

## Popular TV chef to share health tips at Latino event

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Chef LaLa will be the speaker Thursday at the 11th annual Latina Business Conference. Courtesy photo

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STOCKTON - Chef LaLa knows the food struggles overscheduled professionals and business owners face.

As a book author and celebrity chef who appears frequently on television shows, she admits she sometimes grabs food that's fast but not healthy.

"I am a person that struggles with my weight. I eat everything," LaLa said during a telephone interview moments after she finished taping a segment for Univision.

### Healthy outlook

The San Joaquin County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce — established in 1972 — is emphasizing exercise, good health and nutrition this year. The theme for an annual trade show, workshop and luncheon is "Health & Wellness in the Workplace."

- **What:** 11th Annual Latina Business Conference.
- **When:** 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Thursday.
- **Where:** Stockton Hilton, 2323 Grand Canal Blvd.
- **Keynote speaker:** Chef LaLa
- **Cost:** \$75
- **Registration and information:** (209) 943-6117.

Yet LaLa is also a certified nutritionist and Cordon Bleu-trained chef who is one of the nation's leading educators on health-conscious cooking and eating. Among other things, she's a regular guest expert on Dale Con Ganas, the Univision show that is a Spanish-language version of NBC's "The Biggest Loser."

She will be in Stockton on Thursday to share her wisdom as the keynote speaker at the 11th annual Latina Business Conference hosted by the San Joaquin County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

The Hispanic chamber is emphasizing exercise, good health and nutrition this year. The theme for the conference is "Health & Wellness in the Workplace."

LaLa, 42, grew up in Los Angeles as part of a family of restaurateurs. She says that the shared love and connection of family life is a key place where dietary decisions - both good and bad - play out.

"My son came home one day and said, 'I don't like greens. I don't want anything green on my plate,' " LaLa said.

Maddox, her son, is 6. LaLa said she won him over with a trip to her modest backyard herb garden. She discovered that when he picked it himself, Maddox was willing to experiment.

"I am promoting creativity and him actually allowing himself to create the dishes he wants," LaLa said.

LaLa knows San Joaquin County because she has a brother who lives in Manteca.

She said she's aware that San Joaquin County residents suffer from high rates of diabetes, obesity and other symptoms of poor diet. She says the solution is also close at hand.

"You are so lucky in the Central Valley because you have so much access to fresh fruits and vegetables," LaLa said. "It could be very easily a very healthy place."

LaLa admits that it is time-consuming to cook, and not everyone has learned the skills needed to turn produce into delicious dishes. That's where she can help with recipes and suggestions on what to substitute for high-carb tortillas or high-fat fried dishes.

"Cooking is not a convenient thing," she said. "I am so glad that TV stations now are making cooking sexy."

Of course LaLa's doing her part to make cooking sexy by appearing on shows such as "Martha Stewart," "The Today Show" and "Dr. Oz." She gushes with enthusiasm over exploring newly trendy ingredients such as kale or turmeric, and hits the gym to stay in shape, especially after she occasionally falls off the dietary wagon.

She says she is now completely Chef LaLa and virtually never uses her given name, Laura Diaz.

"No one calls me Laura except my mom when she's mad at me," LaLa said.

LaLa said she plans to encourage the business leaders at the upcoming Stockton conference to make healthful food part of their lives.

"Get your family involved in these things," LaLa said. "Without you, there is no business. How productive is it to tell people to take care of business without taking care of themselves?"

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