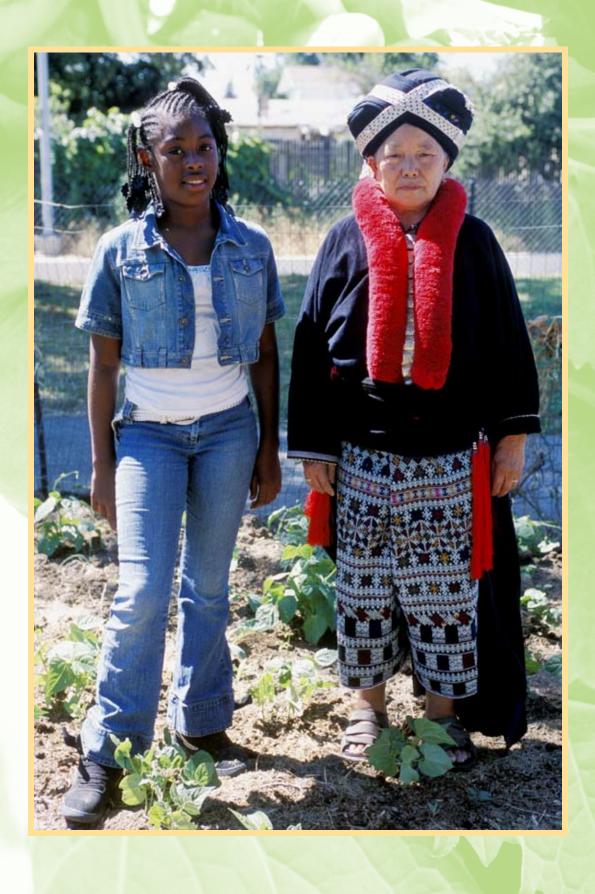
Grow, Cook and Celebrate

A COMMUNITY RECIPE BOOK



PERALTA



Kadisha Young

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Grow, Cook and Celebrate

AND

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Grow, Cook and Celebrate

People of different cultures and generations encounter each other daily at Peralta Hacienda Park. Mien elders from the highlands of Laos, now living in Oakland, have been gathering here since 2003, when the Lao Family Center asked Friends of Peralta Hacienda for garden space for them; local youth have come to play since the park was established in 1996.

Elders and youth grow, harvest, cook and share food, stories and other traditions in seasonal outdoor banquets and afterschool activities in the Community Leaders Arts and Garden Program.



Meui Chin Saelee, Asia Williams



The Mien people have always passed down recipes, farming techniques and stories, orally and by observation, from mothers and fathers to daughters and sons. When the Mien gardeners at the park learned about the Community Recipe Book, they were amused to learn that their family recipes would be written down. They are glad these traditions will go beyond their own community.



Muong and Yen Fong show Kye'anna and Rickiya how to prepare the beans

A divine king at the time of creation handed out tools to the peoples of the world. He gave the axe, knife, shovel and hoe to the Mien. Ever since then, the Mien have been farmers.

— From a Mien story told at Peralta Hacienda

FARMING

As we see the plants grow we get happier every day.



Nai Siew and Finh Luang help prepare Mei Yan's plot

Feuy with dried beans bundled for seeds

We plant Mien crops to keep the seeds alive so that the species from home won't die. If we don't plant these crops, our way of life will disappear.

CUTTING EDGE - AND AGE-OLD - CULTIVATION

THE MIEN GARDENERS AT PERALTA HACIENDA...

- **Use common land** divided by verbal consensus.
- **Do not weed or use insecticides.** They cover the ground rather than leave empty spaces that weeds would fill. To distract insects from attacking a single species, they allow some weeds to grow, and plant varied crops together.
- Plant nitrogen-fixing and insect-repelling species in one bed, a method similar to the Three Sisters mix of Central American traditional fields. Bean vines climb up corn stalks (and fix nitrogen); lettuce grows low on the ground. Different heights allow the plants to get sunlight without wasting space between rows.
- **Use curving planting patterns** instead of straight rows, following the shapes of the beds.
- Enrich the soil between every seasonal planting (as many as three times each year) with grass clippings and decomposed horse manure, keeping the nitrogen content very high. Nitrogen is one of the most important plant nutrients and one of the least available in California soils.
- Let a portion of each of the crops go to seed to collect for the following year. They make ornamental bundles (especially long beans) to hang up to dry.
- Plant different varieties of vegetables based on how they taste in different growing areas. The Peralta Hacienda group plants a different kind of bean than family and friends in Hayward.



