any time but during the Holidays, it is just an unforgettable experience.

## Pasteles can evoke world peace if given the chance!

Pasteles are a culinary masterpiece. Grated green plantains and root veggies are mixed with achiote oil and filled with a savory stew of pork wrapped in plantain leaves. Then they're boiled to perfection. Each bite is a symphony of delicious flavors.



Growing up, it was not Christmas if pasteles weren't being made in my Mami's kitchen with a couple of my aunts. I am so thankful that my family brought their Puerto Rican holiday food traditions to our home in New Jersey.



**Coquito** is Puerto Rico's creamy, dreamy coconut-based alcoholic beverage, and it's utterly addictive. Traditionally made with coconut milk, cream of coconut, condensed milk, spices like cinnamon and nutmeg, and of course, plenty of Puerto Rican rum, it's the ultimate festive cocktail- a must-have!

There are some variations to coquito (even I make a dairy-free version) but trust me- you really don't want to play around too much when it comes to Puerto Ricans and their coquito! Tread very carefully!



# Pernil Asado (Pork Roast)

In my childhood home, a pork roast in the oven was what we had, along with *pulpo* (octopus) salad, chicken & rice, lasagna, and every else. But somehow, *pernil asado* was and still remains the star of the holiday.

Pork shoulder, a primal cut category, is further broken down to two or more sub-categories- the picnic shoulder and the pork butt (also known as the Boston butt.) The butt has nothing to do with the hindquarters of the pig, it really is all about the shoulders. Cheap “cuts” were packed into barrels called *butts* for storage. In fact, “hams” are what we get from the hindquarters. Now a “picnic” shoulder cut is from the lower part of the shoulder butt and includes all of the leg until the hock. The inexpensive picnic shoulder is what *pernil asado* is made from. The reason why it’s so cheap is because it’s a tougher meat. However, it is the best cut to make *this* dish because it requires slow-roasting methods. The fatty top layer assists in keeping the meat moist, as well as providing another highly praised pork treat. We call it *cuerito* but you may know it as fried pork cracklings.

There are many ways to prepare a picnic shoulder, from the marinade to the method of cooking. A picnic shoulder roast will feed a small army- trust me on that. The meat is usually prepared with a sofrito and *mojo criollo* (creole garlic sauce) as a marinade, braising liquid and post-braising dressing. Now I make my homemade *mojo criollo* but there are some quality-good brands out there to choose from. It gives the pork the herbs, spices and acidity that it really needs.

Rice & beans or rice & *gandules* (pigeon peas) with slices of avocado (or an avocado salad) are the usual accompaniments to the pork roast. Then there’s the fried plantains (unripen salty *tostones* or ripen sweet *maduros*), macaroni salad and a bevy of other starches for the holiday in most Latino and Latin-American homes.

In my home, I make just the pork roast, white rice & black beans, avocado and a little cherry-tomato salad. Sometimes, I’ll add plantain chips to give a nod to tradition, but other than that, that’s really all you need on a Christmas plate.

## mojo criollo (garlic creole marinade) & pork prep

- **picnic pork shoulder (a small one can feed 6-8 people)**
- **olive oil**
- **garlic**
- **oranges lemons/limes (juice)**
- **cilantro (or parsley if you prefer)**
- **cumin (dry seeds crushed or powdered cumin spice)**
- **paprika (smoked or regular)**
- **salt & pepper to taste (I use kosher salt and cracked pepper)**

***\*or buy a store-bought brand labeled Mojo Criollo instead***

### ***Preheat the oven at 350 degrees***

In a bowl, combine the juice of 1 orange and 1 lemon or lime with  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of olive oil. Chop 5 garlic cloves into shards and 1 bunch of cilantro. Crush a handful of cumin seeds or add 2 tablespoons of cumin. Smoked paprika, salt & pepper goes in next. Add more splashes of olive oil to the mix and stir well. Set aside.

In a roasting pan, place the pork with the fatty skin on top. Carefully slice back that fat but do not cut it off, just peel it back with your knife. Salt the pork on all sides. Take a sharp knife and poke holes into the pork, be careful of the bone. Stick the shards of garlic in the holes then slather the rest of the marinade all over the pork. Place the fatty layer back over the meat- salt and slather that too. Add orange slices on top, then cover tightly with foil. The orange slices prevent the foil from sticking to the pork. Place in the oven at 350 degrees for about 3 hours.

Take the pork out of the oven and raise the temperature to 400 degrees. Discard the foil and orange slices. Salt the fatty layer *again*. Return the pork uncovered for another hour. Then take the pork out of the oven and slice off the now crispy fatty layer. Cut the meat off the bone, then slice and shred it into smaller pieces. Add a pinch of salt, a splash more of olive oil and the juice of a lemon or lime. Return to the oven (cracklings on top) for the last 20 minutes. I serve my *pernil asado* with white rice & black beans, avocado slices and a tomato lettuce salad. To give it a nod to traditional *tostones*, I add some natural plantain chips.

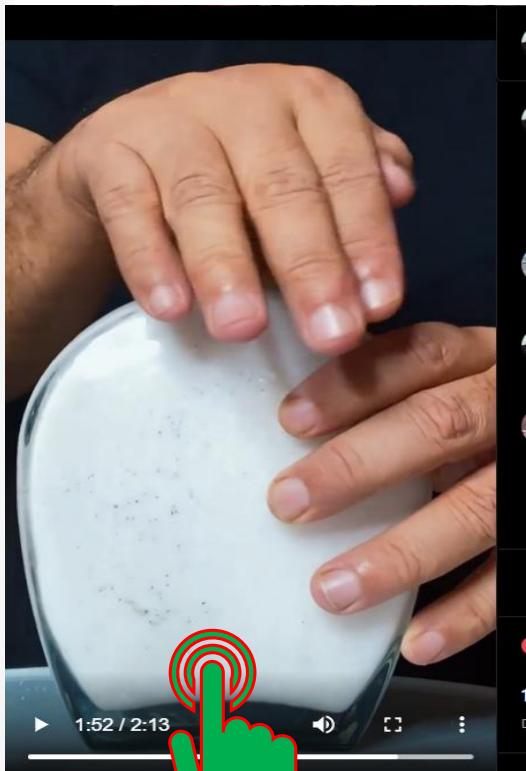


# COQUITO

Coquito is a very traditional coconut cocktail found in most Puerto Rican and Latin American homes during the holidays.

It's made with all kinds of dairy, coconut "milk" and lots of rum- pa' que lo sepa' !!

Coquito is NOT Egg Nog! It is usually our American Anglo folks who describe coquito in this way. Do NOT be that person anymore.



## Dairy-Free Coquito Recipe

I make a dairy free version of the delicious COQUITO- don't get me wrong; coquito is delicious as is! But some folks, like my aunts, make it with 3 different milks and my stomach can't take it! In my 20s, I could barely take it, imagine now in my 30s? Okay 50s, but you know what I mean.

Click the picture to see how I make a very delicious dairy-free version. These also make great gifts. Enjoy!!

# Other Holiday Cocktails

[click / tap each cocktail pic for the recipe]





# Classic Linzer Tart Recipe!

## Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg, beaten (for egg wash)
- 1 cup raspberry and/ or apricot jam
- Confectioners' sugar (for dusting)



## Instructions:

### Step 1: Make the Crust

Hey, let's get started! In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour and confectioners' sugar. Add the softened butter and mix until it's crumbly.

### Step 2: Chill the Crust

Time for a chill break! Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Go ahead and grab a snack or dance to your favorite song!

### Step 3: Roll Out the Crust

Okay, it's time to get rolling! On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough to about 1/4 inch thickness. We're going for rustic charm here, not perfection!

### Step 4: Cut Out the Cookie

Time to get your cut on! Use a cookie cutter or the rim of a glass to cut out a circle of dough. You can also use a heart shape, star shape, or even a square. With your fingers, gently press the centers for your filling(s) to make edges.

### Step 5: Add the Jam, Chocolate Spread, or Hazelnut Spread

Time to Jam! Spoon a small amount of jam, chocolate or hazelnut spread onto the center of the dough, careful not to overflow the edges.

### Step 6: Bake and Enjoy!

The final countdown! Place the raw cookies on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and bake at 375°F for 45minutes, or until the crust is golden brown. Dust with confectioners' sugar and serve warm. Yum! Happy baking!



I have not used Holiday Paper for my Christmas gifts in decades. First of all, Holiday paper is expensive, some have ugly prints and garish colors, they're very seasonal and stores can't seem to keep them in stock. And if you're lucky to find some inexpensive beautiful paper, the colors clash with whatever ribbon you may use.

I use parcel paper- you may know it as craft paper or shipping paper. It's that beautiful brown khaki colored paper, very neutral and just like khaki pants goes

Parcel paper is very inexpensive and can be used for any gift- not just holiday ones. I use them for birthday gifts, Mothers & Fathers Day gifts and Valentines Day gifts as well.

I even used it on a beautiful wedding gift too. I wrapped a book about Puerto Rico with parcel paper and had fresh white gardenias tied up with white silk ribbon. I wrote a beautiful handwritten note in the inside cover and enclosed two

tickets to Puerto Rico and my travel agent's card inside as well. xoxo

This style of wrapping gifts may be customized for any recipient. For a friend who was having a baby, I brought her a beautiful coffee table book with amazing photographs of babies inside. I tucked in an antique baby rattle that I've found with blue ribbon- she was having a boy. For another couple, who was having a girl, I did a similar gift, but that time I tucked in an engraved silver spoon with pink ribbon.

