

CUBAN FOOD STORIES / EPK



A Film by Asori Soto

Run Time: 82 Minutes

Press Contacts

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Submarine Entertainment

**Produced by EASY MONDAYS
In Association with SUNDIAL PICTURES**

SCREENINGS

WORLD PREMIERE BERLIN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Feb 2018

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE GUADALAJARA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

March 2018

US PREMIERE MIAMI FILM FESTIVAL

March 2018

WEST-COAST PREMIERE NEWPORT BEACH FILM FESTIVAL

April 2018 - Culinary Cinema Audience Award

NORTHWEST PREMIERE SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

May 2018

CUBAN FOOD STORIES IN THE PRESS

Variety

<http://variety.com/2018/film/reviews/cuban-food-stories-review-1202710113/>

Deadline

<http://deadline.com/2018/02/cuban-food-stories-first-clip-asori-sotos-road-trip-food-adventure-berlin-1202292884/>

Conde Nast Traveler

<https://www.cntraveler.com/story/meet-the-people-rescuing-cuban-cuisine>

DOWNLOAD LINK FOR TRAILER, PICS and POSTER

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/bf2k0sbju9s2z89/AAAOcjRqRYN03tWzO8QDDK_uRa?dl=0

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Cuban Food Stories

Cuban Food Stories is a unique film about food, society, and culture on the island of Cuba.

Short Synopsis

After ten years living as an expat in the United States, Asori Soto decides to return to his homeland of Cuba to search for the missing flavors of his childhood. *Cuban Food Stories* is a unique film about food, society, and culture on the island of Cuba. A personal road-trip adventure all around the island to discover the most authentic flavors and stories behind the Cuban cuisine.

A film with unprecedented access to regions so remote that you can only get there by raft, horseback, or swimming. A journey that will leave your mouth watering as we take you from the middle of nowhere to the big cities to discover an exciting Cuba in a time of change.

Long Synopsis

After ten years living as an expat in the United States, Asori Soto decides to return to his homeland of Cuba to search for the missing flavors of his childhood. This is a journey to discover culinary traditions long thought lost due to the hardship that Cuba survived after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Cuban Food Stories is a unique film about food, society, and culture on the island of Cuba. Through nine stories, Asori Soto explores the present culinary landscape of his homeland and provides a glimpse into what the future may hold. It is a personal road-trip adventure all around the island to discover the most authentic tales behind the Cuban cuisine.

The film gives unprecedented access to regions so remote that one can only arrive by raft, horseback, or swimming. A journey that will leave your mouth watering as we go from the middle of nowhere to the big cities and rediscover the culinary roots of an exciting Cuba in a time of change.

Director's Statement

Asori Soto

One of the most endearing things about making films is that over the course of each project, you experience a powerful transformation as a human being. This was definitely the case while shooting *Cuban Food Stories*.

After many years living in New York, I decided to return to Cuba as a way to reconnect with my roots. Food was always a very complicated issue in Cuba when I was growing up. We went through so much hardship in the post-soviet era that most Cubans lost their passion for cooking. Culinary traditions started to disappear. To me, food was the perfect instrument to reconnect with my heritage and the country I had left so long ago.

Along the way, meeting the characters in the film and hearing their stories has had a profound effect on me. Regardless of political views or economic differences, food acted as a language of diplomacy in which we could all get to know each other on equal footing. It made me realize the power of food traditions not only in preserving our heritage but also as a tool for opening up a conversation about tolerance and diversity.

With our world so divided, we should strive to find our shared values and build upon them. Embracing each other and appreciating the diversity of cultures that exist on our planet, is the perfect first step towards building a world in which we learn to respect and support each other.

Director's Q&A

Asori Soto

Why did you make a film about food in Cuba?

Ever since I can remember, food has always been a very complicated subject in Cuba. I spent my early childhood in New York and returned to Cuba in 1991, right after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The 90s was a very dark time for Cubans on the island. Food basically disappeared. During that time period, many families ate only water with sugar and bread with oil and salt for dinner. Recipes inevitably changed. Sourcing the ingredients was such a monumental task that people all over the country lost the passion for cooking.

It wasn't until I moved to Los Angeles in 2008, that I fell in love with food all over again. Food became my primary source of learning about the cultures of countries I had not visited. Later, as I started to travel, I realized that I enjoyed discovering the nuances and traditions of these places through their food and all the different stories behind the plates. These untold stories are a big part of what keep local culinary traditions alive. And so, I felt that I had a personal debt with Cuba and the many food stories I did not know.