Finh Luang, Ayanna and Kadisha staking vines

My special memory of Laos is the sight of the rice fields beginning to sprout each year. That made me so happy, because it meant we would have food. — Nai Siew

RICE Oryza sativa

Over 12,000 years ago, people began cultivating the wild ancestor of Asian rice in the foothills of the Himalayas. North Africans first brought rice to Spain; *arroz* comes from the Arabic word *ar-ruzz*. Rice arrived in Veracruz, Mexico, with the Spanish, in the 1520s.



Above and top left: Mien harvesting rice in Laotian highlands



Mei Yan Saechao at Peralta Hacienda community banquet, August, 2006

THE ORIGIN OF RICE — A MIEN STORY, AS TOLD BY NAI SIEW

Many centuries ago, Mien people grew huge grains of rice that were too heavy to carry. When the big grains were ready to bring home from the fields, the Mien people would call out, "O Big Grains, please walk home with us." The big grains could walk, and understand the Mien language. . .

One morning a man and his parents went out to the farm to call for the grains. He told his wife to stay at home and clean the rice houses. But later that afternoon, the grains came running home while the wife was still asleep.

Suddenly she woke and heard the neighbors yelling, "The grains are coming!" so she jumped out of bed and ran to the rice house to clean. She was still cleaning as they ran through the door. The grains were going so fast, they

could not stop and bumped into her. She got mad and hit the grains with her broom so hard that they ran away crying, and as they were running away, the birds ate them all. . .

The Mien people were starving, because they had no rice. They called out to the spirits to help bring the grains back. They had to sacrifice their farm animals — pigs and chickens — to the spirits.

The birds pooped the grains onto the ground and they grew into many small grain stalks. The birds carried the stalks with small grains of rice back to the Mien to plant. From that day onwards people have grown and eaten small grains of rice, right up to the present day.

The Mien originated in southern China at least 2,000 years ago, in the Hainan, Guangxi, and adjacent provinces. They trace their ancestry to King Pan Hu.

By 800, West African kingdoms emerge whose economic base rests on control of trans-Saharan trade, trade that will later enable the rise of great empires.





Meui Chin Saelee, Mey Yan Saechao, Nai Siew Saechao, Feuy Saelee, and Finh Luang Saechao in their hand-embroidered Mien clothing

Back in the village, my mother taught me to embroider when I was seven or eight years old. When you learn embroidery, you keep it in your heart. . .

In the refugee camp in Thailand, we kept up the embroidery and we got paid—it was the only way to earn money. It's like a prison. You can't go out, and there's no freedom. — Meui

On New Year's morning, an egg is dyed red. Every girl and boy has to learn one thing for that day to be allowed to play with the dyed eggs. If I was learning a design, I had to know it by then. . . When I was embroidering, my mother would pinch my eyelids. . .

In Laos, people wear these clothes all the time, even to sleep. Here, people point and stare at me. — Nai Siew

MEY YAN SAECHAO



Mey pours tapioca drink for Kadisha at Peralta Hacienda banquet

When I was little, it was my responsibility to follow my mother to the farm carrying the baby on my back. On the way home, we each had to pick up a little bit of wood to bring home. Another of my jobs was to put the baby chicks in the chicken coop. The older chickens know where the door is, but the baby chicks don't.

I liked to go to where the bamboos were, and cut them open to eat the bamboo shoots. Kids fought over food sometimes because there was not enough. . .

When I was 13, I started to farm. We grew corn, beans and pumpkins, long beans, short beans, sweet potatoes. The farms were big, half-a-mile long. Up in the hills, there were only Mien people, and there was a lot of land there. We flattened the land with a piece of wood we tied to our backs and dragged across the ground.

Lions and tigers would attack the cows, but usually they didn't attack people because people have spirits protecting them.

NUM • Pumpkin Blossoms

- Pick two quarts of pumpkin blossoms.
- Take off the stems. Take out the strings.
- Put oil, salt and a little water in a frying pan.
- Put all the blossoms in ands cook for several minutes until tender.