The first thing most people say is, "Ahhh this one's definitely from H. Luiz."

You see, if you do this often enough and beautiful enough, you don't even need a card. I prefer hand-written notes anyway.

Have you ever received the same exact card / wrapping paper for Christmas? I have... at a party. My way, that's never an issue.



# EAT YOUR COLORS

*is NOT just the title of this publication...*

it's a way of life for a lot of people. Unlocking the power of colorful fruits and vegetables can lead to many health benefits. A colorful diet can boost immunity and can even support mental health. Any plate supplemented with veggies and/or fruits can improve your digestion and regulation too.

Good health or *improved* health can start with eating colorful foods. Experts say that good health is about 80-85% of nutrient-rich foods, 20-15% physical activity *and* enough restorative sleep (average 8 hours for most).



When it comes to our plates, we tend to focus only on the *quantity* of fruits and vegetables we eat. We need to focus more on the *quality* of those foods. Eating our colors, our rainbows of fruits and veggies can have a significant impact on our overall health and wellbeing. Let me try to explain exactly what those colors really mean.

We'll explore the benefits of adding some color to your diet. I will go through all the "colors" that I eat and highlight the benefits of each of them as best as I can.

Remember that I am not a licensed dietitian and all information provided is based upon gathering empirical research. As stated in the beginning of every issue, consult your doctor or licensed nutritionist before changing your dietary needs and/or exercise routines.

## RED: Tomatoes and Bell Peppers

These are high in lycopene- an antioxidant that reduces cancer risk and heart disease. These red fruits supports healthy skin and vision too.

I add tomatoes (Henry prefers them in their raw state) to almost every thing. Tomatoes are on my tartines, I add them (cherry tomatoes on the vine) to dishes as a side veg. They are great in salads and perfect on toothpicks, skewered on burgers.

Peppers (red or otherwise) are found in many of my Caribbean dishes. I have them in my Jamaican stewed chicken. They're found in my sofritos and recaitos. I like them on my tacos and they're great in my steak dishes.

I also like red peppers in my veggie slaws- they add freshness.





## Orange: Carrots

These are rich in beta-carotene, which converts to vitamin A for healthy vision and immune function. They support healthy skin and mucous membranes.

Carrots make the best juice, it's so sweet. I actually blend it with fresh orange juice for our weekend breakfasts.

I add shredded carrots to almost everything-tartines, salads, curry dishes (balances heat) and they're especially good with hummus.

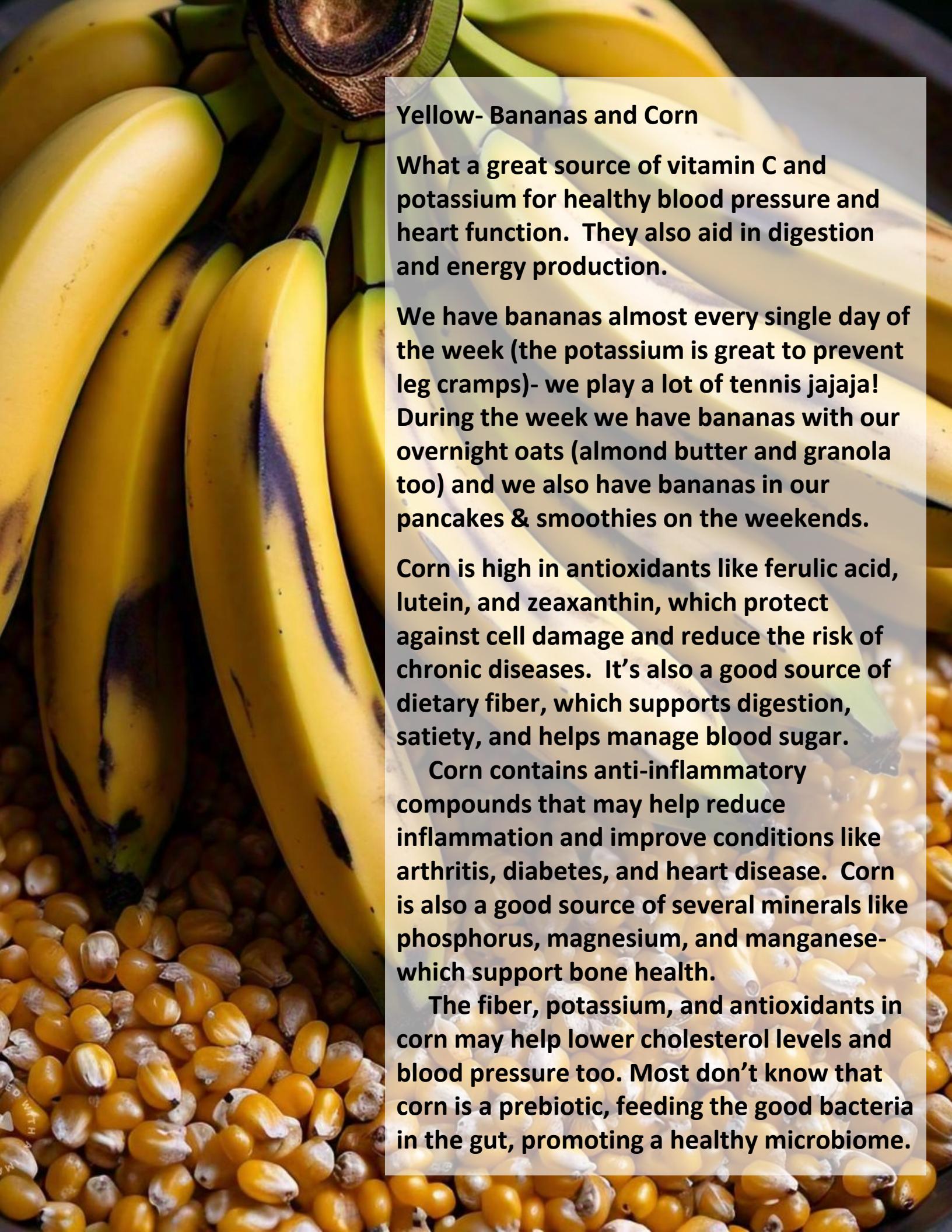


## Orange: Sweet Potatoes

Also rich in beta-carotene and oh so yummy!

Sweet potatoes are naturally sweet and they pair well with nutmeg, allspice and cinnamon of course.

We enjoy sweet potato fries and baked ones too. They're excellent in sweet-potato pies and as a staple (as a puree) every Thanksgiving in my home.



## Yellow- Bananas and Corn

What a great source of vitamin C and potassium for healthy blood pressure and heart function. They also aid in digestion and energy production.

We have bananas almost every single day of the week (the potassium is great to prevent leg cramps)- we play a lot of tennis jajaja! During the week we have bananas with our overnight oats (almond butter and granola too) and we also have bananas in our pancakes & smoothies on the weekends.

Corn is high in antioxidants like ferulic acid, lutein, and zeaxanthin, which protect against cell damage and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. It's also a good source of dietary fiber, which supports digestion, satiety, and helps manage blood sugar.

Corn contains anti-inflammatory compounds that may help reduce inflammation and improve conditions like arthritis, diabetes, and heart disease. Corn is also a good source of several minerals like phosphorus, magnesium, and manganese- which support bone health.

The fiber, potassium, and antioxidants in corn may help lower cholesterol levels and blood pressure too. Most don't know that corn is a prebiotic, feeding the good bacteria in the gut, promoting a healthy microbiome.

## Green: Leafy Greens and Broccoli

Leafy greens and broccoli are packed with vitamins A, C, and K, as well as minerals like calcium and iron. They support healthy bones, eyes, and healthy immune function.

Kale, arugula, spinach and cabbages are staples in our kitchen. In fact, I use them as herbs sometimes too.

I would suggest you chiffonade or thinly slice your leafy greens and add them to *everything*.

We use them whole (so delicious) as a side veg or salad too.

Broccoli is a family favorite vegetable in our home. We like them sautéed with lots of garlic and olive oil.

We also enjoy the cousins- broccolini, broccolirabe and cauliflower too. They make great side dishes.

To properly store broccoli in the fridge, slice a small amount off the root end and place them in a glass container *filled* with water. Afterall, broccoli is a flower and placing them in water will keep them fresh.





## Blue/Indigo: Berries and Eggplant

Blueberries and Eggplants are high in antioxidants and anthocyanins- which support heart health and cognitive functions. They also may reduce inflammation and improve memory.

I like eggplants, I grew up eating many varieties of eggplants in my childhood. Now as an adult, I don't eat it as much because my Partner is not a big fan. However, blueberries are consumed by the truckloads. We have them in pancakes, smoothies, on top of tarts, and inside our fresh muffins. We have them *dried* with our granola and mixed nuts too.

# In Conclusion...

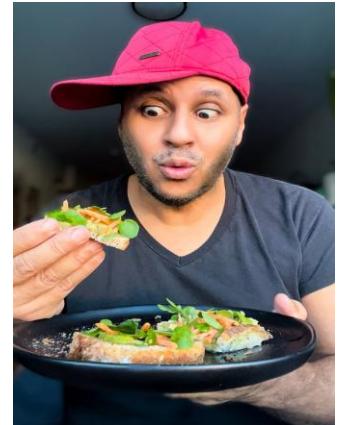
eating a colorful diet is one of the simplest ways to improve your overall health and wellbeing. By incorporating a variety of fruits and vegetables into your meals, you'll not only add some visual appeal to your plate, but also unlock a world of nutritional benefits. So next time you're at the market or in the kitchen, remember to add a rainbow on your plate and EAT YOUR COLORS!

