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Chef's ultimate inspirations: Mom – and Martha Stewart

INSIDE:

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Dispelling myths about memory

Since 1999, neuroscientist Charan Ranganath has been using technology to study memory. With the help of equipment such as functional magnetic resonance imaging and electroencephalogram, Ranganath can identify changes in brain activity.



"You don't want memory to be in the driver's seat," says author and researcher Charan Ranganath. "You don't want your past controlling your future." Photo by Michael Rock

"You're really looking at blood flow in the brain (with the fMRI)," he says. "You can see when people are remembering something and what parts of the brain are revving up. It was exciting to me to be able to see how we can get into people's heads literally and figure out what makes them tick."

Ranganath was born in Chennai, India, but arrived in the United States almost immediately, moving from Rhode Island and Texas and eventually settling in California. He graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, with a psychology degree in 1993. He continued his education, earning master's and doctoral degrees in psychology from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He's been at the University of California at Davis since 2002, most recently as a professor of psychology and neuroscience and the director of the memory and plasticity program.

When Ranganath was studying clinical psychology as a graduate student in the 1990s, he treated addiction, anxiety, depression, insomnia and other mental health issues. About this time, fMRI's scans were providing insight into memory, a relatively new idea. Ranganath recognized how memory impacted the lives of the patients in the clinic and wanted to be part of the research.

"A lot of our thinking in clinical psychology was based on rudimentary ideas on how and why we think and make decisions and feel," he says. "I felt like it was a great time to use these new technologies to understand the brain so that we could bring it back to the clinic for a more scientifically informed practice."

The role of memory and the potential for growth in clinical settings excited Ranganath. Often, people believe memories from a traumatic event or ones

that bring shame and guilt are fixed or deterministic. But they can be updated and changed, Ranganath says. Memory can be a great resource and tool if it's understood how it influences our beliefs, social relationships and other areas of our lives.

"You don't want memory to be in the driver's seat," he says. "You don't want your past controlling your future."

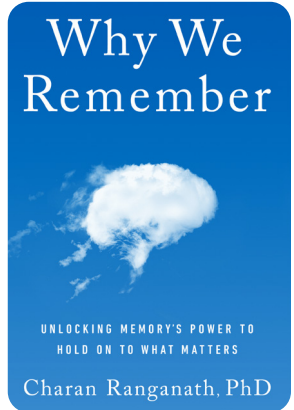
In February 2024, Ranganath's "Why We Remember" was released by Doubleday in audio and hardcover and is available online and in bookstores. Throughout the book's 10 chapters, Ranganath shares personal stories and real-life examples to introduce his research findings and discuss memory and how it relates to how we navigate the world.

The book is for curious readers who want to understand how memory works. It's not a self-help book to introduce ways to remember how to find your wallet or where you parked your car, although he will mention why people (even him) lose items every day.

"For many of us, it's not that we have anything wrong with our memories. We have the wrong expectations for what memory is supposed to do," he explains. "Memory isn't about the past but about the present and the future. It's about taking the things that you have experienced and being able to use it in the moment to plan, to imagine, to make better decisions, to connect with people."

In Ranganath's book, he cites our high expectations for our memory. We worry too much about whether our memory is normal, he says.

"Memory is selective and sometimes inaccurate, and it changes over time," he says. "We're not supposed to remember everything; that's not what our brains were designed to do."



In "Why We Remember," Charan Ranganath shares personal stories and real-life examples to introduce his research findings. Photo courtesy of Doubleday

For globetrotting executive, 'one culture is not enough'



In 2017, three college friends joined Leo Kasuya on journeys through Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and the Middle East. Photo courtesy of Leo Kasuya

Leo "Chris" Kasuya developed his love for travel when he was a young boy. His parents preferred to travel instead of giving traditional presents for birthdays and holidays. This passion, ingrained in him at such an early age, taught him to envision himself in places he wants to visit. He sets his intentions, creates a plan and doesn't let fear, finances or time get in the way of travel.

