

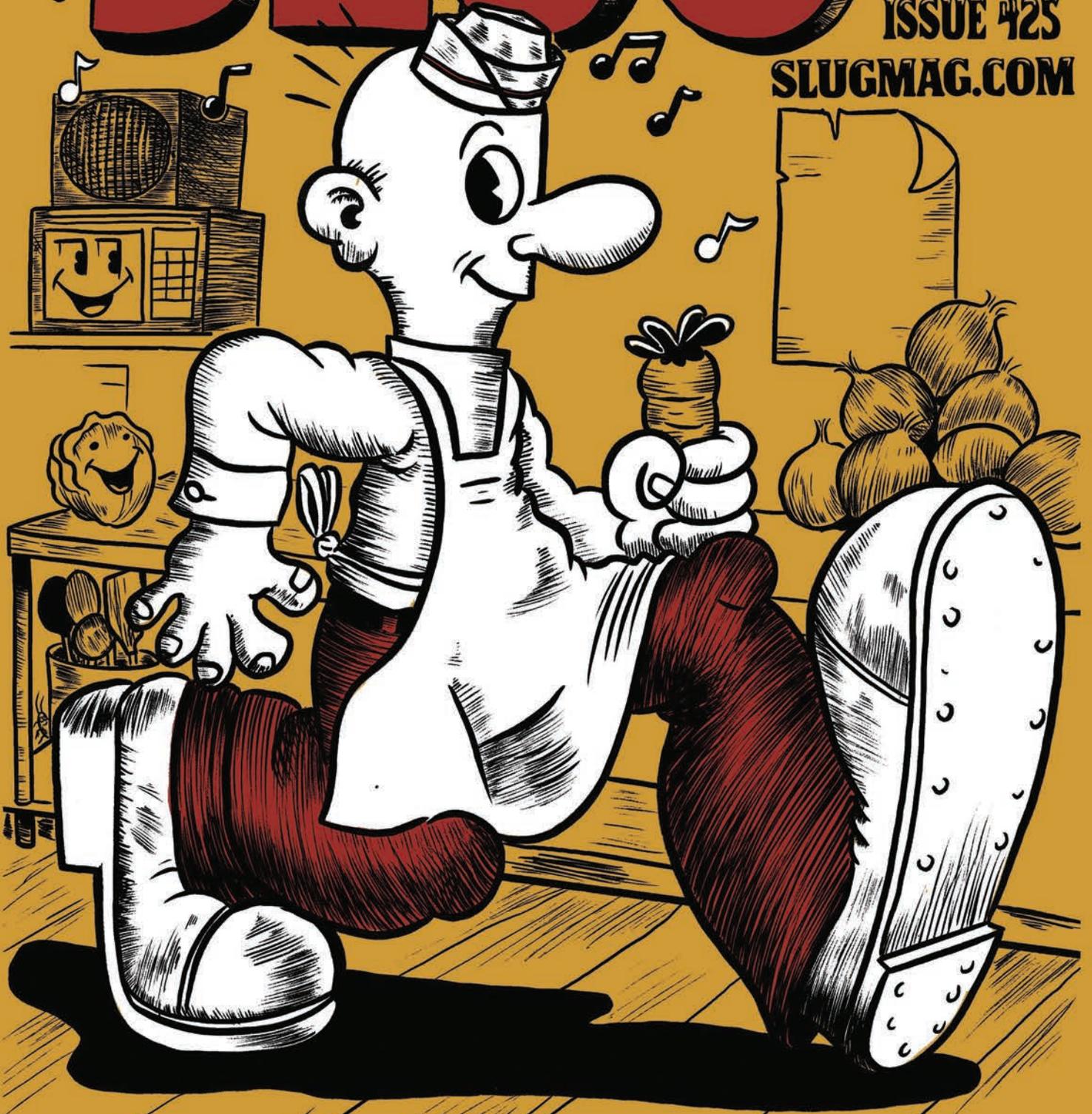
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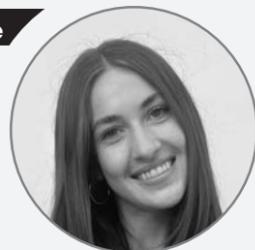
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ABOUT THE COVER: For our May Eat Local Issue, **Jacob Lara** utilized his vintage comic art style to craft a cover that encapsulates the joy and creativity of Utah's culinary community. Follow him on Instagram at @good.cat_ to see more of his retro, food-inspired artwork.

Carlysle Price

Contributor Limelight Contributing Writer



In her time as a *SLUG* Community and Arts Writer, Carlysle has used her impeccable writing and storytelling talents to shine a spotlight on underrepresented talents in Salt Lake City—from small businesses to artists to drag queens. Get a taste of her spice in her interview with Solstice Spices and the Urban Pepper Project on page 10!

Morgan Davis

Contributor Limelight Distro Driver



Morgan has been responsible for delivering hard copies of *SLUG* to cool places all around Salt Lake City since the summer of 2023. Her dedication and hard work are an invaluable part of our process to get *SLUG* out on the streets of downtown SLC and into the hands of our readers. In her free time, she is also an incredible artist and film photographer!

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HOW CHEF PEGGI INCE-WHITING BROUGHT SUSHI HOME



Peggi Ince-Whiting's sushi expertise earned her a James Beard nomination in 2020.

By Addison Austin-Lou
addiesan.sl@gmail.com
Photos by Jess Gruneisen

To enact lasting change as a tastemaker is quite a feat. Few have done it with as much tectonic impact yet humble grace for the Salt Lake community as Chef Peggi Ince-Whiting. She has pushed against the societal expectations of her Mormon upbringing and traditional Japanese stigma of women behind sushi bars to sustain a career spanning over four decades. She has been lauded for her efforts, most recently earning a James Beard nomination for Best Chef in the Mountain region in 2020. From owning Park City's first sushi bar to currently helming Salt Lake's longest-standing Japanese restaurant, Ince-Whiting's life and career are a testament to perseverance and fortitude with triumphant results.

Chef Ince-Whiting's family were among the original peach farmers in Holladay. Their food was simple, homemade fare. In high school, she began working as a tempura chef at *The Hibachi*—one of Salt Lake's first Japanese establishments, introducing her to the intricacies of the cuisine that would come to define her life.

After graduating, Ince-Whiting landed an LDS mission in Japan. That first visit gifted her with Japanese language fluency, which she still utilizes to this day. Afterwards, she went back into the kitchen to pay her way through college. As it turns out, Ince-Whiting enjoyed cooking more than class. "I was offered a sushi job at *The 47 Samurai* in Trolley Square. I thought, at the time ... I could do that for a year. That was 41 years ago."

Thanks to her skill and unique presence behind the bar, she made lucky connections with regular customers. Two Utah-based Japanese businessmen offered Ince-Whiting the opportunity to study in Tokyo. She spent

a year training under **Master Inou**, whom she describes as kind and honest. During one shift, Ince-Whiting recalls Inou describing in detail "becoming one with the fish" before ever putting his knife to the tuna. At times the male apprentices attempted to bully her away from the bar. Despite this, Chef Ince-Whiting persevered, working 12-hour shifts with only one day off a month to complete her training.

Prior to leaving for Japan, Ince-Whiting secured a partnership with a local couple to open Park City's first sushi bar. While she was away, they completed construction on *Ichiban Sushi*. "I got off the plane, wrote a menu and opened the restaurant, within weeks of getting home," she says.

Ichiban started in the basement of what is now *350 Main Brasserie* with a 10-seat bar and four tables, remaining open in Park City for 11 years. Due to its wild success, Ince-Whiting relocated to a historic church in downtown Salt Lake. Regular customers' chopsticks hung on the wall and massive open house sushi parties were the crowning jewel of each season. After over 20 successful years, she closed *Ichiban* in order to spend more time with her two kids.

During her decade of "retirement," Ince-Whiting was not idle, opening a teriyaki sauce company, *Seal Sama*, and working as a fishmonger. In 2015, the then-owners of *Kyoto Japanese Restaurant* reached out to woo Ince-Whiting back behind the sushi bar. Initially she said no, but ultimately knew it was time to return to her roots.

