

## FOOD FROM THE HEART AND SOUL

How author Esteban Castillo put a stamp on Chicano cuisine with his debut cookbook.

BY VERA CASTANEDA

Unexpected visitors knock on your door.

They're friends. The only food in your fridge is queso Oaxaca, carnitas and mole. What are you supposed to do with that?

If you're Esteban Castillo, you work with what you've got and whip up carnitas poutine — inspired by the mole tots dish from one of Castillo's favorite restaurants Amor y Tacos.

And then you write the tried-and-tested recipe into your debut cookbook, "Chicano Eats: Recipes from My Mexican-American Kitchen."

Castillo takes the measurement guesswork out of his family recipes passed down orally from his Santa Ana childhood home that trace back to his grandparents' street vending days in Colima, Mexico.

Staple recipes include stove-top beans (with optional pressure cooker directions), tacos de adobada (his grandpa's crispy guajillo-marinated pork tacos) and tacos Tuxpeños (his mother's favorite from her youth).

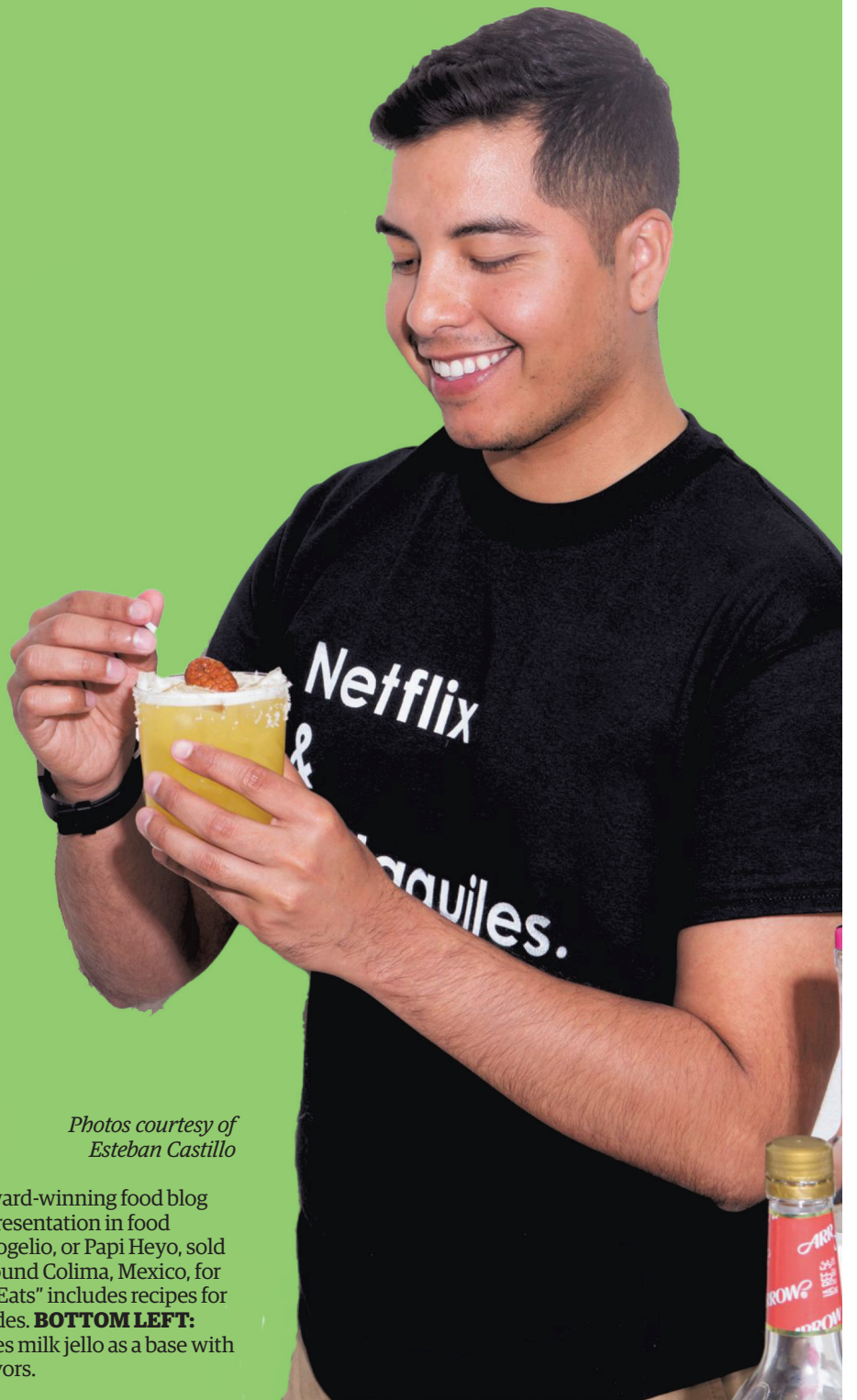
He adds his own dishes too. Strolling through Colima markets and tasting new flavors of agua fresca influenced a strawberry jamaica cake. Nostalgia for Lucas Gusano candy turned into tamarind chicken wings.

He also reimagined "The Real Housewives of Orange County" go-to drink order as a spicy wa-

See **Cookbook**, page R5

Photos courtesy of Esteban Castillo

**RIGHT:** Esteban Castillo created the award-winning food blog "Chicano Eats" after seeing a lack of representation in food media. **TOP LEFT:** Castillo's grandpa Rogelio, or Papi Heyo, sold tacos de adobada in a small taco cart around Colima, Mexico, for many years. **MIDDLE LEFT:** "Chicano Eats" includes recipes for Michelada braised ribs with different sides. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Gelatina de Mosaico, or mosaic jello, uses milk jello as a base with colorful cubes of three other gelatin flavors.



