

A Legacy Local Monthly Publication

September 2025

The Historic

Mesilla Valley



Finding fashion from corners of the world

From the
Publisher's Desk

Calendar
of Events

Trails End Gallery's
upcoming installation

Santa Fe-based leisure
train puts on a production

Recipe: Bacon
Wrapped Dates

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Featured on the Cover:
Oralia Fietze

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FROM THE publisher's desk

Welcome fall! The mornings are getting cooler, and breezes are beginning to trickle through on a bustling day. We are so happy you've joined us this month, as we have many pages filled with content ahead. The Horse Trolley has returned to Mesquite Street for First

Friday! Along with this historic anchor, Trails End Gallery has a new art installation. One of our anchor stories is a feature on couture artists living here in Las Cruces, and let me tell you – from scarves, to jewels, to kimonos, they create it all. So, turn this page and get to reading.

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Calendar OF EVENTS

SATURDAYS

– Yoga: Start your weekend off with a yoga class led by a rotation of instructors at the Farmers Market at Ardovino's Desert Crossing. The class is designed for all levels. Bring your mat and stroll the market after class. \$10 (cash preferred). 9:30-10:30 a.m. 1 Ardovinos Dr., Sunland Park, New Mexico.

SEPT. 20

– Festival: The Cerveza Fest and Battle of the Bands will feature local artists, vendors, food, and more. Live bands will play and duke it out in the Battle of the Bands. \$10. 18+. 2-10 p.m. 4100 E. Paisano Dr., El Paso, Texas

– Salon: New Mexico Press Women presents the first Salon Series at the Hilton Garden Inn, featuring award winning author and playwright, Denise Chavez. Very similar to the salons of Paris, this event will bring people in the community together for conversation. All are welcome. Free. 3-5 p.m. 2550 Don Roser Dr., Las Cruces.

SEPT. 21

– Cook off: The first annual Crosstown Boxing Red or Green Chile Cook Off will be hosted by the Fraternal Order of Eagles, Las Cruces #4038. Cooks will show off their best red chile or green chile for cash prizes. Public tasting and voting are available for \$7 at the door, which includes five tasting tickets. Official judging is at 2 p.m. Awards will be presented to one winner per division. Both red and green chile may include potatoes, meat, or beans. 11 a.m.-3 p.m. 980 N. 17th St., Las Cruces.

SEPT. 24

– Acting sessions: Join Mountain Star Brewing Company to test or tune your acting skills by doing scene work, monologues, duets, and more. If you work better behind the scenes and have a script you want to workshop, bring it in. No experience is required for the sessions. Free. 21+. 6-8 p.m. 11135 Pellicano Dr., El Paso, Texas.

SEPT. 27

– Oktoberfest: The annual Downshift Brewing Company Oktoberfest is returning to the Riverside location. Come raise a stein and enjoy German food and local

craft beer. There will be a best dressed contest, a stein hoisting contest, and more for the whole family. Live music all day from Chris Baker, Spivey, Fungi Mungle and more. \$25 general admission; \$20 first responder/military with ID; \$10 general admission for ages 13-20 and designated drivers; \$100 for 21+ VIP; free for kids 12 and under. 2704 Sudderth Dr., Ruidoso, New Mexico.

OCT. 3

– Trolley rides: Trolley rides: Enjoy horse trolley rides through Historic Mesquite Street during First Friday Art Ramble. Rides are free, but feel free to bring cash to tip. Boarding is along Mesquite Street at Trails End Gallery. Free. 4-8 p.m. 1732 N. Mesquite St., Las Cruces.



OCT. 10-11

– The Rocky Horror Picture Show: The Rio Grande Theatre will host a weekend celebrating the 50th anniversary of the cult classic film, "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." The Las Cruces Shadowcast will bring the characters from the film to life. Doors open at 6 p.m., pre-show at 7 p.m., and the show will begin at 8 p.m. Prop bag included with ticket. \$15. 211 N. Main St., Las Cruces.

OCT. 11

– Book festival: The first annual Southern New Mexico Book Festival is a celebration of authors, literature, and readers. Meet local and regional authors like Shelly Armitage, Frank Lopez, Eva Nevarez St. John, and more. There will be workshops for aspiring writers, craft sessions, discussions, activities for children, and giveaways. Free and family friendly. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 2800 Sonoma Ranch Blvd., Las Cruces.

– Ghost stories: Southwest Expeditions hosts ghost stories at the historic courthouse and jailhouse. Guests will meet in the courtroom for introductions, complimentary wine, hot chocolate, and hors d'oeuvres. Guided by candlelight, descent down the staircase into the old jail and tour the cells in a private tour. The final destination is the prison yard transformed into a creepy graveyard. Hear stories of the hauntings of the historic 1937 courthouse and jailhouse, along with the Las Cruces area. \$38. 21+. 7-9:30 p.m. 251 W. Amador St., Las Cruces..