Harvesting pumpkin blossoms at Peralta Hacienda

NAMES If your name is Mey, you are the first daughter. The second one is always Nai. The third daughter is Pham. The fourth is Fay. The first boy is Koo. Everybody has almost the same first name, but it's the middle name and last name that makes the difference. You get your dad's middle name. My dad's name is Foot Yan so that's why my name is Mey Yan.

LEADERS There is a leader, a Na Bahn, for Oakland, and one for Richmond. To choose the Na Bahn, we telephone each other and have a meeting. If someone has a big problem with someone else, and if it doesn't stop . . . you have to go to the Na Bahn. He will say what is fair. . . In Laos, every village has a Na Bahn.

To avoid persecution, Mien begin to migrate out of China, spreading through the northern mountains of Laos, Thailand and Vietnam in the 1550s and 1600s.

The African slave trade first reaches English America when, in 1619, a Dutch ship brings 20 African captives to Chesapeake (Jamestown, Virginia) for sale.

I was born in 1955 in Dongon, a village with five families. We raised all our own food: corn, cucumbers, rice, green beans, squash and fruit. When I was nine, the war started, I don't know how or why. We were happy in the village, and then the next moment an American plane bombed us. My brother and my great-aunt were killed.

MEUI CHIN SAELEE





Meui Chin Saelee, Asia Williams and amaranth plants

We fled from village to village . . . we had to carry our bags, food, clothes . . . we were starving. Anything that was not poisonous, we would eat. I was the only one who knew how to carry water. You have to balance, with two buckets and a bamboo stick, or there's hardly any left when you get back from the river. . .

Many people died from sickness and starvation. . . The water was not clean, the weather was very hot. . . The Communists would take all the teenagers, especially girls, to perform, to dance in the celebrations, parties, to sing . . . they were not going to let you see your family or anything. So we were scared.

To escape, it took us half a year. . . I was the one who had to move first, then go back for the whole family, and then go back and bring all their belongings. . .

Some were left behind in the village, so my mom, stepmom, myself, and two others went back. The Communists didn't know we were there, hiding. We could hear them walking around the house all night. If they caught us, we were all going to die at once. . .

For three years we raised food for the family and sold sesame seeds and yellow corn. I was fourteen, fifteen, sixteen. When I was seventeen we escaped to Thailand.

BROCCOLI RAAB Brassica rapa or rupo

(Not related to broccoli, but probably descends from a wild turnip)

Broccoli raab Oil

Garlic

Thai chili peppers

Salt

- Pick fresh broccoli raab with green flowers left on.
- Heat oil well, put in pressed garlic and add whole hot peppers.
- Pour in 2 quarts of water and wait for it to boil.
- Drop fresh-picked broccoli raab into the water; salt to taste.
- Boil about 5 minutes. If it's soft, it's ready. Don't overcook.

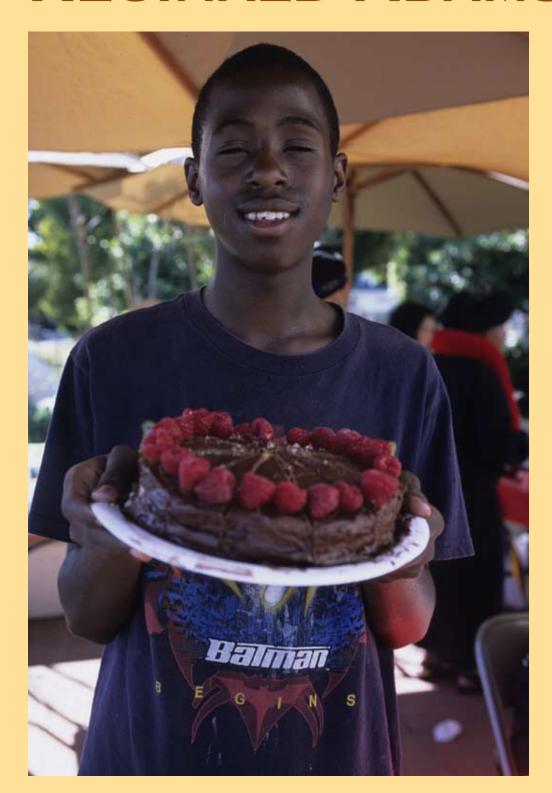
NAI MEUY SAELEE, MEUI CHIN'S DAUGHTER, PROGRAM ASSISTANT/TRANSLATOR

Many people here believe in God. We have people we believe in, the ancestors of our own family, our parents, grandparents, from generation to generation. . . We celebrate the Spirits' New Year, for the ancestors, on March 14.

