



INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE NEWS

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Reinventing Rituals in a Multicultural World

Reprinted with permission from YES! Magazine. Story by Francesca Dabecco.

This holiday season, Kristin Eriko Posner has her San Francisco home prepared for a cocktail-style Hanukkah celebration: a seasonal winter crudité platter and spiced nuts sit on the table, local California sparkling wine waits to be popped open, and her mother-in-law's heirloom menorah sits on a Japanese sakura colored tray.

"We eat fried foods to symbolize the oil that miraculously lasted eight nights," Posner explains, including her mochi latkes, served on a bar with assorted toppings like apple sauce, sour cream, matcha salt and smoked salmon, as well as sufaniyot jelly doughnuts with yuzu cream.

It may look a little different from a typical Hanukkah celebration, but for Posner, it feels just right. Through food and reinvented rituals, she has found a way to blend her two rich cultural backgrounds. She's also created a business to help other multiethnic households create nourishing new rituals drawn from time-honored wisdom.

"I really believe that it's important for us to update our traditions with what is around us and resonates, as well as take what is healing or helps us celebrate at a certain time in our lives," Posner says. Like on Shabbat, Judaism's day of rest, she will often host a Japanese tea ceremony to mark the moment blessings.

But for Posner, it wasn't always this way. Growing up as a fourth generation Japanese American on her father's side, by way of Hawaii, and second generation on her mother's side, the 35-year-old says she never quite felt like she fit in.

"I think it's true for many people across time. Even though my dad's family wasn't on the mainland during World War II, there was still a lot of anti-Japanese and anti-Asian sentiment," she says. "So many people try to assimilate as soon as possible."

Her childhood was spent attending Japanese language school on Sundays and visiting her family in Japan during the summer, yet her heritage still felt



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oddly distant. And while Posner says she felt lucky to grow up in an area outside of L.A. with a large Japanese American community, there were still moments when she felt not “Japanese enough” or not “American enough.”

Posner remembers bringing beautiful bento lunches to school and being made fun of by her classmates. So, she started packing sandwiches. “I look at kids today, and I just think, how cool is it that sushi is cool now?”

In a quest to discover her Japanese heritage, she quit her entertainment public relations job in 2008 and moved to Japan to teach English for two years. She went there thinking that she would make friends and immediately feel like a part of the culture but says she was left with the same sentiment she felt in the United States.

“Just by looking at me, people could tell that I’m not from Japan, and so I had a lot of experiences of having to really explain myself to people, which is the last thing you want to do in a place where you are hoping you belong.”

Then, she started learning how to cook Japanese food from her aunt, and suddenly, Posner says, she felt like her cultural identity was there all along.

“She taught me the basics and very simple home cooking,” Posner says of her aunt. “Nothing that really had a recipe, just things that you can just throw together.”

It brought her back to her paternal grandmother’s cooking — warm, comforting dishes that you wouldn’t find in a restaurant or written in English on the internet. “It was empowering to be able to reclaim these recipes,” she says.

But it wasn’t until she met her now husband, Bryan, and converted to Judaism, that she discovered the power of blending rituals to fit a modern, mixed world.

Cooking seemed like the missing ingredient in her heritage exploration — the universal language that anyone can use to experience culture. So when Posner moved back to San Francisco after her stint in Japan, she decided to take a PR job in food and wine.

“I found such a passion for learning about my own cultural traditions and rituals, so I really wanted to learn about his,” Posner says. “I think, all my life, I have been looking for spiritual navigation. When we started taking classes, I really fell in love with Judaism, the message and traditions.”

Still, she felt pulled between two vibrant cultural worlds.

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Christmas (United States, Europe) – Children write letters to Santa and wait for presents to be placed underneath a decorated tree.

Las Posadas (Latin America) – It is traditional to have a piñata with seven spikes on it. Breaking it open represents forgiveness of sins and new beginnings.

Kwanzaa (The Caribbean, the Americas) – A family will all drink from the same Kikombe Cha Umoja, or a Unity Cup. This is done to symbolize family unity and remembrance of the African ancestors that came before.

Hanukkah (Worldwide) – Along with the lighting of eight candles, it is also traditional to make various fried foods such as latkes or jelly-filled donuts to also help celebrate the “miracle of oil.”

Diwali (India) – During the five-day celebration, it is common for people to decorate their homes with Rangoli, which is artwork made from colorful rice powder.

Christmas (South Africa) – During a time of family and community, many South African communities will do a braai, which is a barbecue with lots of meats and delicious foods.

Bodhi Day (Asia) – People will decorate bodhi trees with lights and statues of the Buddha to represent the enlightenment of the Buddha.