Since then, she has facilitated a renaissance for the venerable establishment, with long-time customers coming out of the woodwork to see her, knife in hand, once again.

When asked what has kept her going in this industry, she says it is her "farm girl work ethic" and a deep love for the craft.

Not only has Chef Peggi Ince-Whiting changed the culinary lives of Utah residents, but she has also changed mine. I've had the immense honor to work alongside her for nearly a decade now. She has taught me everything I know as a chef, having a profound effect not only on how I navigate life as a woman in a male-dominated industry but also outside the restaurant walls. When I ask how long she still has behind the bar, she says, "I still think I have 10 years in me." From what I know of her, I wouldn't doubt it for a second.



After training in Japan, Ince-Whiting opened Park City's first sushi bar, *Ichiban Sushi*.



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SOLSTICE SPICES AND URBAN PEPPER PROJECT'S Farm-to-Jar Philosophy

By Carlisle Price • carlislep@gmail.com || Photos by Logan Fang

Picking flowering vegetables to smell and arranging radishes in an ornate wreath, the three urban farmers at *Cress Farm Cooperative* were excited to share the fruits of their labor with me. Located in Salt Lake City just off of 700 South, the farm feels like a hidden oasis where one can slow down and reconnect with the Earth.

Heather and Tony Peeters, the minds and hands behind Solstice Spices, began farming when they realized that mainstream stores didn't have the food their family needed due to their son's allergies. "When he was only one year old he had a hard time, and we found out he had all these allergies. We were like, 'What's going on?'" Heather explains.

Heather and Tony quickly got to work growing in friends' backyards, at one point using eight different locations to grow their crops. The pair would then gift their home-grown spices like garlic and dill to friends and family, and sell what they had left over to local markets. "Then we got this opportunity to come to this location," Heather says, "so we gave up all those backyards and then started growing here. It was just an old horse pasture."

With just the Peeters couple working on the farm, farming proved more labor-intensive than they could manage, especially once Heather began working a full-time job. That's when they met **Shirley Steinmacher**, founder of Urban Pepper Project. "During the pandemic, I'd garden in my yard and had a lot of projects with my kids," says Steinmacher. "They've helped me get into peppers, because they have contests like hot pepper-eating."

Steinmacher's family also experienced food-related

allergies that were hard to work around during pandemic produce shortages, a time when many families and farmers around the world were also struggling. That's when she quit her job as a geologist and focused all of her attention on peppers, always looking for new and beautiful varieties to grow.

Another frequent farm collaborator is **Aldine Strychnine**, also known as the "Punk Rock Farmer." "[He] is friends with this guy who spends about two thirds of the year in the Amazon, Peru and Bolivia," Steinmacher says. "He was going around collecting all these really cool peppers from markets in different towns."

Steinmacher was given some aji peppers, and got excited to start naturalizing the tropical perennials, helping the plants acclimate to Utah's harsher conditions. Then she began collecting and growing differ-

ent peppers from seeds. "To me, they're like beautiful earrings. And they taste good. There's so much you can do with them," she says. Experimenting with the peppers, she learned many ways to incorporate them into a variety of dishes, and she even sells hot pepper oils at farmers markets.

"We need diversity in farmers. We need urban farmers, we need big farmers, we need a little bit of everything," Heather says. Their products focus on keeping the cycle pure from farm to jar, even reusing the water from their farm by returning it to their well. All three farmers focus on growing things that big farmers don't have the time or attention for, proving their spices and specialty peppers to be a treat.

"We want to make sure that we know exactly what we have and what we're selling. Every ingredient in the jar starts with either raw onion, garlic or pepper. It's all real stuff," Heather says. "It was at the time [when the] farm-to-restaurant movement was going crazy, so we thought, 'There are other spice companies, but nobody's doing this. Nobody's growing their own.' It's way too hard," says Tony.

The three urban farmers are always looking for volunteers to help tend their farm and are proudly selling their products at farmers markets. They will be hosting an event on Saturday, May 4 at *Cress Farm Cooperative* (3348 S. Scott Court) where you can see how the magic happens and try some of their amazing products for yourself.

Keep up with Solstice Spices on Instagram @solsticespices and Urban Pepper Project at @urbanpepperproject for updates on other events, from seed swaps to plant sales and more!

(L-R) Heather and Tony Peeters collaborate with Shirley Steinmacher to grow crops together at *Cress Farm Cooperative*.



Find Solstice Spices' homegrown spice blends and Urban Pepper Project's hot pepper oils at local farmers markets.



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Seasons Cheese

A REVIVAL OF PLANT-BASED CHEESE

By Lila Kiron • lila.kiron@gmail.com || Photos by John Taylor

Every end is a new beginning. Head Chef and Owner **James MacDonald** and Sous-Chef **Omar Lebron** wholeheartedly embrace this reality with their signature plant-based cheese. A plant-based lifestyle does not mean you have to give up the taste of dairy-rich comfort foods you once devoured as a child. *Seasons Cheese* brings them back to life.

SLUG: How have your personal or professional experiences inspired you to make gourmet vegan cheese?

MacDonald: It was the journey of cheffing non-vegan [food] and personally switching to a plant-based lifestyle. I wanted to figure out awesome products for the plant-based world. I think cheese is the majority of everyone's favorite food, so that is the number one product to make vegan.

Lebron: I like to say nostalgia is my favorite flavor. Cheese is intertwined with my childhood. As I progressed in my career and went plant-based, it seemed like a no brainer—this is what I should do. I moved here intent on finding an awesome vegan restaurant to work at. I went banging on doors and this guy answered. We've been working together ever since [about 5-6 years ago].

SLUG: How is *Seasons Cheese* revolutionizing vegan cuisine?

Lebron: Our product is unique in its application. You can use it fresh, cook with it, bake it, anything you can do with traditional dairy cheese—our cheese can hold up and do the same.

For example, my favorite is pepper jack; you can melt it down into some pretty mean nachos.

MacDonald: The health factor, versatility and the deliciousness of it is nice. Our cheese is made from cashews, which yield both health and flavor benefits. Many cheeses on the market are high in oil and starch, [but] our signature recipe is the best of both worlds; it's creamy and made of good bacteria so it's healthy with less fat than dairy cheese. A lot of vegan cheeses hit the market and were just cool because they were an option—*Seasons Cheese* is the next level. It is not just an option, but a *great* option.

Most cheeses use artificial flavors or preset bacterias, like acidophilus, to create flavoring. We have authorization to do wild fermentation. All [of] our bacteria comes from the air into different temperature-regulated containers. We build off of the same culture, creating our signature flavor. Some we culture longer to change the texture, or we add ingredients. It takes about a week for the cashews to be cultured and ready for processing, which produces healthy bacteria. It took about two years to develop our signature flavor.

Lebron: When we talk about culturing, it transcends just the process itself. Seeing and maintaining *Seasons'* sustainability is really important. Culture is big here.

SLUG: What are some of your goals for expanding *Seasons Cheese*?

MacDonald: We want our cheeses sold at *Whole Foods*, *Sprouts* and *Harmons* and [for it to] be a staple for vegan cheese. We are small and don't have money backing us, so it's slow. I know it will

Head Chef James MacDonald has spent years nailing down the signature flavor of his cultured cashew cheeses.



do well because [we have been a vendor] at three summer farmers markets: *Wheeler Farm*, *Park Silly* and *Downtown*, and everyone who tries it gets hooked.

Lebron: It would be awesome to give people their power back to know what they are consuming and take control of their decisions. People want good food. Good food is good food across the board. We deliver good food in a new package.

Shipping nationwide, *Seasons Cheese* goes the distance, evolving the landscape of nourishing our hearts with the comfort foods we love and making it accessible without compromising nutrition. MacDonald and Lebron are dedicated to this vision and you can taste it. Cultured with passion, their quality vegan cheese inspires a new wave of plant-based products.