# **UNESCO Crowns *Italian Cuisine* the World's First Heritage Meal!**

**[Confirmed Wednesday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025]**

To all my home cooks and food lovers, break out that pasta and dust off your Nonna's recipes- this is **HUGE** news!

**UNESCO**, the UN's cultural body, has just made history by naming Italian cuisine the world's first entire gastronomic style to be recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. This isn't just a win for Italy; it's a win for every kitchen where a simple plate of pasta is made with love.

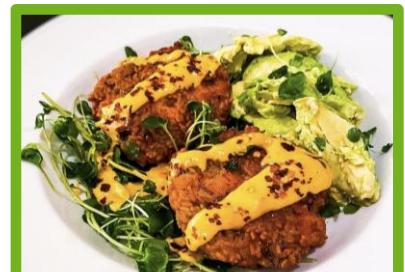
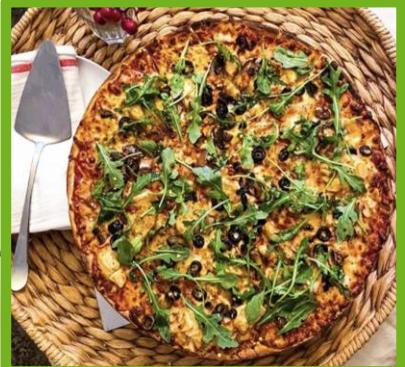


**Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni** was absolutely right when she said, *"Cuisine is not just food or a collection of recipes. It is much more- It is culture, it is tradition, it is work, and it is the true meaning of wealth in a lifetime."*

What exactly did **UNESCO** recognize? They looked at the whole picture- from the fresh ingredients grown on the lands of Italy to the simple, non-wasteful, sentimental connection to food that is passed down over generations. The cuisine's adherence to sustainability and seasonality was also a key factor. Italian cooking is the original low-waste model, turning stale bread into pappa al pomodoro and making the most out of every ingredient! It's my philosophy on cooking as well- use everything and waste nothing.

At its core, Italian cuisine is a communal tradition. Think about Sunday dinner: grandmothers teaching you to roll tagliatelle al ragù, the whole family gathered around the table. That deep, generational sharing is what **UNESCO** is truly celebrating. While this is a celebration of what we can create right here in our own kitchens, it's also a great excuse for food travel. This recognition will add even more prestige to Italy's already stunning culinary landscape.

I am so here for this incredible news. And I was serious about Mexico's Cuisine. You better get on that **UNESCO**.



\*UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) is a UN agency dedicated to building world peace and security through international cooperation in education, science, culture, and communication, working to promote human rights, safeguard World Heritage sites (et.al.,) develop global standards (e.g., on AI, neurotechnology), and foster inclusive societies by tackling challenges in education, environment, and information.

# 5 Great Destinations for Introverts

A Solo Traveler and an introverted traveler are two different things with two different outlooks of what a holiday could / should be.

A solo traveler likes to get out there, see the sights, meet the people, and absorb the culture. They'll speak with the locals and get the real *tea* of the Land. Not to say that an introvert would not like the same things- they just don't want a lot of *yada-yada* with strangers.

It's a common misconception that introverts are quiet, socially inept types who like to stay at home. Introverts enjoy traveling and exploring, they just prefer to take in things on their own terms and at their own pace. They prefer to plan and organize everything, while a Solo Traveler would not mind getting lost- just to find an unexpected lovely experience.

These destinations that I'm going to show you are well suited for every traveler but curated for the introverted one in mind.

## New Zealand

In a country where sheep outnumber people- beautiful New Zealand may just be a great destination for an introvert.

Primarily made up of two islands, North Island and South Island, most introverts can get off the beaten path easily. Although Kiwis (locals) are very friendly, the wide-open spaces of New Zealand allows for roaming on your own.

For true seclusion, head out to Fiordland National Park, tucked away on the southwestern tip of the country. Home to both of the legendary Milford and Doubtful Sounds, a trip here is the epitome of getting away from it all.

Of course, I have to mention Māori culture- I'm obsessed. The Māori people are the indigenous population of mainland New Zealand, or Aotearoa. To watch a Maori performance in New Zealand, visit a dedicated Maori cultural center like Te Puia in Rotorua which offers regular kapa haka (traditional Maori song and dance) performances. Afterwards, take a sight-seeing trip through Rotorua.





## Mongolia

Mongolia is one of the most sparsely populated spaces on the planet. It's perfect for introverts. The skies truly go on forever. The open landscapes sprawl in every direction, and it's quite possible that you wouldn't see or hear a local for hours on end. They don't call Mongolia the Land of the Eternal Blue Sky for nothing.

The say that the best way to experience the culture of Mongolia is to spend a day or so with a nomadic family. A guide can help set this up. You may not know the language anyway, so a few phrases may help to know beforehand. Learn basic Mongolian greetings like "Sain bainu" (Hello), "Zugeeree" (It's okay), and "Bayarlaa" (Thank you). It's also helpful to learn their customs too.

Show interest in helping herd and/or milk the animals, tending the farms, or whatever they may need help with. You'll most likely stay in your own *ger* (a portable, round tent) to call home and with the wide expanse of Mongolia in every direction, your introverted ways will be wholly satiated.

## Kauai (Hawaii)

Oahu and Maui, two of the most popular islands in Hawaii, can at times feel a bit too populated with tourists. But Kauai (aka Garden Island) is covered in green valleys, lush rainforests, magnificent mountains, and unbelievable waterfalls. I particularly love the coconut groves, orchid farms and coffee plantations in Kauai.

An introverted person has so much to see and do on their own (if they choose to do so) in Kauai. There are other many amazing, solitary experiences to have in Garden Island. The Hawaiian Islands are true paradises for *any* traveler.



## Camino de Spain

These beautiful walking paths in the northern part of Spain was once one of the most important pilgrimages. Today, thousands still make the epic journey of the 500+ miles. The countryside is just breath-taking with its expansive spaces. Not only for spiritual experiences, Camino de Santiago also attracts hiking and cycling enthusiasts, and nature lovers alike. Those that seek a retreat from the hectic pace of modern life, will enjoy these serene spaces.

There are several different trails referred to as “ways” that all lead to the shrine of St. James the Great at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia. You can join a group but It is perfectly fine for introverts to make the journey completely on their own as many do. Relish in the solitude and the chance to unplug in the beautiful Northern countryside of Spain.





## **Sedona**

Known for its stunning red rock landscape and energy vortexes, Sedona, Arizona has a uniquely calming, yet energizing effect on its visitors. Rarely crowded, the area offers an overabundance of things to do, but the most popular activity is simply hiking one of the hundreds of trails and enjoying the splendid surroundings at your own pace. For an extra dose of solitude and magic, head out early in the morning to witness the sunrise or stay out late in the day to catch a sunset. At night, you can chill by a fire pit with a glass of wine or enjoy stargazing. If you prefer organized activities, there are many yoga, meditation and healing retreats, but if not- Sedona is well suited for introverts and Solo Travelers alike.



Over 300 million people *still* use Twitter worldwide- even with the new Owner, current US Administration, and name change to “X,” whether flocking to watch popular cat videos, the latest news on what records Beyoncé is *now* breaking (maybe that’s just me), and/ or the latest viral memes of the day.

But as a Traveler, I know that TwitteX (I just made that up, I swear! Twitter + X = TwitteX) is a great resource for flight news. From new routes to fast airline updates to discount codes, TwitteX can be a great place to keep track of the “*not-always-but-trying- to- be*” friendly skies.



Better yet, if you’re having trouble with your flight details and/or plans, TwitteX can help. Lots of brands and companies use TwitteX (I really like that name) as a broad customer service hotline. The airlines, large brands, and other companies also use TwitteX as a newsletter/ bulletin to issue up to the minute news, discount codes, current updates, and just plain social media marketing (SMM).



And just like *they* do, you too can use TwitteX to *your* advantage. It can really help, especially if you have travel issues. But there’s a way to formulate, structure, and write a complaint or assistance *tweet* (I think TwitteX calls them “posts” now.) If you find yourself needing assistance, let me show you what works...

When it comes to getting an airline's attention quickly, TwitteX remains one of the most effective tools for US travelers to lodge complaints. Airlines monitor their social feeds around the clock, and a concise, professional post that tags both the airline's official handle and customer service account may/ can prompt faster responses than a phone call. Keep your message polite but firm, include key details like flight number and date, and avoid sharing personal information publicly—save that for direct messages when requested (they'll usually say- please DM us for direct assistance.) Adding a clear photo or screenshot of your issue often strengthens your case, and if you don't receive a reply within a few hours, a courteous follow-up or tagging the Department of Transportation (@USDOT) can help escalate your concern.

*"Airline customer service, for what it's worth, has largely risen to the task of operating a customer service portal through social media, building tools to find our complaints and engaging with us on an active basis. So use that mobile phone to post rather than to call."*



## Here are Some **EFFECTIVE** and Sound Tips...

### **1. Get Out of Your Feelings**

Bashing an airline on TwitteX is easy- especially if you're frustrated, but apart from releasing some steam, there's little benefit that can come from a LOUD and post. If you really want help from an airline, it's best to stick to facts, talk through solutions, and communicate in warm tones- you want them to help you right?

