



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: COMADRE ROSI AMADOR FROM SOL Y CANTO

BY ROSA BEATO

### IN HER WORDS, WITH COMADRE ROSI AMADOR. REFLECTING ABOUT CAMINO DE SANTIAGO, SPAIN

#### How did you get started as Sol y Canto? How long have you been with Las Comadres Boston Network?

I am originally from San Juan, Puerto Rico. My mom was an actress and singer raised in NYC of Puerto Rican descent and my dad was an actor from Buenos Aires, Argentina. I went to Bryn Mawr College in the Philadelphia area and moved to Boston after graduating and stayed because of the arts, culture, and progressive community that I resonated with. I joined Las Comadres in 2005. I met this wonderful group of Latina women gathering in their homes and was immediately welcomed! I felt I'd found a home away from home right away and went to as many gatherings as possible for years, particularly before I had my kids. I also hosted many a Comadrado in my garden during the summer and loved being the hostess! Las Comadres Para Las Américas has been a beautiful support system in my life.

My husband, Brian and I founded our Latin band *Sol y Canto* in Cambridge, MA where we currently still live, in 1994 after ending a previous Latin band that lasted 10 years (*Flor de Caña*). We knew we didn't want to stop making music and wanted to sing about the things that matter to us. We perform as a duo, trio or quintet around the U.S and in Puerto Rico. We describe *Sol y Canto* as "Latin roots music with a social conscience" and our repertoire ranges from heartfelt lullabies dedicated to our one-time baby twins, to songs expressing our hopes for a better world, to driving dance rhythms about how to combat solitude by connecting with friends. We adore singing for Las Comadres' annual bilingual holiday sing-along online every year. Something Comadre Nora launched during the pandemic!

*sol y canto*



#### Let's talk about your trip to Camino de Santiago, Spain. What made you take this trip to Camino De Santiago?

The *Camino de Santiago* is an extensive network of ancient pilgrim routes stretching across Europe and coming together at the tomb of St. James (Santiago in Spanish) in Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain. We had the idea of going to the Camino de Santiago,

a pilgrimage to Northern Spain, well before the pandemic when we saw the movie "The Way" with Martin Sheen which takes place in the Camino de Santiago. We were supposed to go in May 2020 and due to the pandemic ended up going in October 2021.

#### What did you do to prepare for this trip?

My husband Brian and I trained throughout 2019-20 by walking 2-14 miles every weekend. Just before the trip, we would take two walks a week. One early on a weekday for 2-3 miles and a longer one on the weekend. We always walked on nature trails throughout the greater Boston and New England region, no matter what the weather, and learned how to adapt to all types of climates. We fell in love with it and it is still a sacred ritual for us.

#### Which route did you take? How many nights?

We took the "Camino Francés" (the French Way) which is the most popular. It starts from France, but to walk from France you must walk for about a month. We could only take a total of three weeks of vacation, so we flew into Madrid, spent time with friends before and after the trip, and walked on the Camino for two weeks with our backpacks through the beautiful mountainous regions of Castilla y León and Galicia in Northern Spain. We walked a total of 160 miles and stayed in simple but comfortable lodgings, rural homes, hostels, and small inns along the way. We didn't camp. Most people don't. We stopped to eat in wonderful cafes and small restaurants that dot the way on the Camino Francés, which is very set up for the Camino "pilgrims" as walkers are called who take on this walk. It took us 2 weeks to get to Santiago de Compostela, a beautiful ancient city where all the paths from different countries come together! After seeing so few people on the Camino, it was a bit overwhelming to arrive and see throngs of people, to be honest. We enjoyed our two-day stay at the end of our journey and had some excellent meals in that regal city with an amazing church.

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# GIVING TUESDAY

## Support Your Comadres \* Tues, November 28

November is the start of the **Season of Gratitude**. **Las Comadres Para Las Americas** has a lot to be thankful for, especially Comadres like You. We invite you to reflect on your time as a Comadre, on the friendships and the power of our Comadres Community. It is a warm and fulfilling community. We are here to support you in every way possible through our Comadrazos, speaker series, book clubs, outings, etc.

For Tuesday, November 28, the **National Day of Giving**, We ask for your support by way of a small donation of \$25 to Las Comadres for 2023 programs that enrich, empower, and energize our Comadres and our Community.

Make your donation here:  
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Thank you for Your continued support and friendship.

### Editorial

BY EDITOR ROSA BEATO

This edition of the Las Comadres Connect Newsletter, we focus our attention on health, nutrition, and life’s challenges and accomplishments. These articles you are about to read are from personal lived experiences. Written with the best intentions, thoughtfulness, and soul. We have also included coloring pages in gratitude of the holidays.

As the month of October falls, we leave behind the season that allows us to celebrate our different cultures and traditions; a month that reminds us of how vulnerable we are when the unexpected happens. We are reminded that life is precious, that we can overcome barriers and be resilient!

