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CONTACTS:  
Angela Tung ([angela@pearlriver.com](mailto:angela@pearlriver.com))  
Joanne Kwong ([joanne@pearlriver.com](mailto:joanne@pearlriver.com))  
212.431.4770

**PEARL RIVER MART GALLERY PRESENTS  
'ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS: A RECIPE FOR REDISCOVERY'**

*Art exhibition features vibrant illustrations of foods significant  
to artist Nancy Pappas and Lunar New Year*

NEW YORK, NY – Jan. 12, 2022 – Illustrator and designer Nancy Pappas explores her evolving identity as an artist, Korean adoptee, and Asian American through stunning food illustrations in an upcoming art exhibition for the Pearl River Mart Gallery. ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS: A RECIPE FOR REDISCOVERY opens Jan. 20 and is on view through April 24. A reception will be held Jan. 20 from 6 to 8 p.m.

A South Korean adoptee, Pappas was raised in St. Louis, MO. Soon after graduating from University of Kansas in 2013, she moved to New York City, where she first worked in advertising. After some time, she found herself in a creative rut and decided to pursue her loves of food, travel, and art, eventually becoming the art director at Cherry Bombe, a biannual magazine celebrating women in the food industry. At the suggestion of a friend, she also began to share scrumptious illustrations of what she was eating on her Instagram feed. "I still wasn't quite sure what I wanted," said Pappas. "But I knew travel and food made me happy."

In 2018 she began her birth search, and that same year found her birth mother. In 2019, they reunited in Seoul. "That resulted in mixed emotions," she said. "Joy and enthusiasm, relief but also grief and mourning, confusion." In 2020, she returned to Seoul on a three-month language scholarship from an adoption organization, juggling full-time work back in New York and classes in Korea. As the pandemic raged on and anti-Asian attacks increased in the U.S., Pappas decided to stay. "It felt safer, and before I knew it I was in Seoul for nine months before coming back to the States for a visit."

Now she makes Seoul, along with New York, her home base, and uses food as a way to navigate her way through a country, language, and culture she often doesn't understand. "Seemingly day-to-day things are challenging and daunting for me. But like with anything, when you bring things back down to their basics, they're easier to digest, learn, and relearn. If I've never had a certain dish, I familiarize myself with the ingredients. I ask questions and look up what makes up the dish. That way I can understand it better — by first learning about the simple things that make up the more complex whole."

Her exhibition features some of those ingredients, such as red chili and napa cabbage, the bases of kimchi, a quintessentially Korean dish, and persimmons, which embody a reconnection with her homeland. "My first morning with my birth mother," she said, "I found her outside pulling persimmons



off the tree. She tossed them to me to catch in a bucket. It was strange — we were strangers — but this mundane chore felt so welcoming and home-like, all at the same time."

Also represented are foods traditionally eaten during Lunar New Year — an important holiday in Korean culture — meant to attract good luck, like *tteokguk*, rice cake soup which represents purity, prosperity, and growing one year older; *mandu*, dumplings that embody good fortune; and *japchae*, glass noodles symbolizing long life.

"We're so excited to kick off the Lunar New Year season with Nancy's beautiful exhibition," said Pearl River Mart President Joanne Kwong. "What we love about her pieces isn't just that they're delicious, lucky foods to eat during this festive time. They're connected with who she is, the journey she's on, and her search for home — experiences many of us can identify with."

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS at Pearl River is on view through April 24, 2022. The opening reception is Thursday, Jan. 20, from 6 to 8 p.m. in the Pearl River Mart Gallery at 452 Broadway (between Howard and Grand). The event is free but [registration is required](#).

Pearl River Mart's art gallery features curated exhibitions with local artists from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds. Previous artists include *New Yorker* magazine cartoonists Amy Hwang, Jeremy Nguyen, Suerynn Lee, Evan Hahn, and more; photographers Louis Chan, Hiroyuki Ito, and Corky Lee; painters Arlan Huang and Kam Mak; illustrators Jerry Ma, Yumi Sakugawa and Felicia Liang; and multimedia artists Wiena Lin, Ben Sloat, and Xin Song. Its recent shows include "Heartmind: Portraits from the Bob Eng Lee and Asian American Arts Centre Collections," which was presented in collaboration with nonprofit arts organization Think!Chinatown, and "Corky Lee on My Mind: A Photographic Tribute," dedicated to the legendary photographer and activist Corky Lee (1947–2021).

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### **About Pearl River Mart**

Celebrating its 50th anniversary, Pearl River Mart was founded as a "friendship store" in 1971. The iconic Asian emporium has locations in New York City's SoHo district, the esteemed Museum of Chinese in America, and the popular Chelsea Market with both a retail outlet and Pearl River Mart Foods. From home furnishings to fashion to snacks and everything in between, the store features one-of-a-kind items imported from Asia, as well as innovative merchandise designed and created by Asian Americans. A beloved destination for people from all over the globe, Pearl River has become symbolic of the uniqueness, authenticity, and multiculturalism of New York City. Visit [www.PearlRiver.com](http://www.PearlRiver.com) and follow on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#).

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