



WEATHER



**TODAY**  
High 26°C/79°F  
Low 18°C/64°F  
Cloudy



**TOMORROW**  
High 25°C/77°F  
Low 18°C/65°F  
Cloudy



**MONDAY**  
High 26°C/79°F  
Low 19°C/66°F  
Cloudy



CV

**From:** Dallas, Texas, USA  
**Lives in:** Palermo Hollywood  
**Age:** 34  
**Profession:** Director and Founder of Fabulous Weddings, event planner  
**Education:** University of Texas at Austin - Business Administration / Finance  
**Reading:** The Power of Habit by Charles Dubigg  
**Last film seen:** Osage County  
**Gadget:** My new Apple TV

BY JAYSON MCNAMARA  
FOR THE HERALD  
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**Don't let the Italian last name fool you! And certainly don't take her well-spoken Spanish words for it: Laetitia Orsetti's not a porteña. Leti, as her friends call her, actually grew up in a French-speaking family in Texas. In a tale of forever-changing identities, she moved to BA aged 19, for a university exchange programme. Fourteen years later, Leti's now running her own company that plans weddings for LGBT couples.**

**If for no other reason, entrepreneur Leti Orsetti's story as an expat is unique simply because she's been living in this neck of the woods now for a whopping 14 years. Born in Texas — of all places — she's the daughter of freethinking French-speaking parents — of all parents a Texan girl could have. "My Dad was the director of the French Business Chamber in Dallas. The French-speaking community there is quite big, I can assure you," says a business savvy Leti, who founded the niche company Fabulous Weddings that arranges civil weddings and all the trimmings for gay couples marrying in Argentina, including (and especially) foreigners. No stranger to exoticism, Leti first set her sights on Argentina during university in Austin, Texas. She wanted to do something a little different, to go where her peers wouldn't dare. "Everybody was going to Mexico or Spain," she recalls. "I was 19 when I studied here at Universidad Torcuato di Tella in Buenos Aires. Back in those days I was unique, the only foreigner at the university."**

There was a little *je ne sais pas* about Buenos Aires, Leti remembers. "In Texas they called me 'Letisha.' Horrible! When I got to Argentina my name started rolling of tongues in a way I loved. Then they started calling me 'Leti.' I knew I was in the right place." And to be sure, while many foreigners have come and gone during her time in Argentina, Leti says she's not moving an inch. "I don't see myself returning to the US, she explains. "There's the French blood, the US culture, but I've got an Argentine soul."

Riding out her last year as a teenager, Leti's experience as a student in Argentina centred on the Belgrano neighbourhood, where she lived with a widow. While a quieter home life was far from the general chaos Leti was falling in love with on the streets of Buenos Aires, she established a strong connection with the lady she lived with and keeps in touch with her to this day. "I loved it here. I ended up staying for another six months, and lived with a different widow, this time in Recoleta."

It was 1999, a little before the infamous devaluation that sent the Argentine economy tumbling. "It was a good time. True, it was an expensive city to live in with the dollar being parallel. But as a foreigner I had a blast," Leti says.

## Leti Orsetti, same-sex wedding planner An Argentine soul

"Looking back on that time, I've come to realize that Argentines are so skilled in overcoming challenges. They go through so much. In terms of the ambiance, the people, nothing much has changed. There's still that vibe I fell in love with."

However, now based in Palermo, Leti does mention one significant change: "Palermo was horrible. It was just car sales yards and factories. You could buy property there so cheaply at the time. Hindsight, right?"

Simple maths would have it that Leti was 20 years of age when she moved back to the States, meaning that with 14 years under her belt in Argentina, she only spent a mere year in the land of the free before returning again to Argentina, this time for good.

"I went back home, graduated, got a job. I was working for Arthur Andersen (the former accounting firm), and then the Enron corruption scandal hit. You could say, I chase *quilombo*," Leti jokes, using the Argentine term for chaos or disaster that's often used to describe the general state of affairs in Argentina.