Keep a positive mindset or surround ourselves with a positive circle of friends and more importantly seek a support group or a professional counselor to help you get through your life challenges. Obstacles that get in our path, jump them with vigor and force.

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## Breast Cancer: Debbie's Story of Resilience

By Debbie Bonilla

I'm a 58-year-old single mother of 3 and grandma of one. My parents are from Puerto Rico, I was born and raised in Cambridge, MA. I am a survivor of domestic violence and now a breast cancer survivor.

In March of 2023, I went for my yearly physical. As the doctor walked through the door, the first thing she asked me was if I'd got my mammogram yet and the truth is I had not. I canceled my Mammogram appointment 3 times in the last year because of work. I didn't prioritize myself. I told her that I did not but promised that I would when I got home. She said, "Why don't you just go upstairs today since you're here and just get it out of the way?" I jumped on that offer since I knew it would be hard for me to come back. She examined me after she wrote up my order. If she felt a lump while examining me, she didn't tell me. I left her office and went upstairs for my mammogram. I left and went on with my day. The following week I got a call that they had found something and wanted me to come back for an ultrasound. This wasn't unusual for me because I have dense breast tissue. I went in on a Friday and while getting the ultrasound, I could tell by the doctor's behavior that something was wrong, but they didn't say the word "cancer". They told me that a biopsy needed to be done and they wanted to do it on Monday. The urgency had me nervous. I was told to go to the front desk and make an appointment for Monday. The first available appointment was a couple of months out. I told them the doctor wanted me to come in on Monday. They said they'd see what they could do. Trying to stay calm and keep busy, I went shopping. I decided to grab lunch, and as I was ordering, my primary doctor called to check on me and to see if I had any questions. I thought that was unusual. I didn't think they knew it was cancer because I didn't have the biopsy yet. I decided to ask if they could tell by the ultrasound if it was cancer. She responded, "Yes, it's cancer". I felt sick to my stomach. My food went directly into the trash. I thought about my kids and my parents - how will I tell them? Who will take care of my son? I thought I was going to die within months because of this diagnosis. I went to the worst place possible. I was shocked, scared, and angry. I told my doctor she needed to help schedule my biopsy for Monday. Two months out is unacceptable. Within a few minutes, I got a phone call from the doctor's office. My biopsy was scheduled for Monday. I cried on my way home - I could not believe I had

cancer. I told my 32-year-old daughter, Pariss, what the doctor said. She refused to believe it until the biopsy was done. I spoke to two of my closest cousins and two of my closest friends. They all listened to me and tried their best to comfort me. That Sunday, while on the phone with a friend, I scratched the top of my left breast. I felt the lump! At that point, I lost all hope of it being non-cancerous. On Monday I felt scared and brave if that makes sense. Brave because I was going to let them do what they needed to get samples of the tissue and scared because I knew it was going to come back cancerous. They gave me shots to numb the area. I felt a lot of pressure and heard lots of clicking noises as they took samples and then inserted a marker, so they knew where it was located. After the biopsy, I had another mammogram to make sure they could see the marker. I went home feeling very sad but had to act normal so the kids wouldn't ask questions. The waiting to hear back was hard. I heard nothing on Tuesday and Wednesday. During a team meeting my phone rang - it was the nurse. She told me it was cancer and though they have not officially staged it, she thought it was stage 2 and early detection. I was devastated to receive the news and a little relieved that it was an early detection. She couldn't tell me much more because not all the results were back.

Appointments were made with the surgical oncologist whose job is to remove the mass either by performing a lumpectomy or a mastectomy (there are many types of this surgery), and with the plastic surgeon who will perform reconstruction surgery. My surgical oncologist recommended the best surgery for me was a lumpectomy with reconstruction on my left breast and a reduction on my right breast performed by the plastic surgeon after the mass was removed. At that time, she staged the cancer at 1b, early detection. She didn't think I needed chemo but would need radiation. As she went over my results with me and my sister-in-law who is a nurse and worked in oncology, she said I was in the best situation possible. I felt better about that because I originally thought they were going to tell me I needed to have a double mastectomy and chemo which meant hair loss.

Pariss and I decided to have a family dinner to tell the kids and my 10-year-old grandson, Sevee. That was one of the hardest and saddest days of my life. Pariss prepared a presentation to show the kids the kind of cancer I had and the survival rates. It was helpful. Next, I prepared to tell my parents. I remember my mom taking in what I was telling her, and she had many questions and lots of advice. I saw her strength at that moment. Then she came from around the counter and just hugged me and told me everything was going to be OK and prayed for me while she held me. She let my dad know and we reassured him I would be fine. I was able to let friends, family, and my team at work know after that.



In May, I had my surgery. The day before, I had surgery, I said bye to my boobs and even took a picture of them. It was a difficult moment. I loved my boobs! It was a day surgery which is crazy to me. I was in the hospital all day and they performed the surgery early in the evening. I think I was in surgery for six hours. I went home that evening.