Check out the adjacent vegan restaurant *Seasons SLC*, visit them at farmers markets this summer or buy their products online at seasonscheese.com where you can order from a variety of cheeses: Cheddar, mozzarella, fromage blanc, pepperjack and provolone.



Seasons Cheese has all the versatility of dairy cheese without sacrificing flavor or healthy ingredients.



Soufflés Aren't Just French!

• KUMO CAFE'S FLUFFY PANCAKES •

By Genevieve Vahl • gfvahl@outlook.com || Photos by John Barkiple

Don't be turned away by the sign that reads "Melissa's Cafe" at the address of *Kumo Cafe*, because it's there, tucked into a back cranny of Salt Lake's Chinatown. Located at 3432 S. State St., *Kumo Cafe* has more than what a "cafe" bills it as.

The space, once owned by the eponymous **Melissa Wang** of *Melissa's Crepes and Coffee House*, is now operated by **Irie Cao** of *Doki Doki Cafe*. When Irie's famous Japanese sweet crepes had to come off *Doki Doki's* menu, despite being a fan favorite, Irie brought them over to her new Japanese Crepes Cafe, *Kumo*. Founded in July 2023, *Kumo* serves specialty drinks with homemade chocolate sauces, creamers, crepe cakes and, the point of my mission, fluffy pancakes.

Make sure to get there early enough, because these crepes are a hot topic. I arrived around 12:30 p.m. and most of the crepe cakes and menu items besides the fluffy pancakes were sold out, much less a 45-minute wait. But their cafe style comes in handy, strapped with Wi-Fi to hang out over a specialty drink while waiting for your food.

I ordered an Ube Latte (\$5.99) with coconut milk and an espresso shot. Ube is purple yam, a starchy tuber delicacy. It is boiled, puréed and

cooked down into a gelatinous, bright purple paste. There were flecks of the ube in the latte, which felt like their authenticity shining bright. While the quality of the espresso was not enough to take this drink to the next level, I appreciated how it melted out the sweetness.

They disclose on their digital menu (in capital red letters) that fluffy pancakes take a minimum of 25 minutes to prepare, ensuring that everyone is on the same page and respects the process—because the product is worth it. "*Kumo's* mission is to bring you the best tea time experience ever with all high-quality crepes, drinks and ice cream," their website reads.

I ordered the Matcha Fluffy Pancakes (\$14.99)—every cake delicately fluffy and moist in the middle of golden faces from the griddle tops behind the cashier. The cakes are technically soufflés—egg whipped with air to create a light and delicate meringue-like batter that cannot be prepared ahead of time, or else too many air bubbles will deflate from the batter and the fluffy pancakes will no longer be

fluffy. The batter is whipped from scratch to order, hence the 25-minute wait time disclaimer. The middle feels like a hot marshmallow oozing out of golden crusted flapjacks—a texture worth the wait, unmatched by any mouth feel. The stack is doused in a thick, dark green matcha sauce—rich in its earthy umami flavor and sweetened by their house Kumo Cream sauce that is draped on top of most of the fluffy pancakes on the menu, perfectly cutting the bite from the matcha.

Their presentation was stunning: three wobbly bubble cakes swaying in their buoyancy, steaming next to your choice of ice cream—I chose ube. The ice cream melted from its proximity to the freshly griddled hot cakes, congealing with the matcha green, making for a tasteful Barney-colored palette on my plate. The vivid purple with a bold kelly green could read Mardi Gras.

The plate was finished with whipped cream and a plating of fresh fruit to cut the richness of the cake and ice cream. I almost wish there had been more fruit to cut it further. The sweetness was full enough that the dish would be perfect for sharing, but even as a savory-leaning person, I could appreciate the delicacy of these fluffy pancakes.



3432 S State St • SLC, UT
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kumocafe.shop/menu

Kumo Cafe incorporates unique flavors such as ube, a Japanese yam, into their lattes.

Kumo's fluffy pancakes are made to order using a special soufflé technique to create their uniquely light and airy texture.



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"We have 74,000 individual plants. I do not know every plant; it's impossible," Lynsey Nielson tells me as we stroll through the *Ruth P. Eccles Herb Garden*. As a lead horticulturist at *Red Butte Garden*, Nielson designs and maintains about five acres of land, including the herb, medicinal and fragrance gardens. Throughout her 14 years working there, she has taught classes about edible flowers, preserving fresh herbs and gardening in the Wasatch through the *University of Utah's* Continuing Education program.

Nielson was first introduced to flowers as a source of food through her grandmother, a gardener who cultivated daylilies. "As a kid, it just blew my mind," she says of the realization that every part of the daylily could be eaten. She grew up in Bountiful, where she frequented the nearby foothills. "I think people's plant stories often start when they're young," Nielson says. "It fits with this idea of ecosystems, the way that grandmother trees or mother trees are feeding the babies through their root systems."

Nielson studied environmental science in New Zealand, where she was immersed in a vastly different coastal ecosystem with abundant flora. "Here [in Utah], we are in an ecosystem of scarcity. I think that the way that we talk about foraging here needs to be more reserved, because our plants don't bounce back in those same ways."

However, she explains that foraging for invasive species can help Utah's native plants flourish. Even if you're only eating the leaves, it's best to uproot the entire plant in order to control the population. As we talk, Nielson emphasizes the importance of knowing their scientific names: "There are many genuses that use the term 'sage,' and not all of them are edible," she notes.

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is a noxious weed that grows wild in Summit County, with a spicy, horseradish-like flavor. Curly Dock (*Rumex crispus*) is another invasive green, related to Swiss chard and commonly found in sidewalk cracks, which boasts a bitter, lemony taste. Common Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*)'s tart, succulent leaves are "one of the most nutritious greens on the planet" that can be stir-fried, pickled or blended into soup.

How Ecosystems Feed Each Other: **WILD FORAGING** for Invasive Plants

By Asha Pruitt
asha@slugmag.com

Photos by Nathan Gentry

"They're all delicious, as long as you know the population hasn't been treated with an herbicide," Nielson warns, or saturated with heavy metals from a nearby roadway's chemical runoff. Many native plants are edible, too, but these resources must be shared with pollinators and other wildlife: "Everything that we harvest out of a native space, we're potentially taking from the mouth of Bambi," she says.

As far as how she uses foraged ingredients in the kitchen, Nielson prefers to nibble on plants as she moves through the garden. "I'm a gardener, so I'm a grazer," she confesses. When she does take the time to cook, though, she makes salads using edible flowers, as well as teas and other beverages—she once taught a class about botanical cocktails at *Red Butte* in collaboration with *Waterpocket Distillery*.

In the harsh Utah winter, foraging possibilities are far more limited, but plant life can still be found if you know where to look. Oak trees (*Quercus*) can yield a sweet, nutty flour from their acorns that "tastes better than wheat flour" once the tannins are leached off. Prickly pears (*Opuntia*) are very recognizable cacti whose sweet fruit and natural pectin make for delicious jams, jellies and even mead.

The very first step for anyone hoping to try their hand at foraging, Nielson says, is to wrap your head around plant identification. "Pick a plant, or a set of plants, and just go out and see if you can ID them," she advises. "Maybe don't eat them right away. Find your spots, hike around, go on trips of discovery and see what you can see."

Find more foraging resources and information about upcoming classes at redbuttegarden.org. "It's such a powerful and empowering thing to know that if you were in a [survival] situation, you would know what your options are and that you can be safe about it," Nielson says.

Lynsey Nielson picks acorns at *Red Butte Garden* to make into flour with a sweet and earthy flavor.



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OQUIRRH RESTAURANT

power couple cooking

By wphughes • william@slugmag.com
 Photos by Jovvany Villalobos

Angie and Andrew Fuller have built a community at Oquirrh.

The staff at Oquirrh may be small, but they are talented.