## Kindred hospital workers in Westminster demand better safety precautions after 16 workers contract COVID-19

BY BEN BRAZIL

Employees of Kindred Hospital in Westminster are demanding that management take better safety precautions after 16 employees contracted the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 in the last several weeks.

A deficit of personal protective equipment and adequate safety protocols are among the complaints from the hospital workers.

About 30 Kindred employees held a protest on Wednesday afternoon in front of the hospital to draw attention to the hospital's deficiencies in dealing with the pandemic.

"Patients come in constantly with COVID, and we need to isolate and protect the people, staff members and the other patients that are in our facility from these COVID-19 patients," said Josh Fernandez, a respiratory therapist at the hospital. "We feel the man-

agement direction and leadership is very poor."

Of the 16 workers who have tested positive for the virus, six are currently on medical leave and another four are quarantined. About 10% of the patients in the 109-bed hospital have COVID-19.

Kindred is a long-term, acute care facility that treats many elderly patients who are transitioning from critical care. A lack of sufficient safety protocols can put these immunocompromised patients at risk for contracting the virus.

Fernandez said the hospital management is putting these patients at further risk with a new policy that allows the transfer of COVID-19 patients out of the Intensive Care Unit without first testing them to confirm that they are no longer positive for the virus. The practice is allowed by

See **Hospital**, page R2



Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

**KINDRED HOSPITAL** employees protest outside the 109-bed long-term care hospital to demand better safety precautions for staff and patients after 16 employees contracted COVID-19 in the last several weeks.

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# O.C. devotes significant funding to law enforcement despite need for community programs, report finds

BY BEN BRAZIL

Orange County is failing its residents by investing in law enforcement rather than its most vulnerable communities, according to a recent report by the Urban Peace Institute.

Among several findings, the report, titled “Investing in Community Health: An Orange County Budget and Safety Analysis,” shows that the county isn’t addressing the root causes of mass incarceration by devoting enough resources toward community-driven methods that delve deeper into social issues like income inequality and homelessness.

This leaves underserved residents vying for basic needs in one of the country’s richest counties, according to the Los Angeles-based institute focused on promoting community health and safety, ending mass incarceration and expanding community policing.

“Counties and cities across the country have historically spent large portions of their budgets on what is traditionally known as public safety, such as police departments and prosecutors, and this holds true for Orange County,” the report says.

“However, there is a growing consensus that a larger investment in community health, rather than systems of punishment, are a more effective, efficient and sustainable way to create lasting public safety and address the underlying root causes of violence



Irfan Khan | Los Angeles Times

**A REPORT** by the Urban Peace Institute contends that Orange County devotes much of its budget to law enforcement agencies rather than crucial community programs.

and crime.”

The report comes amid a national movement to defund police departments.

Eric Lam, manager of strategic initiatives at the Urban Peace Institute, said the county budget should include significant investment in community health in the form of community-backed pro-

grams for mental health and drug treatment, among others.

The county’s public safety budget increase of 15% over the last six years is higher than its overall budget increase of 11% over that time.

Other than the county’s Health Care Agency, investments in community-based organizations have

largely remained stagnant, according to the report. The county wielded a total budget of \$6.8 billion in fiscal year 2019-20.

“When we say budgets are moral documents, we mean they represent the values and priorities of the people so they should ultimately be responsive and reflective of the community’s needs

and voices,” Lam said.

“We don’t feel the Orange County budget reflects the actual needs of residents upon our assessment of participant public agencies most closely aligned with safety, criminal justice and juvenile justice.”

Lam said one of the most glaring statistics they found was that juvenile probation spending increased by 57% while juvenile arrests dropped by 60%, showing that arrest rates don’t dictate investment.

“In other words, the investments don’t actually meet the need,” Lam said.

The investments in public safety agencies also don’t necessarily yield results. Despite the increase in spending to the Sheriff’s Department, the agency saw an increase of violent crimes by 28.6% between 2013 and 2018. Yet, the number of cases that were solved decreased.

Furthermore, the researchers contend that there are larger community problems that need adequate funding.

“Our analysis paints the picture of growing poverty and inequality in Orange County, which can lead to a negative cycle of increased crime and contact with the justice system,” the report says.

The report shows that the median hourly wage for white residents is more than double that of Latino residents.

Due to the income inequities,

See **Funding**, page R5



Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

**THE CANADIAN** Forces Snowbirds at the 2019 Great Pacific Airshow in Huntington Beach.

## Huntington Beach’s Great Pacific Airshow is a no-go for September

BY SARA CARDINE

This year’s annual Great Pacific Airshow in Huntington Beach — an event whose aerial feats have drawn hundreds of thousands of spectators to the city’s pier and beachfront area since 2016 — has been canceled.

Organizers recently announced the three-day spectacle scheduled for Sept. 18 through 20 would not take place, due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and restrictions placed on large in-person gatherings.

Kevin Elliott, president of Pacific Airshow, LLC and director of the show, said he held out hope the show might still be held as planned with social-distancing measures in place. He even explored the feasibility of moving the entire affair 3 miles out to sea and having spectators watch it from boats.

But in late June, as Orange County coronavirus cases and COVID-19 hospitalizations began to surge, Elliott said he began to see the writing on the wall.

“We started hearing more and more about those cases rising, and it seemed evident we were going to have an uphill battle,” he said

Tuesday. “We ultimately came to the realization that the unfortunate reality was the state was not going to issue any permits for outdoor events.”

The Great Pacific Airshow annually thrills audiences as three international jet teams — the Air Force Thunderbirds, United Kingdom’s Red Arrows and Canada’s Snowbirds — engage in what Elliott described as “a spectacle of engineering and aviation skill.”

Participants from Newport to Long Beach might also catch performances from the Red Bull Air Force or watch county fire department aerial units demonstrate water drops. Last year, two jet-pack-wearing racers zoomed before audiences, the first time such a feat was performed as part of a public display.