I was angry at work, and I realized it was me who chose to put work before my health. I should've never canceled those appointments. The last mammogram I had was in 2019. I couldn't believe it. COVID got in the way for a couple of years, I could've gone in 2022. I believe things happen the way they're supposed to happen. I'm so fortunate to have an incredible circle of friends and family that have been supportive throughout the entire process.

I had the surgery in May. I looked at myself as I was taking my shower and at first, I didn't like what I saw but as days went by things got easier. I'm okay the way I look now but I do miss the boobs I had. I took six weeks to recover from the surgery. I remember getting a call from the nurse and she told me that the pathology test came back and I might need chemo. I needed radiation and will have to take medication for 5 to 10 years. I was really scared of chemo because of how sick it made people. Also, the thought of losing my hair hurt just as much as losing my boobs. My pathology results showed that chemo was not needed.

I will have another surgery next spring. I recently started taking medication to lower my chances of reoccurrence. I started feeling some of the side effects of the medicine including bone pain, headaches, and fatigue. I will be on medication for the next 5 to 10 years of my life.

I appreciate life. I'm not waiting to do things that bring me joy, like traveling. I have set boundaries around my time. I listen to my body. I don't worry about things I used to. I'm looking for a therapist because it's important to talk about my experience. I have joined a couple of breast cancer groups which have been very helpful. I always love being with my family and friends and hanging out with my kids. I try to stay positive and upbeat but sometimes I feel sad, depressed, desperate, anxious, and scared. I stretch, exercise, and eat healthy 95% of the time. I love sweets and bread! I treat myself sometimes.

For me, it's important to share my life experiences with people. I want them to know that they are not alone. I can empathize with them. I never assume my journey is the same as someone else's journey. My advice to you is please make your health a priority. Get your mammogram done. If something doesn't feel right, let your doctor know and if you feel you need a second opinion, get one.

## WELLNESS: EATING DURING CANCER

By Esperanza Beltrán

Trying to change one's eating habits can be stressful. If you're going through cancer treatment it can be anxiety-inducing but try to remember that it's an adjustment for the long term, so it will take time and the process will not be perfect. Here are a few things I learned that will hopefully be of some help:

- Keep it simple with lots of vegetables, fruits, and lean meats.
- Look at the ingredients list of packaged foods - the simpler the ingredients, the better
- Add vegetables to your fruit smoothies.
- Replace refined sugar with raw, unfiltered honey or with other natural sweeteners like Stevia or dates.
- Drink lots of water
- Try different foods that have lots of colors.
- Enjoy eating! If you're going through chemo and your taste is gone, don't be afraid to treat yourself to soft fresh desserts like Jell-O or a little bit of ice cream

## RECIPES | RECETAS

### HOMEMADE ALMOND MILK

- 1 cup of almonds
- 4 cups of water
- Soak overnight
- Blend with a pinch of sea salt—for longer life (Optional: add 1 tsp vanilla extract)
- Strain
- Enjoy!
- Be sure to refrigerate the rest

### HOMEMADE ALMOND-FLAX PANCAKE MIX

- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 cup almond flour
- ¼ cup ground flaxseed or 2 tbsp whole flaxseed—adjust to taste preference
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- Mix
- Add 1 egg
- Add Milk or water to the desired consistency
- If you wish to use butter, stick with "grass-fed"

*DISCLAIMER: We are not health care practitioners. ALL information you read on Recipes to nourish is purely for informational and educational purposes. Always seek the advice of your doctor or other qualified health provider/professional regarding a medical condition.*

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: COMADRE ROSI AMADOR (cont.)

### What was your least favorite route?

There were many ascents and descents. On the second day I recall a particularly arduous ascent after a serious descent that was very challenging for our bodies, our knees in particular. Plus, it was a long day - longer than we should have taken on. We planned our own trip by looking at maps and "guesstimating" how we'd do. We learned the hard way and the rest of the trip went great. Because the long descents are the hardest on the knees there are some pilgrims that skip it - and are taken by car to the next town - others who do it. I'm glad I did it, but I would have liked a lighter walking day to feel less inclined to hurry to get to my lodging before it got dark.



### Would you do it again?

Absolutely! We already went back once, though only for five days the following June, with friends, this time from Santiago de Compostela to the coast (Finisterre, Spain) - "*Finis -terre - end of the earth*, to see the coast! My dream is to go back and do the Camino with my twins who are now 27. So far, they are not too interested in

that walk but open to other adventures. That is my wish - that we go as a family. I suspect I may go with other friends before that happens.

### What is challenging?

You must be in good enough physical shape to be prepared for those climbs and descents. Though, on the other hand, we saw people who were significantly older than me who were walking alongside us at times. We decided to carry our backpacks, but many people pay a small fee for a van to take their backpacks to the next lodging and simply carry a daypack. A lot of organized trips are like this. That is friendlier for the older, less able-bodied walkers. We used walking poles which made the walk more manageable, and it reduces the impact on the knees. We love them and use them now every time we walk!

