



Flavours of Argentina and Chile Delight at QIFF 2025, Celebrating the Qatar Argentina and Chile 2025 Year of Culture

xx February 2025 – Doha, Qatar – As part of the Qatar Argentina and Chile 2025 Year of Culture, Argentinian culinary talents took centre stage at the Qatar International Food Festival (QIFF) 2025, showcasing the delicious gastronomic heritage of South America. The Years of Culture initiative aims to develop mutual understanding and strengthen economic, cultural, and social ties between Qatar and partner countries through a series of long-term exchanges and collaborations.

Among the standout figures from Argentina were Chef Juli Duca, a rising pastry star on the Qatari culinary scene, Chef Martín Repetto, a seasoned culinary ambassador, and visiting from the Patagonia region of Argentina Chef Alejandra Repetto who specialises in local cuisine and sustainable gastronomy. Chef Nicolás Gárate, a champion of Chilean cuisine who blends tradition with innovation, and Chef Benjamín Nast, a culinary artist known for his bold flavours and creative approach, represented Chile.

Chef Juli Duca: Sweetening Doha's Palate

At just 26 years old, Chef Juli Duca has already made waves in Qatar's food industry. A pastry virtuoso, she launched Medialunas by Juli in 2024, a bakery specialising in Argentina's beloved *medialunas* (croissant-like pastries), a staple of Argentine breakfasts. Recently rebranded as Juli's Bakery, her shop has become a hub for expats and locals craving authentic Argentine treats.

Her participation in QIFF was marked by a masterclass on Argentinian delicate *alfajores* filled with luscious dulce de leche and often dusted with powdered sugar or dipped in chocolate.

Beyond her bakery, Juli shares her culinary journey and daily life as a pastry chef in Qatar through social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Her engaging content offers followers a glimpse into her creative process and the growing food culture of Doha.

Martín Repetto: A Global Ambassador of Argentine Cuisine

Born and raised in Buenos Aires, Chef Martín Repetto's culinary journey spans over 25 years. With Italian roots from Genoa and Spanish heritage from the Basque Country, his early influences were rich and varied. His grandmothers' traditional Italian and Basque recipes ignited his passion for cooking, leading him to formal training at the Superior School of Hotel and Catering Business in Buenos Aires and further studies at the University of New York's culinary faculty.

Chef Martin's career has taken him across Ukraine, the Caribbean, Europe, and Russia, where he was named Argentina's Cultural and Gastronomic Ambassador in 2015. At QIFF, he joined Argentina's Ambassador to Qatar, HE Guillermo Nicolas, to showcase traditional Argentinian cuisine. For the QIFF masterclass, he prepared "Patagonian lamb and potato pie," while the Chef's Table experience consisted of a four-course dinner using octopus, camel meat, chorizo, and lamb.

Currently, he is the Executive Chef at The Westin Doha Hotel & Spa, where he brings his global expertise and passion for authentic flavours to the hotel's diverse culinary offerings.

Chef Alejandra Repetto: Culinary Journey from Patagonia to Qatar

Alejandra Repetto oversees *El Alambique*, the signature restaurant at Hotel Kau Yatún in Argentina's Patagonia region, where she specialises in local cuisine and sustainable gastronomy. The restaurant is celebrated for its use of locally sourced ingredients and its dedication to the responsible management of guanaco, a native species abundant in the region. Working exclusively with certified guanaco meat, *El Alambique* highlights its exceptional nutritional value and minimal environmental impact. Repetto's mission is to re-establish guanaco as a culinary emblem of Southern Patagonia while championing a gastronomic philosophy rooted in sustainability, regional identity, and the mindful use of natural resources.



At QIFF's cooking studio, Chef Alejandra prepared a dish featuring lamb loin and camel meat—both similar in texture and cooking requirements to guanaco—paired with fried bread, apple pickles, and rhubarb powder.