With this in mind, we set out to make a documentary about the Cuban cuisine that exists today on the island and the people behind it, not the Cuban cuisine that the world already knows. A journey to a Cuba that until now, had been unknown to me.

What are common misconceptions when it comes to Cuban cuisine?

As with every regional cuisine, there are many misconceptions about Cuban cuisine. Depending on where you live, you may relate Cuban cuisine only with a Cubano sandwich, or with rice and black beans with pork and plantains. But the reality in Cuba is different. For instance, although the Cubano sandwich origins are blurred between Tampa and Cuba, it is in Florida where the Cubano sandwich truly shines. In the Cuba of today, people are just getting caught up to it because of pressure from international tourism. By contrast, the sandwich that truly rules in the island is the "Pan con Lechón" (bread with pulled pork and Cuban mojo sauce)!

In the case of rice and black beans with pork and plantains, yes, it is a staple of Cuban cuisine, but there are many regions on the island where they only cook it for tourists. For instance, in Baracoa or Gibara, the traditional regional cuisine is very different than those flavor profiles.

People often tell me there is no exciting food in Cuba, but that's a misconception. All over the island, there are many entrepreneurs starting new restaurants and challenging themselves to create a new Cuban culinary landscape, like Jose Carlos Imperatori, from "El Del Frente" restaurant, featured in *Cuban Food Stories*. Jose Carlos' cuisine goes back to his grandmother's kitchen and gets modernized on a daily basis in the most authentic Cuban way. Like his croquetes, that are made out of his grandmother's version of "Arroz con pollo a la chorrera" (Cuban Rice

with Chicken). In this dish, he reinterpreted the Cuban croquette in a form that looks closer to an Italian arancini, but with the most authentic Cuban filling.

We think we genuinely know the food of any given country because we have been to our local neighborhood's ethnic food restaurant, but to truly understand it, we need to go to the source and experience not only the flavors but the stories behind such dishes.

Is Cuban Food Stories part of a bigger project?

Cuban Food Stories has become the inspiration behind "Food Stories," the series. We would like to add to the universe of foodie content by bringing more diversity to the screen. We are missing the local nuances behind the stories currently being told on screen, which only a local voice can bring. This is where "Food Stories" comes in.

"Food Stories" is an immersive food and travel series that dives deep into the most authentic and flavorful experiences around the world. In each episode, a local foodie filmmaker will take us on a personal journey through their homeland's culinary traditions.

We believe that the beauty of humankind relies upon the diversity of humanity. This series will represent that diversity both on screen and behind the lens.

What were the biggest culinary surprises you found in Cuba?

I would say that Gibara and Baracoa were the culinary regions that truly surprised me on the island.

Gibara is a town in Holguin, about 16 hours east of Havana, that has a very authentic local cuisine. Here, the flavors are influenced by their heritage from the Canary Islands and their access to good quality seafood. I can still taste the seafood polenta in my mind. Whether it is a restaurant or a house, they cook unique dishes like "Arroz with Coquina Clams", "Stuffed Blue Crabs", or a "Shrimp Boat" with flavors that you will not find on the rest of the island.

In Baracoa, the difference from the rest of the island is even more extreme. Baracoa was the first city founded in Cuba, but until mid-1900's, Baracoa remained isolated from the rest of the Island. It is located way out on the eastern tip of the island, about 24 hours from Habana. The only way of getting in and out was by the sea. At some point in the 1800s, the people of Baracoa had closer economic relations with French Louisiana and Haiti than the rest of Cuba. In Baracoa, coconut and chocolate are the primary agricultural cultivations. These historical conditions profoundly influence the cuisine there. The use of coconut milk, coconut oil, and chocolate in their cooking is unprecedented in the rest of the country.

Because of the remote geographic locations of both Gibara and Baracoa, their cuisine is mostly unknown to the rest of Cuba and the world.

What do you think about consistency and quality of food production in Cuba? How does that affect restaurants and tourism?

Consistency in both food quality and food supply is the most significant problem to overcome in Cuba's culinary world.

Food production on the island is significantly low, so the country depends on a deficient import chain for many products. Additionally, there are regulations imposed by the government that limit what private businesses can produce, who they can sell to, or what they can import. Because of this, demand is much higher than supply, making prices skyrocket on a daily basis.