Given the complicated logistics of booking performers, seeking airspace permits and securing marine resources to ensure public safety, each event typically takes about two years to pull off, according to Elliott.

“We’re already well underway planning our 2022 show,” he said.

While this year’s cancellation will amount to a revenue loss Elliott estimated to

be in the range of several million dollars, it could have a wider impact on Huntington Beach’s finances.

According to a 2019 report on the economic impacts of the Great Pacific Airshow, the annual event is thought to generate about \$68.1 million in local spending and \$3.4 million in local revenue as visitors book hotels, dine in town and hold VIP watch parties throughout the weekend.

“Of the 741,848 unique event attendees, 535,426 were incremental visitors who live outside Huntington Beach and visited the city primarily to attend the event,” the report indicated, adding that the average visitor spends about \$255 in the city while visiting.

Elliott said sponsors and corporate attendees who’d planned to attend the three-day event in September have already rolled over their investments into next year’s planned event.

“While we’re sad for 2020 — it would have been undoubtedly our best show yet — we’re absolutely encouraged about 2021. We have some huge things in store for next year,” he said.

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## HOSPITAL

Continued from page R1

the CDC but is controversial to hospital workers, who believe it may cause the transfer of patients who are still contagious into other sections of the hospital.

Workers are demanding stronger protections to avoid a similar outbreak to the one at Kindred Hospital in Brea, where more than 40% of patients and 27 caregivers became infected with the virus. One of the nurses died from COVID-19.

“A lot of people are scared,” Fernandez said. “They don’t feel safe. We are understaffed at times because of what’s going on. Kindred sends mixed signals about staying home if you’re sick but you are not allowed to call out ... What we are doing together is we are trying to work with the employer to keep each other safe. We are under the same management. The only reason they seemed to up the precautions to stronger infection control measures in Brea was because they had a death of a [licensed vocational nurse].”

According to the National Union of Healthcare Workers, which represents Kindred hospital workers, management has rejected several requests from the staff, including establishing a dedicated COVID-19 unit to fully isolate patients, providing regular testing to employees, providing sufficient personal protective equipment and increasing staffing.

Kindred Hospital in Brea no longer has any workers infected with COVID-19. During the outbreak in early- to mid-June, hospital management established a dedicated COVID unit, held weekly safety meetings with workers, provided N95 masks to all employees and offered to test employees on an ongoing basis, according to the union. Employees from the Westminster hospital are hoping to get these same practices applied at their hospital.

“Kindred Hospital Westminster’s top priority is to protect the health and safety of our patients and employees,” Julie Myers, chief executive of Kindred



Photos by Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

**A PROTESTER** at Kindred Hospital in Westminster holds a sign demanding fair hazard pay for front-line workers.

Hospital in Westminster, said in an emailed statement. “With encouragement from the California Department of Public Health, the Hospital is proudly providing support to our community by offering care, in specially designated areas of the hospital, to those recovering from the COVID-19 virus, thereby helping to free up critically needed beds in our local ICUs.”

Myers also said the hospital has an “abundant supply” of personal protective equipment for all employees, and every staff member who enters a patient room is given an N95 mask.

“To recognize the extraordinary personal sacrifice of our teams who are caring for COVID-19 patients, we have offered ‘hero pay’ premium incentives to employees at this hospital who are providing care to COVID-19 patients,” Myers said. “To date, the union has rejected our offer.”

Cesar Robles, a nurse at Kindred in Westminster, said he caught the virus in mid-June while working at the hospital. He was released from the hospital

on July 1 but is still recovering at home. Robles, who is no longer contagious, showed up to the rally, though he couldn’t march because he still suffers from shortness of breath due to the virus.

He’s demanding that the Westminster hospital provide at least the same benefits and precautions as the Brea location.

“They don’t want to create a COVID unit,” Robles said. “They put the nurses and patients at risk. If the nurses get infected, we are going to transmit it to the patients. Many of the patients there are on ventilators ... Are they waiting for somebody to die? That’s what they are waiting for?”

Marsha Shannon-Mabry, a monitor technician at the hospital, said she worries about being exposed to the virus every day at work.

“If I’ve been exposed, then I could bring it home and give it to the grandkids I take care of,” said Shannon-Mabry. “Me being a two time cancer survivor, that’s the last thing I want, [to] be sick myself.”

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**KINDRED HOSPITAL** employees protest as 16 workers have tested positive for the coronavirus, as well as 10% of the patients in the 109-bed hospital.

# TimesOC

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# UC Irvine receives \$529M in research funding

BY ADA TSENG

UC Irvine announced that the school received \$529 million in grants and contracts during the 2019-20 fiscal year, which ended June 30.

This is a record for the school, a roughly 20% gain from last year's total, also a record.

The National Institutes of Health, the nation's medical research agency under the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, was the largest single source of funding with \$189 million, and the National Science Foundation granted \$65 million to the university.

"This research funding milestone surpasses our campus strategic plan goal of \$500 million while accelerating UCI's ascent among its Assn. of American Universities peers as a world-class research university," UCI Chancellor Howard Gillman said in a news release.

"Despite the hurdles we face during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UCI community continues to make a meaningful impact on regional economic development and to improve society through globally prominent research."

Pramod Khargonekar,



File Photo

**UC IRVINE** received a record-breaking amount of research funding during the last fiscal year, a roughly 20% gain from the previous year's total, much of which will go to projects at UCI Health Sciences and the Henry Samueli School of Engineering.

who has been the university's vice chancellor for research for four years, said the university has been laying the foundation for this success for years.

Their strategy includes recruiting and supporting faculty, investing in research infrastructure, encouraging groups of faculty to go after major projects

together and creating a culture where research and innovation is valued.

"The growth, I believe, is sustainable, because it's based on solid fundamentals," he said.

