



Mission

Preserving, promoting, and celebrating the unique cultural heritage of Ybor City and supporting the Ybor City Museum State Park

NEWS BRIEF

Since the late 1800s, the women of Ybor City have taken on non-traditional and significant roles that were critically important to our community's development. To celebrate Women's History Month, the Ybor City Museum Society has chosen to highlight Adela Gonzmart and Clarita Garcia, two influential women in the Ybor City food scene and beyond. Getting a bit ahead of ourselves, we wrote about Adela in the January 26th News Brief. You can [read more](#) about her larger-than-life role as a restaurateur at the Columbia, and as a musician, community advocate, and ambassador. This week we feature another story about Adela and one on another noted restaurateur, Clarita Garcia, of Las Novedades fame. These women represent the oldest restaurant still operating and the oldest restaurant in Ybor City, respectively. Both women had an immense love and talent for cooking, both wrote much-coveted cookbooks that have elevated the dishes served in many homes for decades, and both have taken their places in the history of our National Historic Landmark District.

Ashley Rocks, our intern from USF's history department, has been a major contributor to the restaurant and food stories, as well as the recipes we have presented in our newsletters. Our thanks to Ashley for researching and writing on these topics that we hope are of interest to you.

~ Chantal Ruilova Hevia, President and CEO

Las Novedades: Ybor City's First Restaurant



While the oldest restaurant still operating in Ybor City is the Columbia, the title of “oldest restaurant” belongs to Las Novedades. This Spanish restaurant was founded as a café in 1890 by Manuel Menendez across the street from the Sanchez y Haya Cigar Factory and was frequented by many of the factory’s cigar workers. As with many of Ybor City’s early

buildings, the restaurant was destroyed by a fire in 1891 and reopened in 1892 after

being rebuilt.

By 1910, Menendez was managing the restaurant with two partners, Angel Ramon and Baldomero Diaz, until the struggling restaurant was sold in 1939 to Manuel Garcia, a Spanish immigrant who sold his interest in a sandwich shop, La Fonda, in order to make the purchase. In 1946, the restaurant moved to a new location on the corner of 7th Avenue and 15th Street, after which Garcia spared no expense in remodeling the building, taking inspiration from Moorish architecture.

Las Novedades was sold by the Garcia family in 1970 to the Columbia's Cesar Gonzmart. After additional sales and various uses for this unique and ornate building, this site became the home of the new Hotel Haya in 2020.

Photo is from UF Digital Collections

Clarita



Clarita Valdes Garcia, Manuel Garcia's daughter-in-law, became a prominent figure at Las Novedades and helped manage the restaurant. She came from a line of cooks and cooking Spanish food was in her blood.

Clarita was educated at the University of Madrid. Before she married Manuel Garcia Jr., her mother instilled a love of cooking in her. Her mother was a perfectionist and taught Clarita most of what she learned. From the importance of caring for utensils to the picking the right ingredients, her mother prepared her to own a successful Tampa restaurant.

During her lifetime, she wrote two cookbooks, with the most notable being *Clarita's Cocina* (1960), Tampa's first Spanish cookbook, which documented many Spanish recipes. Some of the recipes, including arroz con pollo (yellow rice and chicken), were used in Las Novedades. Clarita was arguably the first celebrity chef in Florida, hosting a cooking show on WTVT, and brought Spanish cooking to many.

Arroz Con Pollo

Although there are many variations of this dish, one Ybor City staple is arroz con pollo, or yellow rice and chicken. Dating back to the 700s when the Moors invaded Spain and brought this

dish over, it became a hit and was adopted as a Spanish dish. The earliest restaurant to feature arroz con pollo on its menu was also Tampa's first restaurant, Las Novedades. Opened in 1890, it served this dish until it closed in 1972. During the Spanish-American War, a group of Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders stopped through Tampa and ordered this dish before heading to Cuba.



[Get the Recipe](#)

Recipe from Clarita's Cocina
Photo from DavidLebowitz.com

Adela



Adela Hernandez Gonzmart was an immensely talented pian who was educated at the Julliard School. She not the first choice for the succession of the Columbia. When her father could not work, Adela came back to the restaurant and became its face, suggesting new items and gradually becoming more engaged in running the restaurant. When waiters went on strike, she donned a suit and became the first female server. She and her husband also helped gather musicians for the Columbia's Siboney Room, helping to popularize the restaurant. Outside of the restaurant, Adela participated in events in the community like serving soup outside the restaurant on Fiesta Day. The flan recipe below is from *The Columbia Restaurant Spanish Cookbook* she co-authored with Ferdie Pacheco.

Buildings Alive!



The Ybor City Museum Society is producing a Buildings Alive! video in collaboration with 10 community partners, whose buildings will be showcased and premiered during a virtual event. Today, we feature Hotel Haya, named after Ignacio Haya, whose cigar factory, Sanchez y Haya, rolled the first cigar in Ybor City 130 years ago, on April 13, 1886. Hotel Haya embodies Ybor

City's exuberant Cuban, Italian, and Spanish influences. Located on 7th Avenue, the project fuses modern construction with the ornate Las Novedades building and the Warren Building, where Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders are rumored to have haunted. The original Las Novedades building is considered to be one of the most unique examples of Mediterranean Revival design in the country.

Do You Love Historic Buildings?



The Ybor City Museum Society owns six historic "casitas", which it preserves and maintains. These irreplaceable buildings are always in need of a little TLC. YCMS is currently looking for someone who can help with their maintenance by handling small repairs and overseeing larger projects.

Inquiries should be directed to info@ybormuseum.org or 813.247.1434. This part-time work is likely to grow when we open the Tampa Baseball Museum at the Al Lopez House in a few months. The "casita" pictured here will soon become a Vegan Market and Deli. More information to come....

COOKING CORNER



Flan

One of the many dishes included in the Columbia Cookbook co-authored by Adela Gonzmart

[Get the Recipe](#)

The Ybor City Museum State Park is Open

The Ybor City Museum State Park is again open to the public. To ensure your safety, masks are required to be worn during your visit.

Admissions can be paid by cash or credit card, however you are requested to bring exact change if you are paying by cash. The "casita" portion of the museum tour is closed due to

Covid-19 restrictions but you can enjoy the Museum Garden during your visit. **You can also enquire about renting the Garden, a beautiful 10,000 sq. ft. outdoor space, by [clicking here](#).** It is a unique venue that creates its own ambience for your special event.



Featured Exhibit - *The Jewish Roots of Ybor City*
New Hours of Operation: 9 am - 4 pm Wednesday - Sunday
Admission: \$4 per person, free for children 5 years and younger
1818 E. 9th Avenue, Tampa, FL 33605, 813.247.6323

Please Join Us

Member benefits make it easy for you to strengthen your connection to Tampa's roots and experience the unique cultural heritage of Historic Ybor City. Now that the Ybor City Museum State Park is reopening, you can use the free admissions included in your membership. Thank you to our current members, whether you have been part of our family for years or have just joined us. For your convenience, new or current members can [join or renew your membership online.](#)

With Gratitude

History teaches many lessons and gives us a lens to the future. While 2020 was a year to pause and reflect, we have benefitted in many ways as our friends and followers came together to celebrate the landmark events that make Ybor City such a unique community. Thank you who supported our programs and educational activities last year. For those who enjoy this newsletter and learning more about Ybor City's cultural heritage, please consider a donation to support our 2021 programming.

DONATE

The Ybor City Museum Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Federal Tax ID No. 59-2274494. While we do not give tax advice, donations are tax deductible to the extent the law allows.

YborMuseum.org ■ Info@Ybormuseum.org ■ 813.247.1434