### **2. Who Are You Talking To?**

Past the tone, keep in mind that not all airlines handle customer service through TwitteX in the same ways and lots of them have folks impersonating them. Yes- even airline TwitteX handles have imposters and you can get catfished by em too. Make sure you're communicating with a real verified airline company.

### 3. Help Them, Help You

In order for any airline representative (online or otherwise) to help, they need contextual, concrete data. I'm not talking about personal information on a social media platform, but rather *relevant* information about your trip in order for them to help you effectively.

#### RELEVANT INFORMATION

Departure Date

Flight number

Departure/ arrival airport

Baggage tag numbers

Your \*Name

\*do not give your name in public spaces

### 4. Hey- There ARE Limits Here

One way of empowering a customer service agent via TwitteX or phone call is to help *suggest* solutions. But you have to come off as a problem solver- not a problem *starter*. If your flight is significantly delayed, for example, it may help to *suggest* other possible routes in order to escape a defunct itinerary. A quick search on your mobile device can provide some data to start. I always begin or end my *suggestions* with “Is it possible to...?; May we try to...?; I found this, does it help? What do you think about...?” Again, suggest solutions and try not to give the impression that the person *helping* you is incompetent. They’re overwhelmed already and your suggested solutions may be welcomed.

Now there are limits of course. If you're on a flight that's delayed because of storms, it doesn't make much sense to complain to the airline about it. They certainly can't change weather fronts and patterns. A similar case can be made for issues like overhead bin space or inflight amenities. There's nothing that an online agent can do about bin space availability or that your favorite chips were not available during your flight- especially after the fact.



### 5. Don't Lose Site of Things

Keep in mind, while TwitteX can be a medium for solving short-lived problems, it's *not* really the ultimate tool for filing complaints. In order to file a complaint and to request appropriate action to be taken, leave a detailed message (free of emotion) directly on the airline's site. Specific complaint forms can be found there.



*I follow the Legacy 3 (Delta, United, and American Airlines) on TwitteX but I follow aviation industry leaders too. Sometimes, I know what's happening in the aviation world before the airlines tell us...*

## **My Top Aviation & Airline News Handles to Follow on TwitteX**

**@Simple\_Flying**- A well-regarded online aviation publication offering comprehensive global coverage of the aviation industry.

**@FlightGlobal** -Provides full-spectrum aerospace and aviation news, analysis, podcasts, and event updates.

**@ReutersAero**- Reuters' global aerospace and defense team, delivering authoritative and trusted reporting on the aviation sector.

**@AirlineGeeks**- A veteran aviation news account offering industry stories, deep insights, and broader context for commercial aviation.

**@aviationbrk** (Breaking Aviation News)- Curates and posts breaking aviation news, with timely photo and video updates.

**@TheAirCurrent**- An analytical and data-driven feed reporting on airline business, tech trends, and strategic developments.

**@WorldALNews** (World Airline News)- Shares a diverse range of daily airline news with photo-driven posts and route updates.

**@airlinegossip**- Offers unofficial yet informative tidbits and insider news from the airline industry world.

# Which of these are fruits and which ones are vegetables?



This question always seems to confuse a lot of people. The truth of the matter is, the foods pictured on the opposite page are *all* fruits and none of them are vegetables. I believe it's because of the way we eat (or the way we prepare) some of those foods is really the reason why some of us are confused.

Most people knew from grade school that *tomatoes* are fruits, but jalapeños, chili-peppers and pumpkins as well? Olives, avocado and okra are fruits too? All squashes, like zucchini and spaghetti-squash are also fruits.

Now before you start arguing with me, keep in mind the simple rule botanists swear by: fruits are the fleshy parts of plants that develop from *flowers* and contain seeds or a pit. If it has those, it's a fruit.

Now here's something else that I think is going to confuse you: strawberries, raspberries and blackberries are not berries at all, but pineapples, bananas, plantains and chili-peppers are! (huh?)

So, then what makes a berry a berry? In botany, a true "berry" is a fruit that grows from a single ovary. It usually has a slightly soft exocarp (outer peel), fleshy pericarp (middle portion), and soft endocarp (area that surrounds the seeds). Berries grow from a stem, core or stalk of one flower. Peppers stem from one flower and bananas and plantains all grow from one stem too.



What about the pineapple then? Turns out, the multiple scales on the outside of a pineapple are actually individual flowers that have grown tightly together around a central core. In some countries like Brazil (the largest consumers of pineapples on the planet, 11% of the global population)- they eat pineapple one berry at a time. They rip off the leafy "crown" and pull the berries off one by one. By the way, that's how my father taught me how to eat a pineapple.

# Mamí's Pítipua



Stewed pigeon peas (known in most Puerto Rican families as *pitipua*) is also known as *chicharos* or simply as *gandules guisado* (stewed pigeon peas). It is a main staple in the Caribbean, Latin Americas and India. A bowl of stewed pigeon peas (Puerto Ricans call the dish *pitipua*) is so much more than a delicious meal for me.

The first time I ever had pitipua, I must have been 3 or 4 years old in my childhood home. However, the first time I've had and *experienced* the flavorful lentils (pigeon peas are in fact lentils- not "peas") was in my Grandmother's house. I must have been 6 or 7 when I really tasted pitipua- tasted the history of the dish through the generations of my family. I was in my early teens when I really understood that a wonderful soup just tastes better when you know what it meant to your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and perhaps their parents too.

As with everything else, the source of your food makes all the difference when preparing meals. When I was a child, my Grandmother made her pitipua with pigeon peas she grew from her garden. Pigeon peas can be left to dry in their pods, right on their stems, but my Grandmother picked it while it was young (green) and tender. Those made for the best pigeon peas- she would say.

I don't have access to pigeon pea plants and so I use the dried variety. I've used good-quality canned ones as well but alas it's not the same. I've even seen frozen ones but use what you like and what you can get your hands on.

Dry pigeon peas (*gandules*), are more-flavorful than canned, Soak the dry lentils in a bowl overnight for at least 8 hours. Use whatever bits of meat or fowl you'd like- or eat them vegan style. I'm partial to bits of ham- smoked ham preferably- the way my Grandmother (*Mami*) made them.

My mother told me that as a child, that pot of soup was present every day as well. As I got older, I was told that my Grandmother ate that very soup when *she* was a child every single day. She said back then, you would dunk some crusty bread in hot coffee (yes even children had coffee she would say) at the start of the day. Then they would have pitipua at the end of the day. My Grandmother (we call her Mami, my mother is “Ma”) said that besides being delicious, pitipua can stretch whatever meat you were lucky enough to have to feed the whole family.

So if you had a piece of ham, you can shred it or dice it into small pieces and have the soup for a few days. Sometimes they would chop up salted fish to make pitipua con pescado or throw in bits of leftover chicken, to make pitipua con pollo. I would interject that I was never given the soup with chicken- how come? She would laugh and say that back then, they used whatever they can get their hands on- but she really liked it with ham (I did too.)

***“Today, we can choose what pitipua we’d like, and I really like it with ham, don’t you?”***

**-Mami**

My Grandmother continued to tell me that sometimes, there wasn’t *any* meat to have with pitipua when she was little. In those cases, her mother, my Great Grandmother would spoon up little balls of a green plantain masa, drop it into the soup to cook up and make bollitas de platano (plantain balls) for the end of day meal.

Today, no matter how organic my pigeon peas are, what ham I use, if I make the whole dish vegan or whatever- my pitipua or lentils never taste as good as my Grandmother's. How could they, right? That pitipua has some real deep-seeded history to it. Now I hope to make new memories with my cooking so that my adult child can say to his future children "These lentils taste good but it never tastes as good as Papi's pitipua!" The thought of that just warms my heart- literally.

Nowadays, pitipua con bollitas de platano is eaten in many Caribbean-American homes during the holidays and celebrations. It's enjoyed as an honorable nod to the lean years of how our past generations were able to survive. With her soup, my Grandmother taught me that I can use whatever I can "get my hands on" to feed myself and my family just with humble ingredients. I didn't have a sustainable food garden, but I had the knowledge of Generations past.

During the pandemic, when food items became scarce in our supermarkets (so scary, I know) I was able to keep cool and rely on making soups- even in hotter months. There hasn't been a shortage of pigeon peas, dry split-peas, beans and other legumes to make soups that stretch for days and days. My family was none the wiser because I make these soups and stews all the time.

Thanks to my Grandmother, I learned to be generous with what I have- especially in terms of food. Sharing with others, whether it's food recipes, food preparations or just simply the act of sharing food, is something that flows in my veins.

As I often say, nostalgia is an ingredient that we cannot replicate when it comes to our childhood dishes. No matter how many times I make pitipua- it'll never taste the same or as good as my Mami's version... or my mother's version for that matter.



## INGREDIENTS

- \* 14-16 oz. pigeon peas
- \* ½ cup fresh sofrito
- \* 2 teaspoons olive oil
- \* tomato sauce (1 cup)
- \* 1 tablespoon of paprika
- \* 1 cup of diced ham / bacon
- \* 3 garlic cloves minced
- \* 6 cups of chicken stock
- \* ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- \* 1 bay leaf
- \* bunch of cilantro or parsley

\*Making fresh sofrito is easy- in a blender or processor, throw in 1 peeled onion (quartered), 1 head of garlic (peeled), 1 red bell pepper (chopped), 1 green bell pepper (chopped), 1 bunch of cilantro

### -BLEND-

I do not add salt nor oil in my sofrito, so I can better control those ingredients later when I'm actually cooking.

