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SAN FRANCISCO
Pájaro Latino Americano, La Verdad Musical, Andanzas
Welcome to the Guide to Latino San Francisco put together for you by the Latino Public Radio Consortium. Just like Latino public broadcasting, the Latino culture of a city is often ignored by traditional tourist magazines and guides. In a city known by the Spanish name for Saint Francis, you know there’s definitely a Latino influence at work. We’re here to assure you that there is more to San Francisco than Fisherman’s Wharf, cable cars and sourdough bread. There are pupusas, tortillas, Dia de los Muertos kitsch, traditional Mexican folk art and edgy, contemporary expressions of what it’s like to be Latino in one of America’s major cities. Maybe it’s the salt air that produces such creativity, talent, skill and can-do attitude among Latinos in this city by the bay. Just scratching the surface, we found an abundance of Latino food, art, music, dancing, literature and activities that you’re sure to enjoy while in San Francisco.


We also have a Guide to Latino Denver which you can get either on-line (www.latinopublicradioconsortium.org) or by contacting us at lprc@comcast.net. Perhaps you have an addition for either of the Guides. Contact us.

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**HISTORY OF Latino San Francisco**

The first Native Americans to settle in this coastal bay area were the Ohlone. Sir Francis Drake was one of the first Europeans in 1579 to map the coast and called it Nova Albion, but the British made little effort to claim the land.

Spain, however, found the bay of great strategic significance for trade and defense. It founded missions and eventually displaced over 10,000 Ohlone natives. Mission San Francisco de Asís was popularly called Mission Dolores because it was near a creek named after Our Lady of Sorrows. A small town grew up near the mission and was known as Yerba Buena because spearmint grew in abundance there. Today’s city, San Francisco, adopted the formal name of the Spanish mission. Until the late 1970s or early 1980s Yerba Buena remained the name of a San Francisco neighborhood; now it’s only the name of a few buildings and a garden. San Francisco became part of the United States with the annexation of California in 1850 and is estimated to be the twelfth largest city in the United States. Of the over 800,000 people living in San Francisco, more than 14% are Latino or Hispanic.
Music

Santana One of San Francisco’s most famous sons, famed guitarist and philanthropist, a native of Mexico, grew up in San Francisco and graduated from Mission High School. Santana crafted a name for himself while playing his brand of Latin-tinged rock ‘n’ roll in the late 1960s and has achieved iconic status.

Cascada de Flores (415-999-3340, www.cascadadeflores.com) The trio “waterfall of flowers” preserves and disseminates Mexican and Caribbean folk music and dance. The music ensemble is involved in creative collaborations, recording projects, community outreach activities and in-school programs and workshops.

Dr. Loco’s Rockin’ Jalapeño Band (www.drloco.com) Dr. José Cuellar, known by his pocho name Dr. Loco, combines his talent as a U.S. Mexican multicultural anthropologist, musician, educator and activist to lead the Rockin’ Jalapeño Band.

Café Cocomo (650 Indiana Street, 415-824-6910, www.cafecocomo.com) Its slogan is “It’s Like Paradise.” If your idea of paradise includes hot salsa rhythms from the Pacific Mambo Orchestra, an ensemble of 19 cream-of-the-crop Bay Area musicians, then you are indeed in paradise. They also offer zumba classes to keep you in shape for an intensive night of dancing.

Roccapulco (3140 Mission St., 415-648-6611, www.roccapulco.com) Roccapulco is a salsa club and restaurant that has bachata every Thursday and salsa and merengue on the weekends from international acts shake the house.
Fine Arts

Cartoon Art Museum (655 Mission Street, 415-227-8666, www.cartoonart.org) Latino artists are no strangers to comics. CAM has mounted exhibits of the legendary San Francisco underground comix artist Manuel Spain Rodríguez, Richard Sala and recently held a Latino Comics Expo.

Juan Fuentes (www.juanrfuentes.com) After many years as primarily a poster maker and silkscreen artist, Juan began producing linocuts focusing on portraits to elaborate on the human condition. His early poster art is now part of the Chicano Poster Movement. He recently launched a new press called “Pájaro Editions.”

Elizabeth Gómez (www.elizabethgomezart.com) Elizabeth’s work is influenced by popular arts from around the world and by surreal artists who explore reality through fantastical transformations. The qualities of sharply outlined cartoons, the Mexican retablos of her childhood, jewel-like Persian or Indian miniatures and medieval illuminations are elements of her work.

