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magazine

The Food Issue

EXPLORE OKC'S VEGETARIAN SCENE

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FRIENDSGIVING
THIS MONTH!**

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**BEST NEW
RESTAURANTS**

TRAVEL

A young boy is the central focus of the image, wearing a large, light-colored sombrero with a wide brim. He is dressed in a white, long-sleeved shirt with intricate embroidery and a large, multi-colored bow around his neck. He is holding a small, colorful object in his hands. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Guadalajara

Home to rich traditions, including Charreada, the Mexican Rodeo. This colorful, horse-centric spectacle dates back to the 16th century. Matt Payne takes us there on page 52.

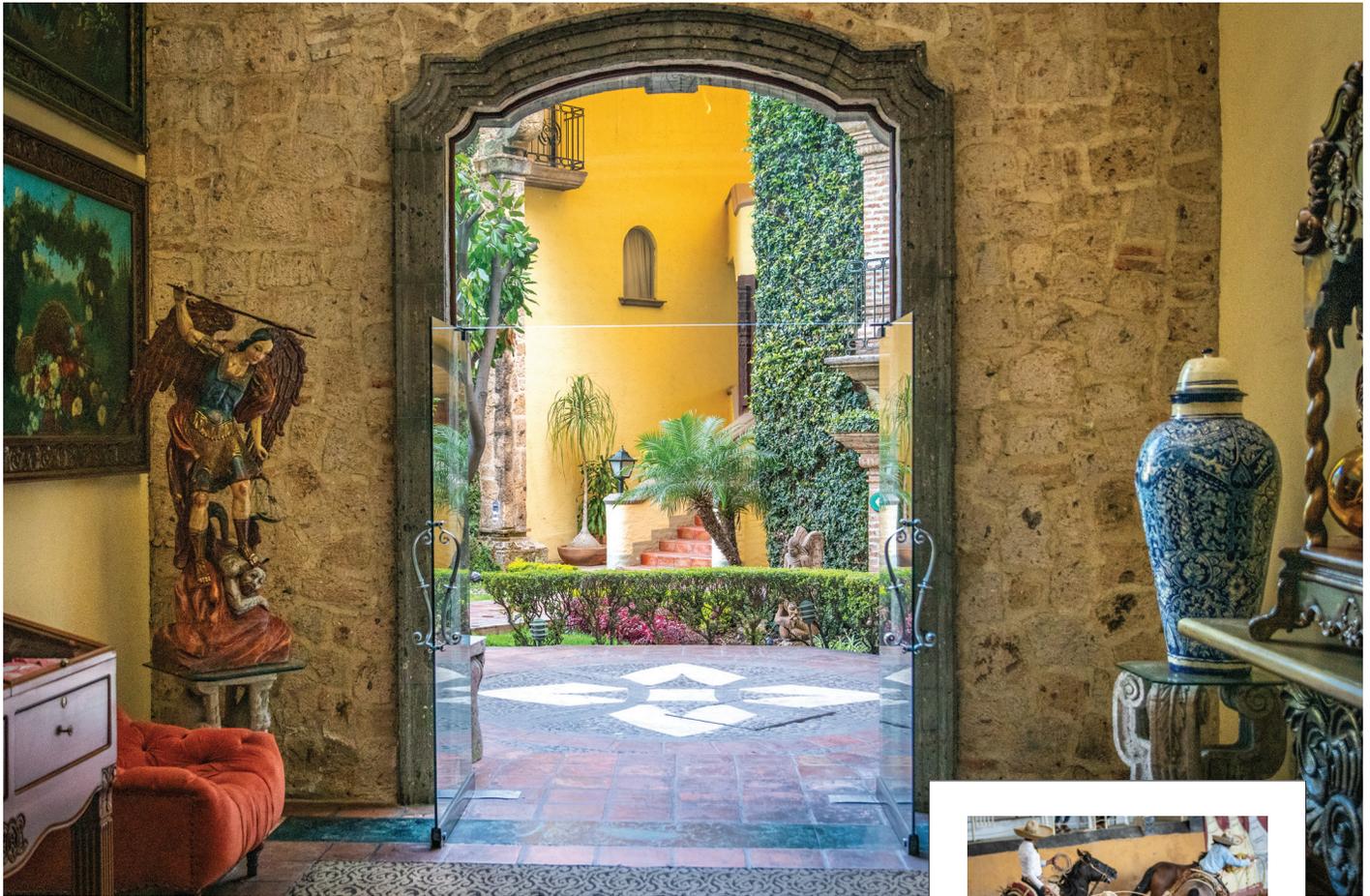


Guadalajara, With Gusto

SAVORING A MEXICAN MARVEL

BY MATT PAYNE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT PAYNE

It is just past 9 a.m. in Guadalajara, Mexico, and somehow – again – I’m starving. I’d spent the previous blissful day an hour outside Mexico’s largest city in the town of Tequila, where (needless to say) I’d not just imbibed a respectable amount of the agave-based ambrosia, but had also eaten what felt like my weight in birria, pozole, asada and jericalla, and then – once back in the city – stopped for a pair of doughnuts from the enigmatic Secret Doughnut Society before a tamale dinner at the family-owned and -operated Dona Gabina Escolastica.



