

# EVENTS & FESTIVALS

## These Tamales don't intend to be the blue woman group

Los Angeles Times

**W**HEN it comes to humor, there is often a gender divide.

How else can one explain the time-honored conundrum of why men find flatulence and the Three Stooges endlessly funny and most women endlessly don't?

Comedian Kiki Melendez believes she may have the answer: "I think the way women are, our feelings are on the table," she says. "I think men hold in so much, that's their way of releasing what's inside. [Women] release it verbally; men release it biologically."

Melendez knows a thing or two about comedy. In 2002, she and a pre-"Desperate Housewives" Eva Longoria founded Hot Tamales, a female stand-up troupe. "I was literally told by every club owner that it could not be done," Melendez says. "They said there are not enough [women] to carry a show."

But Melendez and Longoria (who's now legally added husband Tony Parker's last name) are having the last laugh.

Five years later, the collective has grown to 150 female comedians from coast to coast, representing all ethnicities. "I used to scout talent when we first start-

ed, and I was surprised to find so many talented women out there," Longoria says via e-mail.

Seven of the Hot Tamales, including Longoria and Melendez, perform at HBO and AEG Live's third annual Comedy Festival in Las Vegas on Saturday. Among those also appearing at this week's event are Wanda Sykes and Ellen DeGeneres, who sit alongside Lucille Ball, Carol Burnett, Sandra Bernhard, Margaret Cho and Marilyn Martinez in Melendez's unofficial funny lady hall of fame.

Although differences between the sexes come up in the Hot

### HOT TAMALES LIVE

**WHERE:** Caesars Palace, 3570 Las Vegas Blvd. S., Las Vegas

**WHEN:** 11:45 p.m. Sat. as part of the Comedy Festival

**PRICE:** \$50

**INFO:** (877) 823-3378; [www.thecomedyfestival.com](http://www.thecomedyfestival.com)

Tamales' routines, the shows are a men-bash-free zone, Melendez says, in part, because she knows it's bad for business to alienate half her potential audience. Plus, she adds, "We love men."

Through their ethnic diversity the comedians come up with universal themes. "An Asian

comic could talk about immigrating here and that's the same experience a Dominican would have," she says. "I mean, they could talk about being discriminated against because they drive slow. Me, at the same time, as a Latina can identify because we get discriminated against for not having car insurance, stereotypically."

And although not exactly family-friendly, the Tamales also don't work blue: "They can't be crude. I want the show to be a class act."

— MELINDA NEWMAN  
THEGUIDE@LATIMES.COM



Kiki Melendez, standing, and, from left, Kira Soltanovich, Amy Anderson, Sandra Valls and Gina Yashere.

### A FLURRY OF ART

Would you like some snow with your sawdust? More than 150 artists will be offering their works when the **Sawdust Art Festival's Winter Fantasy** opens this weekend with a real field of snow, holiday carolers, storytell-

ing, live music, art classes, children's activities, refreshments, holiday lights and Santa. New this year is the **ArtistTree Ornament Fundraiser**—original decorations will be sold at the information booth, with proceeds

benefiting the festival education fund. Tree-lighting ceremony: 8:30 p.m. Saturday.

**10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sat.-Sun., through Dec. 9, 935 Laguna Canyon Road, Laguna Beach. \$3-\$9. (949) 494-3030; [www.sawdustartfestival.org](http://www.sawdustartfestival.org)**

Photographs by INDIA JOHNSON; JOHN BERRY The Comedy Festival

