

Hispanic Heritage Month | Jeymi Matos

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Meet MGC Raleigh paralegal Jeymi Matos as we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month!

My parents were born in the Dominican Republic in the mid-1960's. They met during their teens and eventually got married. I was their first-born in the late 80's. When I was seven-years-old, my parents decided that we should move to the US. At the time, I also had a three-year-old sister. Like many other families who come to this country, the goal was obtaining the "American dream" with better jobs and opportunities. We lived in several boroughs in New York City including the Bronx, Manhattan and Queens. New York City is actually called by many "Santo Domingo 2" (after the capital of the Dominican Republic) because of its large population of Dominicans. After approximately three years, we moved to Ohio. My father has been a licensed minister for as long as I can remember and he felt that we should start a Hispanic church in Columbus, which we did. During the 11 years we were there, my younger sister and I completed most of our education. I graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from Capital University. Shortly thereafter, my family and I moved again, this time to North Carolina, where we currently live.

[caption id="attachment_19875" align="alignleft" width="300"] Photo Credit: Sabores Dominicanos[/caption]

I'd like to think that I am Dominican to the core. Growing up, and even to this day, my daily meals mostly consist of rice, beans and some type of meat. This basic plate is what we call "la bandera" [the flag]. The term comes from two of the colors in the Dominican flag, which happen to be red, white and blue. White rice and red beans would be the main representation of this. Some people add the red with fried "salami," a type of Dominican sausage (see photos). Other things I do to keep my heritage alive is some of the music I listen to which includes "merengue" – a very upbeat, lively and dance-inducing rhythm that originated in the Dominican Republic. Let me tell you, if you're ever feeling sad and just need a little pick-me-up, just put some merengue on, and that'll probably do it!

Another important thing, for my family in particular, was my parents making sure that my sister and I did not lose the Spanish language. I still vividly remember it being a strict rule for us, that even after we had started to learn English in school, we would not speak it in our home. Any time my sister and I would try to have a conversation in English, my mother would quickly say to us, "Español!" to remind us. Today my sister and I are bilingual, which has opened many doors for us, and we have our parents to thank for that! Now that I myself have a child, I plan to have the same rule as he grows so that he will have the same benefits of being bilingual.

I will leave you with a recipe for a very common dessert – some would even eat it for breakfast! We Dominicans absolutely love “[arepa](#),” a custardy-cake made of cornmeal and coconut milk. This recipe is from [www.dominicancooking.com](#), where you can find tons of other recipes from my beloved country. Enjoy!