By the late 1800's, large numbers of Mien live in settled communities based on hunting and farming in the highlands of Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.

In 1793, Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin, which greatly accelerates the spread of cotton plantations and slave labor yet further west and deeper south.

REGINALD ADAMS



Jasper, Texas, is more peaceful, more quiet; not a big rat race. My grandfather was a salesman. We farmed, but for ourselves. We had chickens and hogs. We raised watermelons, cucumbers and sweet potatoes . . . all the different vegetables. We had a lot of land. We continue to garden back there.

— Rose Armstrong, Reggie & Richie's mother

I was born in Louisiana, my father was a sharecropper. . . We raised our corn, potatoes, and we raised our greens, our own hogs and our cows . . . and we had cotton . . . so we had it all. . .

Twenty-five years ago, I built a big mansion in Texas, so we stay there three or four months of the year. If I was there now, we'd be getting the fall garden ready, and I think it is about time to do that right now.

— Lee Armstrong, Reggie & Richie's father

REGGIE'S FAVORITE CAKE

WITH FRUIT & HERBS FROM THE GARDEN

Yellow cake mix (Betty Crocker extra moist)

Egg and milk (or water) as called for on the cake mix box

Chocolate frosting (Betty Crocker)

Fresh strawberries

Fresh mint

- Bake the cake following instructions on the box.
- Layer and frost the cake.
- Wash the strawberries and cut the stems and leaves away.
- Slice the strawberries, press them into the frosting and make a design.
- Wash the mint, pull the leaves from the stems and press the leaves into the frosting around the strawberries.

I was born in Jasper, Texas. Some people, while we're here, are planting the gardens there. Right now they're watering all our plants, small flowers and big flowers.

RICHARD ADAMS



RICHIE'S FRANKS & LINKS

Ingredients: smoked pork franks and sausage links

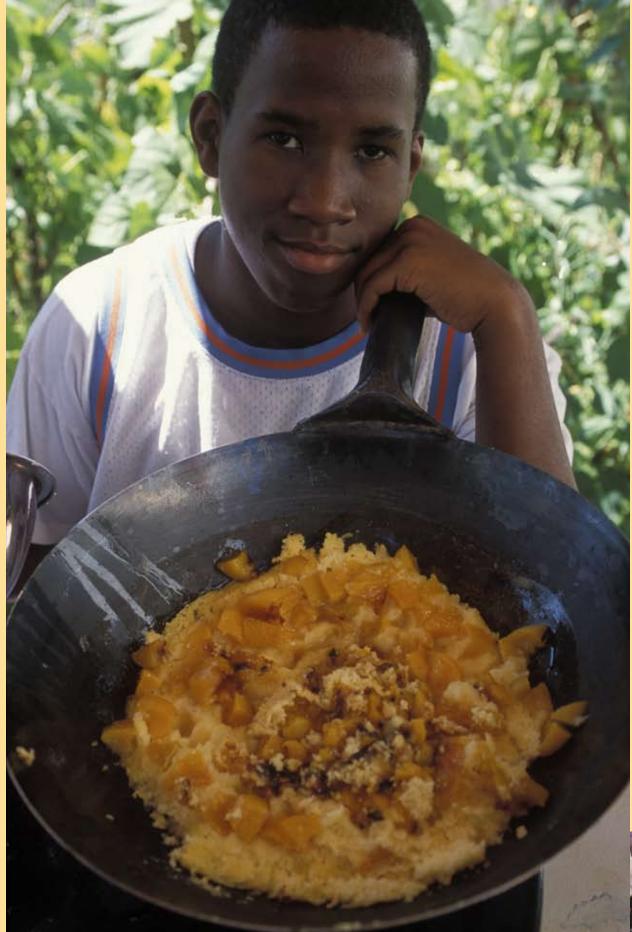
- Barbeque on open flame until browned.
- Serve with hotdog buns, ketchup and mustard.

I have learned how to grow things from the gardeners in the park. You put in the seeds, and you water them, and after they're grown you pick them. We have activities in the park and eat what we've grown.