"Traveling is one of my biggest loves," says Kasuya, who lives in Miami, Florida. "I just think there's something so beautiful about seeing the world. A lot of people treat travel as a reward for working, but it's really an education for living."

Kasuya's family moved from Tokyo, Japan, to Atlanta, Georgia, in 2001, when he was 10 years old. He studied international business marketing and Japanese at the Terry College of Business at the University of Georgia in Athens, graduating in 2014. He was the recipient of the 40 Under 40 Award from UGA's Alumni Association in 2022.

After graduation, Kasuya spent three years in strategy consulting with the accounting firm KPMG. Although he was developing the professional skills needed for success in the business world, he began to question

his career path. After months of contemplation, he decided to take a sabbatical for one year and travel the world.

"Being born in Japan and spending the first half of my life there, and the second half in America, I quickly realized that living in one culture is not enough," he says. "There's no such thing as a utopia out there, but you have the opportunity to create your own utopia if you go and see, experience and understand what good is out there."

Three college friends joined Kasuya on this journey. In July 2017, they left for Hawaii and moved west through Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and the Middle East. For the first six months, the group shared their progress on Instagram through [Unique Impressions Group](#), a company they formed to help fund the travel costs. Although they wanted to create a community and represent brands, they closed the business after six months because it was too time-consuming to pitch companies and run the site while on the move.

The foursome took a detour in January 2018 to support their alma mater's football team. "Our beloved Georgia Bulldogs went to the National Championship game, and we diverted to Atlanta to see the game," Kasuya says. "After the game, we all went to South America and ended in Europe."

Soon after he returned from his travels in 2018, Kasuya started with family-owned King's Hawaiian, known for its sweet breads and rolls, working as the senior project leader within the office of the CEO. In September 2021, [Irresistible Foods Group](#) was founded to foster long-term success and growth in King's Hawaiian and other acquired companies.

Based in Los Angeles, California, IFG is the parent company to King's Hawaiian, Grillo's Pickles, Shaka Tea Hawai'i and Innovation Bakeries. Kasuya joined the company as director of strategy and new ventures with IFG, whose mission is to ensure its operating companies continue to thrive.

IFG looks for companies with a strong product, positive work environment and history of community involvement. Its interest is in purchasing companies and being good stewards of the brand.

"The full intent is for each business to operate on its own and be in a network of other Irresistible brands," he says. "IFG is in the business of investing in and eventually acquiring other food and beverage brands. Our ultimate goal is to find these brands with irresistible products and also irresistible values."

Once shrouded in anonymity, their works are now uncloaked

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The Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) continues their effort to rectify the previous exclusion of artists of Asian descent from the American art canon by featuring paintings from three American artists of Japanese descent in their upcoming exhibition, "Pictures of Belonging: Miki Hayakwa, Hisako Hibi and Miné Okubo," in partnership with the Japanese American National Museum.



Hisako Hibi, *Autumn*, 1970, oil on canvas, 39 1/8 × 32 1/4 × 1 1/2 in. (99.4 × 81.9 × 3.8 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the American Women's History Initiative Acquisitions Pool, administered by the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative, 2023.6.3

Hisako Hibi

Despite all odds, the prolific painter and printer, Hisako Hibi, spent decades creating artwork that highlighted her experiences as an immigrant of Japanese descent. Born Hisako Shimzu in 1907 in Torihama, Fukui Prefecture, Japan, Shimuzu and her parents moved to the United States in 1920. The young artist enrolled in the California School of the Arts. During her matriculation, she also met a fellow Japanese artist, Matsusaburo George Hibi.

While raising two children with her husband, she continued to paint and participated in the Bay Area art scene. However, the Executive Order 9066 of 1942 completely upended the dreams the young couple had for their lives and their children's. The order, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, forced Japanese Americans to leave their homes and move to internment camps. Despite the immense hardships of living in the camp, she remained productive, creating over 70 paintings depicting the desolate barracks and daily life in the camps.