UCI Health Sciences brought in a significant portion of the research funding, with \$190 million (36%) going to the School

of Medicine. The Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Institute for Memory Impairments and Neurological Disorders also received significant support.

The funding from the National Science Foundation will go to two new centers in the Henry Samueli School of Engineering.

On Sept. 1, Xiaoqing Pan will lead the opening of the Materials Research Science and Engineering Center, which has been in development for about five years.

And Athina Markopoulou will lead the Protecting Personal Data Flow on the Internet: An NSF SaTC Frontier Project, a recently cre-

ated center that is dedicated to safeguarding personal data privacy in an increasingly networked world.

"This has been an important field for some time and it's growing," Khargonekar said. "Especially after COVID-19, everything is online. Look at how much of our healthcare has become telehealth."

Other notable projects include Nancy Rodriguez's study on the sources and consequences of prison violence in seven states; Jenny Yang's project developing methods for the capture and removal of carbon dioxide from the air and from flue gases emitted by fossil fuel plants; the Institute for Clinical & Translational Science's efforts to speed the transformation of scientific discoveries into medical treatments for patients; and Jessica Millward and Tiffany Willoughby-Herard's partnership with Baltimore's Morgan State University to encourage UC faculty to actively engage with faculty and students at historically Black colleges and universities to attract and retain graduate scholars focused on African American content.

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## Young Leaders of O.C.'s high school volunteers serve low-income elementary students during the pandemic

BY ADA TSENG

For the last year, Stella Hong and Laura Park, juniors in high school, have been co-presidents of the Buena Park branch of Young Leaders of Orange County (YLOC), an organization of mostly high school volunteers who provide free tutoring for low-income elementary school students.

Before the pandemic, the Buena Park branch's 30 volunteers would tutor about 80 students every Saturday at the Walter D. Ehlers Community Center.

But as social-distancing mandates prevented in-person tutoring, Hong and Park had to figure out how to continue their services.

"A lot of our students emailed us telling us they were having a difficult time with [their school's] online learning," Hong said.

They emailed all the parents to make sure the students had access to the internet and created a new Young Leaders of Orange County YouTube channel to upload personalized tutorials for the students.

While it's been a challenging new project for them to manage, Park, whose father is a teacher, said "it taught me a lot about how to be a leader and how to be comfortable and flexible during these unprecedented times."



Courtesy of Stella Hong and Laura Park

**STELLA HONG**, left, and Laura Park are co-presidents of the Buena Park chapter of the Young Leaders of Orange County.

YLOC was started in 2011 by Helen Youn, a Fullerton resident who immigrated to the United States with her husband when she was in her early 30s.

When she heard about the steep education budget cuts taking place nationwide that year, she and her teenage daughter started tutoring kids in their Fullerton neighborhood.

While Youn had earned a teaching credential in Korea, she had never used her skills in the U.S.

Soon, she started hearing about a need for educational support for low-income students in the neighboring city of Buena Park, so they approached the city to start the organization.

"When I made the presentation with my daughter and the volunteers in front

of the Buena Park City Council meeting, I was so nervous," she said, explaining that for years, she had sheltered herself within the comforts of O.C.'s Korean-speaking community. "I wrote the script and just read it, but they really welcomed and encouraged us."

It started with 10 volunteers that mostly consisted of her daughter's friends, tutoring math in Buena Park. In the last decade, they've grown to include branches in Fullerton, Anaheim, Stanton, La Mirada and La Palma, as well as subjects like reading and music.

But Youn, who now works part-time for the Cypress School District, always wanted leadership to be part of the goal.

Each branch not only has presidents, vice presidents,

secretaries and board members, but there are also team leaders that create worksheets each week for the tutors to use during their sessions.

"I did not plan to grow it, because it's a lot of work, but we sensed that it was a win-win situation for everybody," she said. "It was good for high schoolers looking for opportunities to do community service in a safe environment, low-income families could get tutoring for their kids for free, and cities also welcomed the idea, because through our service, they can serve the community."

Though Youn jokes that she'd like to retire and have someone else take over, she's extremely proud that she, as a first-generation immigrant, was able to have such an impact on the community.

She remembers about a year after they started the organization, she received an email from the Buena Park city manager explaining that the city could no longer offer them discounted rates to rent their space.

Youn thought she had no choice but to close YLOC down.

But when the parents of their students heard, they showed up to the City Council meeting to protest.

"I was so surprised," she said. "With a lot of the His-

panic parents, I cannot communicate with them very well, because they don't speak English, and I don't speak Spanish. It was so unique and special to me, personally, that they really supported me."

She remembers the parents spoke to the City Council in Spanish, and one of the security guards translated their comments for her. Some of them were crying and telling stories about how YLOC was the only place that they could send their kids to get tutoring for free.

"They saved it," Youn said.

The council reversed its decision and allowed YLOC to continue.

Now, the organization is partially funded by Hanam Chain, a Korean supermarket in Buena Park which donates a percentage of its sales whenever a YLOC member shops there.

And the group has an annual garage sale and fundraiser at the parking lot of the Buena Park community center where members sell used textbooks and educational supplies.

While Youn said she's always around to give advice, she encourages the high school students to come up with their own ideas — and lead.

This year, Hong and Park created a weekly toy raffle and gave out raffle tickets

as an extra incentive for their students to finish their homework.

Previous volunteers started a math competition event in La Palma, which started with 12 participants and now attracts over 100.

Park thinks that as high school students, they are able to develop deeper relationships with the elementary school students, who understand that they aren't being paid to be there — that YLOC volunteers are there because they want to be.

Hong wants to be a journalist in the future, but her greater goal is to one day found a nonprofit that teaches journalism to kids.

While Hong and Park will soon pass the torch to next year's co-presidents, they both plan to continue tutoring with the organization next year.