Nestled near the quiet part of South Temple, Oquirrh Restaurant has quickly become one of Salt Lake's most beloved culinary hot spots. As a regular myself, I have always wanted to chat with the couple behind the restaurant, Angie and Andrew Fuller. Luckily for me, SLUG wanted to hear from them as well. I got to sit with the Fullers in their cozy restaurant and talk about what makes Oquirrh unique.

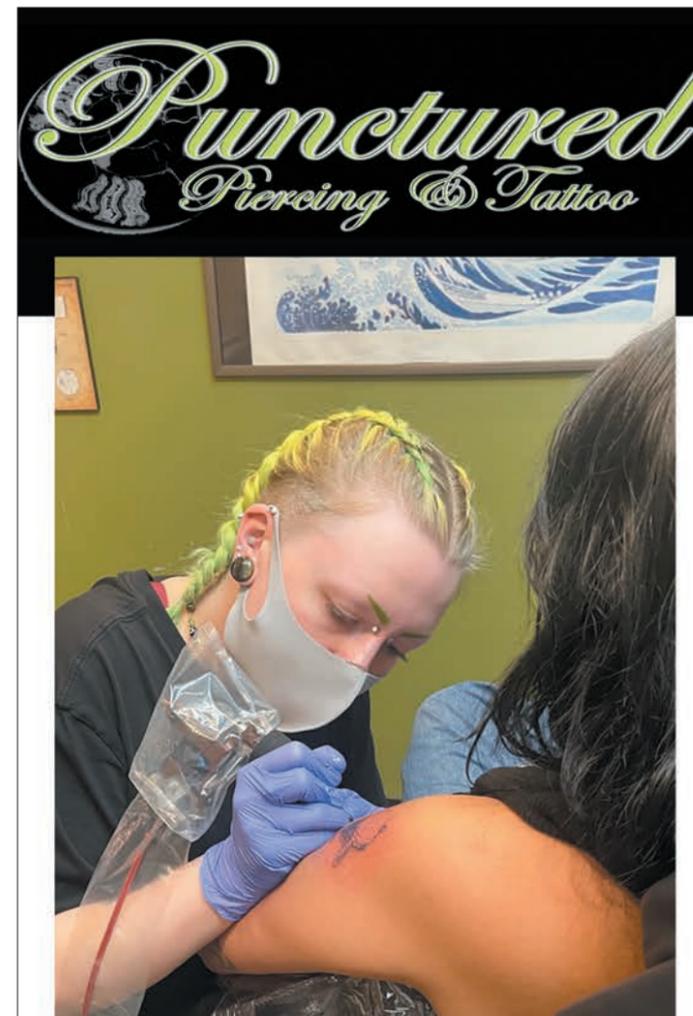
When I ask Andrew what inspired him to open Oquirrh, he took a long pause. "No one has ever asked me that question and I haven't thought about it much," he says. "It just felt natural. It's what I've wanted to do since I was young." Andrew recounts how he got a line cook job at a country club when he was just 16 and has continued to work in kitchens ever since. Incredibly self-driven, Andrew finds inspiration in the wide varieties of American cuisine. "Utah is a unique spot. It doesn't have a distinct style of cooking, so it lets us do almost whatever we want with the menu," says Andrew. He makes a strong effort to use locally-sourced ingredients, especially produce, which makes Oquirrh's menu very seasonal and ever-evolving.

Angie, who runs the front of house, has always worked in food service—specifically, she has managed table service for some of Salt Lake City's most well-known spots, including *The Copper Onion* where she first met Andrew. She tells me that the best part of working at Oquirrh is making a family with the servers: "In some ways I feel like their mom, and it breaks my heart when they move on to bigger things," Angie says. She believes that working at Oquirrh creates a lot of strong bonds and friendships very quickly. "The restaurant is very small," she says. "There isn't a space dividing the front of house from the kitchen, so there is nowhere to hide."

The tight-knit community of Oquirrh extends beyond the staff. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fullers made take-home meal kits that customers could pick up directly from their front door. Not only did it help folks who were trapped indoors experience something special, but it also gave the couple something to do while the restaurant was closed. The Fullers believe this helped them build up such a strong reputation, and when they reopened their doors for indoor dining, many of their first customers were those who regularly ordered those meal kits.

The most notable moment in Oquirrh's history, though, is Andrew's James Beard semi-finalist nomination for Best Chef in the Mountain region in 2023. The semi-finalists list for Best Chef is incredibly small in the region—just under a dozen nominees—and in 2023, Andrew was the only nominee from Utah. "I feel incredibly humbled," he says. "I am sad that we didn't make it to the finalists list, but I am not dwelling on it. I want to keep cooking." Andrew told me that neither he nor Angie were trying to be nominated for the James Beard, but that it just came to them. I think it's this attitude that will continue to bring the Fullers and Oquirrh the national attention they deserve.

Oquirrh is small but feels very special and intimate. Adding to the community-forward approach the Fullers have taken, the couple also chooses local artists to hang their work on the wall. "Customers can, and have, bought the art right off the wall," says Angie. With the upcoming spring and summer seasons, there are sure to be new dishes hitting Oquirrh's menu. Along with the menu rotations, they are also looking to add new art to the walls as well. If you want to keep up with the restaurant, follow their Instagram @oquirrhslc.



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SALT LAKE CITY'S FINEST POP-UPS

SLUG Mag's adventurous foodies **Katie Hatzfeld** and **Jacqueline Read** are here to highlight some of SLC's best culinary pop-ups. Often elusive, the pop-up is here and gone again. Many of these spots collaborate with local bars, delis and even art galleries to help provide the best food for local events. Prepare to dive into a world of warm, Japanese pastries from Tomodachi Bake Shoppe and fresh, traditional quesadillas from Xolo Masa Co. Be sure to keep an eye out for these fantastic pop-ups for your next night out!

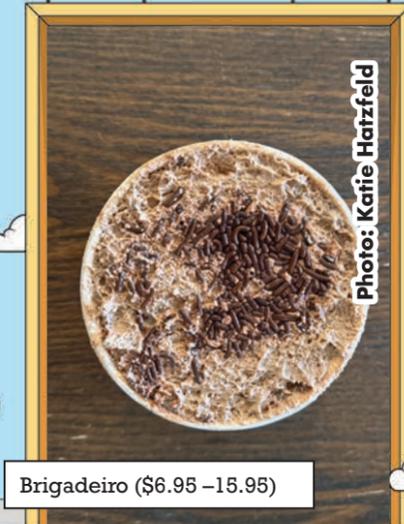
PARFÉ DIEM

I sat in my car outside of Parfé Diem where I'd picked up my order, too excited to wait for the drive home, and pulled out a small, white cup decorated with pastel colors. As I pull off the lid, my eyes are greeted with the whipped peaks of gourmet pudding. Here, texture is just as important as taste—a satisfying "squish" sounds as my spoon passes through the layers of pudding, fruit and house-made wafers, like running my hand through a bubble bath, and it's just as luxurious. The buttery-soft dessert melts on my tongue, and I hardly remember to breathe between bites.

to on an Italian vacation—tart bursts of fresh raspberry balance the sweetness. Their Hot Chocolate (\$6.95–15.95) is a Mexican-style cocoa pudding with a kick of spice and raspberries, but a real chocolate lover will swoon over the Brigadeiro (\$6.95–15.95), a creation of chocolate wafers with chocolate pudding, adorned with chocolate caramel sauce and chocolate sprinkles. Want the deliciousness to last longer? Any of their flavors can be purchased as a "freeze," similar to ice cream but almost better, as the pudding maintains its velvety texture.

The OG Banana (\$5.95–14.95) is a mixed-up banana cream pie, the most iconic flavor that Parfé Diem has to offer. Pistachio Envy (\$6.95–15.95), their current special, brings back memories of green gela-

Order curbside pickup or delivery through DoorDash or Uber Eats on their website, parfediem.com. Keep tabs on their Instagram @parfediem to hear about upcoming flavors such as blueberry cheesecake and "puffernutter." —Katie Hatzfeld



Brigadeiro (\$6.95–15.95)

Photo: Katie Hatzfeld

SLC POP-UPS

TOMODACHI BAKE SHOPPE



Photo: Katie Hatzfeld

Red Bean & Sesame Coffee Cake (\$5)

Stopping to grab a latte from *Loki Coffee*, a glance into the bakery display case set my stomach rumbling. Pastries are piled plentifully with frog-faced signs, the logo for Tomodachi Bake Shoppe. Playing with Asian flavors such as miso, black sesame and red bean, Tomodachi brings a unique twist to the usual coffee shop offerings, along with made-to-order cakes.