### What lessons do you take away from this journey?

I learned that carrying a backpack with a total of two sets of clothes and a few other things is ALL you need to be happy! Who knew? What a simple discovery. We were able to wash our dirty laundry at every stop easily (there are plentiful washing machines in the lodgings). So amazing how much stuff we carry around in our lives that we don't need at all. I loved

the simplicity of having only one goal every day: to walk and be in the present. I loved being in nature in a beautiful country where the locals are so kind to the pilgrims and where I was sharing an adventure with everyone else who was walking. We pilgrims always wished one another "*Buen Camino*" (good path) whenever we walked by one another. People from all over the world do this walk - some for religious or spiritual reasons, and some for adventure - and we all feel this deep connection simply by sharing the Camino.

For Brian and me, one of the things that made it very special is that we shared our music. Since it was still during the pandemic, we chose not to stay in hostels where (younger) people tend to stay to save money and sleep in bunk beds. When we stayed in a hostel, we got a private room (only once). We always had our own private room everywhere we stayed. I worried that we'd never meet anyone this way, so I proposed to him that we go to the breakfast room where we were staying and sing one of Brian's songs called "*Buen Camino*". We simply got up and made an announcement that we wanted to dedicate this song to all the pilgrims present (in English since that's the common language for international travelers). Not surprisingly, people then approached us to meet us. We made so many wonderful friends that way! In fact, a fellow pilgrim filmed us singing "*Buen Camino*" on the Camino. Brian played a small travel guitar that fit in his backpack that came in handy daily. [Watch the YouTube Video.](#)

The biggest lesson learned from this journey is that for me walking is a spiritual practice. I discovered something I already knew but felt more deeply on the Camino: nature is a part of my spirituality. Walking in silence is a gift. Even though I went with Brian, we frequently walked at a different pace, and he would be ahead. Sometimes I walked with other pilgrims and had a fantastic time hearing their Camino stories. But mostly I walked alone, hearing my footsteps. This solitude gave me lots of time to think, to really listen to the birds and sounds of nature, to sing to myself, to reflect on my life, to fully embody the walk and to feel so much gratitude for making the commitment and then to carry out this dream we had for years. Our bodies were strong to carry us through on foot in good weather and rainy and cold weather at times. We LOVED the Camino and look forward to returning. We also love Spain, the food and wines! Spaniards are so welcoming; they know how to treat their guests. The country's infrastructure is topnotch, traveler friendly and it's economical.

**There have been some conversations about Las Comadres possibly making this journey to Camino de Santiago. I know I would love to do it too.**

I think that's a GREAT idea! It's a very bonding experience! And very doable if you plan it right. Brian and I got good at planning. A lot of people just hire a company that organizes it for your group and that works well too if you're into that. We wanted total freedom.

*Argentina, Mate, Alfajores and Las Comadres:  
A Memorable Afternoon with Mirta Rinaldi*  
by Jacqueline Quinones



It all started at a Comadres luncheon in Queens, New York, as we were having lunch and joined by Comadre Mirta Rinaldi, a Chef at League of Kitchens. She and her daughter, Paola, joined the Comadres group about 10 years ago. I have met Mirta on several occasions and every time I hear her stories, I learn something new about

someone she met, what types of jobs she has done, and where she has traveled.

Mirta also has had several articles written about her in *Oprah Magazine* (2018), *Food and Wine Magazine* (Sept and Dec 2021), *Women's Issue in Edible Queens* (2018). Mirta's cooking career with the [League of Kitchens](#) and family history in Argentina are covered in a half hour pilot show titled "From Grandma with Love" produced by Everywoman Productions and The Magnolia Network on Discovery Plus. Follow her on Instagram [mendulcina/](#) or website [mendulcina.com](#) you can find a link tree to the movie.

Mirta is well known for her alfajores de maizena (shortbread cookies stuffed with dulce de leche) which are her specialty. She holds cooking classes at her apartment, so Las Comadres New York City decided to attend one of her classes. Mirta was delighted and added a Mate ceremony for the group before the class.

Little did we know that we would experience an amazing food and culture retreat. Mirta and her daughter welcomed us with a homemade lemonade that was very refreshing and smooth to the palate. She told us stories about Argentinian history and culture. Many of the items displayed in her apartment tell the story of Argentina through pictures, historical classical books, and her incredible collection of Mates. Mirta explained the history of the gauchos, how mate is cultivated, and the significance of community it represents. She also demonstrated the different types of mates (yerba mate with stems, without stems, and other herbs) and had a small table with individual servings of aromatics, like orange peel and

coconut flakes that could be added to the mate. Mirta also brought us to her balcony where she grows fresh herbs like basil, oregano and mint which we could add to the yerba mate. In Argentina, they drink Yerba Mate daily. They use hollowed out gourds to make the mate cups and a metal bombilla functions as a straw.



