



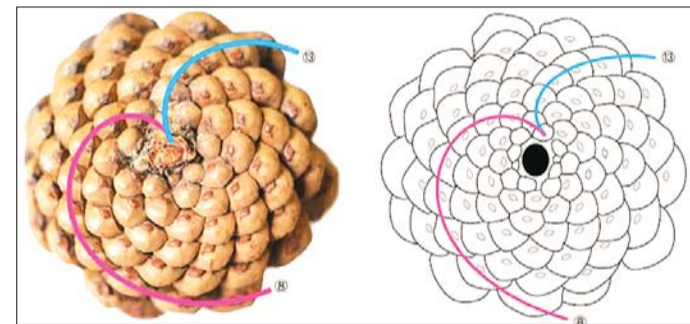
International Hummus Day: Celebrating the World's Favourite Dip

Observed on May 13, International Hummus Day honours the beloved Middle Eastern dish that has become a global culinary staple. Made from chickpeas, tahini, olive oil, lemon juice, and garlic, hummus is celebrated for its rich flavour, versatility, and nutritional value. From traditional meze platters to modern wraps and bowls, the creamy dip continues to inspire chefs and home cooks alike. The day encourages people to explore different variations, support local food businesses, and appreciate the cultural roots of this simple yet iconic dish that brings people together through food.

#MATHEMATICS

Inside A Pine Cone

What makes this pattern so profound is its universality. From a pine cone to galaxies light-years away, the same mathematics repeats itself



At first glance, a pine cone may seem like a simple product of nature, rough, woody, and unassuming. But hidden within its structure is a remarkable mathematical pattern that connects it to flowers, seashells, hurricanes, and even distant galaxies. This shared pattern is rooted in one of the most famous sequences in mathematics: the Fibonacci sequence.

The Fibonacci sequence is a series of numbers in which each number is the sum of the two preceding ones: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, and so on. While this sequence may appear abstract, it plays a fundamental role in how many natural forms grow and organize themselves.

As plants develop, new leaves, seeds, or scales do not emerge randomly. Instead, they form at a precise angle relative to the previous growth. This angle, known as the golden angle, measures approximately 137.5 degrees. By growing at this angle, each new structure avoids shading or crowding the ones that came before it, allowing for maximum exposure to sunlight, rain, and air. This efficient spacing is not a matter of aesthetics; it is a solution shaped by physics and evolution.

In pine cones, this growth rule produces a striking visual result: interlocking spirals that wind in opposite directions. When counted, these

spirals often correspond to consecutive Fibonacci numbers, such as 8 spirals in one direction and 13 in the other. This arrangement allows the cone to pack its scales tightly while maintaining structural stability, demonstrating how mathematics and biology work together to solve practical problems.

This same geometric principle appears across the natural world. Sunflower heads display spiral seed patterns that follow Fibonacci numbers, maximizing the number of seeds that can fit in a given space. Nautilus shells and other mollusks grow in expanding spirals governed by similar ratios. Even on vastly larger scales, hurricanes and spiral galaxies echo this form, revealing how the same mathematical rules can shape phenomena from the microscopic to the cosmic.

What makes this pattern so profound is its universality. From a pine cone held in your hand to galaxies light-years away, the same mathematics repeats itself across different scales of reality. Nature, it seems, favours efficiency, and the Fibonacci sequence provides an elegant framework for balancing growth, space, and energy.

In this way, the pine cone becomes more than a natural object. It is a quiet reminder that mathematics is not merely a human invention, but a language woven into the fabric of the universe itself.

THE TRIAL OF LASTENIA ABARTA.

The Court Room thronged with Curious Spectators.—The Jury Impassioned.—The Prisoner in Court.—Her Appearance.—Progress of the Trial.—The Lines of Defence.—Story of the Defendant.