As the number of private restaurants starts to increase, there are a couple of very resourceful food producers that are starting a micro-farming revolution, but that number is still low. This affects restaurants in many ways. For starters, to source ingredients they need an "army" of buyers running all around the city the entire day, searching for ingredients. But even with such "armies," there may be times when specific ingredients are nowhere to be found. Because of this, even the most famous restaurants will have to change their signature dishes on any given day. This change in flavors, may cause frustration to the clients, the dishes may taste different on any given day, or a restaurant that was recommended may be a very different culinary experience than what they expected.

After many years handling international film productions, was it hard to shoot in Cuba?

Whether it is a documentary or a narrative film, or shooting an independent road film, production is always hard. In Cuba, you add many factors to the level of complexity: the internet is almost non-existent (at least when we were in production), there is no GPS, affordable transportation is old and unreliable, in the countryside practically no one has cell-phones, and the list goes on and on. But on the other hand, you have access to a very dedicated crew with a high level of cinema education and passion about working in film. And this makes all the difference.

Even on the worst days (like when our van broke down in the middle of nowhere more than four times!) we could always make good use of our time. We were on the road about forty-five days, and during that time, we became like a small family. So, in a way, you could say that shooting in Cuba is quite hard, but at the same time, it can be very gratifying.

About the Filmmakers

Asori Soto (Writer/Director)

Born in Havana, Cuba, Asori Soto is a director/producer that studied art history at the University of Havana and documentary filmmaking through NYU Tisch at the Ludwig Foundation in Cuba. He began his career in the early 2000s as an active founder of the Cuban Independent Film Movement, producing and directing two low-budget feature films, several short films and commercials. In 2006, he was named the Best Narrative Director at the Havana New Directors Film Festival. Shortly after he directed “THE KING OF TIMBA”, a music documentary, and he co-directed “VEDADO”, a student film that became the first Cuban independent feature film.

Asori later moved to Los Angeles, where he spent a couple of years producing short-form content before becoming an Executive Producer at The Cortez Brothers, a commercial production company. There, he produced everything from low-budget to multi-million-dollar commercial campaigns for multiple international brands.

Asori is currently directing and producing a wide range of projects, from branded content videos to full-length documentaries. The first of these projects is Cuban Food Stories, an unprecedented feature-length travel documentary on Cuban food, culture, and society. His upcoming projects include the docu-series Food Stories inspired by this film and his discovery of the relationship between culinary traditions and cultural heritage values. Asori resides in the East Village, New York City, where he cooks amazing meals in his free time.

DETAILED FILMOGRAPHY

2017 – Cuban Food Stories – Director / Producer – Doc / 82 Min / First Feature Length Film

2014 – ABCs of Death 2 – Producer – “Segment E” – Feature Length Film

2009 – Facundo! – Producer - Short

2008 – Vedado – Director / Producer – Narrative (Unreleased Student Film) / 70 Min

2007 – Orbita – Director – Narrative Short

2006 – Good Bye, Lolek – Director – Documentary Short

2006 – Mosquito, el documental – Director - Documentary Short

2006 – Zona Afectada – Director – Narrative Short

Joey Carey (Executive Producer)

Joey Carey is a Producer/Director and founding partner of Sundial Pictures. He has worked on a variety of scripted narrative and documentary films, having most recently produced Emmy nominated *Welcome to Leith*, *Havana Skate Days*, *The Seventh Fire*, *Jack of the Red Hearts*, and *Youth In Oregon* and co-produced the breakout comedy *Obvious Child*. He served as executive producer on Dee Rees' *Pariah*, David Gelb's smash hit documentary *Jiro Dreams of Sushi*, and Matt Ross' *28 Hotel Rooms*.

Sundial Pictures has played films at festivals including Sundance, Berlin, SXSW, Tribeca, and Toronto, and partnered with companies such as A24, Focus Features, Magnolia Pictures, and Samuel Goldwyn for distribution. Sundial has also created content for companies such as Univision, Fusion, and Conde Nast, among others.

Joey's love of filmmaking began with his father, documentary filmmaker Tobe Carey. As a director, Joey made the documentaries *Searching for Tupac* in Havana, Cuba, and *Greasy Rider* about bio fuels, which features interviews with Noam Chomsky, Yoko Ono, and Morgan Freeman. He also directed the Iggy & the Stooges reunion concert documentary *Raw Power Live – In the Hands of the Fans*.

After graduating from Hampshire College, Joey taught at the Academy of Cinema in Athens, Greece with producer Norman I. Cohen, before returning to New York City to start Sundial Pictures. He is currently finishing the documentary *The Organizer* about community organizing and Wade Rathke, the founder of ACORN. He lives and works between New York City and Havana, Cuba.

