

‘Eating Cultures’ provides food for thought

By Janos Gereben

“Eating Cultures,” a small art exhibit at SOMArts Cultural Center, is an amazingly rich and varied collection reflecting moving human experiences.

Sponsored by the Asian American Women Artists Association and Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center, the juried show of interdisciplinary works by 36 artists focuses on Asian foods in America and their impact on how Asian-Americans feel about their dual ethnicity. It also examines how the popularity of Asian and Asian-American foods — from chop suey to Korean tacos to sushi — affects the way Asian-Americans are perceived.

Margo L. Machida, professor of art history and American studies at the University of Connecticut, selected the works in the show, which was curated by Michelle A. Lee, Linda Inson Choy and Cynthia Tim.

In her mixed-media piece “Let’s Eat,” [Oakland](#) artist Susan Almazol uses turmeric, soy sauce, red beets and oil to stain a 29-by-41-inch sheet of paper that mimics her mother’s food-stained recipes.



COURTESY CRIS MATOS
Susan Almazol is pictured with her work “Let’s Eat” at “Eating Cultures” at SOMArts Cultural Center.



“I am a Filipina,” Almazol explains, “and my work pays tribute to my 93-year-old mother and her cajoling her family to eat. I covered the sheet with my mother’s words, which she repeats because she has dementia: ‘Let’s eat. Sit down and get a plate. We have plenty of food. Did you get enough to eat?’”

[San Ramon](#) artist Pallavi Sharma’s large collage shows what an Indian bride cooks and serves for the family at the wedding reception. Her work intimates women’s subservience.

More puzzling is Berkeley Korean-American artist’s Jung Ran Bae’s piece, a string of 700 used Yogi tea bags, each with the tag offering advice for the day. Bae says it represents her addiction to Yogi tea and her ethnicity-free “inability to throw anything away.”

In addition to art, film and literary works, the show also features Asian-American oral histories, a pop-up shop, a wall where guests can share recipes, and other programming co-presented by Asia Society and the Culinary Historians of Northern California.

IF YOU GO

Eating Cultures

Where: SOMArts Cultural Center, [934 Brannan St., S.F.](#)

When: Noon to 7 p.m. Tuesdays–Fridays, noon to 5 p.m. Saturdays; closes May 30

Tickets: Free

Contact: (415) 863-1414, [www.somarts.org](#)

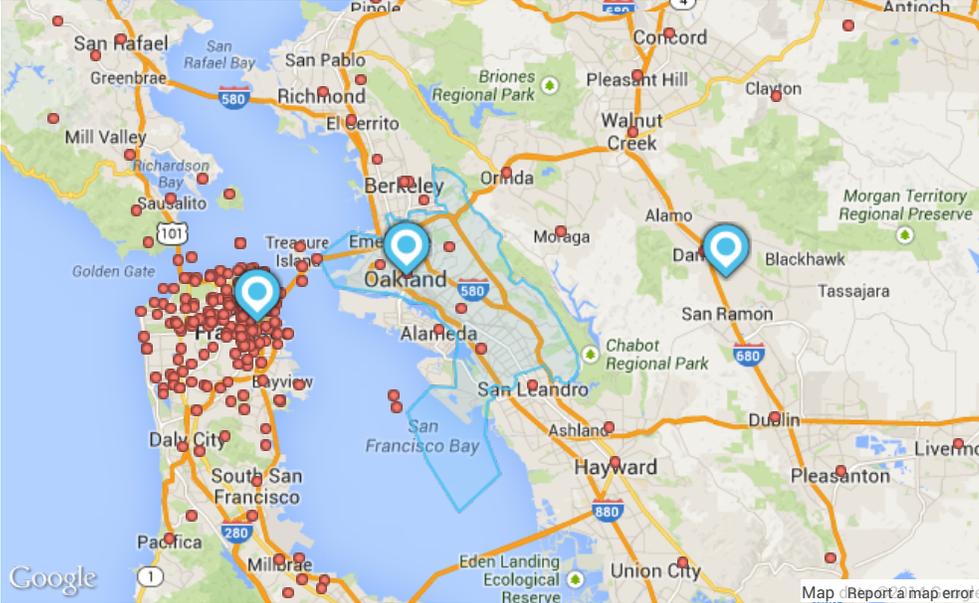
Related events

Saturday: "Eating Asian America" is a panel discussion co-presented by the Culinary Historians of Northern California, 2 p.m.

May 17: "Literary Sriracha: A Spicy Mix of Poetry, Mini-Memoirs and Flash Fiction" is co-presented by Asia Society, 2 p.m.

May 30: A closing reception, community potluck and "Sausage Homage" performance by Genevieve Erin O'Brien is co-hosted by Community Health for Asian Americans, 6 p.m.

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Bio:

Janos Gereben is a writer and columnist for SF Classical Voice; he has worked as writer and editor with the NY Herald-Tribune, TIME Inc., UPI, Honolulu Star-Bulletin, San Jose Mercury News, Post Newspaper Group, and wrote documentation for various technology companies.

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