But things happen for a reason, the 34 year-year-old says, as she confesses to having maintained a long-distance relationship with a *porteño*.

"The story goes that I met an Argentine boy who over time introduced me to Argentine culture. Because of him I went to all these Argentine weddings. They were so fun, we were up until 7 in the morning, eating, sitting down, dancing, then eating some more, and dancing again. I loved it."

**LOVE AND MONEY, LOVE AND LAW**

A walk down the aisle wasn't in the plans for Leti and her Latin lover, as they eventually broke up, and nor was wedding planning as a profession, at least for the time being. Instead, the free-spirited twenty-something-year-old first went about building up her CV at a big-name firm based in Argentina.

"I found a job with Denole (the French multinational beverage company) and was

Dakar Rally, which relocated to South America in 2009. Then she found her niche.

"My parents were here a few years ago in 2011 when I organized the world's first fashion show for same sex couples in BA," explains Leti. "I was able to convince six of the best local designers to come up with outfits for the couples. I finished the show with drag queens. It was a hit, and an insane time for my parents, very surreal."

**'The story goes that I met an Argentine boy who over time introduced me to Argentine culture. Because of him I went to all these Argentine weddings. They were so much fun, we were up until 7 in the morning, eating, sitting down, dancing, then eating some more, and dancing again. I loved it.'**

involved in launching Ser water. I got to travel around the country, launching the product to the company's sale force. I was the only woman and I must say it was quite fun. I was treated well," says Leti, who notes that an openness to drinking Fernet helped her find her groove within an all-male team.

Fernet aside — and judging by Leti's strong eye-contact and attentiveness — solid communication has been something that has underscored this entrepreneur's years in the big, bad world of business in Argentina. She mastered Spanish and found her feet during a difficult period in Argentine economic history, drifting into event planning at Denole and later taking up a position at the

That was 2011, when not only did Leti have the backing of her parents and a sizeable group of creative gay friends, but the law was now on her side. More importantly, she had ideas.

**AND THOSE FABULOUS WEDDINGS?**

The series of events that led Leti to found her own business, Fabulous Weddings, have clear beginnings in Argentina's 2010 marriage equality legislation.

"I knew as soon as the law was passed that it's what I wanted to do," Leti explains, reflecting on some of the scenes from that period, which culminated in the proclamation that gay couples in Argentina, the first in Latin America, could finally wed.

So one weekend, and not without the help of her friends, Leti prepared a promotional video for her soon-to-be company's website. And from there - as it goes - the rest is history.

"To give you an idea, there are 200 civil weddings here each month. Gay couples are big spenders, they love luxury travel, and to top it off, they're so much fun. I go out with them. Sometimes they come to my place, I always find myself drinking champagne with them," she explains, while suggesting that in the process she's also learnt a lot about love.

"I did the wedding for the youngest couple ever to marry in Argentina. A Texan, 25, with an Argentine, 21, from Misiones, they met a year ago online," she recalls. "When they're long distance, they use an app to communicate, that answers automatically. They leave the phone next to their beds, so they can watch each other sleeping. They're really in love."

On that note, Leti recalls having wed the first gay British couple to marry in Argentina, the first Dominican couple, and let's not forget the first Texan couple.

"Did you hear about Texas?" Leti interjects proudly. "They've just declared the ban on same-sex marriage there unconstitutional."

And more good news recently arrived in the form of a sonogram, sent by a Uruguayan couple whom Fabulous Weddings had helped marry in Buenos Aires not so long ago.

"They sent me a sonogram of the twins they're expecting through a surrogate mother. It's amazing," she says. "If you have love in your life, you can really get through anything."

And does she? "Romi from Puerto Madryn. It was love at first sight," Leti says of a three-year relationship that ended just recently. "Buenos Aires is a demanding city and it was really just time for a rest. That said, I'm catching up for dinner with her tonight. We're still very close."



Laetitia Orsetti

MARIANO FUCHILA