At 10 o'clock yesterday morning Judge Sepulveda's court room was crowded by an eager throng drawn thither by the knowledge that at that hour the trial of Lastenia Abarta, who, on the 15th of March last, shot and killed Francisco F. Forster, was to be commenced. A venire of sixty jurors had been summoned, all of whom were present, and in a few minutes after the formal opening of the Court the impaneling of the jury which was to decide her fate commenced. Contrary to expectation the panel summoned proved ample, and by half-past twelve o'clock the following jury was sworn: Marion Miller, William White, Andrew Stephens, J.H. Martin, Willis Newton, M. Serrot, Tipton Bandy, Thomas A. Garey, D. C. Wilson, J. H. Banks, R. Kidson, Frank Bishop. The jury were then cautioned by Judge Sepulveda that during the course of the trial they were to hold no communication with outside parties on the subject of the trial and after the judgment and plea read to them they were placed in the care of the Sheriff, lest the Court took a recess until 2 o'clock P. M.

During the empaneling of the jury the defendant, Miss Abarta, neatly dressed in black and wearing a composed modest demeanor, occupied a seat in her counsel's W. Wiley Wells and J. F. Godfrey, E. W. Moore. Her mother and sister, also dressed in black, occupied a seat near her.

The counsel for the prosecution are District Attorney Brown, Stephen M. White and Theodore Lynell, Esquires.

Los Angeles Herald, 16 March 1881.

A Wronged Woman's Revenge.

Los ANGELES, Cal., March 17.—F. P. Forster was shot dead on the street yesterday by Lastonia Abarta, a Spanish girl, who states that Forster had betrayed her under the promise of marriage. Forster was connected with some of the oldest Spanish families in Southern California.

Harrisburg [Pennsylvania] Telegraph, 17 March 1881.

Little Rock [Arkansas] Democrat, 16 March 1881.

Got His Deserts. Los ANGELES, Cal., March 16.—F. P. Forster was shot dead on the street to-day by Lastenia Abarta, a Spanish girl, who states that Forster seduced her under a promise of marriage. Forster is connected with some of the oldest Spanish families in southern California.

Herald, 29 April 1881.

The Forster family was among those new-comers who had made a fortune acquiring former Mexican lands, often through legal maneuvers that the original owners couldn't fight. One of his most significant acquisitions came from Pio Pico, California's last Mexican governor, who lost thousands of acres near San Diego.

Chico Forster grew up in this wealth. At 40, he was known around town as a gambler, a womanizer, a man who spent his father's money on horses and women. He wasn't married. He didn't work. He had time, money, and a reputation.

Lastenia Abarta came from a very different world. At 16, she worked in her parents' pool hall in the Mexican part of town. She was known for her voice, she sang and played guitar, entertaining customers. She was beautiful, talented, and young.

He noticed her. He was a regular customer. What happened next depends on who was telling the story. But here's the version that came out at trial.

Chico invited Lastenia to perform at a party hosted by Pio Pico himself, the former governor whose land Chico's father had taken. At the party, according to testimony, Lastenia sang with improvised lyrics that mocked Pico. Whether she did this at Chico's encouragement or on her own initiative, the performance was apparently humiliating enough that Pico never forgot it.

After the performance, Chico and Lastenia left together. They went to the Moiso Mansion Hotel. And there, according to Lastenia's later testimony, Chico made her a promise: if she gave herself to him, he would marry her. He would come back with a ring and a priest, and they would formalize the union.

She believed him. In 1882 Los Angeles, for a young Mexican woman from a working-class family, virginity was everything. It wasn't just morality, it was currency. A woman who lost her virtue outside of marriage became unmarriageable, damaged goods, a source of family shame.

Lastenia wasn't naive. She knew what she was risking. But Chico was wealthy, charming, persistent. And he promised marriage. So, she said

She Shot Him Dead In Broad Daylight

She fires once. The bullet enters through his eye. He drops instantly, dead before he hits the ground. Witnesses freeze. Blood pools on the dusty street. Lastenia doesn't run. She doesn't drop the gun. She just stands there, waiting. Within minutes, police arrives and arrest her for murder. Open and shut case. Dozens of witnesses. Confession. Physical evidence. Three months later, she walks free. Not because she didn't do it. Everyone knew she did it. But because a jury of twelve men decided that Francisco Forster had it coming, and that Lastenia Abarta couldn't be held responsible for what happened when a man breaks a promise to a woman he's "ruined."



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#JUSTICE



yes. Then, Chico disappeared. No ring. No priest. No wedding. No word at all. Lastenia and her sister Hortensia went looking for him. They searched for days. Finally, they found him at a race track, gambling, laughing with friends, acting like nothing had happened. When Lastenia confronted him, he brushed her off. He had no intention of marrying her. The promise had been a lie to get what he wanted.