## DIRECTIONS

It's typical in Puerto Rican Cooking to sauté your sofrito or flavor base first. In the pot that you're going to cook your stewed pigeon peas (pitipua) in, drizzle in the olive oil.

Add your diced ham and let it render for about 2 minutes. Add your sofrito and tomato sauce- stir for about a minute. Add the cumin and 1 bay leaf, continue to cook for another 2 minutes. Add your ham either diced or sliced (or whatever meat you'd like) and sauté for 2 minutes.

Add the chicken stock then add salt and pepper to taste- bring to a boil. Add the pigeon peas, stir and check for seasonings again. Add what you may need- more sofrito, salt, pepper, chicken stock, etc. Bring back to a soft boil then cover the pot for 30 minutes.

The aromas in your home will be unbelievable! That's when you really know that your pitipua con jamon is ready!



# TRAVEL

## Be Flexible and Travel Monday through Friday

Being flexible with your dates is the way to go for the best airfare prices. You may be able to save up to \$100+ dollars. Also, weekdays are the more-favorable days to travel- Tuesdays & Wednesdays have the lowest fares.

*I often travel (when on my own dime) Tuesday through Friday. That's 3 Nights and 4 Days of FUN and I find it is enough time. I often return on Fridays because Fridays & Saturdays (sometimes Sundays too), hotels charge MORE for weekend stays- up to 40% more. Keep that in mind when planning quick getaways.*

## Get the Package Deal

Airlines that offer package deals or "Bundles" can offer savings of up to 40% off and even more during off-season travel times. It's very cost-effective especially when travelling with others.

*This is also a great way to rack up travel points and rewards on your credit cards that offer these incentives. You may also greatly save on car rentals with package deals too.*

## Keep an Eye on It

Google Flights, Hopper and a few others are great fare trackers. They monitor and notify you when the best and lowest prices become available.

*You can set up as many combinations that you're considering, including different departure and return dates, so you can get alerts for all possible fare reductions. But fair-warning, these reduced fares don't last long so be ready to book when notified.*

## Look at Nearby Airports and Price Check

There are 3 airports close to me. The same exact airline(s) going to the same exact locations offer very different prices- up to \$200 different. The cheaper one (\$160 cheaper) is further away from me by just 20 minutes. I think it's worth the savings for just a few minutes out of my way.

# TIPS

## Carry On, Travelers

We have taken 10-day trips with just 1 carry-on and extra smaller bag when flying. Yes I know, I'm a guy and I don't carry as much but did you know? Most travelers wear about 35-40% of what they bring. *Here's what we do: we often book 4-5 nights in tropical weather*

*locations. There are great beaches and pools where we stay and so we spend most of our days in swim-suits, sandals and t-shirts. We bring a nice outfit or two for dinners (I usually bring a very lightweight jacket to put over a t-shirt. Our best tip is- the same nice clothes we use to travel in, will be the same ones we return in.*

## Stay Fresh

Bring an empty aluminum water bottle to clear the gate then fill it when you are able to do so. Most hotels nowadays provide you with water (be sure you're not being charged) so fill up your personal bottles. Also, if you can get to markets where they sell water and other tasty goods (fruits, veggie sticks, hummus, crackers, etc.) stock up. You can even ask your hotel for a mini fridge if it's not already provided. Great for snacks and late-night munchies! The fridge keeps your other libations cold too.

## Let's Get Physical

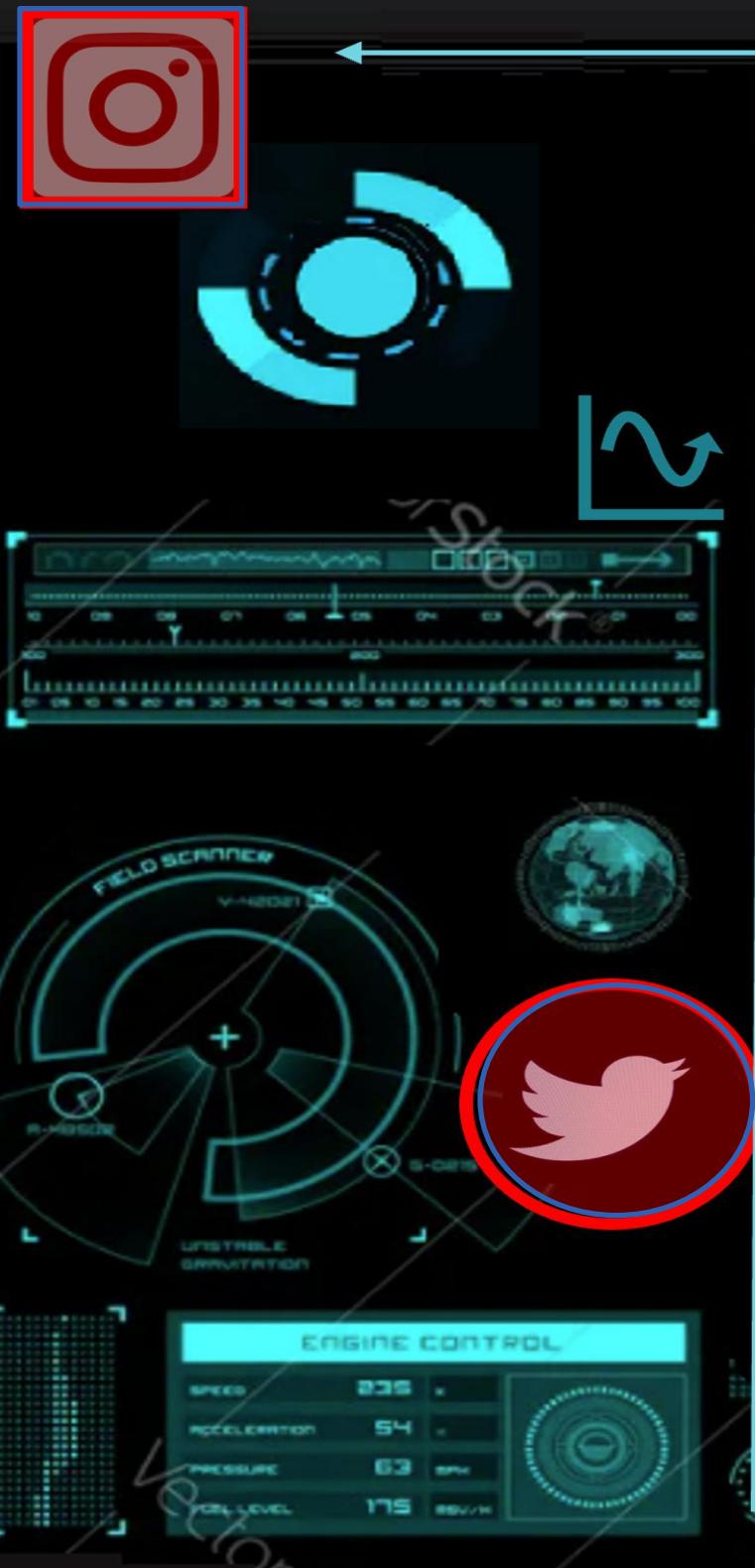
Most hotel have fitness rooms or a great gym on the premises. In fact, I would say that hotel gyms have come a long way. Get your cardio on even if it's walking on the beach, taking a walking tour, riding bikes or dancing the night away. You can also burn calories with eh... um... some other activities too.

## Get Some Culture

Some folks experience digestive issues in other countries. Here's a great tip: eat up those little tubs of yogurt out there- eat them in the morning and at night as a dessert snack. The enzymes will keep you well.



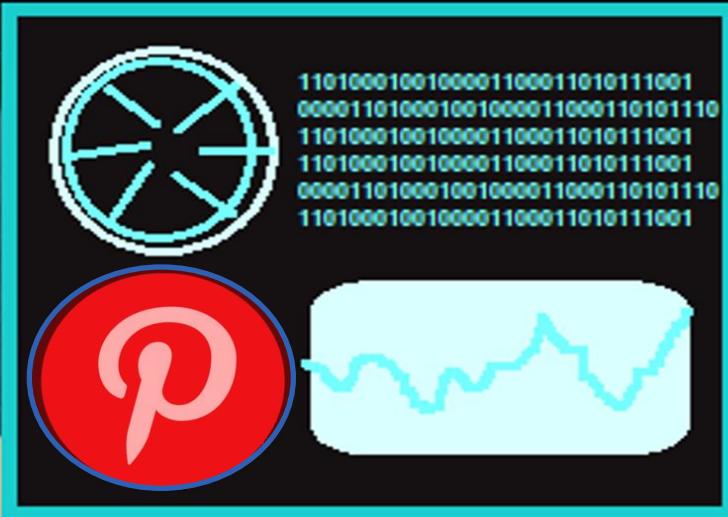
**Eat Your Colors magazine  
is very touch interactive.**



# Tap here to test



Tap or Click on the Images, Texts and / or Links to get more recipes, videos and further information throughout the entire magazine.