The Han continue to encroach on Mien lands and impose tributes. Then, in 1893, the French claim Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, calling the area Indochina.

The Missouri Compromise (1822), Compromise of 1850, and Lincoln's election in 1860 inspire the South to secede, resulting in civil war and slavery's end.

MARCUS JONES AGE 16, SPEAKS ARABIC & ENGLISH



My grandfather brought a stone from a volcano in Somalia. He carved it with the face of each family member that was born. I will inherit it. That is how we remember our family history.

MARCUS' PEACH COBBLER

Cake mix, preferably rainbow cake but yellow cake will do Egg and milk (or water) as called for on the cake mix box One cup sugar

Two cans diced peaches

Cooking oil

- In a mixing bowl, combine the cake mix, the egg and the sugar.
- In a separate bowl, drain the juice from the peaches.
- Heat a tablespoon of oil in one pan.
- Layer into the hot pan first the peaches, then the cake mixture.
- Place a lid over the pan and cook until the mixture thickens and a crust forms on the top.
- Oil the second frying pan and place it face down on top of the cooking mixture.
- This is the tricky part: Flip the pan so that you turn the contents of the first pan upside down and into the second pan, scrape the pan as needed.
- Cook for 3 5 minutes to brown the bottom, and serve with ice cream.

I want to be a chef. We cooked every week on the Peralta House patio. I cooked pan peach cobbler for the last banquet. It started to burn, then Finh helped me get the heat down. I invented this recipe for dessert on camping trips: It uses two frying pans instead of an oven.

My grandmother cooks food from Somalia. Her whole house smells like coriander.



Marcus tells his family history at the Story Circle at Peralta Hacienda

YEN FONG SAECHAO

Once, a man in our village went out to shoot a bird, and a tiger jumped out of a tree, and killed him and ate him. We say now, when we tell the story, that it was his time. We believe, when you die – that day, that time – is the time for you to go. That was what was there for you. Here, you say it is accidents.



Long Beans. There are 150 varieties of long beans, bred for the flavor and succulence of their pods. Those grown in the garden may be *Phaseolus vulgaris*, indigenous to the Americas, domesticated in ancient Mesoamerica and the Andes. Or they may be *Vigna sesquipedalis*, a relative of cowpeas and black eyed peas, believed to have originated in tropical Africa.

TOP KWAY • Green Beans

Green beans

Oil

Water

Hot peppers

- Harvest green beans and wash.
- Break off tips and break into 2-inch pieces.
- Heat vegetable oil in fraying pan.
- When hot, throw in beans and sauté a few minutes at high heat.
- Add some water—not to cover them, just to create steam.
- Sprinkle with pepper, cover and steam 15-20 minutes.
- Remove the lid to stir frequently so that all the beans get cooked.

In Laos we use hot peppers cut into small pieces, but you can use powdered "Mexican blend" or paprika.

In our culture, basically, the husband's mother buys you and you go to their house. . . I got married when I was fifteen or sixteen. I lived with my husband and did farm work. . . We grew corn, squash, beans, coconut and rice. We ate meat only when we sacrificed a pig for a big ceremony at the beginning of each year.

There were no clocks, we used the rooster to tell time. When it cock-a-doodle-doo's in the morning, it's time to wake up and make your rice for lunch to take to the farm. The pigs did not even wake up. . . I just left food there for them, and if they ate, they ate, and if they didn't, fine!

One of the Communists shot my stepfather in the back. I saw that happen. After that, we knew we had to leave, because we couldn't let any more lives end like that.

We kept moving and moving from place to place. Every time we moved, we started a farm, but then had to move again. . . Later, we went to Thailand to the camp and did farm work for other people. Then Thailand said there wasn't enough space for all the Laotians. They didn't have enough to feed us, so they sent us to the United States.

NAI SIEW SAECHAO

The land is meant to plant. I really love it. I don't have a garden where I live. I walk eight blocks to get here. I can say, "I have a plot somewhere." And when I get homesick, I know there's a place where I can go and the wind blows.

When I had to move to the United States I was so scared I didn't want to come. . . When I first got off the plane, I was worried about the food. . .

At first, I just stayed home and worried and cried. There weren't any pigs to feed, no chickens to watch, no chicks to look after. . . I had nothing to do. Back home, we build our own fire and put food we grow ourselves on the fire, and cook it and share it with everybody. And here we can't do that.