"I love that YLOC allows for passionate high schoolers to interact and lead future generations toward a path where education is well respected and cherished," Park said. "I've been blessed to see the progression of students' mindsets ... and younger students growing a passion for learning that many of us have."

For more information or to donate, visit [yloc.org](http://yloc.org) or email [yloc11@gmail.com](mailto:yloc11@gmail.com).

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## Organizers at UCI collect donations to help prisoners released early

BY ADA TSENG

When Gov. Gavin Newsom announced on July 10 that approximately 8,000 California prisoners could be released ahead of schedule to stop the spread of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 inside state prisons, Nalya Rodriguez watched as organizations planned ways to support those who would soon be released into a pandemic-ridden world.

Place4Grace, which serves families impacted by incarceration, started Rides2Freedom, which coordinates pick-ups and drop-offs for those who might not have easy ways to get back home, especially if their prisons are miles away from their families sheltering in place.

Rodriguez, a sociology PhD student at UC Irvine who has been organizing around prison issues for about eight years, wanted to find a way for people who might not be able to give rides to help.

She reached out to Place4Grace to see if the prisoners had need for supplies and learned that often times the newly released prisoners are sitting in the release area for hours with-

out basic necessities.

For the last week, Rodriguez and Courtney Echols — organizers for the newly formed People's Coalition of UC Irvine — and their volunteers have been putting together backpacks filled with supplies to give to these prisoners.

The "solidarity packs" include hand sanitizer, personal hygiene kits, face masks, tissues, waters, snacks and \$25 gift cards. "The gift cards are to allow them to have some money to buy a fresh set of clothes," Rodriguez said. "So that they feel like new as they come into our communities."

Rodriguez said they were inspired by the work already being done by organizations including 714 Mutual Aid, which collected supplies for folks recently released from the Santa Ana county jail.

"It's to show them that as they're being released, that your community cares," she said. "Your community is here and we want you to thrive with us."

Officials at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation said that those with fewer than 180 days left in their sentence and those older than 30 will

be given priority. No one serving time for a crime defined in state law as violent or involving domestic violence would be set free, officials said, nor would those required to register as sex offenders.

In the first week, the People's Coalition raised \$1,700 and created about 78 solidarity packs. During Thursday's emergency drive at UC Irvine, which lasted from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., they raised over \$2,400 and collected hundreds of donations ranging from food to menstrual products, socks and backpacks.

Both Rodriguez and Echols, a UC Irvine PhD student in criminology, law and society, also organize for UCICOLA, which started in February, inspired by UC Santa Cruz students advocating for a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) on their campus to support those affected by the ongoing housing crises in California.

The People's Coalition, which started in June, is also working on projects including the expansion of a critical race theory conference on campus and the development of an anti-racism program for PhD students and for the school



Courtesy of UCICOLA

**NALYA RODRIGUEZ** and Courtney Echols are leading an effort at UC Irvine to collect supplies for "solidarity packs" for prisoners that will soon be released into a pandemic-ridden world.

of education.

Both organizations collaborate on biweekly mutual aid fundraisers for the Irvine community.

Echols said that UCICOLA has been able to redistribute \$15,000 from donations to students in need of emergency funds.

They're trying to create as many solidarity packs as possible before the anticipated release of prisoners

later this month and in early August.

The next mutual aid drive is scheduled for July 31.

"This is a really scary time," Rodriguez said. "They're being released into a society where people are dying. There's nothing we can do about it. But we saw that there was a need and that we have the resources to put something together

to contribute to the community."

Money can also be sent through Venmo @[uci-mutual-aid](https://venmo.com/uci-mutual-aid). Rodriguez also encourages donations to Place4Grace's Rides2Freedom ([theplace4grace.org](http://theplace4grace.org)) and Choices For Freedom's Home4Good program ([choicesforfreedom.org](http://choicesforfreedom.org)).

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## COOKBOOK

*Continued from page R1*

termelon margarita.

The book is the hard-cover manifestation of Castillo's food blog with the same name that launched in 2016. He started cooking out of necessity, as he sought comfort food after moving from Santa Ana to Humboldt for college. The blog became an online archive of recipes, but also an exploration of identity through personal stories. It peaked the interest of a loyal audience, who also felt far from their community. It won awards and attracted interest from a book editor, about five months after Castillo started it.

After he secured a book deal two years ago, Castillo decided to leave a 9-to-5 job to devote all his time and effort into "Chicano Eats," following the perfectionist mentality: "If this is the only book that I ever get to publish, I want it to be 110%. I want to put my stamp on it."

Prior to the spread of COVID-19, he was looking forward to matching faces to the people behind emails, DMs and online comments he's received over a four year span, by meeting readers at tour stops across the country. Instead he's housebound along with his partner and three dogs in Fresno.

In this lightly edited conversation, Castillo talks about the making of his first cookbook, internalized racism and where to buy tortillas in O.C.

**Q One thing that strikes me about the book is the connection to home, from your family's recipes to the details of the design — like the chapter dividers having the flowery pattern of a plastic mantel.**

**A** I was writing the book to my younger self and it really incorporated a lot of the recipes that I wish that I knew how to make when I was homesick. I thought it was important for me to include those recipes where I would give my mom a call and she wouldn't be able to translate her way of cooking into exact measurements. I want this to be a book that people are able to use often and not look to for one or two recipes and then put it down. I compiled all of the recipes that were going to make people feel like they had a little piece of home in the kitchen.