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*“Where Ideas Come to Life”*

#### Amenities



Zen Room



Peloton



Mail Delivery Service



Fiber Optic WiFi/IP Solutions



Coffee Break



Conference Room Hours



Shower



Daily Xpress Breakfast

**ILA San Juan**  
1055 Marginal  
Kennedy, San Juan,  
00907



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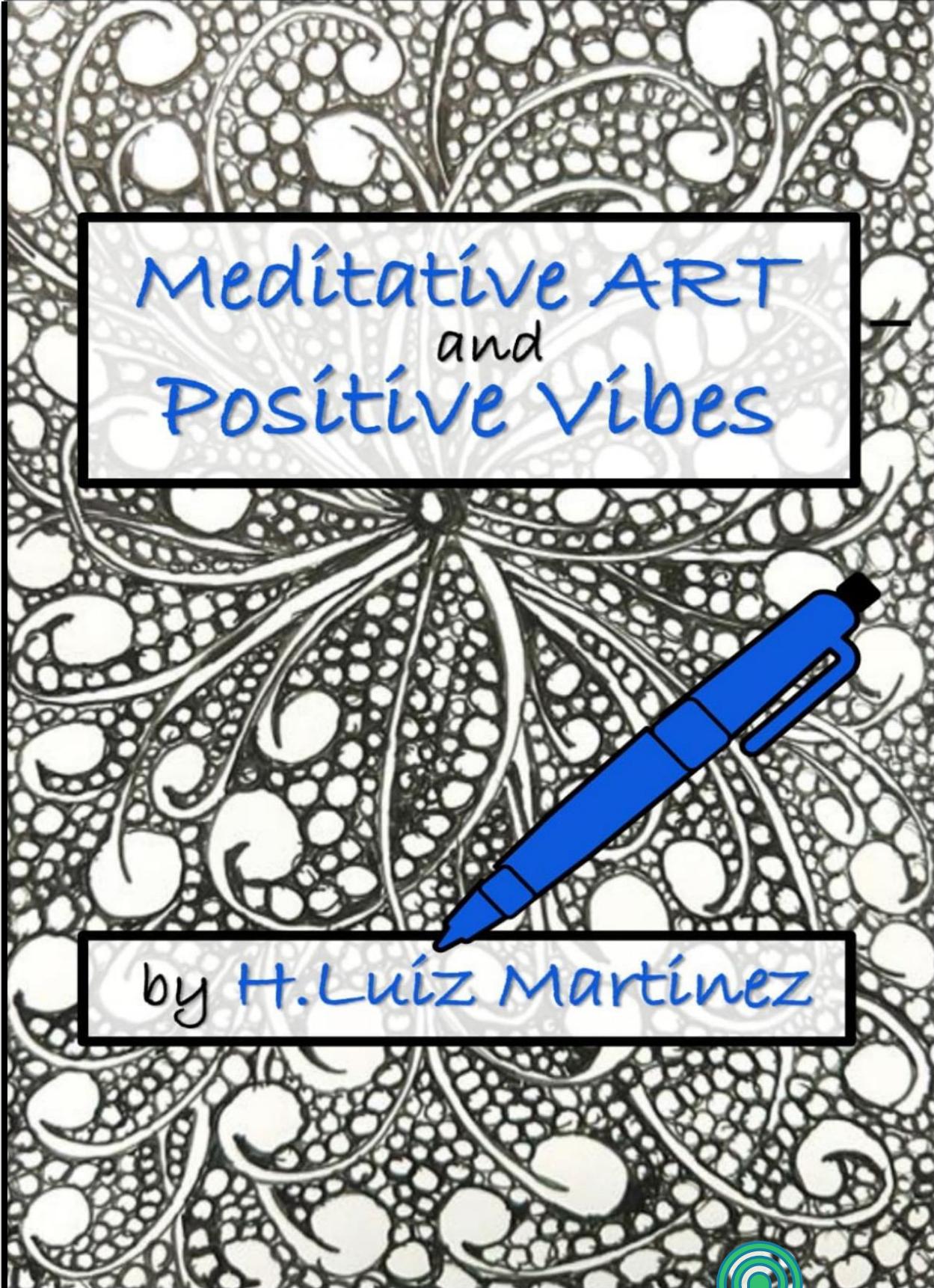


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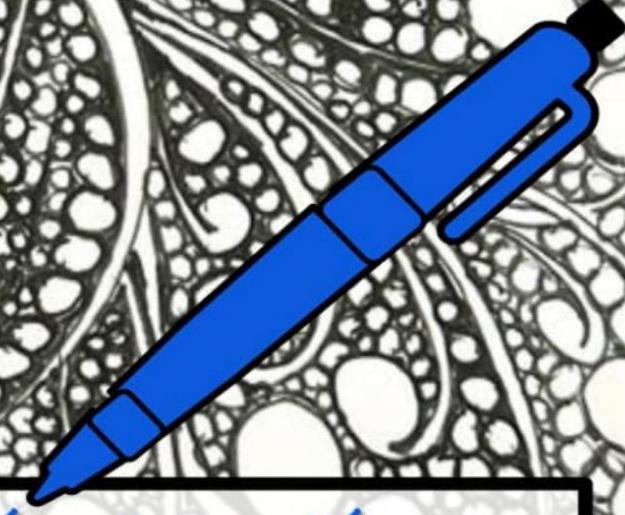
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# Meditative ART and Positive Vibes



by H. Luiz Martinez

\*available exclusively on **AMAZON**



# Meditative Art and Positive Vibes by H. Luiz Martinez

Meditative Art, Art Therapy, Mindful Art or simply just Doodling has been around since forever- they're found in caves for goodness sakes. Don't let anyone tell you any different. Create fun, easy patterns and create beautiful designs- I call them tableaus. Inside, I'll tell you how I got started (40+ years ago) and how you too can benefit from creating your own tableaus. I even show you how you can make one-of-a-kind gifts with your artwork.

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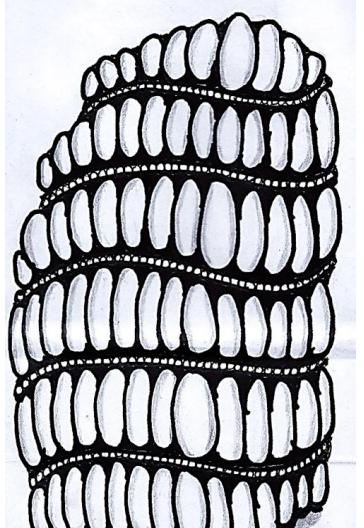
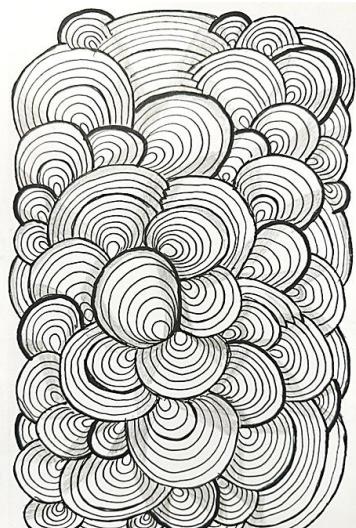
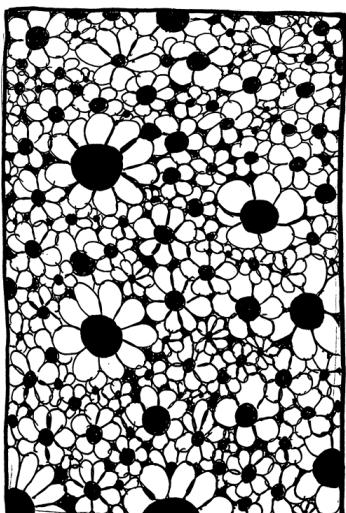
## About the author