OCTOBER EVENTS at Nichols Ranch & Orchard

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Trails End Gallery's upcoming installation

By Dave Harkness

Trails End Gallery's upcoming installation of "The Land of Enchantment: Then and Now" by local painter Clyde Gunnell will be unveiled at Historic Mesquite Street's First Friday event on Oct. 3.

Gunnell, born in 1900, began her painting career at the not-so-tender age of 53. A lifelong interest in art became her foundation and her love of life guided her passion. As a self-taught artist, she delved into painting landscape and still life works, portraiture of family members, and occasional commissioned pieces. After her first public showing in 1956, she went on to produce hundreds of paintings during her lifetime – sometimes selling them for a small stipend to purchase materials, and sometimes for barter.

Gunnell's works exhibit a strong grasp of format, color, scale, light, and style, while presenting the viewer with a sense of organic structure that hints to nineteenth century impressionism. Her ability to capture personality in her portraits along with a knack for creating activity and motion add an unspoken dialogue to her subjects. Ultimately, her pallet reflects an honesty of nature.

"The Land of Enchantment" piece was submitted in 1970 as a concept mural to adorn a new Albuquerque International Airport expansion wing project. Painted with oil on Masonite board, it measures three feet in height and 21 feet in length. Although it wasn't chosen for the project, the mural survives as a testament to Gunnell's talent, versatility of style, and confidence.

In her own words, Gunnell described the painting as an "historical landscape of New Mexico" spanning her lifetime and incorporating geographic, technological, and cultural growth. The mural includes images of cattle drovers, rustlers and farmers, horse drawn and steam-driven transportation vehicles, and maned flight. Elements from Native American culture, pueblos and log homesteads, cultivated lands and wilderness, and flora and fauna native to the land flow as a timeline from left to right, ending with a shady pine forest and meandering stream.

Eventually purchased by Las Cruces resident Robert Gamboa, the mural has been showcased in many Las Cruces venues and was displayed in the Gamboa Restaurant for many years. It was also displayed at the Branigan Cultural Center in 2002 as a testament to Gunnell's artistic talent and the respect she holds among the community.

After the Branigan show, the mural was packed away into storage until it was recently gifted to the Trails End Gallery as a permanent installation. As new conservators, Trails End is taking great care to

provide a safe and secure exhibit venue for this significant piece of local Southwestern history.

While the first official showing takes place at the upcoming First Friday, it will also be shown at the gallery's new Art Talk Program on Oct. 18, when Gunnell's granddaughter, Lydis Marby, will be presenting a talk about her "Grammy" and displaying her own creations for purchase.



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Finding fashion from corners of the world

By Elva K. Österreich



Svea Peterson and Enrico “Ric” Rao are local artists with a love for the feel of fiber. Peterson learned to knit when she was three years old at her home in Sweden. Rao’s true love of yarn grew in 1975 when he and his partner built a house and barn in New Jersey, where they had sheep and other animals. While Peterson and Rao create some vastly different things, they also do some of the same, making for a creative friendship filled with learning.

“We both create in different ways,” Rao said. “She taught me so much.”

Peterson feels the same way, remarking on Rao’s artistic talents.

“He’s taught me! He’s a natural dyer; he uses indigo and cochineal bugs from the cacti,” Peterson said.

Rao really started getting into the fiber works when he participated in a master spinner program, leading him to Olds, Alberta, north of Calgary, Canada. The program took place once a year for over six years.

Bonding over an interest in the Navajo-Churro sheep, Peterson and Rao are advocates for saving the diminishing breed.

“We travel and do talks and shows around the Navajo-Churro sheep,” Peterson said.

Rao uses dyed Navajo-Churro wool to create colcha embroidery, an art form historically developed in New Mexico. He spins and dyes the wool to sell and use.

Rao described that in the early 1900s, the U.S. government forced the Navajo to add fine wools into their Churro wool, but the fine wool sheep had too much lanolin. The Churro wool could be spun without washing it, but the new sheep did not do well in the desert. Peterson said the Churro came from the Iberian Peninsula with Juan de Oñate, who brought them for food.

“The Navajo got them from bartering and stealing and they ultimately became a staple,” she said.

The Churro wool is coarse, and good for things like rugs, footwear, and more. That’s where Peterson comes in. She is primarily a felter, though she creates using various fiber arts. She uses the Churro for stools, rugs, clogs and much more.