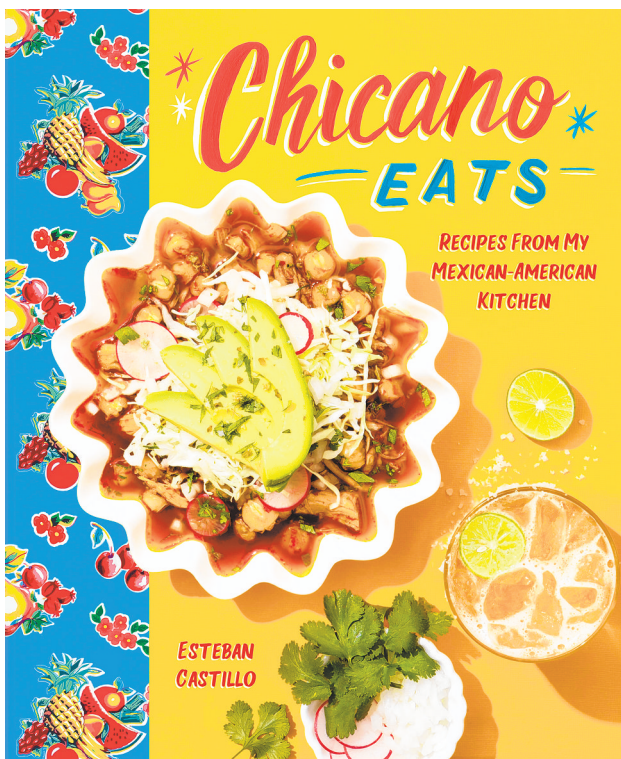
**Q What was your process for putting together the cookbook?**

**A** It was stressful [laughs]. As someone who does their own photography, food styling, recipe development and testing, it was a lot of work to take on. Different authors have different journeys when it comes to writing a book and it depends on what kind of team they have and what kind of budget they're working with. I did everything myself. There were times where it got pretty stressful, but I couldn't be more proud of the outcome.

**Q Chicano cuisine can depend on where you're located in the U.S. So what are your food influences?**

**A** My version of Chicano food is everything that I ever asked my mom to make. If we ever asked her to make hamburgers or spaghetti, there's a sort of twist that she would incorporate. For me, there's a lot of Asian influences and a lot of middle America influences.

**Q Chicano Eats, the blog, is this accessible multimedia experience. Why decide to put it to**



*Esteban Castillo*

**THE COVER OF** Esteban Castillo's first cookbook, "Chicano Eats: Recipes from My Mexican-American Kitchen."

**gether in a cookbook?**

**A** The idea of writing a book had never crossed my mind. I had an editor that reached out to me maybe four or five months into me blogging who had seen a collaboration with We Are Mitú. She saw the video and she reached out to me and she was like, "I really like your work. Have you ever thought about writing a cookbook?" I was honest and I said, "I'm super new to blogging. I'm still trying to find my voice and who I am and what road I want to take with this." I wasn't very serious about it at first. It wasn't until she introduced me to my agent where he really sat me down and we discussed everything. It made me think of it differently because I haven't seen anything else like this in the landscape.

That's one of the other things that pushed me to start the blog. I didn't see a lot of the recipes that I grew up with reflected on some of these blogs. My partner had already been a food blogger for a really long time. Whenever I would look for recipes, I noticed that people were always turning to white people for our stories and our recipes. And it just didn't seem fair. Why can't I do this? Not seeing anybody else like me in that landscape really pushed me to compile all of these recipes. If I was feeling like this, I don't know how many other people are out there who are also homesick or trying to decipher their mom's recipe.

**Q And it turned out a lot of people felt the same way.**

**A** It's been crazy to see the reception the blog has gotten, the reception the book has gotten. When I started the blog, it was an outlet for me to just be creative and share some of these recipes that I really enjoy. After the [2016 presidential] election, it took a different route. A lot of people were reaching out to me, who were either first or second generation Chicanos, telling me, "I never grew up with my culture because my parents really assimilated me into this country and stripped me of pieces of the culture. Your blog has really helped me."

That was really surprising for me as someone who grew up with all of this. To see that it was a tool and a resource for others where it made them feel closer to their culture was super gratifying.

**Q When you say you grew up with all of this, what do you mean?**

**A** I talked about this right after the election, but when I was growing up, I felt some sense of shame. My dad has been working

construction for most of his life, and I got to work with him a lot on the weekends. I got to hear a lot of the comments that were thrown at him and his co-workers by some of the foremen. I internalized a lot of that hate and a lot of those comments. He never understood anything that they said, but I did and it really hurt me.

I don't like thinking about it, but I remember being in fifth grade and feeling ashamed of being brown. There were days where I would go into the shower and I would scrub my skin really hard wishing for the melanin to be removed from my skin because I didn't want to be seen as a dirty Mexican. I really took all of their comments to heart. I hate that I felt like that at the time.

**Q At what point did your perspective change?**

**A** I would say that happened in high school — once you start taking your AP Spanish classes and some of these other classes. I went to Santa Ana High School, and a lot of our teachers were graduates from the same school. Seeing them being more than just what other people thought ... seeing them being able to go far really helped me.

**Q When did you start identifying as Chicano?**

**A** It would have been around my high school senior year or freshman year of college. I gravitated toward the term Chicano because it reconciled a lot of those issues where I felt like I didn't fit in. Up until I was 21, my parents were undocumented. When I went to Mexico, it was on my own or with an aunt or an uncle. I never really felt like I belonged there because I spoke English. Then I would be here on the playground trying to speak Spanish with my friends but also hearing that we shouldn't do that. You struggle [answering the question:] where do I belong? The term Chicano really helped me embrace that. I'm not from here or there, but from both at the same time. It made sense for me.

**Q That identity is represented in the book's language. Sometimes you have to defend the use of Spanglish with publishers. What was the thought process behind it and not explaining or translating certain phrases?**

**A** It was a no-brainer because it's just how I naturally talk. If I'm hanging out with my siblings or my cousin, I'm going to use Spanglish. That's who I am. When I was having meetings with the different pub-

lishers that were interested in acquiring the book, one of the things that I was looking for in a publisher was to work with someone who was either a person of color or Latina or Latino. Out of the many different publishers that I met, there was only one that had a cookbook editor who happened to be Latina and that was with HarperCollins. Everybody else in the landscape was essentially white.