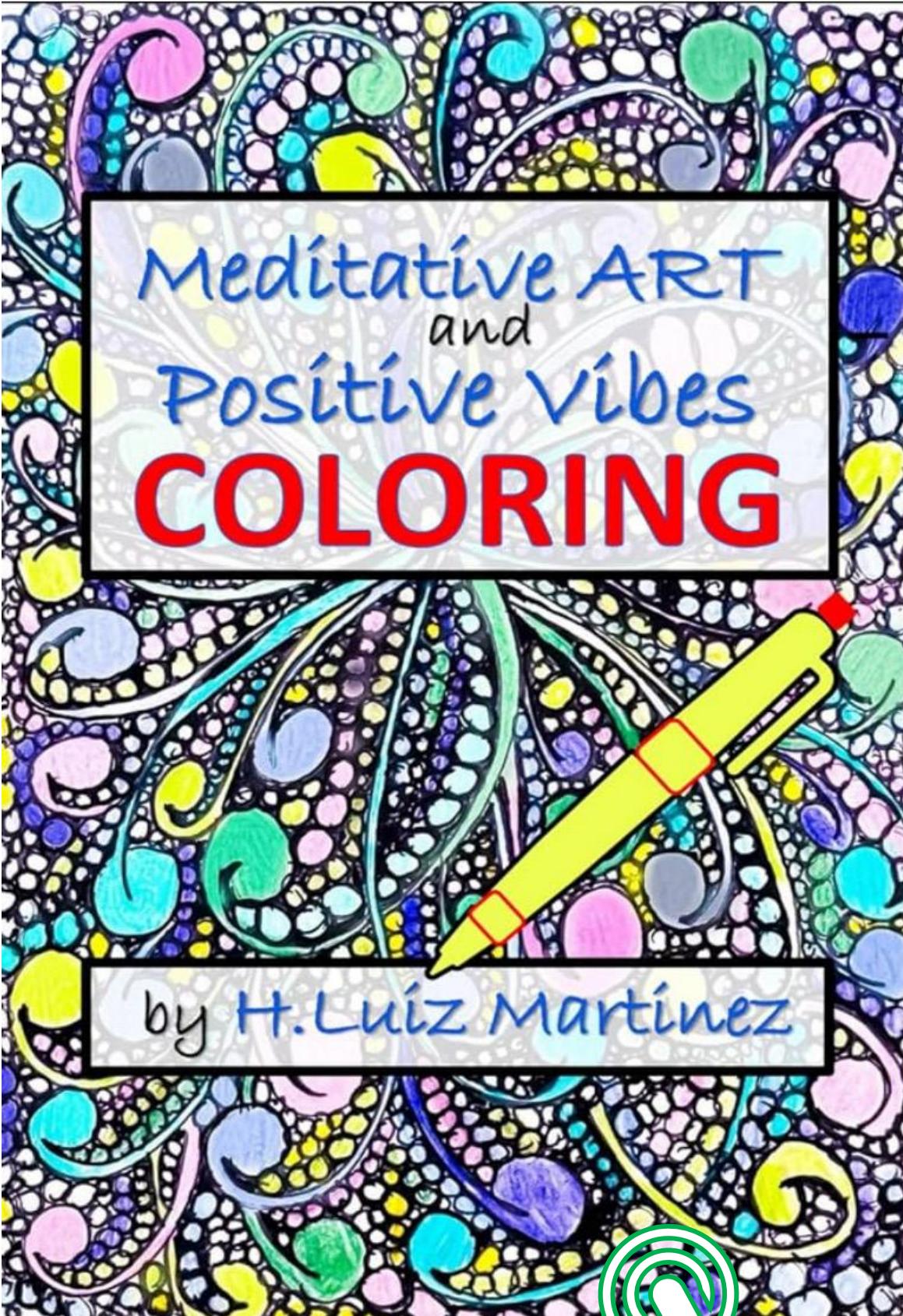
### H. Luiz Martinez



Over 40 years ago, I used to doodle on everything I can get my hands on. It wasn't until I started doodling on my homemade book covers (I started with brown paper bags but graduated to white kraft paper) that people really started to notice my artwork.

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# Meditative ART and Positive Vibes **COLORING**

by H. Luiz Martinez

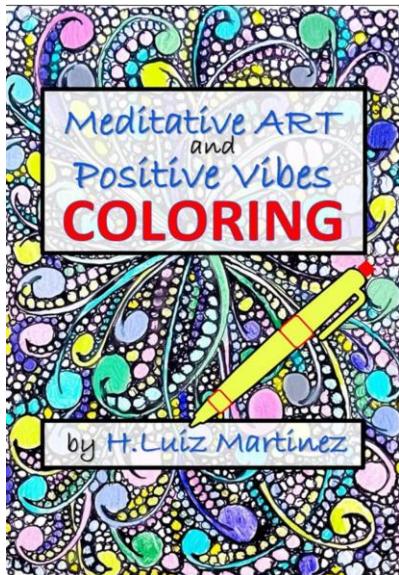
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## Meditative Art and Positive Vibes - Colors

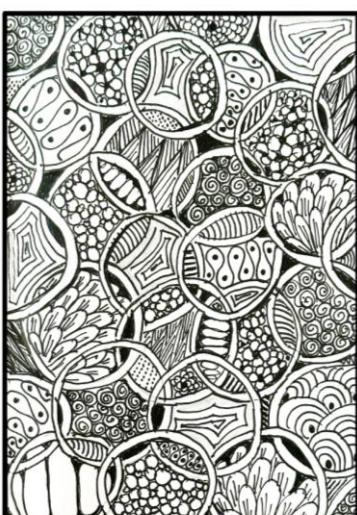
It's finally here- the coloring book for Meditative Art and Positive Vibes! Some of the tableaus that I've done on Live Streams, some postcards that I've sent to you, some of the giftbags that I've designed and even some new designs and patterns too- all here for you to color.

A lot of you have expressed that *coloring* is just as therapeutic for you, so this book was created with that in mind. You may color with as many colors as you'd like or as little color as you would like as well.



Doodling, drawing and coloring kept me calm, motivated and positive- I'm sure it can do the same for you. All you need do is give it a try.

Coloring tableaus that I have already created gives me double the calm, twice the meditations and two time all the fun. There's already a 2<sup>nd</sup> book in the works- a larger book with bigger spaces to color. Some tips and tricks to blending too. This will be out in 2025.



Meditative ART and Positive Vibes

# COLORING BOOK



by H. Luiz Martinez

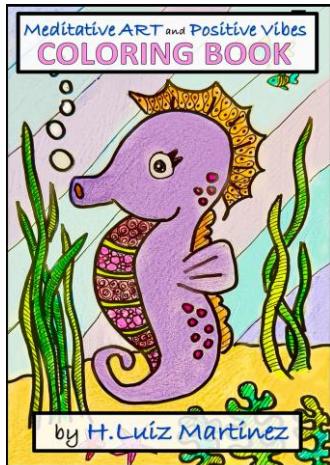
Available on **AMAZON**



# Meditative Art and Positive Vibes Coloring Book - Youth Edition

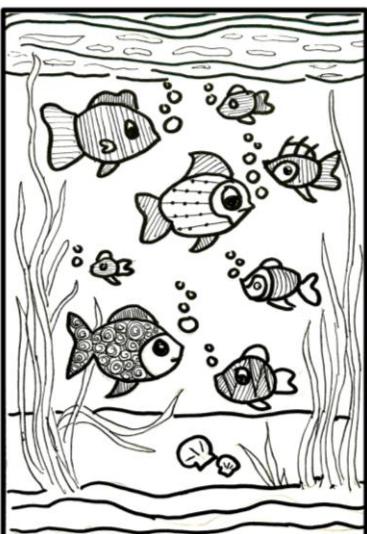
I wanted to *introduce* Meditative Art and Positive Vibes to our youth but on a level that was easy for them to understand. Creating this coloring book with the same principles and meditative properties as the 1<sup>st</sup> book was really the goal and intention.

This coloring book teaches our children to take ownership of their art work. Which in turn, gives them the very tools that they may internalize to take ownership and some responsibility over their very young lives.



When I was a child, I would color the people, animals and objects in my coloring books(s), colors that were in my imagination. People might be colored a light shade of blue or a dark shade of green with hair colored- orange or pink. Cats and dogs may be purple. The sky may be a cool red or a warm yellow tone, and the sun a bright turquoise.

The actual sky is blue of course but I couldn't control that but I *could* control my coloring books though.



# Travel Tips that You Should Really Know

*Before you travel to a different country, there are some unspoken travel rules, tips and good-practices that you really should know. Good Manners and proper etiquette go a very long way in our **own** country and it's just as important (maybe more so) when we travel to another the country as well.*

## Get in the Know

Familiarize yourself with the customs of the places that are unfamiliar to you especially how to greet someone.

A firm handshake may work here in The States but in other parts of the world it *will* not. This may take some research on your part but it is so well worth it.

Even though the world is changing and becoming more *westernized* (not a complimentary term in most regions), most countries hold fast to the customs and traditions. Simply greeting someone on *their* terms is a sign of utmost respect.

## New Zealand

*Hongi is the pressing together of forehead and nose is what the Māori people call a “sharing of breath.” The greeting signifies the sacred welcome of a visitor into Māori culture and is used in welcoming ceremonies.*

## Islamic Countries

Most Women do not shake hands and it is unlawful for men to shake women's hands. However, this varies from region to region.

In **Argentina, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Colombia**, one air kiss is standard but in **Spain, Portugal, Paraguay, Italy**, and cities like **Paris** it's two. In the **Ukraine** and **Belgium**, three is the norm.



## Don't You Speak English?

According to some friends in the Caribbean, Mexico, South America and Europe, this may be the rudest question they sometimes hear from *some* Americans when visiting their country. They say it's *not even* the actual question- it's the tone used by some as if "how dare you not know my language in *your* country." And they say it's not just the *tone*, it's the "*Don't you speak English?*" or "*Do you speak English*" without so much as a greeting most times, not even a smile or a wave, just: do you speak English?

They also expressed to me that some are not even learning common phrases in their country's language, but they want us to help them.

*"Some of them are not putting in the effort to learn common phrases in my country's language, why would I help them in 'their' language?"*

Now that's not to say that we are *all* rude, but it's common enough (with all my friends anyway) where some countries are judging *all of us* because of the impression left by some- which is unfair and wrong too.

That being said, learn a few local common phrases in the region(s) you are visiting. Saying good morning/ afternoon/ evening with a genuine smile will go a long way. Saying "Thank You" and "please" are must-learn phrases.

There are also great translator apps you can download- some even will use audio to translate what you're saying to a different language. I would check those out and get familiar using them before you travel.

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## Eat Their Way

The utensils used in your country may not be the ones used in theirs. Learn the culture's eating habits and their customs- follow suit.

Eating with your clean hands is a common custom in India. In China, eat rice with chopsticks. In Japan, chopsticks are *not* used for eating *nigiri* (rice topped with fish). If foods are unfamiliar to you, do not make a face or say that it's gross.

When in Rome, do as the Romans do.



## Best Day to Book?

We were told by the travel experts that booking flights on a Monday or Tuesday would get us the best rates. While that *may* have been true (some say it was just something agents used to say to us), in today's travel world, it's just not so.

Now that we are our *own* travel agents (thank you, Internet!) finding the best deals may be tricky and challenging. But let me share with you that there ARE pockets of time, ideal windows, when you should book flights for cheaper fares.

Unfortunately, every airline's "pocket" of time differs from one to the next and some "windows" are smaller than others. So what does one do?

Here's what I do: use Google Flights to monitor prices and book when a fare becomes reasonable. Let their algorithms do all the work.

Google Flights allows us to track prices for *specific* routes and will alert when prices drop. We can book directly with Google Flights or be directed to the airline's site to get our travel tickets.