Christmas (Ireland) – People dressed in straw outfits called mummers will go from house to house and perform plays, rhymes, songs, and dances for communities, somewhat like caroling in the U.S., to spread holiday cheer.

"I was really scared that I would lose my Japanese parts to take on these Jewish parts," Posner says. "I had this conversation with our rabbi, and he asked me 'Why can't there be room for both?' It wasn't something that I had considered, but there is plenty of room for both. It really changed my perspective."

And so Posner decided to experiment and hosted a dinner for friends.

"I made this dish called 'Jew-ish,' which was basically like a hot pot, but I put rice in it and used everything bagel seasoning," she explains. It was a hit. Her friends were inspired to combine dishes and ingredients from their own cultural backgrounds. "When I started

When Passover approached, she wanted to reinvent the classic matzah ball soup by featuring tsukune—a Japanese chicken meatball made with ginger and leeks.

And for Rosh Hashana in September, Posner made a brisket braised in a homemade Japanese barbecue sauce. For dessert she shared two different options: Japanese spongecake with whipped cream, spiced apples, and honey or roasted apple sundaes with miso honey. It's her version of Rosh Hashana's simplest dish, apples dipped in honey, an edible prayer for a sweet new year.

This upcoming holiday, Posner looks forward to serving her mochi latkes, where she swaps out potato flour for mochi flour and serves it with an Asian pear sauce, as well as the classic apple. And of course, no Jewish celebration is complete without challah, and she always uses leftovers as a strata or panzanella salad.


While experimenting with new recipes seems like a fun, light activity, Posner says that for her, it feels like reclaiming her heritage. "I think we all have the power to bring our rituals and traditions back into our lives," she says.

While many hold generations-long family traditions to such specific standards, Posner encourages others to stay open to what a ritual or tradition may look like for where they are in their life's journey.


"That was huge for me because I thought there wasn't enough room for both [cultures], and yet, being introduced to all of these Jewish traditions actually made me more curious about my Japanese background, significantly even more than before," she says.

When balancing on the brim of two cultures, Posner takes inspiration from a colleague, Jessica Hendricks Yee, who is in a Chinese-Jewish marriage.

"She said it in a really beautiful way: 'There's no right or wrong way to blend cultures, except for what feels right or wrong to you,'" Posner recalls. "It comes with its own challenges, like confronting and examining your differences. But you get to design a life based on what's most meaningful to you and create something entirely new and special—your own nourishing rituals and traditions."




"I was really scared that I would lose my Japanese parts to take on these Jewish parts," Posner says. "I had this conversation with our rabbi, and he asked me 'Why can't there be room for both?' It wasn't something that I had considered, but there is plenty of room for both."



[my business], I didn't know exactly what it was going to be, but that kind of made me realize that food was going to be a really important part of it."

Now on her website and social media, she shares updated recipes from both her Jewish and Japanese cultural identities, but with a focus on fresh, local, and seasonal ingredients. Naturally, the holidays have created an opportunity for her to play with those flavors.

Like for Purim, a holiday that commemorates the saving of the Jewish people from Hama, Posner made hamantaschen—triangular, jam-filled cookies that symbolize Haman's ears or his three-cornered hat. To pay homage to her father's upbringing in Hawaii, she created macadamia shortbread cookies filled with guava jam.



Scenes From the 2023 Symposium for Inclusive Excellence

Image Description: Two pages of photos showing people at various events for the 2023 Symposium for Inclusive Excellence.





Transgender Policy Panel



Self-Care Practices We Love: How OIE Staff Re-Energizes

Anonymous Responses:

"My favorite self-care practice is watching a documentary about something interesting to me."

"Massages!"

Victoria Benjamin

"Shopping!" "Legos!" "Getting outside."

"Baking all the things!"

"Take a really hot shower for 30 minutes a day and play my favorite tunes to sing along. Then hop into clean sheets and take a nap or go to bed."

More Ideas:

"I like to do tasks that keep me so focused, that I can forget about the stressors in my life for a while. Whether that be cooking a delicious meal, writing or drawing in my sketchbook, I can take a few hours to just focus on that task at hand. It helps me wind down when I'm feeling overwhelmed by the world."

Sam Schaefer



Military Appreciation Day

Inclusive Excellence & Athletics: Honoring Service Members



Alaskan Biocultural Diversity Threatened by Capitalism

Guest article by Dr. Christina T. Cavaliere
Assistant Professor, Human Dimensions of Natural Resources

Extractive capitalism threatens biocultural diversity through the erosion of identity in the Anthropocene. The coastal community of Ketchikan, Alaska, while remote, contends with overtourism and economic dependence on the multinational conglomerate mass cruise industry. Travel restrictions during the COVID-19 lockdown temporarily removed 'the company' from the company town identity of Ketchikan. This provided unique research insights into social-ecological impacts and bioregional resilience. Residents of Ketchikan's greater bioregion provided empirical insights into the industrialization of identity and perceived biocultural impacts through qualitative, semi-structured interviews. This research extends place identity by applying critical ecofeminist-posthumanistic epistemologies that analyze the structural power components of biocultural identities. The findings offer a critical biocultural identity framework comprising nine indicators that serve to substantiate emotions, affect, and sensoriscapes as subjugated knowledges while critiquing the capitalistic colonization of materialisms and the psyche. Future interventions incorporating this framework may inform social science strategies for the conservation of biocultural identity.