Even though she's not Mexican or [living] in Mexico, she was super passionate about the project, and I felt comfortable that she was going to understand my journey and my writing. I didn't feel like I was going to have to be constantly having to introduce things. It wasn't much of a battle having to do whatever it was that I wanted.

**Q That's one of the main reasons why you went with HarperCollins?**

**A** Yeah ... I had met with other publishers, who right off the bat told me that I wasn't going to be shooting photography. That was something that was really important to me because a lot of my work revolves around my photography and that's how people recognize me.

To hear an editor say, "We fully trust you" — it was such a weird experience because I've never felt like that in my life. I graduated from college, and I was thrown into marketing right away. And there, I was just super uncomfortable because I was always reminded of my age. Even though I had the talent, I was never really taken seriously. To see her just be completely open to me doing whatever I wanted was just such a gift.

**Q Was there anything throughout creating the cookbook that you had to go back and forth on? Any challenges?**

**A** As a perfectionist, feeling like I could have done better is an eternal struggle. I ended up actually shooting the book twice. I shot the book. I turned in the manuscript, and then I had a couple of months where I was allowed to go and make edits to the recipes, or if I needed to reshoot any photos, I could do that. So I reshoot about 75% of the book. [laughs]

**Q Did your family see the book? What have their responses been?**

**A** My parents saw it about two weeks ago. I went to Barnes & Noble and my mom just teared up a little bit and she was like, "I'm really proud of you." They just got the book last week, and my dad was flipping through it. I've always felt like my dad has never really understood what it is that I do. So it was really nice for him to have something concrete, to be able to say, "This is what my son does."

**Q For the tortilla excerpt, you recommend going to small local places versus buying from big corporate manufactured brands. If I'm looking for tortillas to buy in Orange County, where would you recommend to go?**

**A** None other than El Toro Carniceria in Santa Ana on First and Bristol streets. I grew up behind El Toro, so we always had access to fresh tortillas and I kid you not, they are the best. If you're ever in Santa Ana, go get some carnitas and a taco de asada too. They make their tortillas daily and I can't even explain how different they taste from these mass-produced tortillas.

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## Recipe: Tacos Tuxpeños

**TIME: 45 MINUTES, PLUS 8 HOURS UNATTENDED. SERVES 6.**

Tacos Tuxpeños, sometimes referred to as tacos de canasta (basket tacos) or tacos al vapor (steamed tacos), is a dish we had whenever *mi mamá* was feeling homesick. It reminded her of her childhood in Colima, enjoying these tacos during her lunch breaks at school *con sus amigos*. The taco Tuxpeño originated in the tiny pueblo of Tuxpan and became famous because the train from Colima would stop there and women would stand outside with baskets filled with tacos kept warm by their own steam, ready to feed hungry passengers. The taco consists of pork stewed in a guajillo-anchito broth until it shreds apart. I love the flavorful filling, but instead of warming these tacos in their own steam, I like to serve mine on a crispy fried tortilla.

— *Esteban Castillo*

### Tacos Tuxpeños

#### PORK FILLING

**6** large guajillo chiles (about 5½ inches/14 cm long; 1½ ounces total), stemmed and seeded

**2** ancho chiles, stemmed and seeded

**2** cups low-sodium chicken stock

**1/4** small yellow onion

**5** whole garlic cloves, peeled

**1** teaspoon fresh thyme leaves

**2** whole cloves

**1/4** teaspoon ground cumin

**1** tablespoon diamond crystal kosher salt, plus more to taste

**2** dried bay leaves

**3** pounds boneless pork butt or pork shoulder, trimmed and cut into 4-inch (10 cm) cubes

#### TO ASSEMBLE TACOS

Vegetable oil, for frying

**24** mini corn tortillas (street taco size)

Diced onion, chopped fresh cilantro, sliced radishes and lime wedges, for serving

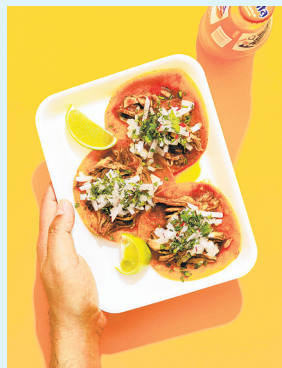
Salsa de Molcajete (see recipe below)

**1** Make the pork: In a large pot, combine the guajillos, anchos and at least 6 cups water, enough to completely submerge the chiles. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to low and simmer until the chiles have softened, about 15 minutes.

**2** Use a slotted spoon to scoop out the chiles and transfer them to a blender. Add 2 cups of the chile cooking liquid to the blender (if you end up with less than that, add fresh water to make up the difference). Add the chicken stock, onion, garlic, thyme, cloves, cumin and salt. Blend (be sure to open the steam vent/center cap and cover with a towel to avoid explosive hot liquid) on high speed for about 45 seconds to make sure it's fairly smooth.

**3** Run the sauce through a fine-mesh sieve right into a 6-quart slow cooker, Dutch oven or pressure cooker. Use a spoon to push the liquid through as needed. Stir in the bay leaves and add the pork.

**4** In a slow cooker: Cover and cook on low for 6 to 8 hours, until the pork shreds easily. In a Dutch oven: Cover



*Esteban Castillo*

**TACOS TUXPEÑOS**, made with chile-sauce pork atop crispy fried tortillas.

and cook over medium heat for 2 hours to 2 hours, 30 minutes. In a pressure cooker: Cook at high pressure for 45 minutes, then quick-release the pressure.

**5** Taste the sauce and adjust the salt as needed. Using a slotted spoon, remove the pork from the sauce and shred it with two forks, then return it to the sauce.