This is the second time I attended an event hosted by Mirta and she never disappoints. There was a spectacular, colorful and charming table setting with individual silver plates set up to drink mate with Quince jelly, decorated butter, and fancy wooden picks to gather olives and other finger foods. The table also had a spread of appetizers like "matambre"

which is cold meat stuffed with spinach, hardboiled egg, and carrots. There was also a variety of Argentinian cheeses like Cascara Colorada, (Gouda), Cuartirolo (Port Salut), tea sandwiches, dulce de batata, and her own homemade Quince paste which is a recipe passed down in her family. After our Mate ceremony, we were led to the kitchen where she showed us how to make the dough for the alfajores and then we all took turns preparing them to bake. Once baked, we assembled them to add dulce de leche and coconut flakes. It was a simple recipe to make even though there were several steps. They were mildly sweet and delicious.

Mirta went all out by baking a Membrillo pie called Pastafrola that had the name of Las Comadres on it. Mirta also makes homemade membrillo (Quince) to sell, if interested in buying some, check out her Instagram [mendulcina](#) and her website [mendulcina.com](#). It was a day to remember. Such a great feeling of sisterhood, amazing food and an afternoon enriched with history and culture. Thank you, Mirta, for an unforgettable special time.



If you are interested in scheduling a mate ceremony and/or a cooking class that are reasonably priced, especially for Comadres, please visit her website at [mendulcina.com](#) to make reservations. Enjoy the pictures and definitely consider treating yourself, friends and family to one of Mirta's classes, it will be an experience of a lifetime.

## CEMPASÚCHIL—THE FLOWER OF LIFE AND DEATH

### Celebrating Día de los Muertos

By Esperanza Beltrán



#### SOME FACTS ON THE CEMPASÚCHIL

The *cempasúchil* (aka Aztec marigold or African marigold) has the scientific name *Tagetes Erecta*. It is an annual, grows in the summer/fall, and comes in orange, yellow, and white. Its Spanish name, *cempasúchil*, comes from the nahuatl word *cempohualxochitl*, meaning twenty—or many—flowers. This flower, however, was not unique to the Mexicas as it was also known as *expujuj* to the Mayas and as *apàtsicua* to the Purepechas.

The *cempasúchil* made its first appearance in Spanish literature in the book *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, otherwise known as El Codice Florentino, a 12-volume encyclopedia written in Spanish and Nahuatl, by Bernardino de Sahagun and a group of native Nahuatl speakers which included intellectuals and painters (*tlamatinime*, and *tlacuiloque*, in Nahuatl).

The Mexicas believed that the orange of the *cempasúchil* symbolized the sun and was, therefore, bright enough to light the pathway home.

But this flower was not solely used for lighting the way for the dead; it was also known to have healing powers and was often used as a medication for digestive issues such as vomit, indigestion, and diarrhea, for curing cough, fever, skin issues such as warts, rashes, and sores.

Currently, in Mexico, it is used as food for hens to give the meat and yolk their yellow color and make them more attractive; it can also be used to make dye, insecticides, craft beers, and pulque.

Of the 55 species of the *Tagetes Patula*, 30 are native to Mexico. They grow best in the states of Michoacan, Hidalgo, Guanajuato, and the State of Mexico due to their rich dark soil. While the largest producer of this flower was once Mexico, after the start of NAFTA in the 90s, they were not able to keep up with the demand and have been replaced by China, which now produces three-quarters of crops, followed by India (20%) and Peru (5%). However, there is a difference. Marigolds mass-produced in China and India have been engineered not to reproduce, whereas the ones grown by small businesses (or at home) will reproduce and regrow year after year. The way to differentiate between a mass-produced marigold and a naturally raised one is simply by the length of the stem. Natural marigolds can grow up to 3 feet tall and are sold by the bunch; mass-produced ones are sold in pots and grow only a few inches.

Of course, the most common use for the *cempasúchil* is for the setting up of the Day of the Dead altar. Aside from representing the light of the sun, it is also meant to represent the earth, one of the three elements that must be present in the altars. The other two are fire and water. Candles represent fire, and water should be placed in a container made of red clay. Along with these, make sure to have your loved ones' favorite foods, drinks, and any other item that represents their personality or favorite pastimes (i.e., books, games such as cards or dice, tools, etc.) It can be as large or small as you wish, but most of all, make it with lots of love.



## THE AZTEC LEGEND OF THE CEMPASÚCHIL

By Esperanza Beltrán

Xochitl and Huitzilil were childhood friends who fell in love in their adolescence. One day, they decided to go to the top of the hill where they knew that the sun god, Tonatiuh, lived and shone the brightest. They asked him to bless their love, and seeing how strong their love was, he did just that, blessing them with his light.

Not long after, war broke out in their village, and Huitzilil was called to defend his people. Xochitl was sad to be separated from him but hoped they would be joined soon, once the war was over. She waited and waited until one day she received news that her lover, Huitzilil, had died on the battlefield.

Completely devastated, Xochitl ran up the hill to Tonatiuh and pleaded with him to let her be joined with the love of her life. Seeing her immense pain, the sun god shone his bright light on her with such force that she dissolved into the ground. There, a flower grew but remained a closed bud for a very long time.