Galería de la Raza (2857 24th Street, 415-826-8009, www.galeriadelaraza.org) is in the heart of San Francisco’s Mission District. Its tradition of painting murals in the area evolved into the digital mural project. It not only exhibits cutting edge art in its gallery but also offers Lunadas, the ReGeneration Project, Online Archives and the Youth Media Project.

Ester Hernández (www.esterhernandez.com) The daughter of farmworker parents, Hernández’s art reflects political, social, and spiritual themes. One of Hernández’s most famous works is called Sun Mad which is a play on a box of Sun Maid raisins, calling out her farmworker roots.

Latino Arts Network of California (www.latinoarts.net) Throughout its fourteen-year history, the Latino Arts Network supports the Latino arts community with technical assistance and educational services, by sponsoring traveling exhibitions and public
performances, and by educating government, foundation and philanthropic institutions about the Latino art community.

**Carmen Lomas Garza** (www.carmenlomasgarza.com)
Inspired by the Chicano Movement of the late 1960s to the depiction of special and everyday events in the lives of Mexican Americans, Carmen Lomas Garza saw the need to create images that would elicit recognition and appreciation among Mexican Americans, while serving as a source of education for others not familiar with Latino culture.

**Maya González** (www.mayagonzalez.com) Chicana artist and children’s book illustrator Maya González uses Latin American indigenous imagery, pop culture, and icons drawn from her vivid imagination to create narrative paintings and ink drawings. One of Gonzalez’ paintings of a young woman seated next to a ghostly mirrored version of herself is the cover of a textbook on Latin American art.

**The Museum of Craft and Folk Art** (51 Yerba Buena Lane, 415-227-4888, www.mocfa.org) is multicultural and hosts exhibits from all corners of the world such as Mexican folk art. It also teaches hands-on techniques for making papel picado and Oaxacan, Aztec and Mayan textile and clay arts.
Performing & Media Arts

Carolina Fuentes (www.ourrighttosing.com) Her documentary film explores the role of music in the resistance movement of El Salvador during two years of military dictatorship.

CubaCaribe (510-273-2484, www.cubacaribe.org) Because dance, music, and visual art have the power to unite people, CubaCaribe hosts the Caribe Dance Festival to preserve the vibrant traditions of the Caribbean and its Diaspora.

Guillermo Gómez Peña (www.pochanostra.com) His work, which includes performance art, video, audio, installations, poetry, journalism, and cultural theory, explores cross-cultural issues, immigration, the politics of language, “extreme culture” and new technologies in the era of globalization.

Mission Arts & Performing Project (www.sfmapp.com) Without staff and offices but certainly with a great idea, MAPP adventures happen once every two months in the Mission with poets and performances at over 15 venues, on street corners, in taquerías, BART stations and many nooks and crannies.

Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts (2868 Mission, 415-643-5001, www.missionculturalcenter.org) Opened in 1977 as the Palmeto Museum, for more than 30 years MCCLA has presented contemporary and ancient artistic traditions of Latin America and Latinos in California in its galleries, performance stages and exhibit areas.

San Francisco Latino Film Festival (www.sflatinofilmfestival.com) Cine+Más SF contributes to the Bay Area’s active and diverse arts scene through the Latino Film Festival, year-round programming and special events centered on Latino arts— including the visual, performance, and literary arts.

Yerba Buena Gardens Festival (www.ybgf.org) The 87 acres of the Yerba Buena district include the area from Market to Harrison and 2nd to 4th Streets. Yerba Buena Gardens Festival acknowledges the rich legacy the Bay Area has brought to Latin jazz, with an all-star lineup featuring performers from Latin America and San Francisco.
Literature

Alma Flor Ada, Professor Emerita at the University of San Francisco, has devoted her life to advocacy for peace. She is the author of numerous children’s books of poetry, narrative, folklore and non fiction.

Daniel Alarcón An acclaimed novelist who is now venturing into radio, he was born in Lima, Peru, grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, and now lives in Oakland.

Jorge Argueta is the author of several bilingual children’s books and a San Francisco Library Poet Laureate. His work is featured in college textbooks and anthologies.

Lorna Dee Cervantes (www.lornadice.blogspot.com) poet extraordinaire she’s a native of San Francisco who has traveled to the academic hinterlands but luckily returned to the Bay Area.

