



CELEBRATING LATIN-AMERICAN CULTURE



SAN ANTONIO STOCK SHOW AND RODEO



MARIACHI MUSIC AT MI TIERRA

TRUE TEXAN SPIRIT

FROM A WORLD FAMOUS RODEO TO FIRST RATE FOOD, LUCY COCORAN EXPLORES THE RICH CULINARY AND CULTURAL SCENE OF SAN ANTONIO.

Described as a ‘huge city that feels like a small town,’ the landscape has the ability to feel both sprawling and intimate at the same time. People say that if you haven’t been to San Antonio, you haven’t been to Texas, making it a bucket-list destination for anyone eager to explore America’s south.

Known for its melting pot of cultures, San Antonio proudly pays homage to its Mexican heritage. You don’t need to look too far to see vivid swathes of Jalisco dresses, bars serving mezcal margaritas or mariachi bands providing the city’s soundtrack. San Antonio’s cultural identity is

preserved and celebrated through historic sites, spirited events and delicious cuisine.

A RICH HISTORY

San Antonio is home to five Spanish colonial missions, which are the only UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Texas. They are the most complete and intact group of these missions in the world. Built between 1718 and 1731 their primary purpose was to convert Native Americans to Roman Catholicism, while protecting and settling territory claimed by the Spanish Crown.

The system of forced assimilation is controversial, but it is critical to understanding the city’s history.

Each mission tells a story of resilience, spirituality and culture. Many are now run by direct descendants of the Native Americans who suffered under this regime. They see their involvement as a way to honour the sacrifices made by their ancestors.

“They were human beings once and they’re human beings today that all share that heritage,” Ramón Vásquez, a Native American tour guide, tells *The Sybarite*.



MI TIERRA'S BAR



PRESERVING MEXICAN DANCE TRADITIONS

Each mission is unique and still very much a part of living history. Four still serve as active Catholic parishes, hosting weekly mass and sacraments, such as weddings and baptisms. Vásquez says a large part of their work is about “reversing the extinction” of their peoples, a misguided theory that was perpetuated from the 1920s to the 1980s.

“People don’t go extinct, they evolve. We’re the only race of peoples that have to prove who we are,” says Vásquez.

Mission San José is an enduring jewel of Spanish colonial architecture with its baroque features and famous rose window. But The Alamo is the most well-known mission. The 1836 Battle of the Alamo inspired Texas to seek independence from Mexico. In 2014, singer Phil Collins, who had a personal fascination with The Alamo, donated his priceless collection of more than 400 relics, which are on display. To enhance the visitor experience, a new visitor centre and museum are under construction and scheduled to open in 2027.

CULTURAL GEMS

Briscoe Western Art Museum

Housed in a former library, this museum on the city’s historic River Walk contains beautiful artworks exploring the diversity of the area’s landscapes. There are works from historical and contemporary artists, striking the perfect balance between what the land once was and what it is now.

briscoemuseum.org

San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo

“The Greatest Carnival On The Planet” is the neon sign above the fairground entrance. As the leading livestock state in the US, cattle play a significant role in San Antonio’s economy and culture. It makes sense that the San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo is one of the biggest events of the year.

It was first held in 1950 and takes place over 18 days in February.

“ *Charreada, an event that originated in the 16th century, is best described as a mix of rodeo skills and dressage* ”

During this time, Frost Bank Centre bursts into life with a sea of cowboy hats, drawing in spectators from around the world. The event is brought to life by over 6,000 volunteers and the community spirit is palpable.

Participation in the show is invitation only which ensures exclusivity to top talent. Modern day cowboys and cowgirls show off their skills in bull riding, barrel racing and steer wrestling. The floor shakes with thunderous applause as lassos are thrown and records broken. Between events, the rodeo clown entertains



DINING AT MI TERRA

the crowd and happy couples find themselves on the big screen for the famous Kiss Cam. It's all very American and all very fun.

Charreada, an event that originated in the 16th century, is a highlight of the show. Once Mexico's official sport, it's best described as a mix of rodeo skills and dressage. Combining aesthetics with traditional horsemanship, it's a masterclass in pageantry, seeing riders swathed in beautiful colours and fabrics, donning traditional Adelita dresses. It's a privilege to watch and powerfully informative.

sarodeo.com



COCKTAILS AT MI TERRA

CULINARY EXCELLENCE

Best Quality Daughter

The brainchild of Jennifer Hwa Dobbertin, this Asian-American diner is an absolute gem. Located in the historic Pearl area, dishes burst with flavour and are served on family-friendly sharing plates. It's impossible to order incorrectly, but be sure to try the ssam, which sees succulent pork belly served with herbs, pickled sprouts and tangy nam jim jaew sauce, all wrapped in gem lettuce. bestqualitydaughter.com

Mi Tierra

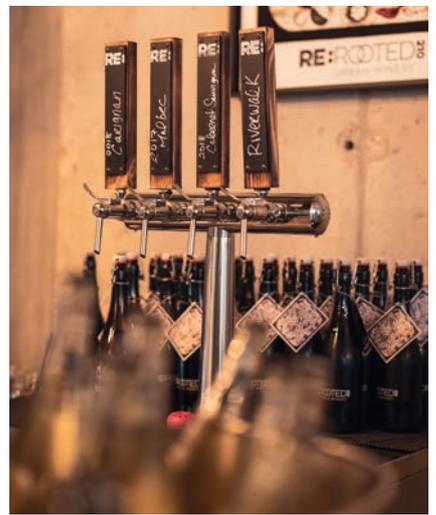
A local institution since 1941, this family-run bakery and restaurant is a visual feast. Piñatas are suspended from the ceiling, the decor is maximalist, and the huge American Dream mural depicts politicians, celebrities and world leaders. Dishes are authentic and packed with flavour, with cheese, beans and spices aplenty. Give into temptation with sweet bakery treats on the way out – the pumpkin empanada is their bestseller.

lafamiliacortez.com/restaurants/mi-tierra/

Re:Rooted 210 Winery

"Nobody thinks of wine and Texas, not even Texans." This is the opening spiel from Jennifer Beckman, owner of Re:Rooted 210. Her urban winery is turning the tide on the Texan wine scene on a local and international scale. It's easy to find a favourite among the drops, with plenty of thoughtful, easy-drinking blends on offer. The winery has an impressive approach to sustainability in production and distribution. Most of their wines are served on tap, which eliminates around 80% of glass waste annually.

rerootedwine.com



THE BAR AT RE:ROOTED



LIVELY MI TERRA

Rita's On The River

For a taste of San Antonio's best Tex-Mex cuisine, Rita's is a great choice. Start your morning on a lively note with the deliciously innovative breakfast tacos, best enjoyed with a dash of homemade salsa. By night, be sure to sit down and savour the venue's famed Texas-sized margaritas. ritasontheriver.com

FEELING AT HOME

For those who aren't San Antonian born and bred, the phrase "I'm not from here, but I got here as fast as I could" rings true. It's a sentiment shared by many who are drawn to this colourful city on a permanent basis, with San Antonio recording the highest population growth of any major US city in 2023. With this in mind, there has never been a more exciting time to visit and find out why so many people are keen to call San Antonio home.