Credits

Production Company In Association With	Easy Mondays Sundial Pictures
Director	Asori Soto
Produced by	Asori Soto
Executive Producer	Joey Carey
Executive Producers	Malena Svarch Stefan Nowicki Luis Lago
Cinematographer	Gilliam de la Torre
Editor	Kristan Sprague
Music By	Kyle Newmaster
Co-Producer	Dan Gabriel
Associate Producers	María Bacardí Jessica Naomi Fong
Unit Production Manager	Livan Gispert
Researchers / Assistant Directors	Jorge del Sol Baylac Silvia Durán Molina
CAST	
Voice Over	Asori Soto
Chapter 1 / A Rich Man	Ernesto Pérez Medina "The Fishing Crew"
Chapter 2 / A Love Story	Migdalia Armas Rieche Gilberto de Armas Rieche
Chapter 3 / More Than a Business	Lázaro Yohan Machin Machín Family
Chapter 4 / A Spark of Fire	Felix "Felito" Manuel Berenger
Chapter 5 / Land of Giants	Jorge Alberto Leyva Mariño "Sarita" Ferrer González Alberto Gamez Ronda

Juana Roldán Arebalo
Florentina de la Vara Gomez
Yasmany Omar Dominguez Claro
Bárbara de Jesús López
Edilberta Hernandez Cabrera

Chapter 6 / A Sip of Pure Coffee Gerardo Flores
Emmanuel Flores

Chapter 7 / The Most Beautiful Land Jose Antonio Dominguez Ramos
Gerardo Guilarte Cobas
Bárbaro Romero Mato
Ada Luz Silot Hernandez
Islandi Romero Labañino

Chapter 8 / New Years Eve “Pepe Luis” Lorenzo Saez
Dianelis Valdés Iglesias
Luis Angel Lorenzo Valdés

Chapter 9 / The New Cuba Jose Carlos Imperatori
Wilson Hernández
Staff at El Del Frente

CREW

1st Assistant Camera Javier Torres

Location Sound / DIT Mandy García Torres

Drone Operator Ronin Novoa

POST PRODUCTION

Assistant Editors Juan Pablo Daranas

Transcriptions Dagne Ramirez

Translation Services Yehudit Man

Subtitling Simon Nuchtern
Tania Frontera
Katina Productions

Credit Scroll by ENDCRAWL
FINISHING

Post Finishing Services by Sim NEW YORK

Colorist	Adam Inglis
Re-recording Mixer & Supervising Sound Editor	Keith Hodne
Online Editor	Tif Luckenbill
Color Assistant	Samantha Astolfi
Finishing Producer	Cristina Esterás-Ortiz
Head Of Production	Jeff Roth

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Consultant for Sundial Film Initiative	Lauren Fajardo
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Kickstarter Campaign Editor	Juan Pablo Daranas
Kickstarter Campaign Finishing	Abraham Torna Yohana Barciela
Teaser Editor	Diego Panich
Motion Graphics	Abraham Torna Yohana Barciela

ADDITIONAL MUSIC CREDITS

Additional Music / Additional Music Production	Matt Battle Kevin Lax Alexandre Kote
Additional Music Production	Edgaro "Productor En Jefe"
Live Band Recorded at Scoring Engineer Assistant Engineer	East West Studios - Studio #2 Jeremy Miller Chaz Sexton
Piano	Andrew Langham
Guitar	Matt Battle
Guitar	Gabriel Garcia
Tres Guitar	Yuniel "el Guajiro" Jimenez
Guitar Consultant	Federico Ramos
Bass	Rene Camacho
Congas and Timbales	George Ortiz

Bongos, Bell, Chekere and Conga	Alfred Ortiz
Timbales, Bongos and Quinto	Ricardo "Tiki" Pasillas
Saxophones	Jerry Moore
Trombone	Scott Hughes
Trumpet	Kyle Newmaster
Vocals	Christy Crowl
Music Librarian	Joni Ramos

AfroCuban Chant Performed By	Diosvany "Bani" Valladares
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AfroCuban Chant Recorded By	Luis Guell & Edgardo Gonzalez
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ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Sales Representation	Submarine Josh Braun Dan Braun Ben Braun Matt Burke
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Jacob Nazar
Jody Mulkey
Meg Carey
Tobe Carey
Martin Tonholt
María Sanchez
Pepin Cutiño
Sergio Guadarrama
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Alejandro Bruges
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