Lucha Corpi, poet, novelist, and children’s book writer, was born in Mexico but came to Berkeley. She has been a tenured teacher in the Oakland Public Schools Neighborhood Centers Program.

Examiner.com is the on-line presence of the San Francisco Examiner Newspaper and features a Latino Literature section.

Libros Latinos (2141 Mission Street, Suite 301, 415-Mi-Libro, www.libroslatinos.com) Established in 1973, Libros Latinos maintains a stock of over 25,000 titles of rare, used and antiquarian books in all fields from South America, Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

Victor Martínez received the National Book Award in 1996 for his book of poetry Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida. When Martínez died February 18, 2011, a few days before his 57th birthday, Parrot had become part of the canon of books taught to American high school students.

Alejandro Murguía is a writing specialist in Raza Studies and a two-time winner of the American Book Award. He was also a founding member and the first director of the Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts.
San Francisco Public Library (100 Larkin Street, 415-557-4400, www.sfpl.org) City librarian Luis Herrera makes sure this is one of the country’s most innovative libraries with an extensive selection of Latino literature in both English and Spanish, e-books, and numerous branch libraries to ensure a wide-reaching community presence.

Alfredo Vea is an attorney who was a migrant farmworker and didn’t enroll in school until 10th grade, but ended up at UC-Berkeley. A Vietnam vet, Vea has written three novels, including Gods Go Begging, which the Los Angeles Times named one of the best books of 1999.
Public Art

**Murals of San Francisco.** More than 600 local murals filled with color, beauty and social political narratives cover the walls of houses and commercial buildings. While there are numerous sites for mural viewing, we concentrate here on the ones that boast Latino themes.

**Balmy Alley** (Between 24th and 25th St. just south of Folsom St.) Running straight into a park in a balmy section of San Francisco, this highly political and sometimes whimsical alley started in 1971 and fills the newly cobble-stoned street with Latino and South American murals portraying images of political strife, artistic movements and cultural heroes.

**Clarion Alley** (One block over from 17th street between Valencia and Mission St.) This subversive alley is filled with contemporary-style murals started in 1992 and features one of the last murals by artist Chuy Jesús Campusano and is the acting location for the recognizably urban and graffiti aesthetic of San Francisco’s New Mission School. Clarion Alley is also host to an annual block party celebrating the newest mural contributions.

**Art Institute of San Francisco** (800 Chestnut St.) The most famous of the San Francisco murals is “The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City.” Commissioned by banker and philanthropist William Gerstle, this is one of four murals in the Bay Area painted by Mexican artist Diego Rivera. The gallery is open daily from 8am-9pm and also features revolving art exhibits.
San Francisco City College
(Ocean Avenue campus in the Diego Rivera Theater)
Another notable Diego Rivera mural (and some say the most important work of its time) is the Pan-American Unity mural. Commissioned in 1940 for the Golden Gate International Exhibit and then moved to its now permanent location in the Diego Rivera Theater in 1961, this 22 by 74-foot masterpiece is based on the marriage of North and South American artistic expression.

Precita Eyes Studio (348 Precita Ave., 415-285-2287, www.precitaeyes.org) was established in 1977 and is now in San Francisco’s Mission District. It is one of only three community mural centers in the United States. It sponsors and implements ongoing mural projects throughout the Bay Area and internationally. In addition, it offers art classes for all ages beginning at 18 months and mural walking tours daily throughout the year.

The Lowrider Movement in the Bay Area has always been strong. Its not just a hobby, but as shown in the movie La Mission with Benjamin Bratt, a lifestyle. Car shows give clubs like Frisco’s Finest a chance to show off, but you may see these artistic creations individually cruising low and slow down public thoroughfares.
Community-based Organizations

Acción Latina (www.accionlatina.org) was founded in 1987 to promote social change and cultural pride in the Latino community and produces a bilingual newspaper, an annual Latino music festival, and coordinates a journalism project for community youth.

Hepatitis C Support Project (PO Box 427037, www.hcvadvocate.org/espanol.asp) Founded by HCV positive individuals the organization provides unbiased information, support, and advocacy to all communities, including medical providers, affected by HCV and HIV/HCV coinfection.

Instituto Familiar de la Raza (2919 Mission, 415-220-0500, www.ifrsf.org) was founded in 1978 as the first Chicano/Latino focused mental health center in San Francisco. The agency evolved into a multi-service community health and social service agency with over 60 bilingual/multicultural and multidisciplinary staff that serve approximately 4,000 clients and their families each year.