When I first came I didn't know there was such a thing as a grocery store. I didn't know there was such a thing as selling drugs. And there were no Mien foods, no Mien festivals. So I had to eat American. Now I am getting used to it.

People who work in offices and buy vegetables, it's strange to me, but that's the way they run things here. I don't like to buy vegetables in the store. If I buy a vegetable I have to eat it that day. We like them fresh.

I want youth to know about the past. I want people to listen. . .

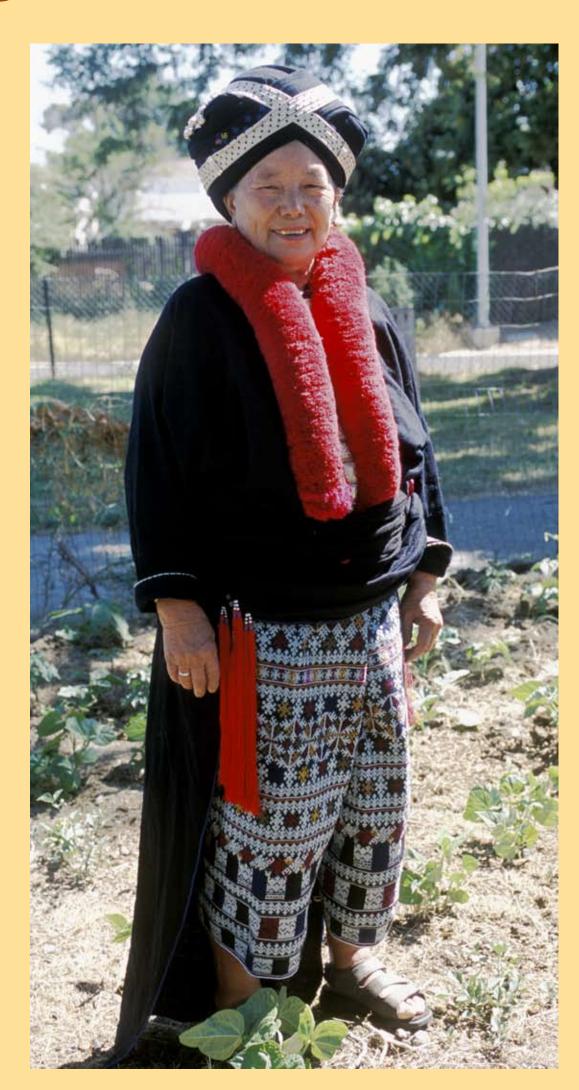
Noodle Salad for Celebrations



FINH LUANG'S NOODLE SALAD

Rice noodles, cooked
Hard-boiled egg
Peanuts
Cilantro
Cucumber
Lettuce
Lemon, a little
Tamarind powder
Dried red pepper, a little

• Combine all ingredients, serve cold.



NAI SIEW'S NOODLE SALAD

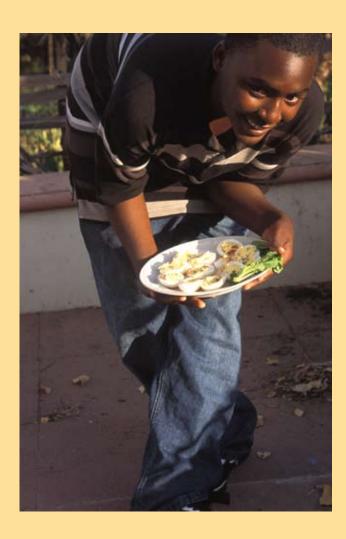
• Add tiny bits of cooked and seasoned chicken and small fresh lettuce leaves to cooked warm rice noodles.

In 1961, one year after the start of the Vietnam War, the CIA wages a secret war on the Pathet Lao. The CIA recruits many Mien to fight for the U.S.

The 1960s see MLK's march on Washington, the rise of Black Power, and the founding of the Black Panthers by Oakland activists Huey Newton and Bobby Seale.

TAMON PERRELLIAT

I was born in Oakland in 1993 on March the sixth. I want to learn more about cooking, I want to be a chef, a good chef, and I want to make strawberry cake with cream. For Christmas, my mom makes gumbo, and she makes her own cake, then we go to her grand-parents' house. They have Jello, Tang, turkey, homemade macaroni and cheese, apple cider, and chicken and gravy. I like cherry tomatoes, the little ones, and I like salad. I want to have a restaurant when I grow up with pictures of different cultures all over the walls.



