

LATINO

Friends fill cultural void with 'Mex and the City' website

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BY MONIKA FABIAN

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MARIELA LOMBARD FOR NEWS

Mex in the City founders, left to right: Erika Mercado, Iris Avelar and Marina García-Vásquez.

For the co-founder of the cultural website and consulting company *Mex and the City*, Marina García-Vásquez, necessity is indeed the mother of invention.

When the [California](#) native relocated to [New York City](#) in 2005, she encountered a place more familiar with Spanish [Caribbean](#) Latino-ness than Mexican-ness.

"I found that I was educating people about the diversity and richness of Mexican culture, what heritage means and what nationality can be," said García-Vásquez, 33, a grad student specializing in arts and culture at [Columbia's](#) journalism school.

"What they knew was [Puerto Rican](#) or Cuban culture, and they imposed what they thought Mexican culture is or was, and that was very limiting," she said. "I wanted to somehow talk about my own experience."

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So García-Vásquez rallied her friends and proposed they start a collective blog about their daily experiences as Mexicans living in [New York](#). Friends Iris Avelar, [Erika Mercado](#) and [Ruby Vizcarra](#) heeded her call, and the four launched the "Mex and the City" blog in December 2009.

Nearly two years later, what began as a hobby hosted on [Tumblr](#) has mushroomed into a full-fledged cultural website ([mexnthecity.com](#)) and consulting firm.

They have produced events for Puma, helped launch and promote a Hamptons-based gourmet taco truck called Montaco, and co-hosted an annual [Cinco de Mayo](#) bash with deejays [Geko Jones](#) and Uproot Andy (of the monthly tropical bass dance party Que Bajo?!) called Cinco de Gallo.

On Friday night, the crew is pairing up with another deejaying duo, [Marcelo Cunning](#) and Amylu Meneses (of Nacothèque, the Spanish-language indie music dance party), for their latest event: a Mexican Independence Day party, Mexican IndependANCE Day, at [Williamsburg's](#) Public Assembly.

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Avelar remembers attending one of the first Nacothèque parties in 2006 and getting "addicted" to its "cool, retro, indie" style.

"At the time, I didn't know of any parties like Nacothèque, and New York was really in the dark about the niche Nacothèque tapped into," said Avelar, 31, who co-owns the Williamsburg Mexican restaurant La Superior.

Partygoers can expect "a lot of revelry and color" says García-Vásquez. An artist impersonating the flamboyant Mexican singer [Juan Gabriel](#) is scheduled to perform along with a mariachi band.

In addition to portraying a "strong representation of contemporary Mexican identity," as García-Vásquez put it, the Mex and the City crew's other main mission has been to support the endeavors of their peers.

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"To promote and push fellow creatives forward," said Avelar.

The site's "Racial Profiling" series - or "Mexican Look Book" as García-Vásquez called it, referring to the ongoing [New York magazine](#) portrait and Q&A series - showcases the photos and interviews of some 40 prominent and influential young Mexicans in New York and [Mexico City](#).

"I just wanted to celebrate," she said, "all the frenetic beautiful energy around me."

monika.fabian@gmail.com

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