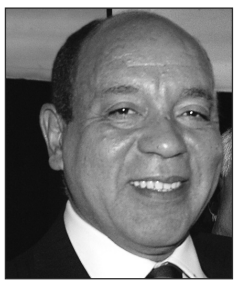
"My Rio de Janeiro" By Leticia Moreinos Schwartz

Can't get away to Brazil? Here's a book that'll bring Rio de Janeiro into your kitchen



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Eating isn't just about nutrition; it provides, at its best, lessons of life experienced in foreign lands. Indeed, with the right recipe, we can enhance our understanding of another country's tastes, its geography, its flora and fauna - its very culture.

Brazilian cuisine, which draws heavily on indigenous, Portuguese, and African influences, should be approached the same way. Although certain ingredients, dishes and culinary techniques are similar across the continent-sized nation, each region prepares and enjoys food in its own, unique way. In today's edition of The Brasilians, we take a look at cuisine "a la Carioca" - the delicacies of Rio de Janeiro, as seen through the eyes of one master chef, Leticia Moreinos Schwartz.

When that musical trio of words Rio de Janeiro hits your ears, what pops into your head? Christ the Redeemer? (Understandable.) The Girl From Ipanema? (Very understandable.) Copacabana? Samba? Maracanã Stadium? (All of the above.)

For a lot of people, though, cuisine is what comes first to mind when they hear Rio. And, indeed, the "Marvelous City" is more than capable of making your stomach feel pretty darn - well, marvelous, for lack of a better word.

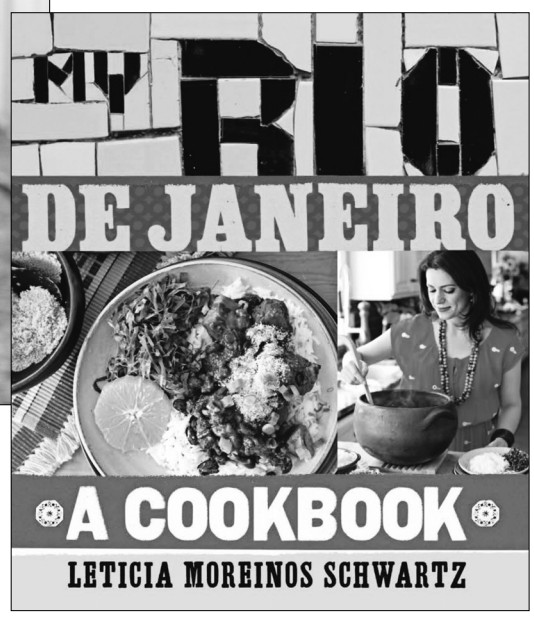
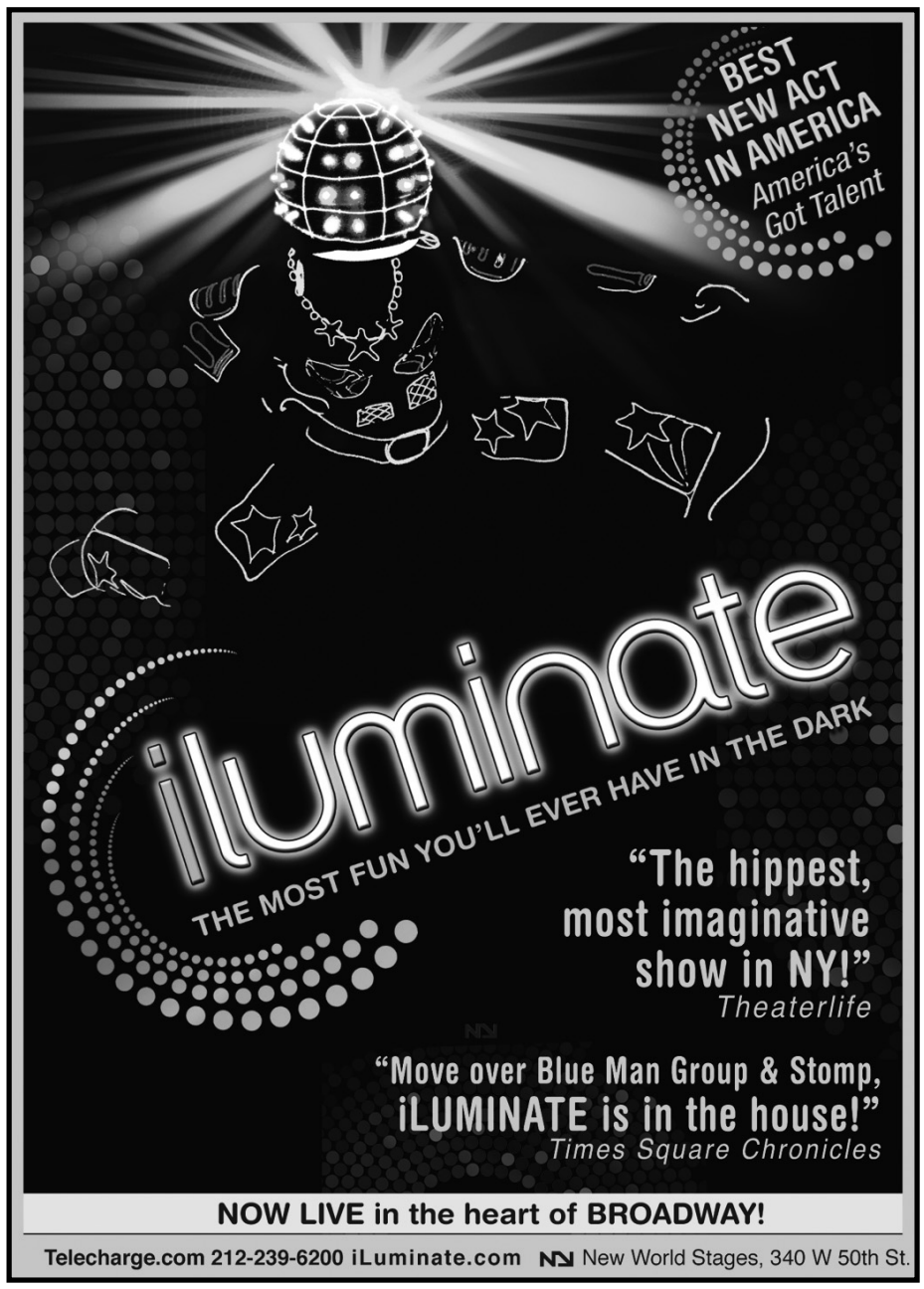
The city offers a swirl of Portuguese, Africa and indigenous flavors, with elements of European, Asian and Middle Eastern fare sprinkled in for good measure. From feijoada (black bean, onion and pork stew) to bacalhao (salted cod) to Filé à Osvaldo Aranha (grilled bovine fillet, rice and beans, toasted manioc flour and French fries), the varied dishes found in eateries around Rio are a testament to the blending of ethnicities and cultures that is at the heart and soul of Brazilian culture.