After her release in 1945 and her husband's passing, Hibi supported her family alone by working in a garment factory in New York City. She continued painting while taking classes at the Museum of Modern Art where she was first encouraged to explore abstraction in vibrant colors. These experiments led her to create works like "Autumn."

The bright colors used contrast with the erratic marks Hibi makes to depict a highly charged scene. In the bottom left corner, a mother holds one of her children in her left arm while grasping the hand of another with her right. The scene seems to reflect the chaotic beauty of her life during the period following her husband's death and release from the internment camps. Most of her work had autobiographical details that reflected the dualities of her identity, grappling with themes of cultural displacement, identity, and resilience.

Despite the repeated hardships, Hibi moved and reentered the vibrant Bay Area art community by continuing to create new works, contribute to various artist associations and show her work in solo and group exhibitions before passing away in 1991. Even after her death, her artistic contributions continue to be celebrated and remembered for their profound insight and emotional depth.

Matsusaburo George Hibi

Born in 1886 in Shiga Prefecture, Japan, Matsusaburo George Hibi immigrated to the United States at the age of 11, settling in California with his family. His artistic journey began early, when he showed a keen interest in drawing and lent his talents to local newspapers.

Hibi's artistic talents flourished at the California School of Fine Arts where he met his wife and took classes to hone in on his formal skills. Eventually, he began teaching classes at the school, and helped to found the East West Art Society in 1921.

Following his marriage to Hisako Hibi, he successfully submitted work to a number of juried shows and had his own solo show. However, the mandatory move to the internment camps forced Hibi to find alternative ways to continue teaching students and making work. The harsh conditions led Hibi to begin featuring his now-signature motif of coyotes and cougars. The inclusion of these wild beasts evoke an anxious and pervasive sense of struggle in the camps as seen in "Coyotes Came Out of the Desert." This oil-on-canvas painting depicts coyotes hungrily roaming around the snow-covered grounds outside of the internment camp barracks. Throughout his career, Hibi's art was characterized by its expressive use of line and form, often depicting scenes from everyday life infused with a sense of nostalgia and reverence for his Japanese heritage. His works reflected a deep appreciation for the natural world, capturing the beauty of landscapes and botanical subjects with remarkable precision and sensitivity.

After the war, Hibi resettled to New York City with his family in 1945. He continued to make work, but unfortunately, his health declined. Matsusaburo George Hibi succumbed to cancer in 1947.



Matsusaburo George Hibi, *Coyotes Came Out of the Desert*, 1945, oil on canvas, 26 15/16 × 23 × 1 1/2 in. (68.4 × 58.4 × 3.8 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Catherine Walden Myer Fund, 2023.5

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Chef's inspirations: Martha Stewart and family matriarch



Emshika Alberini, owner of Chang Thai Café in New Hampshire, says her experience on a Food Network competition show was "the ultimate experience." Photo by MissMegaBug

Although Emshika Alberini, chef and owner of Chang Thai Cafe in Littleton, New Hampshire, was ultimately eliminated from Food Network's "Martha Rules: Tick Tock," she walked away with a compliment from television personality Martha Stewart.

"She said, 'Emshika, your mussels cooked perfectly,'" Alberini says. "She gave me really good feedback. I hold that to my heart."

The 2021 food competition was filmed for five days in Kennebunkport, Maine. Alberini was one of four chefs tasked with using garlic chives with blossoms, hasty pudding, mussels and whole-grain mustard to make an appetizer in 15 minutes. Filming began at 5 a.m. and often lasted until 7 p.m. Alberini served the judges pancakes but unfortunately forgot to include one ingredient: mustard.

Alberini says her appearance on the cooking show was the "ultimate experience" because she met talented chefs with different backgrounds. She made two new friends with whom she remains in contact. "It's not about pride and winning," Alberini explains. "It's about how you meet amazing people."

Alberini grew up in Bangkok, Thailand. She moved to New Jersey in 2000 and later lived in Albany, New York, where she pursued a graduate degree in organizational management from Russell Sage College. While in school, she worked at various restaurants. During her time in a corporate internship, Alberini met her husband, and they married in 2006 and moved to Littleton, where he was raised. That same year, on Alberini's birthday, her sister passed away suddenly.