A Red Bean & Sesame Coffee Cake (\$5), Miso Brown Butter Chocolate Chip Cookie (\$4) and Chai Orange Burnt Honey Scone (\$4.50) caught my eye. Compared to a typical, overly-sweet cinnamon coffee cake, Tomodachi's creation leans savory, with sweetness from the red bean filling to balance the roasted sesame flavor. The miso and brown butter addition to a classic chocolate chip cookie brings depth to the otherwise sugary snack.

The scone, a seasonal special, was by far my favorite. Filled with gingery chunks of caramelized orange, the texture was flakey but not dry. A light, sticky sweet dressing balanced the breadly pastry. It took effort to pace myself and savor every bite.

"Tomodachi" means "friends" in Japanese, a nod to their goal of bringing people together through the art of baking. Their specialty is incorporating all tastes into otherwise sweet creations, mastering umami. Design is just as key—their cakes are piped with rippling corduroy icing and often adorned with whole fruits, flowers and leaves.

Visit their website tomodachi-bakeshoppe.com for pop-up updates, but a rotating selection of their pastries is always available at *Loki Coffee*. —Katie Hatzfeld

SLC POP-UPS

SALT LAKE CITY'S FINEST POP-UPS

At "Bedroom Poetry," an art installation by **Ashley M. Bautista** at the *Mestizo Institute of Culture and Arts*, attendees walked in from the bustling street into a white room filled with walls of pictures, portraits and skateboards, each meticulously placed. Guests were greeted with a drink and given the freedom to roam around the exhibit, examining each display. At the gallery opening, Xolo Masa Co. provided cheese quesadillas (two for \$8) made with hand-pressed tortillas.

Cisco Garcia-Garza of Xolo Masa Co. stayed busy throughout the event, hand-pressing his swirled blue-and-yellow tortillas. The pop-up's sourcing process includes the nixtamalization and hand-grinding of heirloom corn sourced from small Mexican farms. Garcia-Garza peels

his tortillas and places them onto his small grill, using his other hand to place a handful of shredded cheese on top of each of the sizzling rounds. "We plan on always having a red corn, a blue corn, a yellow corn and a white corn variety on hand, and rotating varieties depending on seasons, uses and popularity," he says. After folding and flipping each tortilla, he plates the steaming quesadillas alongside his handmade green salsa. Packs of 12 tortillas (\$5) are sold either standard in single color corn options or as variety packs.

You can find Xolo Masa Co. at a variety of local businesses during scheduled pop-ups. For the most up-to-date announcements on upcoming events, check out their Instagram [@xolomasaco](#). —*Jacqueline Read*

XOLO MASA CO.

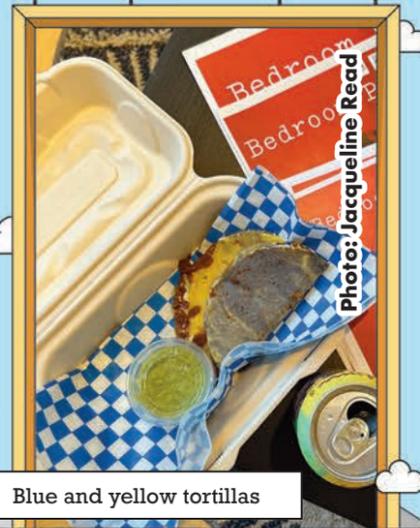


Photo: Jacqueline Read

Blue and yellow tortillas

SLC POP-UPS

THANK YOU FOR THE SHORT NOTICE



Photo: Jacqueline Read

Olive oil cake with a cherry blossom syrup

Tucked underneath an apartment complex, the cute and modern *Citizens Cocktails & Kitchen* was home to the debut of *Bitter Lovers*, an Italian disco-themed installation with food provided by local pop-up Thank You For The Short Notice on Sunday, April 14. Attending guests were immediately welcomed at the door, then seated either indoors or outside on the patio while enjoying Italo disco spun by **Ryan Condrick**.

Guests were given a cocktail menu presented by **Jordon Strang** and **Josh Van Gorden**, as well as a food menu presented by **Josef Ezra** of Thank You For Short Notice, each one specially curated to complement the other. The full menu consisted of shareables, salads and Italian desserts. My friend and I opted for a tiramisu-inspired dessert,

a caramelized croissant dressed up like tiramisu, complete with a mascarpone topping and dusted with cocoa powder; and the olive oil cake, a dense and moist yellow cake drizzled with olive oil and paired with a cherry blossom syrup. Both desserts were unique in both ingredients and flavors, beautifully plated and exquisitely decadent. The coffee flavors of the tiramisu mixed perfectly with the sweet crunch of the croissant and smooth creaminess of the whipped mascarpone topping. The bold flavors were the perfect complement for the mellow, smooth taste of the olive oil cake and tangy hint of cherry blossom.

Taste Ezra's sweet and savory creations at the next pop-up for Thank You For The Short Notice ([@thankyoufortheshortnotice](#) on Instagram). —*Jacqueline Read*

SLC POP-UPS



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LOCAL HEAT

A HOT ONES-STYLE INTERVIEW

By Dylan Bueche • dylan@wasatchgardens.org || Photos by Ashley Christenson

Welcome to “Hot Ones,” *SLUG* style! In a somewhat confusing twist, today I am the bald man (Sean Evans of YouTube fame) and my interviewee, Cobair Collinsworth (pronounced similar to Stephen Colbert), contains all the niche interest, expertise and affinity for hot sauces. Collinsworth also happens to be the store manager of Draper’s foremost specialty goods store, *Pirate O’s Gourmet Market*. Walking into the vegan establishment *Vertical Diner* for our interview, it occurs to me that the best I can hope for in terms of a heat suppressant is oat milk. We sat down and tried six local hot sauces together, as I asked her six increasingly spicy questions. This is not the first time this week I will thank God that I own a bidet.

We begin with Uncle Chainsaw’s Scassa La Bocca. This one is creamy—perfect on our Tender Tigers (*Vertical Diner’s* seitan nuggets) and very little heat for a name that roughly translates to “mouth breaker.” Collinsworth recognizes Uncle Chainsaw’s as a newer brand, and this is a really solid flavor.

SLUG: I understand you grew up working at *Pirate O’s*. How have you seen it change in the intervening years?

Collinsworth: 27 years ago, Draper hardly existed. I counted two cars an hour going down 700 East from the front deck. Now we have 20 employees. We started as a specialty store but just listened to customers and stocked what they wanted—now the Brit-

ish think it’s a British store, the Germans think it’s a German store, the Dutch think it’s a Dutch store, and so on.

Next up is Salsitas Mendoza’s Hell Fire. For having a good bit of heat, this one dumps out fast! It’s sharp and vinegary. We both preferred it in terms of spiciness, and Collinsworth notes that *Pirate O’s* was the first in town to carry this brand that’s now very popular!

SLUG: I heard there are 438 hot sauces stocked within the store—how did *Pirate O’s* become known for hot sauce?

Collinsworth: Genuinely, it’s just because my dad and I love hot sauce and we kept adding to the collection! (What began as a square foot-and-a-half space for hot sauce now occupies an entire wall.)

Mama Africa did not come to play! Collinsworth had never tried this Ndungu Nzitende sauce and it snuck up on both of us. She lingers! This was the first one that cleared out my sinuses, and it has a lot of flavor. The Pepcid AC suddenly makes an appearance. Can we get some oat milk over here, please?

SLUG: Your slogan is “Where food memories begin.” What is your earliest food memory?