The authors would like to thank the community of Ketchikan, Alaska for sharing their perspectives with the research team. Alaska Native and Ketchikan Indian Community participants did not speak on behalf of their respective nations. This research does not represent the vision, thoughts, or opinions of any sovereign nation. No funding was obtained or utilized.

Do you have an article or piece of research to share?

Share your research or articles related to diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice with us!



Email your submissions to
Adriana Avila McClintock
adriana.mcclintock@colostate.edu

BIPOC Support Group

A supportive space for students who identify as **Black, Indigenous, and people of color**. Together we will cover various topics including, **but not limited to**, mental health, social relationships, and cultural experiences.



CSU HEALTH NETWORK
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY



2:30 - 4:00pm



Thursdays



To register, call (970) 491-6053



El Centro Welcomes Our Ancestors: Dia de los Muertos



New Directors Named in CSU Cultural and Resource Centers

Our Cultural and Resource Centers (formerly Student Diversity Programs and Services) have been through a number of transitions this year. Namely, the Women and Gender Advocacy Center WGAC and El Centro have been operating with interim directors. Two new full-time directors

have been selected to lead these centers.

WGAC has named Victoria Benjamin as the new director, effective January 8, 2024. Victoria has been assisting students for over six years in WGAC, implementing new programs and procedures. She is a visionary who remains committed to helping survivors while centering empathy, collaboration and courage.

Additionally, Aaron Escobedo Garmon has been named director in El Centro. Aaron has been serving as interim director since April, centering students in his leadership approach. He has been implementing new practices and programs since he began. Students have been able to attend many programs since Aaron took over

We are deeply grateful for Victoria and Aaron for their commitment to helping students. They are both thoughtful and engaged leaders who care about their colleagues and the overall environment at CSU. We wish them both a lot of success in their new roles!



Image description: Photo of new WGAC Director Victoria Benjamin smiling with her partner.



Image description: Photo of new El Centro Director Aaron Escobedo Garmon smiling outside.

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**BOOK READING &
SIGNING**

FILMMAKER

CURTIS CHIN

AUTHOR

December 11, 2023
4:30 - 6:00 P.M.

Wolverine Farm Publick House

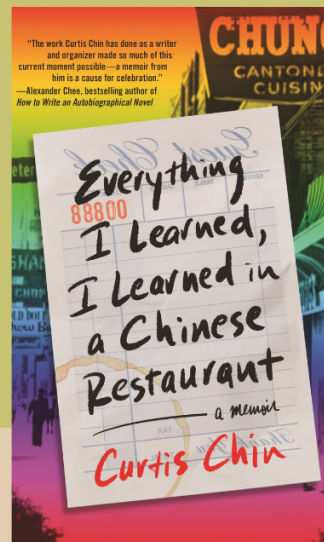


KIRKUS REVIEW

A charming, often
funny account of a
sentimental
education in a
Cantonese
restaurant.

Chin is a born
storyteller

Free & Open to All



COMMUNICATION STUDIES
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY



PRINCIPLES OF

Community

The principles of community support the Colorado State University Mission and Vision of access, research, teaching, service and engagement. A collaborative and vibrant community is a foundation for learning, critical inquiry, and discovery. Therefore, each member of the CSU Community has a responsibility to uphold these principles when engaging with one another and acting on behalf of the university.

INCLUSION

We create and nurture inclusive environments and welcome, value and affirm all members of our community, including their various identities, skills, ideas, talents and contributions.

INTEGRITY

We are accountable for our actions and will act ethically and honestly in all our interactions.

RESPECT

We honor the inherent dignity of all people within an environment where we are committed to freedom of expression, critical discourse, and the advancement of knowledge.

SERVICE

We are responsible, individually and collectively, to give of our time, talents, and resources to promote the well-being of each other and the development of our local, regional, and global communities.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

We have the right to be treated and the responsibility to treat others with fairness and equity, the duty to challenge prejudice, and to uphold the laws, policies and procedures that promote justice in all respects.

NEWLY DESIGNED PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY POSTERS NOW AVAILABLE!
inclusiveexcellence.colostate.edu/resources/principles-of-community