Ruth Behar
and
Gabriel
Frye-Behar

Picadillo for PAULINA

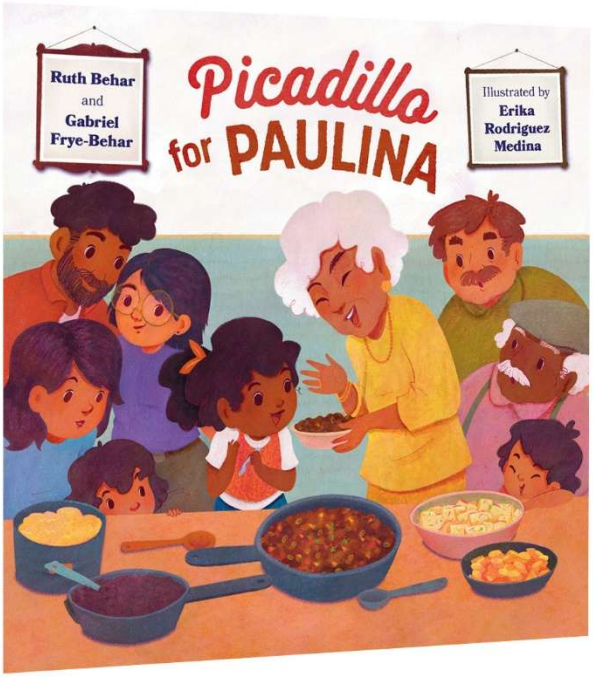
Illustrated by
Erika
Rodriguez
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Educators' Guide

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By Ruth Behar and Gabriel Frye-Behar
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About the Book

An accessible, delightful picture book celebration of young eaters' connections to family, food, and culture.

A young girl must navigate her promise to be a vegetarian without sacrificing her family's delicious, traditional Cuban food.

Paulina has had the birthday of her dreams with the gift of a visit to a petting farm, and to make it even better, her whole family gathers for a celebratory dinner at Cocina de Nana. But when Nana starts passing around her famed Cuban picadillo, Paulina turns it down. It's made from animalitos, like the ones Paulina was visiting earlier in the day. She'd made a promise to those animals and is determined to keep it: she's become a vegetarian. With a bit of trepidation and ultimately mucho, mucho amor, Paulina discovers what it means to practice your own beliefs while still honoring your family's history and traditions.

About the Authors

Ruth Behar is a Newbery Honor and Pura Belpré Award-winning author and MacArthur Genius who lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Gabriel Frye-Behar is a Brooklyn-based, Cuban American filmmaker, writer, and photographer.

About the Illustrator

Erika Rodriguez Medina is a book publicist and illustrator based in Vancouver, Canada.

This Educators' Guide was produced by Raisel Reissman, a NY-based literacy coach, edited by Ruth Behar, and designed by David Frye.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does the visit to the petting farm change Paulina's ideas about eating? Do you feel her different approach to eating makes sense?
2. Nana is very proud of her cooking. Why? How are her memories of Cuba part of the food she cooks at her restaurant, Cocina de Nana? How do you think she feels when Paulina does not want to eat her picadillo?
3. In what way does Nana deal with Paulina's refusal to eat her picadillo? Why does she not just make Paulina explain her reason in front of everyone at the table? If you were her abuela, what would you have done? How do you think Nana felt after Paulina at her own birthday party refuses to eat her abuela's best dish that also sells well at the Cocina? Why does Nana provide her with alternative (no meat) Latinx food instead of insisting she eat the picadillo?
4. How does Paulina's family react when she finally announces at the end of the meal that she is a vegetarian? In what ways does Nana's warm support and suggestion that Paulina be the taste-tester for the Latinx vegetarian menus help Paulina become a respected independently thinking member of her family?



Finding Connections with the Story

1. Have your tastes in food or desire to eat a particular dish that everyone in your family loves, ever suddenly shifted? Maybe a child used to love cantaloupe cut into melon balls, but suddenly decided she did not like the color and refused to eat what had been her favorite fruit. Maybe a nephew went on a diet and was unable to eat the delicious devil's food chocolate cake his aunt made for every family meal. Maybe a cousin is diabetic and needs a special diet to stay healthy. Has anything like this ever happened in your family? Has anyone ever been a guest at a family meal you attended who couldn't eat a dish that was a favorite of everyone and always served? How did the person who organized and cooked the food react? How did everyone at the table react as they enjoyed the traditional family favorite but also accommodated to the needs of a family member?
2. Have you ever been to a party or a celebration meal where you just did not want to eat the main dish? How did you handle it if someone noticed you were not eating? How does Paulina deal with it? Do you think Paulina should have dealt with this differently? If so, how?
3. When Paulina visits the petting farm, her time with the animals changes the way she thinks about food. Have you ever had an experience that changes the way you think about something important?
4. If you were preparing a meal and a guest were allergic to one of your ingredients, or objected because you used meat, would you make an alternative version for the guest or not? Explain what you would do.

Name _____

Thinking About Food

Paulina loves Nana's beef picadillo, but she's made a promise to the animalitos at the petting farm to become a vegetarian. Draw a picture showing Paulina making this promise to the animalitos and another picture showing Paulina telling Nana about the promise she has made.



Name _____

Sharing a Favorite Family Dish

Do you have a favorite family dish? Draw a picture of this dish, showing how it tastes and smells. If you have prepared this dish with a family member or a friend, show how you worked together and the steps followed to bring the dish from separate ingredients to serve and eat.