Collinsworth: Growing up in the store, we tried everything that came through! I had this thing for Sixlets and Maraschino cherries. I would just eat those constantly. I would happily die of candy and pasta.

Too thick to handle, we had to pop the lid off of *Vertical Diner’s* Inferno Sauce to get it out. Habanero is the alleged pepper ingredient; it’s lemony and mango-y and ulti-



The wings are set for some mouthing-burning excitement, with help from six local hot sauce companies.

mately weak shit in terms of heat, but with a good and unique flavor. It appears to me that most hot sauce is already vegan, but it’s worth making a pilgrimage for this one to pair with the Tender Tigers.

SLUG: There has been such an explosion of local hot sauce and chili oil makers in Salt Lake over the past few years. What do you attribute the local boom to?

Collinsworth: Honestly, I credit “Hot Ones.” It’s made people less fearful of the spice and makes hot sauce feel more approachable to everyone. There’s also so many ways anyone can make it, whether it’s a fermented base, a sugar base, etc.

Can you handle the heat? Read the rest of the interview (and three even hotter sauce reviews) at *SLUGMag.com*. Check out more from *Pirate O’s* and *Vertical Diner* on Instagram at [@pirateosgourmet](https://www.instagram.com/pirateosgourmet) and [@vertical_diner_slc](https://www.instagram.com/vertical_diner_slc), respectively. And when you buy from *Pirate O’s*, you’re supporting two local businesses.



Pirate O’s Store Manager Cobair Collinsworth heats things up with hot questions and even hotter wings.

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REDBUTTEGARDEN.ORG/CONCERTS PRESENTED BY **TOYOTA**

Healthy, local food isn't the only thing **Dani Perez** is serving up with Utah Farm to Fork (F2F). Community connections, sustainability and education are all at the forefront of this local task force.

Less of a program and more of a movement, F2F has designed a five-year plan to weave itself into the existing structures of Utah's agricultural and educational systems. F2F has broad but tangible goals to make agriculture a universal part of the Utah education experience. "Not everyone needs to be a farmer, but everyone needs to know about farming," says Perez, a Farm to School Specialist with the Utah State Board of Education. She is also a registered dietitian, a health education specialist by training and a public health activist at heart.

"Food is everything to me," says Perez. Her journey began in graduate school when she realized her calling in food systems. A visionary, Perez understands that access to healthy food is the bedrock of a healthy community. Leveraging her educational background, Perez has developed classroom materials that are available on request for any teacher or school in Utah seeking to expand their curriculum's coverage of food systems, agriculture, and personal nutrition. "Most school subjects can relate back to food and community systems," Perez points out, making the integration of these topics a natural fit.

F2F wants all students, from pre-K to high school, to receive hands-on experience with the whole food chain. Perez has helped coordinate farm field trips and school garden programs and worked with school nutrition specialists to find state and federal grants to purchase locally grown foods for their cafeterias. "It's not a novel approach, but it's what is needed," shares Perez when discussing solutions to the current disconnect most kids have with their local food systems.

The task force does not limit its services to schools. Their strategic plan to integrate into the community includes as many institutions and organizations as possible, such as child and adult care centers, non-profits and religious organizations. Perez works closely with the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food to address the barriers that Utah faces in fostering healthy, sustainable food systems, including a need for more community connections.

Over the years, Perez and her team have



UTAH FARM TO FORK: HEALTHY FOODS FOSTER A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

By Mallory Iverson | @mallory_michele_
Photos courtesy of Utah Farm to Fork

traveled across the state, meeting with Utah farmers and producers, spreading the word about F2F's initiatives and gathering contact information. This information is then included in a central database, accessible to anyone on the F2F website under "Producer/Buyer Connect."

As a part of their initiative to increase market opportunities for small-scale farmers, F2F includes small producers in their database as well. They also engage with school nutrition directors and teachers, sharing resources, providing education on sourcing local produce and applying for various grants. F2F acts as a liaison for farmers to sell their produce to local schools and organizations, strengthening the local economy and contributing to a vibrant community.

F2F also fosters community connections through special events and workshops. This May, they've organized an event called "Raising the Steaks" to celebrate Utah-raised meats and the local schools that use them. Students are welcome to visit nearby participating farms, in-person or virtually, to learn more about the livestock that helps sustain them and their communities. F2F is also planning a special Ute Bison workshop this June for schools interested in learning more about the history of the Ute Bison. The workshop will include educational demonstrations for food service directors on preparing and cooking meat in school cafeterias.

"This movement is safeguarding the quality of food for our youth," says Perez. She envisions a future where schools and organizations build upon the connections fostered through F2F, increasing local foods sourced while enhancing the community's health. To learn more about Utah Farm to Fork's initiatives and events, visit their website utfarmtofork.org or find them on Instagram at @utfarm2fork.



Dani Perez is passionate about providing healthy, locally-sourced school lunches to Utah students.



Utah Farm to Fork holds events at local schools to educate kids about healthy eating and growing their own food.



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PAULETTE PLATT'S EGG ART

By Yonni Uribe
alliyah@slugmag.com

Photos by John Barkiple



Paulette Platt, also known as Paulette Sky Art, practices the Ukrainian art of pysanky to turn real eggs into art and functional jewelry. She “writes” wax patterns on eggs of various origins using a kistka (a type of stylus), then dyes the eggs, from the lightest to darkest shades, to create intricate designs or picturescapes. Don’t let the fun name fool you; this is far from your grandma’s Easter egg coloring kit.

The tradition was brought by Platt’s great-grandfather when he immigrated from Ukraine, though it fell to the wayside during Paulette’s childhood. “I didn’t know that [it] was a family tradition until we were shopping at a craft store and my dad noticed that they had had kits for Ukrainian Easter eggs,” she says. Back on the east coast, where Platt is originally from, Ukrainian egg kits are common, as a larger portion of the population descends from Ukrainian immigrants. She continues, “He was like,

‘Oh, I used to make those,’ and I was like, ‘What?’” He bought the kit and when they got home, he sat down with Platt to teach her the art.

Though the art form was almost lost to time during the Soviet Era, pysanky predates Christianity in Ukraine. It was originally used as a part of Trypillian springtime rituals celebrating the Sun God, eventually becoming talismans. “We don’t say we’re drawing an egg or painting an egg. We say we’re writing an egg,” Platt explains. “You’re writing a prayer, you’re writing a message—a wish—on the egg.” Certain shapes or symbols, each with different meanings attached to them, are written on the egg for specific purposes: Wheat for good crops, triangle borders framing pictures to symbolize teeth for protection, etc. Platt refers to this as “sacred geometry and division.” Eventually, as with most pagan rituals, Christianity would change these meanings.

Platt wouldn’t get back into pysanky until later, although her love of art followed her throughout her life.

She’s the girl’s girl of the art world. Her eyes light up as she tells me, “From kindergarten on, art class was my favorite time. I think [I] only had it once a week, but it was never enough.” In fifth grade, Platt had a teacher with a special program for kids interested in art, where he taught more advanced skills like perspective drawing. She recalls this as the catapult that led her to studying all types of mediums throughout her college years, where she studied fine art alongside video game art, her major, at the *University of Utah*.

When asked about the process of preserving such a delicate canvas, she explains, “Everybody kind of does it differently. I just use a dremel to make one hole on

the bottom. Then I have a U-shaped needle and I attach that to an aquarium pump that pumps the air in.” Depending on the type of eggshell, which ranges from ostrich to zebra finch, Platt either sands it down or uses different acids to prep the canvases for dye. While she has this process down to a T, rarely seeing any casualties, her current hurdle is finding a vegan alternative—she is currently experimenting with nest egg gourds.

While Platt wasn’t nearly as connected to her heritage as she is now through her community of pysanky artists, bits and pieces of it were always there. “It’s not just eggs,” she says. “There’s a really deep history of embroidery and fiber arts [in Ukraine] that are really fascinating.” She adds, “I think right now with the war going on, I feel a really deep connection to the country. I feel like I’ve got a dog in that fight.”

