

Exploring the world one bite at a time

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People create peace when they learn about one another.

That's what **Sasha Martin** believes, at least.

And what better way to connect than through cooking, a universal pastime?

On Feb. 3, 2010, Sasha launched **Global Table Adventure**, her personal way of foregoing Tulsa's fast food tendencies and bringing people together at one gigantic — albeit metaphorical — dinner table.

Sasha, along with her husband, **Keith**, and their daughter, **Ava**, who will turn 2 years old next month, is exploring 195 cuisines, one for every country on the map. Given one week per country to research, grocery shop and cook, the final menu will have kept hunger pangs at bay for almost four years.

Many travel with Sasha, so to speak, by trying the recipes, watching the videos and reading the blog entries on her website, www.globaltableadventure.com.

The online portal to Sasha's sojourns is organized to a T, with options to search by country, food group and even dietary lifestyle. Moreover, Keith's artistic photography makes even the most obscure dishes mouthwatering.

Adhering alphabetical order, Sasha most recently took followers to Greece, Grenada, Guatemala and Guinea.

"That's a good way to keep it mixed up and random. If I went by continent — well, only if you were actually in Africa would you stick around for a whole year of African food," joked **The Culinary Institute of America** alumna.

In this day in age, when headlines seem glued to ongoing war, natural disasters and controversial politicians, GTA exudes warmth.

"I don't like focusing on negative," Sasha said. "There is a good story to tell everywhere."

"There are countries like Ethiopia that you have all these preconceived notions about, like everybody's starving. Then you look at the food and culture, so rich and interesting, and it just totally destroys the stereotypes."

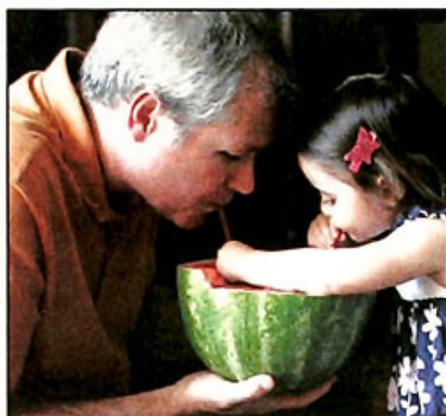
While the family's "day-to-day" food usually comes from **Whole Foods** and farmers markets, Sasha can name, off the top of her head, about a dozen specialty shops she likes, including **Ebute-Metta Tropical Market**, **Nam-Hai Oriental Food Market** and **Siegi's Sausage Factory & German Restaurant**.

Kangaroo meat, one of Ava's first solids, and frog legs were found at **Harvard Meats**, and **Bodean Restaurant & Market** once provided conch.

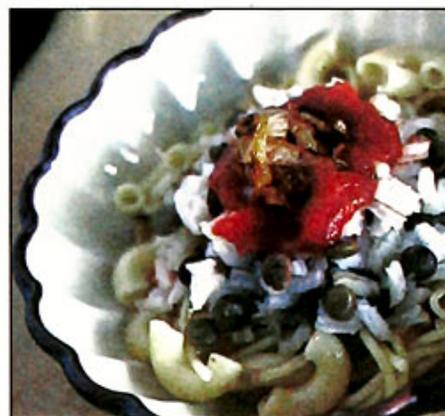
The stay-at-home mom said shop-



Sasha Martin, founder of Global Table Adventure, sips bambus, a mixture of red wine and cola common in Croatia, in the kitchen of her midtown home.



Keith Martin and his daughter, Ava, who will turn 2 years old next month, drink watermelon lemonade, inspired by Ghana's bounty of the fruit.



PHOTOS COURTESY KEITH AND SASHA MARTIN
The Martins tried kushary, an Egyptian dish composed of macaroni, angel hair, long-grain rice, lentils, olive oil and a spicy tomato sauce.

ping for international flavors in Tulsa has been surprisingly easy — and cheap.

"You'd be surprised," she said. "At the Indian and Oriental markets, for example, it's possible to get a lot of those spices much cheaper. Tulsa's really pretty international."

Now more than a third of the way through the project, the three are noticeably more open-minded eaters — word is Keith had "Picky Eater Syndrome" pre-GTA.

He admitted the key was reminding himself that "thousands, if not millions, of people eat these dishes all the time."

While Keith has not always been a foodie, Sasha's comfort in the kitchen dates back to her childhood.

"When I was really little, my mom would stand me up on a chair and give me a piece of her pie dough and say, 'Make whatever you want with it,'" Sasha remembered. "It'd bake and be terrible, but I learned to love the creativity."

So, what else does she have in store, other than plans for Venezuelan spaghetti ice cream?

"I would like to (write) a children's book called 'Ava Eats the World,' have it encourage other kids to try things, but I haven't really formulated it in my head yet as to what the story would be exactly," she said, pondering. "Maybe I'll do some sort of cookbook, too. It's so far away, it's hard to know."

In the meantime, skoudehkaris, anyone?

Mazzio's expands eastward

Tulsa-based **Mazzio's LLC**, a fast-casual Italian concept with 163 units largely concentrated in the Midwest, signed a new franchise development agreement that will expand the 50-year-old chain to the East Coast. **RAMK LLC** acquired the rights for **Mazzio's Italian Eatery** in Virginia.

"The time is right to take this winning

formula to new developers and consumers in markets across the U.S. and into select international markets," said **Greg Lippert**, president and CEO.

MSNBC spotlights Tulsa grub

Local restaurateur **Elliot Nelson's** success story was profiled last month on **MSNBC's "Your Business,"** which airs every Sunday morning.

In the segment, the founder and CEO

of **McNellie's Group** and "biggest restaurant owner in downtown Tulsa," as noted by the reporter, discusses the growth of his businesses, employee culture and challenges of running multiple restaurants.

A TV crew from New York made their way to the Blue Dome District in early April for filming, which mostly took place at **James E. McNellie's Public House**. <

Because life is too busy to worry about finances.

Arvest NEXT is a division of Arvest Bank that focuses on the financial needs of young up-and-coming professionals in the Tulsa area. Arvest's mission statement of "People helping people find financial solutions for life" led young people in Tulsa to request assistance in planning and maintaining their financial goals. And that's just what we aim to do. Arvest NEXT offers personalized service and educational seminars to provide young professionals with the tools to be financially successful.

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