Over the next two years, Alberini struggled with finding purpose in her life. She wanted to connect with her sister's dream of becoming a chef and spend more time with her mother. One day in 2008, Alberini walked past an empty storefront on Main Street in her small New Hampshire town and decided to open a Thai restaurant as a tribute to

her sister. She saw the potential, despite not having the experience or the money to get started. Alberini maxed out her credit cards and started on a small scale. The success was overwhelming. Within a year, she paid off all her debt.

Chang Thai Cafe's menu features dishes - many based on her mom's recipes - from central Thailand. Alberini and her mom do all the cooking. "She's my heart and soul in the business," Alberini says.

Thai Pumpkin Red Curry

Servings: 2

Ingredients

- 2 cups pumpkin (kabocha squash), diced
- 2 cups boneless skinless chicken, sliced thin
- 2 tablespoon red curry paste
- 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil
- 2 cups coconut milk (1 cup of creamy part, 1 cup of water part)
- 1 to 1 1/2 tablespoons fish sauce. Taste as you go so it's not too salty.
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 3 kaffir lime leaves
- 1/2 cup Thai basil
- 3 sliced red pepper
- 4 cups cooked jasmine rice

Directions

Prepare the pumpkin by cutting and removing the top part. Peel the skin off. If this is too hard to peel, put it in the microwave for 2 minutes so it will soften and be easier to peel. Take out all the seeds from the middle of the pumpkin. Cut the pumpkin into 1-inch square cubes and wash thoroughly.

Slice the chicken into bite-size pieces and set aside.

Fry the red curry paste in the pan with the vegetable oil, and then add the coconut milk (creamy part) to get coconut cream mixed with red curry until it looks oily, about 2 minutes.

Add the chicken to the coconut curry and let it cook for 1 minute. Add the 2nd part of the coconut milk, the pumpkin and allow them to cook for about 20 to 30 minutes.

While cooking, add the fish sauce, sugar, salt and kaffir lime leaves until the chicken and pumpkin are cooked. Add the Thai basil leaves and red pepper to garnish. You can also add extra coconut milk to garnish. Serve with the warm jasmine rice.

New to cooking? Follow this pro's advice



"If you're serious about cooking," says chef and restaurateur Joyce Sato, "I think an investment in a great tool can last a lifetime." Photo courtesy of Visit LaGrange

In 2015, when Joyce Sato opened [505 Eats](#) in LaGrange, Georgia, a small town southwest of Atlanta, she'd been making and selling sandwiches at the convenience store she and her husband operated. Sato learned to cook as a child by watching her mom create dishes, especially complicated soups, in their home in Seoul, Korea.

"Her homemade food was an important part of growing up," Sato says. "Her knowledge about how to cook from scratch was inspiring."

In 1997, when Sato was 7, her family moved to Mansfield, Ohio. Sato's mom didn't always have access to Korean ingredients and often had to grow her own produce or substitute an item available in the grocery store.

505 Eats is in the heart of LaGrange, serving American-style dishes such as double cheeseburgers, fried spicy chicken sandwiches and

supreme Philly cheeseburgers. Sato likes to put her own spin on traditional American foods. She features international flavors several times a week: Korean-spiced ribs with grits bowl, pork carnitas in Roja sauce burrito and more.

Discover your cooking style

When Sato first started cooking, she watched cooking shows where viewers learned how to make specific dishes. She learned by experimenting with various ingredients and techniques. Her versions of 505 Eats' double cheeseburger, chicken salad and pimento cheese represent hours of trying new recipes and developing her distinct style of cooking.

Set up the pantry

Seasonings are essential to any cook's pantry. Sato suggests stocking herbs and spices used in the style of foods you want to cook. Begin to build a pantry with basil, flour, oregano, pepper, salt, several types of pasta and rice, sugar and thyme. Once you start cooking, you'll see what ingredients are repeated for certain recipes and ethnic dishes, she says.