Platt frequents various local festivals and markets throughout the year, displaying and selling her work. To keep up with future markets, follow her on Instagram at @pauletteskyart or order her pysanky eggs online at pauletteskyart.com.

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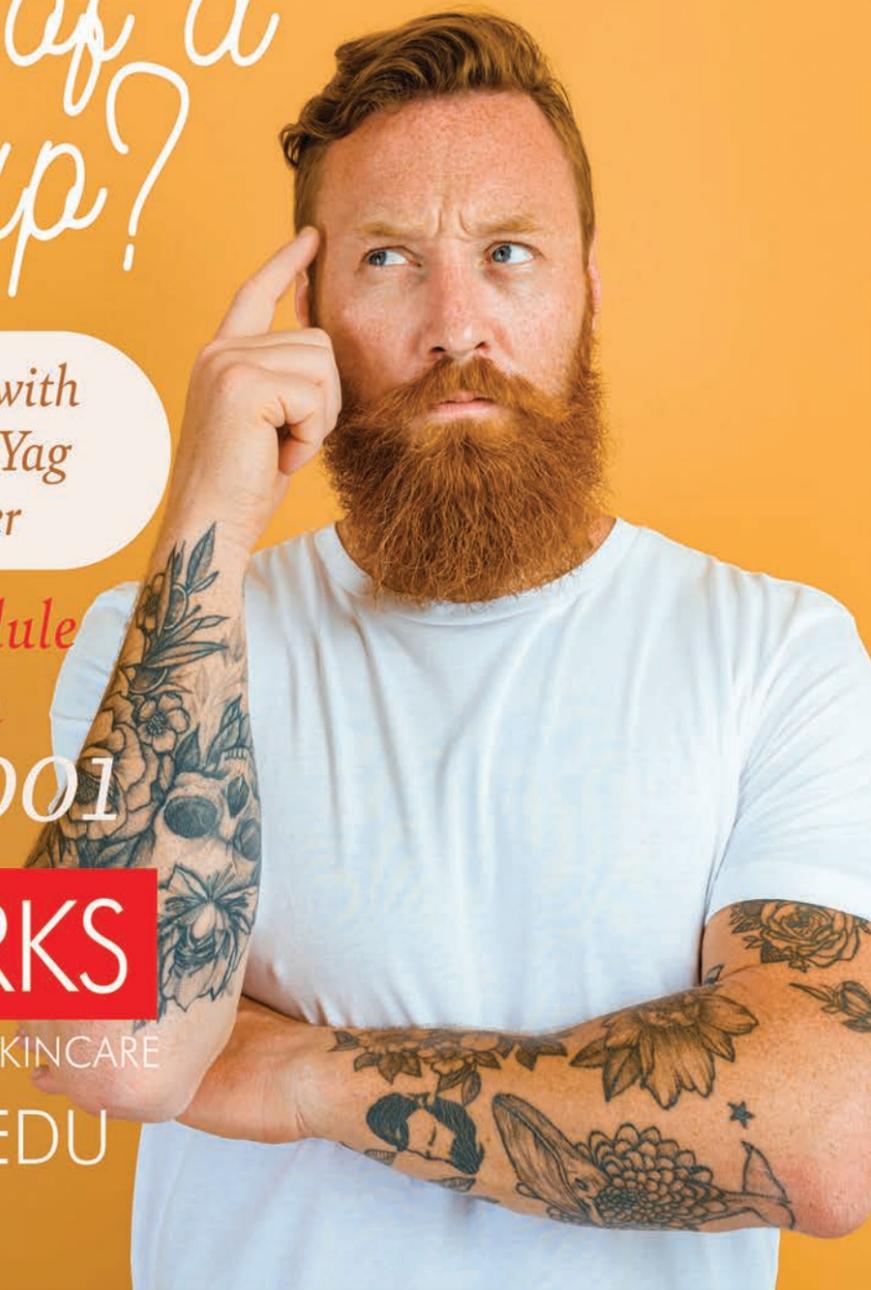
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Paulette Platt paints intricate wax designs on real eggs, in the Ukrainian tradition of pysanky.



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LOCALIZED SLOW POTION

By Elle Cowley • ellecowley003@gmail.com



With a full brass and percussion outfit, Slow Potion is made up of (from L-R) Sam Schultz (bass), Levi Ollerton (drums), Tyler Webb (trumpet), Zane Peterson (saxophone), Dylan Wolfe (trombone), Quinn Diaz (guitar), Alex Renola (vocals) and Scott Seibert (keyboard).

Photo: Logan Sorenson

This jazzy *Localized* lineup on May 28 features headliners Slow Potion and **Chegoya** for a sax-filled serenade. Doors to *Kilby Court* open at 7:00 p.m. and **Teddy P** kicks off the jam at 8:00 p.m. Tickets for this *Riso-Geist*-sponsored event are just \$5!

The key to any good band name, according to Slow Potion, is finding two words that sound good together that haven't been co-opted by anyone else. The name Slow Potion achieves just that. Established two years ago, Slow Potion has been gracing the Salt Lake Valley with smooth jazz ever since.

Consisting of a whopping eight members, Slow Potion has an entire percussion and brass outfit. **Alex Renola** is their lead vocalist, with **Sam Schultz** on bass, **Scott Seibert** on keys, **Quinn Diaz** on guitar and **Levi Ollerton** on drums. In the brass section, **Zane Peterson** plays saxophone, **Tyler Webb** plays trumpet and **Dylan Wolfe** is on trombone. Working with so many members requires lots of communication and patience.

The band's name meets their criteria and really shows what the band is about—making slow, jammy jazz. "It just kind of felt good when we heard it," says Ollerton of the name. "We have a lot of chill songs, so it kind of works out." Pretty much all of the members have been playing in Slow Potion since the very beginning, and before the group's formation, the majority of the

members played together in a different band. "We've been playing together for...I think we figured about like six or seven years," Renola says. While the members each have their own professional musical projects, Slow Potion truly is a passion project. "We all study jazz," Schultz says. "Every single one of us studied [jazz] in school."

While the band falls under the umbrella of jazz fusion, they pull inspiration from many different genres of music, including soul, R&B and even progressive rock. "We all bring our own sound to the band," says Seibert. He's in charge of most of the songwriting, but each member has a part in the creation of the group's music. "[Seibert writes] a lot of songs. We got a few songs from Tyler [Webb] in there as well," Ollerton says. "[Schultz has] brought some really cool stuff to Slow Potion before."

Since the group has been playing together for so long, they have developed a formula for song creation. "One of us will pretty much do a whole arrangement of the song and then bring it to the band," explains Schultz. "And then, a lot of the time, more collaboration will happen later on in the process." Occasionally, two or three members will

get together and write a song together, but most of the collaboration among the group happens in the practice room.

Since the SLC jazz scene has exploded in recent years, Slow Potion have found more and more opportunities to play. However, the dismantling of the SLC jazz concert series at the *Capitol Theatre* has certainly been a blow to aspiring jazz artists in the area. "It was terminated, I think last year, just because they didn't have enough funding for it to bring in artists," Ollerton says. "So I think that's a blow to the jazz scene."

As of March 2024, Slow Potion can now officially be found on Spotify with their debut single, "Confirmation." The jump from live to recording has been a learning curve. "I feel like we kinda do it like a little inverse to how a lot of bands do it," Renola says. "We very much like to play test things before we release them."

As the band dives more into recording, jazz fans should rejoice! Look out for a Slow Potion EP soon. You can also find Slow Potion on Instagram at [@slowpotionslc](https://www.instagram.com/slowpotionslc) and catch them at *Localized* on May 28!

LOCALIZED

CHEGOYA

By Elle Cowley • ellecowley003@gmail.com



Photo: Logan Sorenson

Originally a high school jazz band, Chegoya is comprised of (from L-R) Jackson Data (drums), Emil Welker (bass and vocals), Zane Peterson (saxophone) and Joe Barndt (keyboard).

