

## CINCY-CINCO

### blends flavors, crosses cultures

**Susana Phelan** (left) and Lilita Tramontin, the owners of El Punto Criollo catering business, create meals that include (clockwise from left) tostones con queso, fruit salad, shrimp seviche and rice pudding.



This weekend's **celebration** at Coney Island goes well beyond traditional **Mexican fare**

**By Polly Campbell**  
*Enquirer staff writer*

One recent afternoon, Lilita Tramontin and her catering partner, Susana Phelan, invited me to Mason where they showed me how to put together tostones con queso. They'll be selling the beloved Venezuelan street food at the Cincy-Cinco festival Saturday and Sunday at Coney Island.

Over in Maineville, Mariela Davis has started preparations for tamales, hojaldras, Panamanian chicken and rice to sell at her "El Kiosco Panamanian" at the festival.

Hold on. Isn't Cinco de Mayo a Mexican celebration?

True. The holiday commemorates a Mexican victory over French forces in

the city of Puebla on May 5, 1862, but the way it's celebrated at the Cincy-Cinco festival is an all-inclusive Latino party. Americans have begun to use the Mexican holiday in a way that has no counterpart in Mexico — as an excuse for wild drinking parties. So the Latino community started the festival to create a family-friendly alternative and a cultural showcase.

"We don't want to just have a Mexican party and leave out our Panamanian or Colombian friends," says Alfonso Cornejo, president of the Cincinnati Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and organizer of the festival.

"It's about getting the whole Latino community in (Greater) Cincinnati together, and sharing our culture with everyone else. Of course we have to have food — that's an important expression of our culture."

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Tostones con queso (above left) and shrimp seviche are dishes that transcend boundaries.