“They call it trash wool, garbage wool,” Peterson remarked. “The Navajo weave rugs from it, but I felt rugs, birdhouses, footstools, foot covers; anything you don’t wear, you can felt.”

Since Churro is not good for making sweaters, she also creates sweaters and many sewn, spun, and felted products using other wool she gets online.

“So, this is our story,” Rao said. “We do different things with Churro wool. I buy commercially spun and I spin it as well. I dye with natural dyes. She takes the Churro wool and makes it as batting or buys it as batting

and felts with it.”

When Rao and his partner were in New Jersey, they had some Dorset sheep on their farm.

“It came time for sheering them and each fleece was like 10 pounds,” he said. “So, I sold it to a wool coop, because it was too much. You can only use one of those fleeces in a year. I kept the best wool and sent it off to a mill and I learned how to spin – I learned a little bit of dying.”

The plants are different in New Jersey, so Rao didn’t have all the flowers that he has to work with in New Mexico.

“Desert plants are much better for dying, so I did barks and things that came from trees which worked out pretty good and progressed over the years,” Rao said. “Then we moved to Texas with our [38] sheep and our [14] dairy goats, and that was my wool journey.”

When she was young living in Sweden, Peterson learned to weave. Her mother taught her to make clothes without patterns.

“I started spinning 36 years ago and just wanted to learn to make my own yarn because I was always buying yarn and then felting,” Peterson said. “I am always attracted to anything that is fiber and art – anything you can make fabric and sew with.”

Rao also recycles and sells kimonos through

Continued on Page 12 ►



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This dish (pronounced chill-ah-kee-les) offers a foundation of crispy corn tortilla chips simmering in a warm chile sauce. La Posta's Chilaquiles Verde (green) or Chilaquiles Rojos (red) can be served for breakfast (a favorite), lunch or dinner. Finish this simple dish with a variety of fresh garnishes such as avocado, Cotija cheese crumbles and fresh cilantro to elevate the experience. Serve with a side of refried beans, whole pinto beans, or black beans to complete this meal. (Serves 4)

Directions

1. In a large skillet coated with cooking spray add La Posta Verde Tomatillo Salsa and heat, while stirring, over medium heat. Slowly add tortilla chips, coating & tossing well with salsa. Top with Monterey Jack cheese. Reduce heat, and simmer until chips are soft yet still a bit crispy around the edges, about 3-5 minutes. For crispier tortilla chips, simmer 1-2 minutes.

2. While tortilla chips are simmering, coat a small skillet with cooking spray or oil, and fry eggs "your way". Place fried eggs evenly distributed on top of chips.

Ingredients

24 Crispy Corn Tortilla Chips
1½ 16 oz jars (3 cups) La Posta Verde Tomatillo Salsa
¾ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
4 eggs
2 green onions, mostly green part, minced
2 tbsp. minced cilantro
1 avocado, seeded, peeled and thinly sliced or diced

3. To serve, scoop servings of chips and egg onto individual plates. Garnish with onion, cilantro, and avocado. Serve with refried beans, seasoned black beans or your favorite Mexican side!

Notes: (1) For Chilaquiles Rojo (Red) - substitute the La Posta Verde Tomatillo Salsa with La Posta Sundried Red Chile Sauce and use cheddar cheese. (2) For Heartier, Meaty Chilaquiles: Follow Step 1. Add 2 cups cooked shredded chicken or beef (warmed) on top of chips. Add the cooked eggs if desired. (3) For Vegetarian Chilaquiles: Follow Step 1. Delete the eggs and add 2 cups of your favorite veggie, sweet potato cubes, pinto or black beans, or seasonal squash on top of the chips.

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Santa Fe-based leisure train

puts on a production

By Ryan Mouton



Railways were the backbone of the west during America's great industry expansion in the late 19th century, creating a more interconnected national economy by carrying cattle, farm goods, lumber, mineral ores, and more to buyers all around the U.S. With its mountainous terrain, Santa Fe presented a challenge for railway expansion. However, it's for this reason that rail wasn't laid towards Santa Fe until 1880 – 20 years after many of its Arizonan counterparts.

The rail that finally arrived was a branch line from Lamy, New Mexico that was further connected to the historic Southern Pacific railway, allowing goods and passengers to reach as far as New Orleans, Chicago, and Portland. This line saw prosperous traffic on its rails for many years, until the interstate and personal vehicles became America's new normal.

For many years, the line languished with a lack of paying rail traffic – until one night in 2020, when three Santa Fe entrepreneurs were having drinks and discussing owning a railroad. These three were novelist George R.R. Martin of “Game of Thrones” fame, philanthropist and arts advocate Catherine Oppenheimer, and Bill Banowsky, filmmaker and owner of the Violet Crown.