Named after a beloved, now-closed convenience store by West High School, Chegoya consists of a quartet of musicians dedicated to the art of free-flowing, minimally-structured jazz. From their founding as a high school jazz band to releasing their first EP in January of 2024, the band has come a long way from their roots. "I think we used to kind of suck and now we don't suck," says Emil Welker (vocals and bass). "I think now, we're pretty okay."

Welker and fellow founding member Joe Barndt (keyboard) have known each other since high school. While attending the University of Utah, Brandt met their drummer, Jackson Data. Soon after, saxophonist (and Slow Potion band member) Zane Peterson joined and Chegoya in its current form was born.

"As you play together more, you learn how other people do certain things," Peterson says. Since the band is in its second year of playing in its current iteration, the group has gradually come to know each other's styles of playing.

"Our songs have a structured formula, but solos are always improvised," Welker says. "However long the section lasts is sort of on the fly." A solo could last for a

couple of seconds, or go on for as long as a minute or two. However often improvisation occurs, the band can skillfully play around each other.

Chegoya's music isn't just one thing—it's a combination of numerous forms of jazz. The band's influences include (but are not limited to) The Headhunters and Herbie Hancock. Their ever-so-slightly structured style lends itself to a world of endless possibilities, whether they're performing live or in the studio. As a result, Chegoya's music feels fluid and jammy, each instrument melding into the other. "I think the fact that it's a little more fluid [makes] it feel a little more human," Welker says.

The band doesn't use charts; rather, the members work together to create each track. "I think a lot of people that come to see us—and come to see jazz in any setting love to hear new aspects of songs that are familiar," Barndt muses.

When I ask about why jazz is so important to the group, Barndt puts it best: "I think I can speak for us—[jazz] makes [us] feel like it's something that we want to put out into the world," he says.

As a jazz quartet, Chegoya primarily plays

live. They've played at many local venues, including Hopkins Brewing Co. and the International Artist Lounge. With the explosion of the Salt Lake jazz scene in recent years, the band has seen more opportunities to play than ever before. As an art form, jazz is a genre largely enjoyed in a live setting. However, Chegoya made the leap to recording and plans to release an album in the near future. "We have a lot of songs that will go on," Barndt says. "Once they get fleshed out."

Chegoya's first EP, *I GUESS*, came out early this year. The band says the learning curve from playing live to recording is still something they're working on. The EP brings fluid jazz into outer space, with synthy keys and twinkly cymbals. The one sample on the project comes from an '80s anti-drug PSA. "If you do drugs, you go to hell before you die," Welker says. "It was very compelling. [It] spoke to us."

I GUESS isn't the last you'll see of Chegoya. With an album in the works and tons of gigs coming up, the band is looking forward to their future. Find Chegoya on Instagram at @chegoyasl and catch them at this month's Localized on May 28!

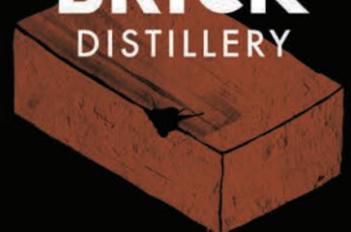


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AIR GUITAR!

By Mike Brown • mgb90210@gmail.com

I like writing about topics that I haven't tackled before. And since *SLUG* is still (kind of) a music magazine, I decided to write about a unique musical art form: Air guitar! I interviewed my friend **John Davis**, also known as **BerzerkAir** (get it?), all about air guitar (AG). See, BerzerkAir hosts the local qualifiers here in SLC for the national championship in Cleveland, which can get you a trip to the World Championships of imaginary instruments in Oulu, Finland later this year. BerzerkAir competed for the world title last year, so he knows what he's doing.

BerzerkAir got into the air guitar genre after watching a documentary called *Air Guitar Nation*. This was several years ago, when—much like hip-hop or punk-rock or most cool music—air guitar was birthed in New York and Los Angeles, and aborted to other cities thereafter. BerzerkAir made a pilgrimage to *The Viper Room* in LA to see his first live AG show, which impacted him enough to bring it to Salt Lake.

I asked BerzerkAir about the origins of air guitar. The first competitive event was founded in Finland in 1996 by some college students who described it as a world peace movement. The concept was that if you can hold an air guitar, you cannot hold a gun (whoa, that's deep). And much like the Juggalos, there is an air guitar community—although BerzerkAir does not know of any Juggalo air guitarists. But a stranger who was overhearing our interview at *Jackalope Lounge* did interject that some Southern Utah guy named **Josh** is a Juggalo who plays the air guitar.

BerzerkAir has even participated in an air guitar funeral, where "Free Bird" by **Lynyrd Skynyrd** was appropriately performed. In fact, every local and national air guitar show ends with "Free Bird," and internationally, the shows end with "Rockin' in the Free World" by **Neil Young**.

On this subject of how the shows end, let's go over the rules. Although air guitar is considered more of an art than a sport, it's evaluated by three judges on the same numerical scale as figure skating, from 4.0 to 6.0. You can pick any song you want to perform, but it has to be edited down to 60 seconds. Also, you are not allowed to use props of any kind, although you can wear whatever you want. If your outfit matches your persona, that's a plus.

There are three basic criteria upon which the judges evaluate. The first is technicality—it really helps if you actually know how a guitar works and if your air



John Davis, aka BerzerkAir, hosts the local air guitar qualifiers in SLC and competed in last year's Air Guitar World Championships in Finland.

chords match your tune. The second criteria is stage presence and the third is your level of "air"-ness, which is kind of like your air charisma, I think.

I still had a few more questions for BerzerkAir: First, is there any beef between air guitarists and mimes? It was explained to me that while mimes are trapped in an imaginary glass box, air guitarists smash that imaginary glass ceiling. I also wanted to know if there are any other air instruments besides guitar. The answer is no, not really, but there are full air guitar bands, which makes load-in and load-out much easier.

There are also air guitar groupies, which is

good because as we all know, most dudes join a band for the babes. One such groupie that BerzerkAir knew about was a girl named **Spider Monkey** who has a crush on performer **Cold Steel Renegade**. Spider Monkey also does air guitar at *Burning Man*. I don't think I need to fact check any of this—it all sounds about right.

Anyway, go down to *The DLC at Quarters* on Friday, May 31 to see BerzerkAir compete in the local qualifiers. Tickets are \$10 for the general public and \$15 if you want to perform, and anyone is welcome to sign up to play. Go to usairguitar.com for more details!

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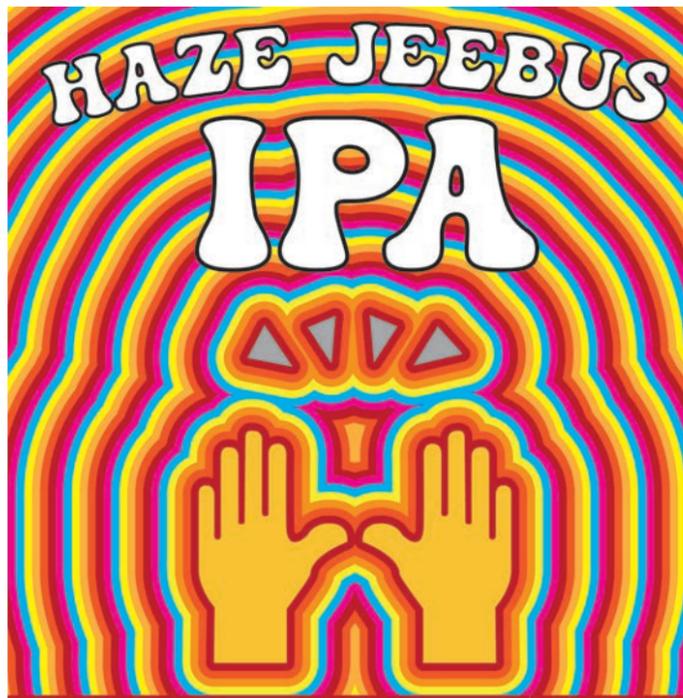
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SMASH INTO PIECES **LOW TICKETS** 5.02
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