Reflecting on her experience in Qatar, Chef Alejandra shared:

"I'm from El Calafate, the land of glaciers, so nothing could be more different than the warm weather here in Qatar. I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to be here, sharing special moments with so many wonderful and inspiring people. I feel incredibly comfortable learning from ancient cultures that are entirely new to me because cooking is a universal language — a way to connect and deepen our understanding of one another. I have been touched by the kindness and warmth of everyone here, and I deeply admire how beautifully everything was organised. This has been an amazing and unforgettable experience that I will cherish for a lifetime!"

Chef Nicolás Gárate: Honouring Tradition, Embracing Innovation

Born into a family of butchers, Chef Nicolás Gárate developed a deep appreciation for quality ingredients from an early age. Driven by a desire to blend tradition with innovation, and a strong competitive streak that saw him nearly debut on the football team for Universidad de Chile, Nicolás pursued his culinary passion early on. He specialized in culinary education, molecular cuisine, and culinary competitions, continuously refining his craft. Beyond his expertise in the kitchen, Chef Nicolás is dedicated to shaping the next generation of chefs. He has taught at various culinary schools and, in 2019, launched his own educational project, emphasising the importance of training people while celebrating Chilean ingredients and culinary identity.

A husband to a fellow chef and father of three, Nicolás remains committed to both his family and his mission to elevate Chilean cuisine through education and innovation.

At QIFF, Chef Nicolas participated in the opening ceremony of the festival, in the cooking studio as well as the chef's table. He created a five-course Chilean Menu which he called "*CHILE A LA VANGUARDIA*" using seafood and products you only find in Chile.

Chef Benjamín Nast: A Culinary Artist Shaped by Heritage and Exploration

Like any artist, Chef Benjamín Nast expresses himself through a vibrant palette of colours, flavours, and textures. Born into a matriarchal family of Italian-Spanish descent, he grew up in a home where women led the way, shaping his deep appreciation for traditional cuisine. He fondly recalls his great-grandmother's house, where the rich aromas of spices filled the air, creating an indelible imprint on his culinary identity.

Initially pursuing a degree in Commercial Engineering, Benjamín soon realised that his true passion lay elsewhere—he longed to create with his hands. At just 20, he left Chile to seek inspiration in Berlin, immersing himself in the bustling markets and unfamiliar ingredients of Europe. A cookbook sent by his mother rekindled his love for cooking, sparking a journey of self-discovery that led him through various European cities, where he refined his craft and embraced gastronomy as his true calling.

At QIFF, Chef Benjamín brought his signature approach to the Cooking Studio and Chef's Table, preparing dishes that highlighted lamb, clams, and prawns, infused with the bold flavors and spices of Chile.

The Qatar International Food Festival (QIFF) took place from 12 to 22 February at Hotel Park, delivering an unforgettable celebration of gastronomy. Visitors enjoyed world-class cuisine from renowned chefs, explored over 100 food kiosks, and experienced live entertainment and exclusive workshops. This year's highlights included the MICHELIN Guide Village, showcasing culinary excellence, the lively QIFF Ring, engaging activities at QIFF Juniors, and unique dining experiences including Dinner in the Sky.

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**About Years of Culture**

The Years of Culture initiative, chaired by Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, spearheads long-lasting cultural partnerships between Qatar and other nations. It exists to promote respect and understanding among diverse cultures and serves as a catalyst for bringing people together, nurturing connections, encouraging dialogue, and deepening understanding. At its heart, Years of Culture celebrates the power of cultural exchange, which enriches Qatar's ties with partner countries beyond the dedicated year.

Each year is organised with support from Qatar and partner countries' cultural institutions, ministries, foundations, and private and public sector partners, with assistance from Embassies in Qatar and abroad. Programmes are tailored to explore the unique nature of each partner country with a focus on cultural heritage, creative industries, social and economic development, and innovation.

Previous Years of Culture have included: Qatar-Japan 2012, Qatar-UK 2013, Qatar-Brazil 2014, Qatar-Türkiye 2015, Qatar-China 2016, Qatar-Germany 2017, Qatar-Russia 2018, Qatar-India 2019, Qatar-France 2020, Qatar-USA 2021, Qatar-MENASA 2022, Qatar-Indonesia 2023, and Qatar-Morocco 2024.

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