Attracted by the bud's strong scent, a hummingbird one day approached it and touched its beak to the center of the bud. Recognizing the hummingbird as Huitzilil, Xochitl opened herself, revealed her bright orange color, and released the strong scent of what she had become—the cempasúchil flower that Tonatiuh had turned her into.

It has since been said that as long as there are hummingbirds and cempasúchil flowers, the love of Xochitl and Huitzilil will endure.



## MI ALTAR

By Tish Leon



Views of Tish's altar for Dia de los Muertos.





## PAULINA JARAMILLO, AUTHOR

*The Littlest Chef: Fun and Healthy Recipes for Children*



The recipes (with slight modification)

### Peanut Butter and Chocolate Oat Squares

#### Ingredients

- 3 cups quick cooking oats
- 1 cup natural peanut butter (creamy)
- ½ cup honey (organic or raw)

Line a 9x9 pan with foil. Spray foil lightly with non-stick spray. Have an adult help you melt peanut butter and honey together in the microwave until smooth. Add oats to peanut butter and honey mixture. Mix thoroughly. Place mixture in pan and press down lightly. Place the pan in the fridge until the mixture is firm.

#### Chocolate Topping

- 1/3 cup creamy peanut butter
- 10 ounces dark chocolate, chopped
- 1 Tbsp honey
- 1/2 tsp vanilla

Peppermint sprinkles, crushed

Ask an adult to help you melt the peanut butter, chocolate, and honey together in the microwave on low. Stir often. Let it cool for about 15 minutes. Add vanilla and stir. Spread the chocolate topping over the oat squares. Add sprinkles. Place in the fridge until firm. Cut into squares and enjoy.

## Mind, Body & Spirit

*Written by Jeannie Diaz -200hr Yoga (Vinyasa/Yin) Meditation Teacher*



### *Tips for beginners on how to prepare yourself for your first in-person yoga class*

When I started yoga there were not a variety of yoga classes and diverse teachers. Yoga is a mind-body experience --- find a studio that will be suitable for you and I am sure when you do you will feel the most benefits.

#### 1) Support your local studio and research

You don't need to travel too far and sometimes in doing so may result in rushing to take a class which may defeat the relaxing mode you are trying to capture. There are many studios that offer a 2-week unlimited new member sale--- which is such a great deal. Try all different types of classes. In time, and if you can afford to, some of the pricier studios offer an array of props for instance eye pillows and hands-on aromatherapy. A smaller class where the teacher is more attentive to you and has time to have a full conversation with you prior to the class really makes a difference.

#### 2) How to pick a class that will suits you

There are about 8 styles of yoga. The most popular are Vinyasa, Restorative or Yin, Hatha, Astanga or Bikram. For beginners, I recommend a class that will focus on basic postures explained in depth, a yoga flow where pranayama (breath control) and basic meditation techniques are explained. Simplicity is key. As described by my favorite yoga studio "sometimes moving slowly and with intention can be our greatest challenge and our greatest reward".



### 3) Shopping Time

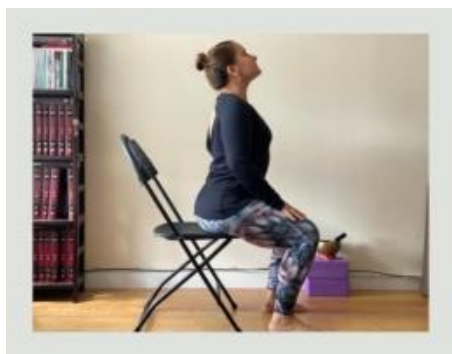
**Clothes-** Before shopping for a whole new expensive wardrobe, take a class first. Wear the supportive clothing that you already have. Something breathable that you feel comfortable in. Depending on the class, there is no right/wrong clothing. Since all of our bodies are shaped beautifully, I always recommend to shop in person so that you can feel the quality. Look for breathable, moisture-wicking, stretch (which allows freedom of movement) fabrics of your choice that are kind to the skin.

**Yoga mat- the main key.** Why do I shop in person, feeling the quality of the mat has helped the most. Some mats are thicker (which is key for the support of all your joints). Some have a different coating although most are made with PVC. Others may smell at first when unrolled (which may sound odd, but they have a chemical smell) and if you perspire a lot look for one with the right grip which is also important. The 4 keys are thickness, material, length, and type. Portability and color play factors too but not as critical as the above. Colors that tend to be fun may be inviting for you to use more. Don't shop super cheap as you will then end up shopping for multiple mats but don't go all in for a \$150 mat as well. When shopping online look for reviews prior.

**4) Be patient with your practice and gentle to yourself and your thoughts.** Your first yoga class may be a euphoric and zen-like experience or the latter. Listen to how your body is feeling on that particular day, try not to overdo poses (pre-stretch a bit) there will be students who are more flexible but don't let that intimidate you- your practice is uniquely yours, and don't give up on the first try. Experience other teachers or studios. Through routine practice, you will reap the benefits of learning how to calm your mind, relax your body, and control your breathing. The fact that you are moving is amazing.