But what if, heaven forbid, you can't make it down to Rio? How on Earth are you to satisfy your Brazilian culinary cravings?

Cooking teacher and author Leticia Moreinos Schwartz, a Rio-born chef, delivers the tastiest of answers in her latest endeavor, "My Rio de Janeiro: A Cookbook" (Kyle Books 2013). In what reviewers have described as an "intriguing Cookumentary," Schwartz gives us not only home recipes she grew up with, she takes readers on a voyeuristic tour of her homeland, unveiling dishes that are now bubbling up in the potpourri of Carioca culture.

Schwartz, who penned The Brazilian Kitchen, winner of the 2010 Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in Paris for Best Latin Cookbook, offers easy-to-follow instructions for those who want to recreate the fare of Rio's restaurants in their home kitchens, from flaky salt cod and flame-broiled churrasco beef, to shrimp and catupiry cheese turnovers and shrimp and butternut squash risotto. (Along with about 90 recipes come some very sinful photographs that make the mouth water.) Meanwhile, for readers with a passion for Brazilian juices, there's even a nice spread on smoothies, cocktails and fresh-squeezed native fruit and berry juices.

But the real triumph of this 192-page book is how Schwartz, who moved to New York City in 1997, describes how neighborhoods of Rio and cities and towns surrounding the sprawling coastal city develop and express their personalities through the art of cooking. The author takes kitchen travelers on walking tours of the coastal cities of Buzios and Paraty, as well as the mountain resort of Teresópolis, describing the flavors and aromas one senses while roaming the cobbled streets. Indeed, you'll find not just pictures of tempting dishes, but vibrant photos of Schwartz's favorite places and people, and array of images that will not only help you understand the people who created these culinary treasures, but perhaps make you want to discover them for yourself.



COMING SOON
30th BRAZILIAN DAY IN NY
Sunday, August 31st
from 11am to 7pm
@ 46th Street,
Little Brazil