Now, as I refuel for another day exploring the markets and murals of Mexico's second largest city, I decide to take on my biggest meal yet.

Torta Ahogada translates to “drowned sandwich,” and is the signature dish of a city where every dish is a contender for that lofty title. Mounds of slow-cooked pork are piled onto a variation of a baguette known as a birote, which is then smothered to the point of being submerged in a fiery Yahuallica pepper salsa. The miracle of the dish is that the birote – which, because of climate and geography, can only be prepared in Jalisco – doesn't lose consistency despite the chile de arbol deluge. Noshing on such a beast of a sandwich for breakfast seems almost as dramatic as eating the soupy monstrosity by hand, but that is how things are in Guadalajara and the encompassing state of Jalisco. By meal's end, I am satiated and

sweating, and it is time to head to the Tlaquepaque market to sample some culture and candy.

Tlaquepaque is an upscale, historical and prismatic arts and culture district known for blown glass, ceramics and tiles. Here, visitors can find everything from inexpensive art and textiles to sculptures from the likes of famed artist and sculptor Sergio Bustamante. To simply absorb the art as an onlooker is one thing, but in Tlaquepaque, visitors can also engage in their own creations. Because I need a minute for my Torta Ahogada to mellow, I stop into the Nunez Panduro workshop. The multigenerational clay studio operated by three sisters – Eva, Connie and Pilar Nunez – specializes in lifelike clay figurines of key historical figures, but if you stop in for a class, you'll leave capable of sculpting your very own clay pig. While learning about the clay process is engaging,



Witness Charreada

One of Guadalajara's proudest traditions is Charreada: the Mexican Rodeo. Making the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List, the colorful, horse-centric spectacle dates back to the 16th century, and features a variety of competitions and ceremonies. Lienzo Charros de Jalisco is Guadalajara's most famous, boasting competitors young and old; male and female.



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watching the sisters' precision as they bring figurines to life is the real gold when visiting Nunez Panduro.

Creative juices activated, I saunter on through Tlaquepaque until it is time to eat again. Now, though, my focus is all things sweet; at Nuestros Dulces, I have an opportunity not only to sample some of Guadalajara's many traditional candies, but also to see how they are made. Centered on a historic courtyard, Nuestros Dulces functions similar to a co-op, with different rooms featuring different candy makers. First stop is the chocolateria, where I sample a variety of stunning infused artisanal chocolates while watching the process from cacao fruit to final product. Next, it is the macadamia-based rompopo and then the nutty datil con nuez. For the last stop in the courtyard, I sample cajeta lugo, a combination of burnt sugar and goat's milk similar to dulce de leche. After a quick trip around the gift shop, it is time, inexplicably, for my next meal. This time, tequila will be involved.

Upon entering Casa Luna, situated in the spacious courtyard of a yet another historic home, one doesn't walk to one's table so much as float. From the floral arches at the restaurant's entrance to the dreamy twinkling lights and colorful glowing globes that hang from the trees inside – the experience at Casa Luna starts like a



Explore Guadalajara's Historic Center

To get a real sense of Guadalajara's pulse, one must head to the city's historic center. Here, there are two UNESCO World Heritage sites. The Instituto Cultural Cabañas is a former hospital and features murals by Mexican revolutionary Jose Clemente Orozco – including arguably his most famous, “The Man of Fire.” His mural work also appears nearby at the Palacio de Gobierno, the 18th-century baroque marvel that now serves as Guadalajara's government building and was once the home of the Mexican parliament.



Take a Day Trip to Tequila

There is plenty of tequila to drink in Guadalajara ... but an hour outside the city is the actual town of Tequila, and the center of the region where all the world's tequila is made. Agave fields seem to stretch forever, and tucked into the soft dusty hues of blue are some of Mexico's most renowned distilleries. At La Cofradia, visitors can taste dozens of types of tequila, watch artisans craft tequila bottles, see the elixir get made and – perhaps the most thoroughly unique experience in all of Jalisco – sleep in a giant tequila barrel amid the agave plants.



dream, and has shifted into something transcendent by the time the food arrives. Shrimp empanadas, vacio chicharrones and duck tacos are among the menu's highlights, and at the pinnacle is the Cochinita Pibil and molten cheese with chorizo and mushrooms. While one "floats" into Casa Luna, the exit is best described as a "roll."

Once home to the affluent Martinez family, the 70-room *Quinta Real Guadalajara* is a sprawling collection of historic buildings, striking courtyard gardens, fountains, indigenous artwork and the ideal respite from the gastronomic onslaught that has been Guadalajara thus far. The rooms are, in a word, elegant. The nuanced and spacious lodgings, complete with terrace and palatial bathroom, are old-school sophistication with modern touches, and while it's hard to leave such luxury, a world of culture and comida await. [LOS](#)