### REFERENCES

- Las Comadres YouTube Channel: [Mind, Body & Spirit: Breathe Meditation with Jeannie Diaz](#)
- Website: [Jeannie Diaz Yoga](#)



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### NOV 8—WRITING OUR STORIES. PIVOTING FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY

Interview with NEW! award winning playwright Dr. Charley Ferrer her cancer story and thereby empowered herself and others.

**Nov 16 -- LAS COMADRES UNIVERSITY PRESENTS Empowering Latinas with AI Tools: Don't Get Left Behind**  
With Monica Talan, CryptoConexión  
Registration Required \* Fee = \$25 \* [Register here.](#)

**NOV 27 – LAS COMADRES & FRIENDS BOOK CLUB TELECONFERENCE**  
Interviews with authors John Manuel Arias (WHERE THERE WAS FIRE) and Gabriela Romero Lacruz (THE SUD AND THE VOID). [Register here](#)

**DEC 13 -- LAS COMADRES KITCHEN**  
Our hostess **Lola Wiarco Dwerck** of Lola's Cocina will showcase Edible Gifts for the Holidays. [Register here.](#)

**DEC 18 -- LAS COMADRES & FRIENDS BOOK CLUB TELECONFERENCE**  
Interviews with authors V.Castro (THE HAUNTING OF ALEJANDRA) and Melania Luisa Marte (PLANTAINS & OUR BECOMING: POEMS). [Register here](#)

**DEC 21 – ANNUAL HOLIDAY CONCERT WITH SOL Y CANTO**  
Once again, we will be serenaded by the music of Sol y Canto – Rosi and Brian Amador. Plus, there will be a big sing-a-long. Song lyrics will be provided.

**JAN 1, 2024 – NEW BEGINNINGS!**  
Launch the New Year with your Comadres. We'll chat, laugh, cry and celebrate the old and the new and all the endless possibilities we are capable of together. Brea

**JAN 10 -- LAS COMADRES PRESENTS MIND, BODY & SPIRIT**  
Hostess Jeannie Diaz will discuss the benefits of journaling and lead us through a journaling exercise.

*\*\*Where possible recordings of presentations will be uploaded to the Las Comadres YouTube channel. Subscribe today!\*\**

## Retirement...Are You Ready?

By Clara Galvano Rivera

If you are nearing retirement age, what have you put in place that will allow you to enjoy what comes after you have finally worked your last day on the job?

### Can you afford to retire?

Most Latinas accept that caring for aging family members is part of their culture, and many also come from households where having enough money was always a problem. If you were able to put that scarcity mindset aside once you started working, it will help you. If you weren't, there are still things you can do to help your situation.

Not to scare you, but whatever your age is right now you need to ask yourself some really important questions. Are you saving enough? Can you afford to stop working when the time comes? According to the National Council of Aging, "a 65-year-old will likely live twenty more years. Between rising healthcare costs, debt, and inflation it's more expensive to grow older now."

Comadres, where will you live? Will your elderly parents live with you? Do you have children that need to continue their education and could call on you for financial help? Will you consider retiring abroad to the land of your ancestors where the cost of living may be less? Will that reduced cost of living still be true when you retire? As Dylan sang, "times are 'a changing" and no one knows what the future holds.

More questions: When will you claim your Social Security retirement payments? For good solid info, contact the Social Security Administration. A regular Social Security deposit in your bank account can be a beautiful thing, but remember, the amount of your benefit will depend on your average income over your working years, your spouse's average income (if married) and the age at which you claim benefits. Social Security can be an important part of your retirement.

Even more difficult questions will come up and most will deal with -- you guessed it -- money and how to manage it. What to do? You are in luck. Las Comadres has members who are professional financial planners and who can help you create a plan individualized for you to help you keep feeling secure and in charge. Check in with Las Comadres' online directory or with your local network members to find professional financial planners. Having a pro show you the way can be life-changing! Start planning now however old you are, because that retirement day will come. Here are some links with useful information: [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov); <https://dol.gov>; <https://www.aarp.org/retirement/>; [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org).



### Ahhh, Retired!

No need to get out of bed on a cold, snowy day to trek to the office. What luxury! But how will you spend your time now that you are retired? Well, if you are living alone, you have the luxury of scheduling your days as you want. However, many of you have pets that need care, and they will let you know that their schedule is important too. So, take that into consideration.

If you live with others, spouses, children, grandchildren, elder parents, or siblings, then you may need to design a loose daily schedule until you can figure what works best for all of you in the household. Kindness and consideration are the key words here when figuring out what's best for you and all concerned.