Build your toolbox

With any hobby or vocation, a set of tools is necessary to get started. Cooking is no different. Sato advises purchasing a standard chef's knife and pots and saucepans based on your family's size. Spatulas, tongs and a wooden spoon also come in handy in the kitchen.

"If you're serious about cooking, I think an investment in a great tool can last a lifetime," she says. "There's value in certain things that are essential that you won't have to replace."



505 Eats Chicken Salad

Servings: 4 to 6

Ingredients

- 4 chicken breasts, or 2 pounds
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 stalks of celery, finely chopped
- 1/2 white onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise or more to your taste

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Wash and pat dry the chicken breasts and put them on a baking sheet. Sprinkle the rosemary, thyme, salt and pepper on top of the chicken. Drizzle the olive oil over the chicken. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes; the internal temperature should read 165 F.

Take it out of the oven and let it cool. After the chicken cools, shred the chicken with a fork or by hand and put it in a bowl. Add the celery, onion and mayonnaise to the shredded chicken and mix it all together. Add additional salt and pepper to taste if needed. Serve over lettuce or on the bread of your choice.

Once shrouded in anonymity, their works are now uncloaked

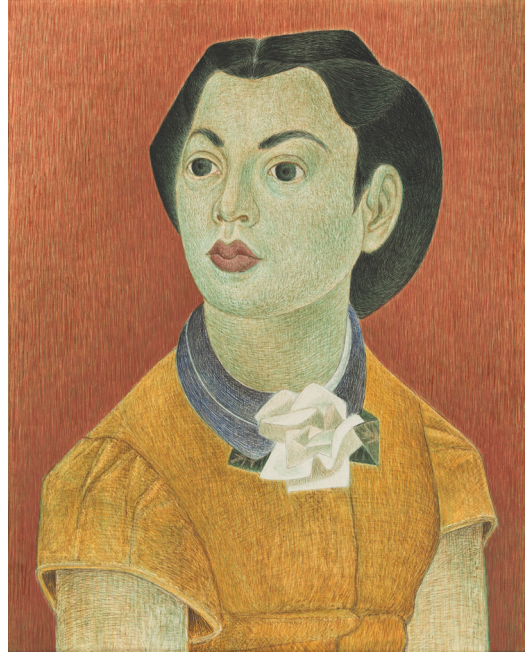
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Miné Okubo

In "Portrait Study" by Miné Okubo, the artist utilizes tempera to experiment with shading, color and form to create a textured likeness of herself. This work demonstrates the style and content the artist is most known for: representation of daily life and human existence. The Japanese American artist, writer and social activist whose life and work left a profound impact on the cultural landscape of America was born in Riverside, California, in 1912. Okubo's artistic talents became evident at an early age, and she pursued formal training in art, studying at the University of California, Berkeley. During her matriculation, she developed a unique style characterized by bold lines, vibrant colors, and a keen eye for capturing the essence of everyday life.

During World War II, Okubo and her family were forcibly relocated to an internment camp. There, the young artist used her talent and experience as a means of documenting the harsh realities of life in the camps. Following her release in 1946, she made her book debut titled "Citizen 13660." The illustrated memoir provided a poignant and intimate portrayal of the internment experience, offering a firsthand account of the fear, uncertainty, and resilience of Japanese Americans during this dark chapter in American history.

Okubo continued to pursue her passion for art and activism. She traveled extensively, documenting social and political movements and advocating for civil rights and social justice. Her work continued to evolve, encompassing a wide range of media, including painting, illustration, and printmaking. Miné Okubo passed away in 2001, but her spirit lives on through her timeless art and unwavering commitment to social justice.



Miné Okubo, *Portrait Study*, ca. 1937, tempera on hardboard, 23 1/2 × 19 3/8 × 1 1/2 in. (59.7 × 49.2 × 3.8 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Luisita L. and Franz H. Denghausen Endowment, 2023.46.1, © 2023, The Miné Okubo Charitable Corporation