

Newcomb Art Museum dishes up Prison Gourmet workshop

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"Prison Gourmet: New Orleans Cook-off" will feature recipes created by former inmates while in prison. (Karla Diaz, 'Prison Gourmet,' 2012, installation. Courtesy of the artist.)

In a city known for food, there are certain New Orleans culinary traditions that receive little attention. These are the enterprising recipes developed and shared by individuals serving time in local prisons.

The [Newcomb Art Museum](#), in partnership with Los Angeles artist Karla Diaz, wants to bring attention to some of the dishes created by formerly incarcerated women in the upcoming workshop "[Prison Gourmet: New Orleans Cook-Off](#)" at Sister Hearts Thrift Store.

"With Louisiana reigning as the 'Prison Capital of the World,' we want to increase residents' understanding of the complexities and grave societal impact of mass incarceration," said museum director Mónica Ramírez-Montagut. "Food serves as a familiar point of access and underscores the resilience and creativity frequently demonstrated by individuals in prison."

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Diaz, who has exhibited her work at the Whitney Museum in New York and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, conceived her multimedia Prison Gourmet in 2009. Inspired by her then-incarcerated brother, she recreated commissary recipes in an effort to explore the politics of food, especially with respect to power, memory, race and culture.

The focus of the New Orleans edition on women derives in large part from the input of Sister Maryam-Henderson Uloho. The Ohio native, after spending nearly 13 years in the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women, opened Sister Hearts as a thrift store and training program for previously convicted persons.

Open to the public, the workshop and community gathering will bring together former women inmates to discuss, share, and prepare recipes developed in prison, utilizing common—yet often unexpected—foodstuffs and tools.

The experience will inform Diaz’s performance planned for NAM’s spring 2018 exhibition focused on mass incarceration in Louisiana.

“Prison Gourmet: New Orleans Cook-Off” will take place on Monday, May 22 from 5 to 7 p.m. at Sister Hearts Thrift Store located at 7519 West Judge Perez Drive in Arabi, Louisiana.