Stress? Oh yes, it happens in retirement, especially when your identity has been connected to what you did before retirement. Teacher? Social worker? Attorney? Super? Doctor? MTA bus driver? Who are you now? Not being around your ex-colleagues can be sad and leave you feeling isolated. "Easy" fix is to stay connected to those you were friends with; someday they will retire too! And follow your interests to connect with new people who enjoy the same things you do.

Retirement is a great time to dust off a hobby or find a new one. For instance, are you a "fiber artist"? Take a look at what the [The Knitting Guild Association](http://TheKnittingGuildAssociation.com) and the [Crochet Guild of America](http://CrochetGuildofAmerica.com) have to offer. Have you tried to grow orchids? The [New York Botanical Garden](http://NewYorkBotanicalGarden.org) has a program that teaches how to grow and conserve those beautiful but finicky orchids. For that matter, contact any botanical garden in your state for info. Looking for something else? There are tons of listings on the internet that list associations and resources that will lead you to delve deeper into an old or new, exciting hobby and form new friendships in the process.



Comadres Corner



Volunteering is also worthwhile, [AARP's Create the Good](#) program is amazing and can connect you with volunteer opportunities (in-person or virtual) in your local community or in the State where

you live. Helping others is totally worthwhile on its own, but there are medical results that support that it is also beneficial for your well-being. For starters, it helps keep you from becoming a statistic of the increasing loneliness epidemic. A report from the *Cleveland Clinic Newsroom* quotes psychologist *Susan Albers* as saying, "Studies have indicated that volunteering is great for your mental health. . .It has been shown to decrease stress levels, depression, anxiety and boost your overall health and satisfaction with life." The article states that "when you help other people, it activates the reward center in your brain and releases serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins." No wonder many people often feel better after volunteering!

Some other benefits mentioned in these medical studies about the benefits of volunteering include "meeting new people, getting in some physical activity and developing a deeper sense of purpose and meaning."

Maybe part of your retirement plan is a gig that provides you with extra income, as well as provides an avenue to pursue something you love doing and would do even if you couldn't make money doing it! This endeavor may be something new or perhaps you had already developed a side-hustle before you retired from your day job – either way, now you have the time to devote yourself to something you may have dreamed of for a long time. It's never too late!

Having time on our hands is great – taking daily naps is what makes my older sister, Mary, happy, but that may not be for you. Stay active, take daily walks. Keep reading, doing puzzles, and watching webinars that interest you. Check out local museums during less busy weekday hours. Go to a theater production or to the movies. Visit your local library! Try new exercises – there are many online classes! Reconnect with your college or university alumni community to make new connections and partake in interesting social and educational programs. Explore if there is a senior center near you that offers classes or day trips that would be of interest to you. Often these centers offer lunch and a way to socialize as well. Stay healthy and get regular medical exams. Meditate, do yoga, dance in your livingroom to music you love! Life has so much to offer that you don't ever need to be lonely, sad or feel isolated. Get out there and live. And remember there is always the Comadres community to support you!

**LAS COMADRES & FRIENDS BOOK CLUB: FALL BOOKS**

**SEPTEMBER**

*WOMEN WITHOUT SHAME* by Sandra Cisneros

*DULCINEA* by Ana Veciana-Suarez

**OCTOBER**

*LAS MADRES* by Esmeralda Santiago

*LET US BEGIN* by Julia Amante

**NOVEMBER**

*WHERE THERE WAS FIRE* by John Manuel Arias

*THE SUN AND THE VOID* by Gabriela Romero Lacruz

**DECEMBER**

*THE HAUNTING OF ALEJANDRA* by V. Castro

*PLANTAINS AND OUR BECOMING: POEMS*  
by Melania Luisa Marte

**IMPORTANT WEBSITES**

Las Comadres Para Las Americas – [www.lascomadres.com](http://www.lascomadres.com)

Las Comadres & Friends National Latino Book Club – [www.latinolit.com](http://www.latinolit.com)

[Las Comadres Accomplishments](#)

[Las Comadres YouTube Channel](#)

[The 2023 Nora Awards – Comadre of the Year, Comadre Community Service & Friend of Las Comadres](#)



### COMADRAZOS ALBUM

Showcasing in-person Comadrazos for 2023 in Austin, San Diego, Washington DC, New York, Dallas, Inland Empire, Orange County, Rio Valley Grande, etc. You can find more Comadrazos photos on our website.



Austin Comadrazo



Austin Comadres Mason Jar Lunch



Austin Comadrazo – Geri Wilson & Nora



Austin Comadres



DC Comadrazo



In land empire 15



San Diego Comadrazo



Dallas Fort Worth Network



In land Empire comadres



NYC Comadrazo boat ride '23



NYC Comadrazo boat ride



Orange County Comadrazo Ana Nogales



Jeannie YOGA THIS ONE



Lola Dweck



Rio Valley Grande Comadres



SandDiegoComadrazomelodyvelainblue



Día De Los Muertos

Flores Artwork

by Esperanza Beltrán







♥ A Grateful Heart is the Best Kind to Have ♥

*Happy Thanksgiving*