And Google Flights is a *free* service.

*\*Look for the article in this issue where I go into details on how Google Flights work and how you can save you travel money*

## Local Currency Rules

Do not exchange your money to the local currency at the airport. I know that it sounds like it should be okay but believe me- for what they charge you in fees is criminal.

It's better to go to the visiting country's bank to exchange for local currency. In lieu of opening an account, they will ask you for your passport or other docs, so bring them with you to the bank.

I find that the best way to exchange money for local currency is to go to a local bank ATM. If you withdraw \$40 USD, for instance, money will come out of the ATM in the local currency's value of \$40. Just be sure you inform your bank that you are traveling and to what country. Most banks will not charge you an international fee but your visiting country may charge you \$2-\$5 per transaction.

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## Hotel Tips

Generously tip for your room, trust me, it's well worth it. Now I don't mean overtip, I mean tip well enough that housekeeping will go out of their way for you. Extra tips mean, extra towels, extra lotions, extra toiletries and extra cleaning.

## Be Loyal

Frequent fliers should pick one airline and stick to it in order to accumulate as many points as possible. Earning top-tier status with a particular airline yields great results such as free upgrades. Similarly, you can earn points with a chosen hotel chain and you're more likely to be upgraded to a venue's best available room upon check-in.

When I'm invited to do press tours, the tourism group or hotel brand will pay for the flight & hotel stay- but I'll get the *travel points* for both. I can use those very same points to upgrade my airline seat to a roomier one. Same with the hotel (although they tend to place me in their best rooms so I can write/ post about them) I can use points to upgrade to a nicer room.

Those Membership Rewards Programs are oftentimes amazing! Be loyal to one or two cards and soon, you too will be able to get lots of perks for travel.

## Budget Food Hack

I've learned a hack or 2 during my 35+ years of traveling. Here is one that I think you're going to love...

In my early travelling 20's, I figured out that the in-room coffee maker made piping hot water, ideal for late-night cups of ramen. I even steamed broccoli and carrots in the filter tray, while I waited for the water to boil. Then I would add the steamed veggies to my *cup of noodles* and pour hot water right in the cup. I've never trusted those "flavor packets" so I would bring packs of soy sauce and chili oil from my Chinese take out place. It was a great way to save money on dinner costs while on vacation.

I told a friend about this hack 20+ years ago and he took it further. He would use the hot water to pour onto those instant oatmeal cups for his kids' breakfast. For lunch, he would load the glass carafe with a couple of hotdogs for a cheapie lunch. He said that 2 kids can wreck a travel budget on just food alone. He would rather spend the money on nice suppers while they were away on vacation.





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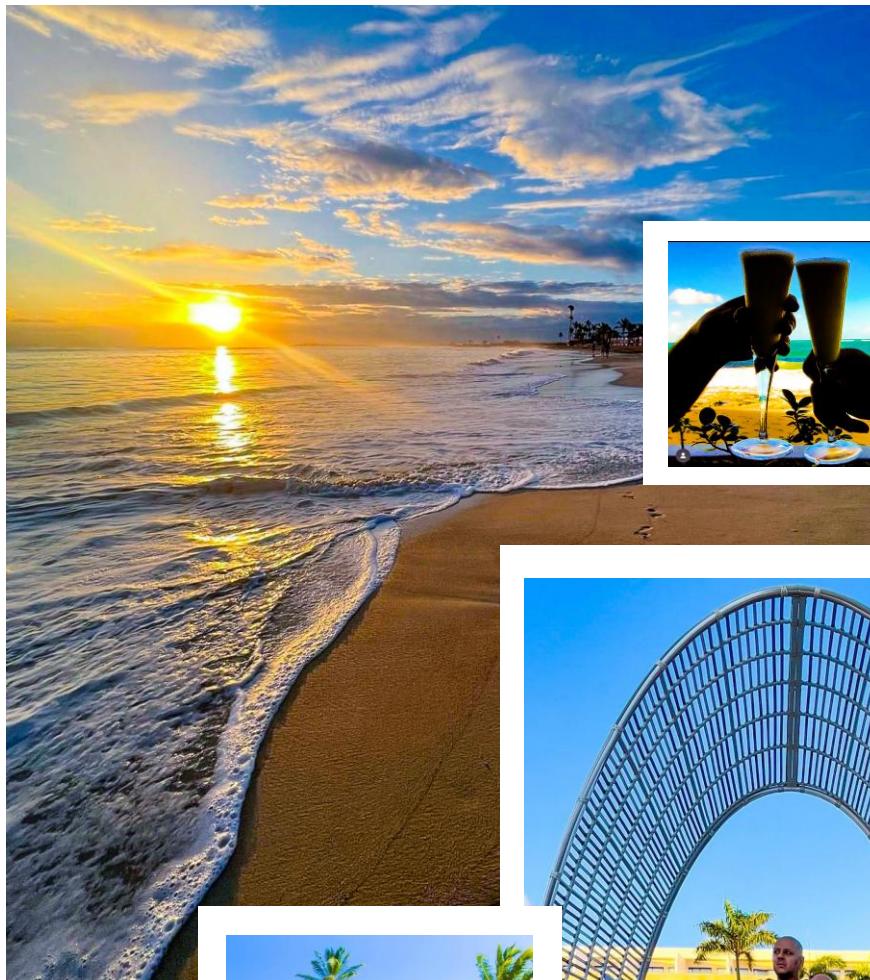


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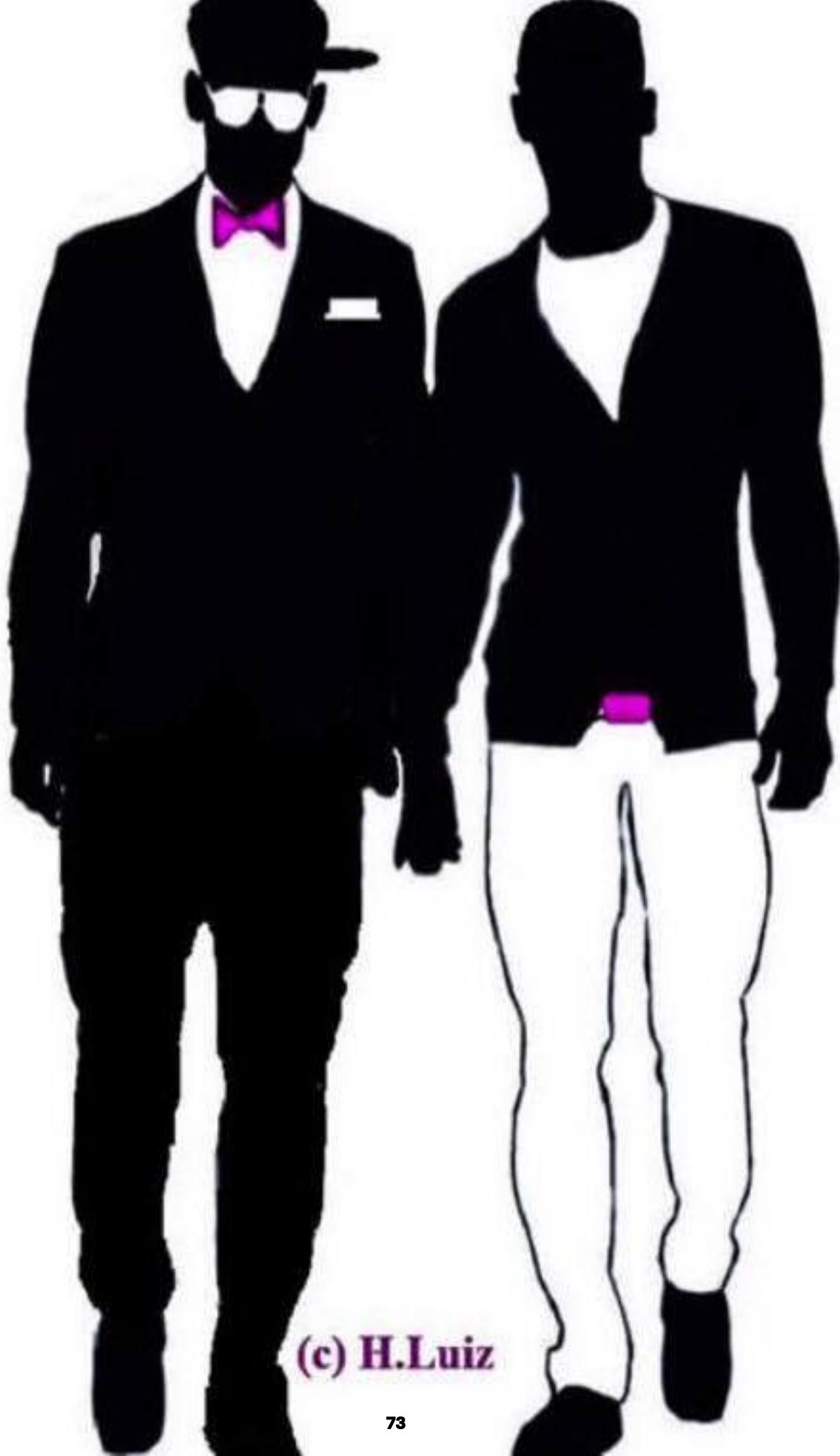
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Here's to a happy and healthy New Year.  
Wherever you may find yourself, we wish you a  
Life full of love, friendship, tranquility and peace.

We wish you the very best in the New Year 2026!

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