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Media Only

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Virginia Feeds Travelers' Passions for Flavor
**- Chef Alex Montiel and foodies like him lead the charge in Virginia's
culinary revolution -**

RICHMOND, Va. – Virginia is in the midst of a culinary revolution and Chef Alex Montiel and passionate foodies like him are leading the charge. Montiel embodies the heart of culinary travel in Virginia – small, locally-owned treasures with a reverence for authentic cuisine and a love of local ingredients. His southern flare for flavor is feeding travelers' passion for great food in Virginia.

Montiel's passion for culinary creations has taken him around the globe. He studied under some of the world's best chefs before opening *La Cocina del Sol*, an authentic Mexican restaurant in the small town of Crozet, near Charlottesville. Fusing Mexican and Southwestern traditions with hip, eclectic charm, his menu of crab cake bruschetta, calamari fritos, red snapper tacos and caramel flan excites guests with an explosion of tastes. Montiel's success has led to a second restaurant, *Brasserie Montiel & Coffee House*, in Charlottesville, where college kids and neighborhood friends dig into some of the best dishes around.

Virginia was recently named one of the top food and wine destinations in the country and it's easy to see why. Each region of Virginia has its own unique flavor and style to tempt travelers' taste buds. From traditional southern comfort food to seafood delicacies straight out of the Chesapeake Bay, passionate chefs are embracing Virginia's culinary heritage like never before.

With more than 2,000 restaurants featuring tantalizing local specialties from Chincoteague oysters to peanut soup to Brunswick Stew, Virginia is full of culinary adventures. Local legends include the shrimp and grits at *Croaker's Spot* in Richmond's historic Jackson Ward neighborhood. Indulge in the famous baked potato soup at *Allison's* in charming Abingdon in Southwest Virginia. For upscale southern flavor, order the skillet seared backfin crab cakes at the award-winning *Bistro 1888* in South Boston. Take a walk on the wild side with the game entrees at *Flamenco Restaurant* in Onancock on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Enjoy sweet potato encrusted rockfish stuffed with Smithfield Ham at *Smithfield Station*. Satisfy sweet cravings with giant, homemade marshmallows at *Dairy Godmothers* in Alexandria. Or dig into the award-winning barbecue and bluegrass at the *Galax Smokehouse* along The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail.

Combine all this great flavor with award-winning wine from one of [Virginia's 130 wineries](#) for a glimpse of culinary nirvana. Each culinary destination is surrounded by rich history, surprising small towns and beautiful accommodations, from mountain top resorts to quaint seaside cottages, making Virginia a destination of distinction.

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For people who base their travel decisions on their taste buds – now is the time to feed that passion for great food in Virginia.

Hungry for more? Go to www.Virginia.org to watch Alex Montiel make his special, heart-shaped appetizer and get ideas for the best places to taste Virginia’s culinary revolution.

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Note to media:

The *Virginia Travel Stories* series is part of the *Live Passionately Virginia is for Lovers* campaign. The Virginia Tourism Corporation will highlight Virginians who embody the spirit of *Live Passionately*. *Live Passionately* is less about a vacation and more about a lifestyle, with savvy travelers choosing to visit Virginia to live out their passions for wine, music, heritage, outdoor adventure, and other fulfilling experiences that make Virginia one of the top destinations in the country.

Video and downloadable images of Chef Alex Montiel and this feature in Word and PDF format are available for media use at www.vatravelstories.com.

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