

EL FLAMENCO
SPANISH CABARET



Antonio Granjero
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entre flamenco

SHOW FROM \$25, DINNER-SHOW FROM \$48

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Photo: Tracy Lessor

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Pumpkins
Sales Start October 7

Free Event **Open Daily 9-6** Free Event

Pet Day
October 12
12-3 pm
Pet Adoptions (Fees)
Pet Blessings
Pet Treat, Watering Station
Pet Food Donations Appreciated

St. John's
United Methodist Church

Fall Festival
October 20
3-6 pm
Trunk or Treat
Bounce Houses
Children's Reading Time
Face Painting and More!

1200 Old Pecos Trail
Santa Fe



EDITOR'S NOTE

Rain in the fall

My paternal grandmother was a short woman with gray eyes and pupils of different sizes. We called her Mala Babcia, which means Little Grandma in Polish, to differentiate her from our other grandmother who was tall.

Mala Babcia (read: Mahwah Bahbchyah) moved to Canada when she was 74 and I was 11. She lived with us for the rest of her life. She spoke old Polish and a little Ukrainian, and she only learned how to say one word in English — dollar — which she'd shout out while watching *Wheel of Fortune*. She admired Pat Sajak's teeth and imitated his smile every time I asked her to. She had the softest skin. Her cheeks turned pink when she drank tea or her daily shot of spirytus vodka (192 proof) or when she read about politics in imported Polish newspapers. Her motto was "soup is life" — until she turned 90 and changed her mind.

Mala Babcia loved early October and the start of mushroom season in Northern Europe and Canada. She was from a region in Poland (or Prussia or Lithuania, depending on the century and war) saturated by lakes and cut by thick woods, where the last of the European bison roam free. The region's name translates to "at the edge of the forest." Her people were forest people.

There is a Polish saying that goes like this: *Rosnąc jak grzyby po deszczu* (To pop up like mushrooms after the rain). Mala Babcia loved the rain and would watch like a hawk for dark clouds. If the season was good, she'd harvest baskets of orange kurki (chanterelles), whose Polish name means "little hens"; kanie (parasol mushrooms) that taste of umami; and borówki or prawdziki (porcini or king bolete) for their meaty texture. She'd hang them to dry on long strings all over the house.

Coincidentally, my maiden name is Prawdzik. It was the surname of Mala Babcia's first husband, and my father's father, Piotr Prawdzik, who was dragged out of the family home by Soviet agents in 1949, when my father, an only child, was one and a half.

Mala Babcia's name was Ludwika Koronkiewicz, formerly Prawdzik, née Miszkiel. Prawdzik could mean "the one who speaks the truth" or "a real boar," or it could refer to that meaty type of mushroom grandma loved so much. I prefer the latter.

When she couldn't identify a mushroom — and I do not recommend this method, as it is highly dangerous — she'd cut its stem and lick it to see if the fungus was poisonous. Sometimes she'd make a face, throw the mushroom away, and tell me to stop filling the bottom of my basket with dead leaves and get to work.

She'd have loved early fall in Northern New Mexico for its late monsoon rains. If you'd have gone mushroom hunting with Mala Babcia, deep into the Santa Fe National Forest, say, she'd have woken you before sunrise, forced you to eat hot milk soup with strange little noodles, stuffed your backpack with kielbasa and rye bread, and if you were not family she'd have you sit blindfolded in the car until you reached your destination (and on the way back). Like a true mushroom hunter, she was competitive and kept the exact location of prolific mushroom spots secret.

Mala Babcia died in her sleep 15 years ago this week, at the age of 94, right at the beginning of mushroom season. The sky was blue when we put her to rest. She'd have hated it.

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The New Mexican's Weekly Magazine of Arts, Entertainment & Culture



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Pasatiempo

Burner him!

**ZOZOBRA GETS HIS
FILL OF HOT AIR**

