

OUR GUIDE TO DENVER'S BEST STUFF!

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Liberty For All

Independence Day eats get an international twist.

America isn't the only country to have gained its independence in the month of July. Indeed, Laos and a trio of South American countries celebrate their nationhoods this month, each with its own traditions and cuisines. This Fourth of July, if you're looking for something different from the typical ribs-and-pie spread, consider saluting these global options. —REBECCA CARO



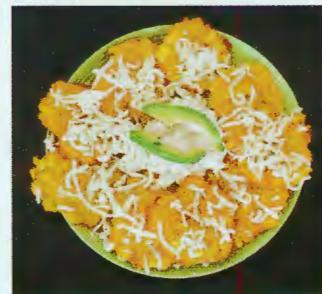
ARGENTINA

Argentina celebrates the anniversary of its 1816 independence from Spain on July 9. **Maria Empanada** in Lakewood is known for its empanadas, but in addition to the stuffed pastries, owner Lorena Cantarovich also bakes savory tarts. Try the zucchini and cheese or the egg and potato version known as tortilla Espanola. Finish with an alfajor, a sandwich cookie filled with dulce de leche. 5209 W. Mississippi Ave., Lakewood, 303-934-2221, mariaempanada.com



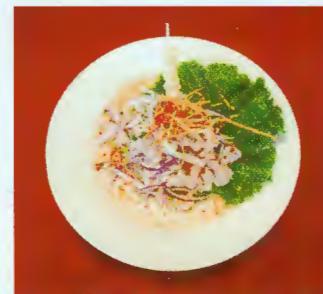
LAOS

Laos won its independence from France on July 19, 1949. Although Laotian food can be difficult to come by locally, **Thai Street Food**'s owner Utumporn Killoran is from the Issan region of northern Thailand, which borders Laos. She fuses the cuisines of Thailand and Laos into curries rife with chiles and spices, as well as dishes like green papaya salad with salted crab. 11650 Montview Blvd., Aurora, 303-587-2293, thaifoodcartdowntowndenver.com



VENEZUELA

Late president Hugo Chavez may have rewritten Venezuela's constitution and launched the country's Bolivarian Revolution, but its native sons still mark the nation's 19th-century independence from Spain on July 5. **Empanada Express Grill** serves Venezuelan favorites: tostones (fried green plantains), arepas (corn cakes), and tequeños (fried, cheese-stuffed breadsticks). Multiple locations, theempanadexpress.com



PERU

Peru shares its liberators with Argentina. José de San Martín and Simón Bolívar helped free the country from Spain on July 28, 1821. The unique flavors of Peruvian cuisine include global influences spanning from Japan to Spain. **Pisco Sour**'s weekend buffet includes classics like seafood ceviche; potatoes with chile-cheese sauce; and potatoes layered with tuna. 8501 E. Colfax Ave., 303-322-7777, restaurantpiscosour.com