TAMON'S DEVILED EGGS

'TNT DEVILED EGGS'

A dozen hard-boiled eggs

6 tablespoons of Ranch dressing or mayonnaise

2 teaspoons of mustard

1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar

2 tablespoons of sweet pickle relish

1 tablespoon of chopped yellow onion

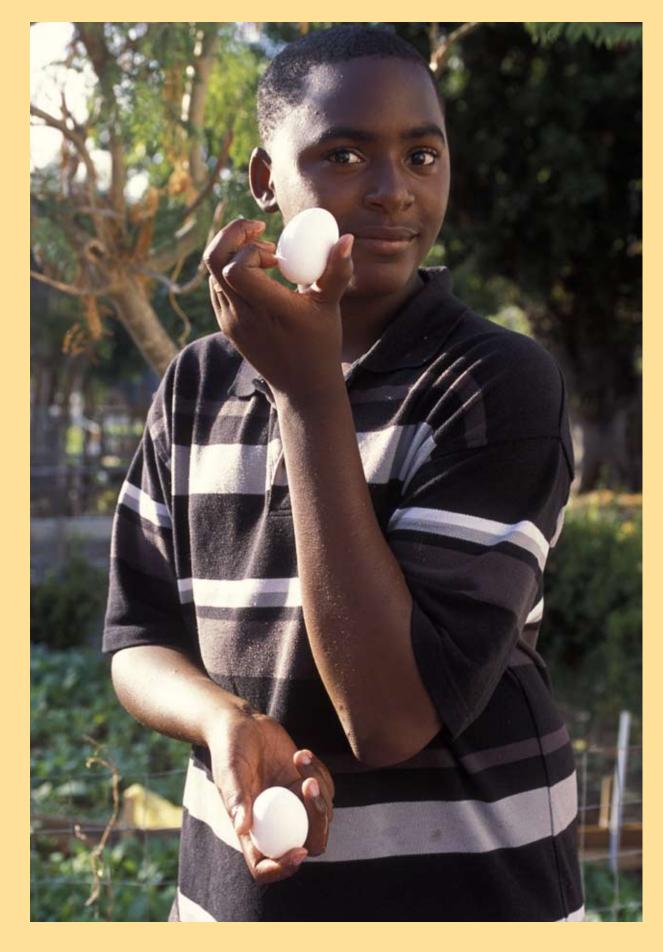
Hot sauce to taste

Salt and pepper to taste

Paprika

- Boil whole eggs 12 15 minutes.
- Cool eggs by placing in cold running water.
- Peel shells and cut lengthwise with knife.
- Remove yolks and place in mixing bowl.
- Mash yolks with a fork and add remaining ingredients.
- Spoon mixture back into egg white halves and sprinkle with paprika.

I tried a couple of online recipes to choose my ingredients for deviled eggs.



Mustard Trivia Mustard is made from seeds of Brassica juncea, Brassica hirta, and Sinapis alba — brown, yellow and white mustard. Brown makes the spiciest mustard and yellow makes the mildest. Mustard is by far the largest spice by volume in world trade.



FINH LUANG SAELEE

Our holidays are different from American holidays. We have holidays for animals. I was born on the holiday for the wind.

Nobody works on that day. If we work, then later a big wind comes and destroys everything.

One holiday is for the tiger's sleep, and another holiday is for the tiger walking. One is for the mouse. If we work on that day, the mouse eats the rice.

My real mother was disabled. She cooked and fed the pigs and chickens for my stepmother. When she died . . . I made the casket out of bamboo and buried her. We moved to the city and I worked for my stepmother and my stepfather and his three other wives. It was very hard.

The fighting began. . . I had to flee . . . we hid in the mountains, in caves . . . about 15 people in the village died every day in the bombing. . . I saw everything. . . Kua Finh and Nai Finh both died when they were 14 days old. In the refugee camp, I got married. We came here in 1981.

I'm concerned about my own children. I always talk about it with my friends . . . my daughter, Mey Finh, died at 33, two years ago. . . I have three children born here in Oakland, all living with me. My son doesn't want to hear about Laos. It's all the past. My daughter, Emily, wants to know. . .