The sisters tried to force the issue. They literally grabbed him and pushed him into their carriage, intending to take him to a church and make him keep his promise. But Chico wasn't going to be forced into anything. During the carriage ride, he escaped, jumped out while it was moving and ran. Lastenia chased him on foot through downtown Los Angeles. When she caught up to him on the street, she pulled out a gun and shot him dead.

The shooting happened in broad daylight, on a public street, in front of witnesses. There was no question who pulled the trigger or whether Chico died. The only question was whether Lastenia Abarta would hang for it.

Chico's father was devastated and furious. He used his considerable wealth and influence to ensure that the district attorney prosecuted aggressively. This wasn't going to be some quiet case that disappeared. His son's killer would face justice.

But Lastenia's defense attorney had a strategy. In 1882, the legal and

medical establishments were obsessed with "female hysteria," a diagnosis that basically blamed women's uteruses for any emotional or mental disturbance. The theory was that women were controlled by their reproductive organs, making them prone to irrational behaviour, especially related to sex and love. It was junk science. Complete nonsense. But it was widely believed by doctors, lawyers, and judges.

Lastenia's attorney argued that she had been driven temporarily insane by what Chico had done to her. Not just the broken promise, the loss of her virtue itself had unbalanced her mind. She literally couldn't be held responsible for her actions because her female biology had made her irrational.

Dr. Joseph Kurtz, a physician, testified that Lastenia suffered from "moral insanity" brought on by the loss of her virginity and the betrayal. He argued that in her hysteria, she couldn't distinguish right from wrong. She was, in that moment, not criminally responsible.

This defense worked for two reasons. First, it aligned with existing pseudoscientific beliefs about women. The all-male jury already believed women were emotionally unstable and controlled by their biology. This just confirmed it. Second, it let them punish Chico without saying so directly.

Because here's the thing: the jury sympathized with Lastenia. Not because they were progressive

fragile female nature. It was a defense that both helped and harmed women. It got some women acquitted who might otherwise have hanged. But it also reinforced the idea that women were irrational, controlled by their bodies, incapable of full moral responsibility. And it only worked for certain women. Lastenia was young, Mexican, working-class, but she was also portrayed as virtuous before Chico "ruined" her. The defense depended on painting her as an innocent girl destroyed by a wealthy elite predator.

If she'd been older, if she'd had previous relationships, if she couldn't be framed as a virgin victim, the defense wouldn't have worked. The "temporary insanity" defense was only available to women who could perform innocence convincingly enough.

Think about the absurdity of the verdict. Lastenia shot Chico Forster in broad daylight, on a public street, in front of dozens of witnesses. She confessed immediately. There was zero question about the facts.

And the jury said: not guilty. Because they decided that he deserved it. Not officially, of course. Officially, they said that she was temporarily insane and couldn't be held responsible. But the subtext was clear: Chico Forster broke a promise to a young woman he'd seduced, and that violation of honour justified his death.

It was vigilante justice wrapped in pseudoscience and delivered by twelve men who couldn't punish Chico legally but could refuse to punish his killer.

The case also exposed the racial and class tensions in Los Angeles. Chico's family represented the new American power structure that had taken land from the old Mexican families. Lastenia represented the Mexican working class that was being pushed to the margins. The jury acquitted Lastenia, they weren't just sympathizing with a wronged woman, they were also, perhaps, expressing some resentment towards the Forster family's wealth and power. A small act of resistance against the new order. Or maybe, they just couldn't bring themselves to broken a promise. Either way, Lastenia walked free. And Los Angeles went back to pre-

tending women were delicate, irrational creatures, controlled by their biology, right up until those women needed to work, raise families, and survive without the men who'd promised to protect them.

The irony is that the same society that called women hysterical and irrational also expected them to run households, raise children, and manage complex domestic economies. Women were supposedly too unstable to vote or own property, but stable enough to be trusted with literally everything else.

The "female hysteria" defense exposed this contradiction. If women were truly as irrational as the diagnosis suggested, they shouldn't be trusted with anything. But society needed women to be functional, so, the hysteria was conveniently temporary, triggered by specific circumstances (usually involving men and sex), and treatable by giving women what they wanted.