Mission Language and Vocational School (2929 19th Street, 415-648-5220, www.mlvs.org) Founded in 1962 as the Centro Social Obrero, MLVS provides language and job skills training to immigrants and other minorities as well as placement in the medical fields and restaurant arts. One of their showcase projects is the Latino Cuisine Culinary Academy with the Florida Street Cafe, a student-run restaurant.
Newspapers

Serving the Hispanic community newspaper in Spanish and English.


Shopping

Casa Bonampak (1051 Valencia Street, 415-642-4079, www.casabonampak.com) For latinoa-centric party goods such as papel picado of la Virgen de Guadalupe, tarjetas navideñas, and Día de los Muertos essentials this is a must stop.

Luz de Luna (3422 25th Street between Mission St. & Osage St., 415-920-9988) The gifts, art, jewelry, scarves and Día de los Muertos gotta-haves are described as “so definitely Mission kitschy... just cuter.”

Mixcoatl Arts & Crafts (3201 24th Street between Van Ness Ave. & Cypress St., 415-341-4191) Rave reviews about the trinkets, jewelry and fabulous gift shopping. And if that’s not enough they have a very extensive selection of lucha libre masks.

Polanco Gallery (393 Hayes Street, 415-252-575, www.polancogallery.com) Curated and hand-picked by the owners on frequent trips to villages and cities, the unique and often one-of-a-kind items represent the best of Mexican folk art.
Comida

San Francisco is a treasure trove of restaurants, eateries and cafes representing every Spanish-speaking country in Central and South America, Mexico and Spain. The motherlode of Pan American cuisine is the Mission District where the restaurants and ambience are concentrated. Outside the District the Latino flavor still abounds. There are literally hundreds of opportunities to taste Latino food in San Francisco, leaving you no excuse for not having a culinary adventure.

In the Mission District

Balompie Café (3801 Mission Street at Richland, 415-647-4000) Serving traditional Salvadoran treats like pupusas and platanos. The good news is they have several locations scattered around San Francisco so you’re always near a pupusa.

Café La Boheme (3318 24th between Mission & Osage, 415-643-0481) People recommend the Mexican Cocoa and wholesome food but others go for the coffee and people watching - Latino writers, activists, musicians, Puerto Rican and Cuban men who blather all day outside, basking in the sun. The Café sponsors community events & fotos of local personalities.


Gracias Madre (2211 Mission, 415-683-1346, www.gracias-madre.com) has a reverential attitude towards its organic vegan Mexican food and their culinary skills make any visit a heavenly experience.

L’s Caffe (2871 24th Street between Bryant and Florida, 415-206-0274, www.lscaffe.com) not only serves great coffee, bagels, soups, crepes and more but also invests itself into the life of the Mission.

Mission Pie (2901 Mission, 415-282-4PIE, www.missionpie.com) has pies, baked goods and light fare made with produce from local farms. Its too noisy for intimate conversations but you’d probably rather be stuffing your face.
**Sun Rise Restaurant** (3126 24th Street between Folsom & Shotwell, 415-206-1219) owned by Salvadoran Alba Guerra who serve *huevos al gusto* with plantain for breakfast. The black bean and zucchini pupusas get rave reviews.

**Outside the Mission District**

**Balompie Café** (3349 18th Street, 415-648-9199) Salvadoran mainstays, pupusas and plátanos from one of the largest Latino groups in San Francisco.

**B44** (44 Belden Place, 415-986-6287, www.b44sf.com) An extensive Spanish wine list accompanies the Catalán selections such as squid paella and a multitude of tapas.

**Colibrí Mexican Bistro** (438 Geary Street, 415-440-2737) Really good, interesting Mexican food, great ambience.

**Florida Street Café** (710 Florida Street, 415-648-5220, www.floridastreetcafe.com) Under the supervision of professional restaurant personnel and chefs, students from the Latino Cuisine Culinary Academy cater bocadillos or gourmet meals that include Latino and world cuisine.

**Maya Restaurant** (303 2nd Street between Harrison & Folsom, 415-543-2928, www.mayasf.com) The food is great contemporary versions of traditional Mexican fare, but be sure to visit the dessert tray – empanadas de plátano and chocolate tres leches.

**Taquería Maná** (439 Stockton Sreet at Bush, 415-421-3781) Hard to find but people say its worth it, especially for the grilled chicken burrito.
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