Dao • LAND

Where I lived, we could plant anywhere we wanted to. It wasn't like, 'I own this land, and I can only plant this land.' We could plant anywhere we wanted to.

MUSTARD GREENS B. juncea

Origin: Central Asia, Himalayas

- Pick a large bundle of fresh mustard greens.
- Put in a large pot:
 3 tablespoons chicken fat
 2 cloves chopped garlic
 Salt
 Couple of small whole hot peppers
- Cook together until fragrant.
- Pour in water, several inches deep.
- Put greens in water, tearing them into smaller pieces as you do so.
- Bring to boil; cook to taste until tender.
- Drain off water and serve.



The 80s and 90s see a tough change for the Mien, as they juggle ancient traditions from the highlands of Laos with urban life in the U.S.

Building upon the energy and legacy of the 60s and 70s, many African Americans come to hold prominent leadership positions in the 80s and 90s.

KADISHA YOUNG



Collards Brassica oleracea acephala

Collards originated in the Mediterranean region and were a regular food in Ancient Greece and Rome. Collards belong to the cabbage family. Acephala, means "without a head" — collards don't have a close-knit core of leaves like other cabbages.

I was born in Oakland in 1994. My mom comes from L.A. and my dad comes from Berkeley and Oakland. My grandma is from Oklahoma. I am in the seventh grade at Calvin Simmons.

When we first started to plan the youth garden, I asked to grow collard greens, because they are my mother's favorite vegetable. When the collards grew to be very big, leafy plants I asked my mother to show me how to make the greens. This is her recipe.

Collard Legend: Eating collards on New Year's Day ensures wealth in the coming year because their leaves resemble folded money.

KADISHA'S COLLARD GREENS

One bundle of collard greens, freshly picked from the garden

One large yellow onion

Favorite spices to taste

Salt and pepper to taste

We used lemon-salt and a Mexican spice combination.

- Chop the collard greens and onion and place in mixing bowl.
- Add spices, salt and pepper, and mix thoroughly.
- Heat a pot of water to a medium hot and add the mixture.
- Put a lid on the pot to cook slowly for two hours.
- Strain the greens to serve.



By 2007, about 4000 Mien live in Oakland. Statewide, many Mien lend their agricultural expertise to California's burgeoning organic farming movement.

By 2007, well over 2 million African Americans live in California, including roughly 150,000 in Oakland, and 12,000 in Fruitvale.

THE MISSION OF FRIENDS OF PERALTA HACIENDA HISTORICAL PARK is to

promote understanding, historical healing and community amid change and diversity. We present and interpret the untold history of the Peralta rancho and the stories of the Fruitvale community today, giving voice to the many cultures that have created—and are still transforming—California. The six-acre park and historic house form an arts and educational hub for local families and youth, and regional center for historical inquiry and discovery.

PERALTA HACIENDA HISTORICAL PARK is a six-acre City of Oakland park containing the 1870 Antonio Peralta House (on the National Register of Historic Places), indoor and outdoor historical exhibits, community garden, native plant garden, recreational and activity areas and a nature area where Peralta Creek meanders through alders and redwoods. Friends of Peralta Hacienda Historical Park operates the site, offering tours, events and community programs, developing exhibits and publications, and spearheading completion of the master plan. Peralta Hacienda is on the National Park Service San Juan Bautista de Anza National Trail and is a state and local landmark.

THE SITE WAS ONCE THE HEADQUARTERS of the 45,000 acre Peralta cattle ranch, where seven modern cities of Alameda County now stand, including all of Oakland, Berkeley, Albany, Alameda, Emeryville, Piedmont, and parts of San Leandro. Luís Peralta received the land in 1820, when California was still part of New Spain. The rancho continued as California became part of Mexico in 1822 and was admitted to the union as a free state in 1850. The rancho's last acre finally sold in 1897. Today, the park is nestled at the heart of the vibrant and diverse Fruitvale district of Oakland, California. Native Americans have lived here for millennia, and still do, their history encompassing rapid transformations of land and culture through Spanish, Mexican and U.S. invasions, colonization and settlement.

EVERY HUMAN BEING MAKES HISTORY AT PERALTA HACIENDA HISTORICAL PARK.

FRIENDS OF PERALTA HACIENDA HISTORICAL PARK

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