Lastenia Abarta got what she wanted: freedom. Not marriage to Chico, that was impossible now. But freedom from hanging.

She took it and disappeared. Somewhere, under a different name, she might have lived a long life. She might have married, had children, died old and forgotten. Or she might have died young, a casualty of the same society that acquitted her but couldn't actually protect her. We'll never know.

What we know is that on March 14, 1882, an 18-year-old girl shot a 40-year-old man dead on a Los Angeles street because he broke a promise.

And twelve men decided that was justice. Not because they believed in women's rights or equality. But because they believed in promises, honour, and the idea that some betrayals are unforgivable, even if the only punishment available was refusing to punish the killer.

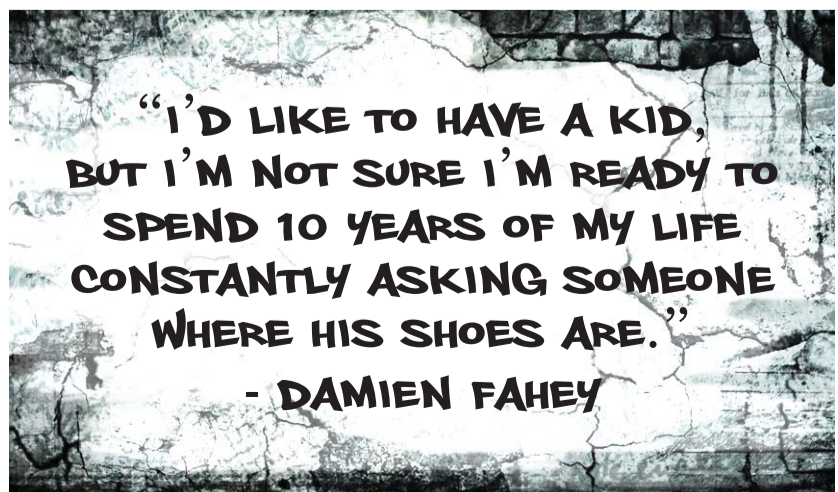
Chico Forster is buried in Los Angeles. His grave can still be visited. Lastenia Abarta has no grave we know of, no memorial, no marker. She exists only in newspaper archives and court records, frozen at 18 years old, holding a gun.

She killed a man. She walked free. She disappeared. And history can't decide if that's a tragedy or justice.

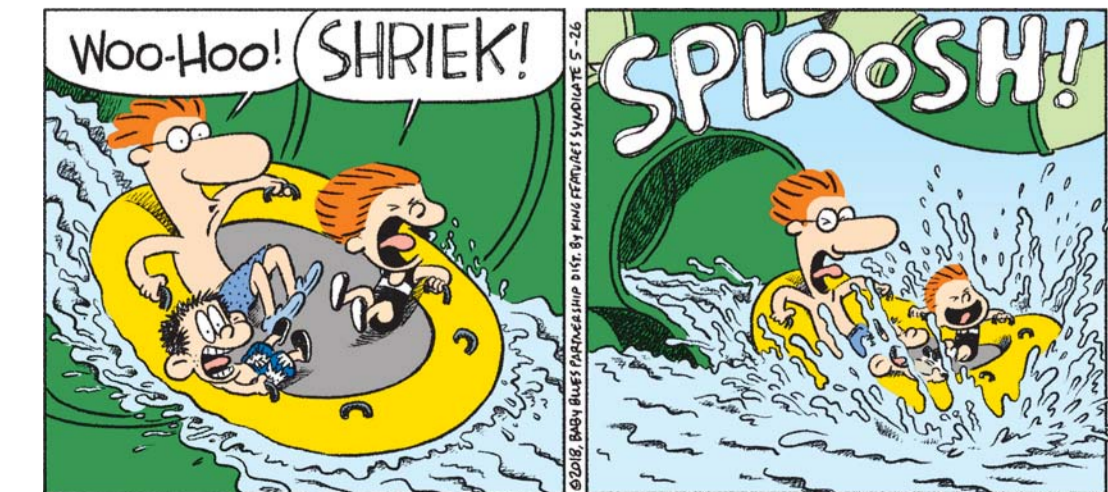
rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman