

**Food is Family**  
**By Rescuepoetix™**

Growing up in a large Puerto Rican family  
Meant parties for every occasion  
Big gatherings of generations  
That reached back to the motherland

standard foods for every day  
*Aguacate ... Tostones... Arroz ... Carne*

During celebrations, visiting family, you could  
Count on special things  
When abuelita brought out the huge caldero  
To make a massive pot of yellow rice

Easter meant *Ensalada de Bacalao*  
Spring goodness of root vegetables, onions, eggs and salted codfish  
Hot or cold ... worth every comfort food spoonful

Other occasions – baptisms, Noche Buena, New Year's Eve  
Brought the truly great things:  
*arroz con dulce, pernil, arroz con gandules, flan*  
and my favorite

*Pasteles*

Making *pasteles* was a family affair  
Long into the night a production line of aromas  
And textures; a marathon of papel and twine

stacked stations of unrelated things  
Became the steps to a family experience  
Hours and Hours after the slow roasted pork fell apart,  
Boiled, seasoned mashed vegetables to make the masa

Annatto seeds turned to *achiotina*  
For its rich, telling color  
olives green  
fingertips blackened and orange by the labor of love

those once unique bits turned into a structured stack of dozens  
and dozens of freezer ready goodness

***NAMI NJ Dara Axelrod Expressive Arts Mental Health Poetry Contest 2021 - 4th Place***

because you couldn't just make one or two

No: this effort meant commitment, dedication, drive  
until at least one of the big, passed down, dented, well-worn  
pots is scraped to the very bottom

signaling the chance to sample the family food effort  
and how close la familia truly is while cutting twine  
no matter how hot - stinging fingertips  
no pause until flipped out onto a plate  
to dig into with laughter and the appetite for connection