From that night, years of diligent work followed, and Sky Railway – a leisure train that offers more than 10 distinct railway experiences – was born. The railway includes an array of themes like stargazing, wine tasting, history, and even special holiday events, such as the horror-themed rides coming in October and train rides with Mrs. Claus for Christmastime! Here are a few of their most popular experiences:

The Outlaw Express: Ride at your own risk, because these tracks are often held up by horse-riding bandits. Experience history starting with a champagne toast and dress in wild west attire for a chance to win a prize!

Santa Fe Scenic: Take in the beautiful

landscape from the comfort of restored passenger cars, with the option to upgrade to the first class car, The Acoma – the original from 1937, now equipped with authentic charm, an elevated bar menu, and air conditioning. Select rides will feature performances from local Native American groups and feature pop-ups from the Santa Fe Raptor Center! Make sure to check their calendar.

New Mexico Wine Train: Taste local wines while enjoying the gorgeous views of the New Mexico landscape, including a complimentary glass of wine of your choice, charcuterie, and live entertainment.

The Stargazer: Departing at 9 p.m., join the Stargazer on its way to Galisteo basin to see the Milky Way up close and personal. Enjoy champagne and live music, along with the chance to step out into open-air cars and view special celestial events.

The Fright Train: Enjoy DJ'd music and unexpected horrors on this wild and fun train ride. Along with the horror and fun, there's a chance to win a \$500 prize for the best Halloween costume. Don't forget to check Sky Railway's website for the after party locations!

Pablo's Holiday Express: Drink cocoa and listen to stories from Mrs. Claus, as she tells both young and old passengers about how Pablito the Dragon (the Sky Railway mascot and engine art) saved Christmas in New Mexico. Join for sing-alongs and great photo opportunities with your children.

Make sure to visit skyrailway.com to see their upcoming schedule and view all their railway experiences that aren't described here (like the Lamy Beer Fest!). Their hand painted train cars and friendly staff offer such an inviting and comfortable way to enjoy the New Mexico landscape and decompress from the busy world. Explore which of their themed excursions might suit you best.

◀ Continued from Page 10

fusing the Japanese art of boro (a traditional textile art of patchwork and mending) with the sewing skills he learned from Peterson. He mentioned that the stitching is not “fussy quilting” but rather is made from torn fabrics. He often uses sashiko stitching on his repurposed kimono material, including running stitches and stars. Rao loves the shibori patterns he gets and understands the process it takes to make each piece of fabric.

“I love the fabrics, and I love the aesthetic of it,” he said. “It's a delicate thing. You have to be sensitive culturally. They did this out of poverty. They did this to be warm. They had no really warm clothing, so that's why they did this stitching on it. It hasn't been an easy journey for me; you have to have perspective to sew. You have to look at things two-dimensionally and three-dimensionally.”

To get in touch with these two fabric and fashion creators, you can contact Peterson (Desert Quail Designs) at mendedthread@gmail.com for custom creations, and reach Rao by text at 676-496-7678 for custom kimonos, jewelry, and bags.

The duo will have a booth with their wears at the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum's HomeGrown event the weekend before Thanksgiving.

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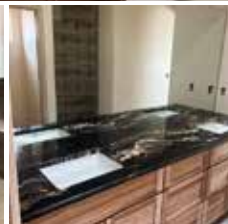


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Recipe



Bacon Wrapped Dates

By G. Buck

INGREDIENTS:

20 Medjool dates
8 ounces goat cheese
½-1 lb. thick cut smoked bacon

DIRECTIONS:

Cook the bacon and let cool slightly. Don't allow the bacon to crisp, as it needs to maintain a workable nature.

Pit the dates by scoring down the center with a paring knife and remove

the center filet slightly. Take about 1 tbsp of goat cheese and stuff the dates until the cheese has piled evenly with the filet seam; don't be afraid to really stuff them. Wrap the bacon around the dates, adjusting the amount of bacon to your desired volume and thickness. Put on a platter and enjoy! This snack is a great accompaniment for champagne and girl dinner.

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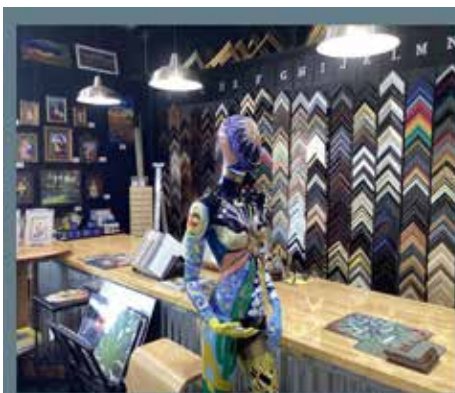
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