**6** To assemble tacos: In a medium skillet, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium heat. Grab a tortilla and dip it in the sauce in the pot with the pork, then fry it in the oil until lightly crisped, about 1½ minutes on each side. Repeat for the remaining tortillas, adding more frying oil as needed, to make 24 tacos.

**7** To serve, add a spoonful of the pork in the sauce on top of the crispy tortilla and top with onion, cilantro, radishes and salsa. Serve with lime wedges.

### Salsa de Molcajete

**1** pound roma or plum tomatoes (about 3 to 4), halved lengthwise

**3** chiles de árbol, stemmed (use 4 for more heat)

**3** whole garlic cloves, peeled

**1/2** teaspoon diamond crystal kosher salt, plus more to taste

**1** tablespoon fresh lime juice (from ½ lime)

**1/4** white onion, diced

**1/4** cup finely chopped fresh cilantro

**1** Preheat the broiler. Line a baking sheet with foil. Arrange the tomatoes skin side up on the baking sheet and broil on the top rack until the skins blacken and blister, about 10 to 12 minutes. Set aside to cool.

**2** Meanwhile, in a dry skillet, toast the chiles over medium heat for 1 minute, flip them, then toast for 1 more minute.

**3** Add the garlic, salt to a molcajete or large mortar. Use the piedra or pestle to grind everything together until a paste is formed. Add the blistered tomatoes, one at a time, and grind them into the paste. Add the lime juice, half of the diced onion and half of the chopped cilantro, then use a spoon to mix everything together; add more salt to taste. Top the salsa with the remaining diced onion and chopped cilantro to serve.

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## FUNDING

*Continued from page R2*

rent burden is becoming a significant problem for communities of color in Orange County, and homelessness increased by more than 43% from 2017 to 2019.

These issues, though significant to many residents in Orange County, receive less attention than law enforcement in the county's budget.

The institute was tasked with looking into Orange County's budget by the California Endowment. The report took about nine

months to compile.

For its research, the institute reviewed public information provided on the county's website and other information obtained through public records requests. The institute largely focused on the district attorney's office, the probation and sheriff's departments and the Health Care Agency for its analysis.

"While the County of Orange cannot comment on the report as we have not had a chance to read it at this time, we can state that we are working under the County's Integrated Services 2025 Vision Report,"

said county spokesperson Molly Nichelson in an emailed statement.

"...The County's goal, consistent with the Federal Stepping Up Initiative, is to reduce the number of mentally ill individuals in our jails and to reduce the number of individuals in our system of care by wrapping them in services until they achieve self-sufficiency. As we implement the Vision 2025 Integrated Services Strategy, the concept is that more funds will flow to Program II Community Services and less funds will flow to Program I Public Protection. That process

takes time, but the County is committed to it."

The institute has a number of recommendations for the county to modify how it addresses community and public safety needs.

One of these recommendations is for the county to stop expanding detention centers like the James A. Musick facility and reinvest that money into community-based services for drug treatment, mental health services, housing, gang intervention, outreach services and pre-arrest diversion programs for youth and adults, among other programs.

The report also urges the county to increase budget transparency and include the public more in the budgetary process.

"Studies have shown it's much more efficient and impactful to invest in the front end than the back end," Lam said, explaining that prevention is more effective than punishment.

Lam said they hope the report will provide a blueprint for nonprofit organizations, residents and public officials to rethink how the county's budget should be allocated. On Tuesday, the researchers presented the report to several non-

profits and community organizations.

"What this is helping to do is reframe the conversation around community safety and health to reimagine and redesign what a structure of budget that is reflective of community needs looks like," Lam said. "And then to move forward around advocacy, to building in community voice that is truly reflective and honors what people are paying for."

To read the report, visit [urbanpeaceinstitute.org](http://urbanpeaceinstitute.org).

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# Announcing Times OC Readers' Choice Awards for 2020

Nominations start July 20th!



On Sunday, November 15, we'll announce Orange County's favorite people, places and services in our special section—Times OC's Best of 2020. Winners get Times OC's Best of 2020 seal and award certificate to display in their business.

Nominations: July 20 – August 23 • Voting: September 1 – 30

## Times OC Readers' Choice 2020 Categories

**ENTERTAINMENT & LIVING**

Beach  
Best City  
Best OC Event  
Best Sports Team  
College or University  
Live Music Venue  
Live Theater  
Museum  
Orange County Attraction

**FOOD & DRINK**

24 Hour Restaurant  
Bakery  
Bar  
BBQ Restaurant  
Best Craft Brewery  
Breakfast  
Brunch  
Chinese Restaurant  
Coffeehouse  
Desserts  
Hamburger  
Italian Restaurant  
Mexican Restaurant  
Pizza Restaurant  
Seafood Restaurant  
Steakhouse

Sushi Restaurant  
Thai Restaurant  
Wine Selection

**HEALTH & WELLNESS**

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Cosmetic Surgery Group  
Dental Implants Office  
General Dentist Office  
Health & Fitness Club  
Hearing Aid Clinic  
Hospital  
Medical Group

**HOME & GARDEN**

Doors & Windows  
Flooring/Carpet Store  
Furniture Store  
Heating & Air Conditioning  
Kitchen & Bath  
Nursey/Garden Center  
Outdoor Living  
Pest Control  
Plumber  
Solar Power

**LUXURY OC LIFE**

Best Casino Destination  
Best OC Resort Hotel  
Day Spa  
Golf Course  
Jeweler  
Luxury Auto Dealer  
Shopping Destination

**PETS**

Cutest Dog  
Cutest Cat

**REAL ESTATE**

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Mortgage/Home Loan Provider  
New Home Builder  
Real Estate Agent  
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**SENIOR LIVING**

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Senior Leisure  
Senior Transportation

**SHOPPING & SERVICES**

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Bank  
Camera Store  
Charity  
Golf Store  
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