

# Chef LaLa targets Latino diabetes with healthier Mexican-food recipes

by STEPHANIE CARY, STAFF WRITER • JULY 17, 2012

## Chef LaLa

For many, Mexican food is thought of as a treat, that delicious splurge that throws off your daily caloric intake leaving you feeling guilty.

But celebrity chef and certified nutritionist Chef LaLa is fighting that stigma as she creates healthy recipes without abandoning her Latino heritage and flavors.

The chef's cookbooks "Latin Lover Lite" (Spencer Publications, 2004) and "Best Loved Mexican Cooking with Chef LaLa" (Publications International, 2008) are aimed at creating healthy ethnic cuisine.

But now she has taken it a step further by partnering with Merck, a global health care company, to launch Sazone Su Salud, an educational campaign designed to educate the Latino community about type 2 diabetes and to offer diabetes-friendly

To get additional recipes or learn more about Chef LaLa's mission, go to [sazonesusalud.com](http://sazonesusalud.com).

recipes.

"My part as a chef and certified nutritionist was to be able to speak about my experience," says LaLa, whose birth name is Laura Diaz. "My position, personally, is not only of understanding what it is to live with a family member who has diabetes, but also of one that I have to take special precautions because I understand I'm predisposed to diabetes."

LaLa got involved with the campaign because the disease runs in her family, and because it's prevalent in the Latino community. Her goal is to make healthy recipes, suitable for those with diabetes, without having to give up the flavor.

"As a chef, I love to cook. I mean, I became a chef because I like to cook as much as I like to eat and I wanted to re-create the dishes that

I love to eat," she says.

"And at the same time, because I'm a foodie it's important that it tastes good. If someone gives me rice cakes to eat and says that's what I'm stuck with, I'm not happy. I have a strong heritage and traditions - I didn't want to forget them."

There are ways to create flavor without all the fat, says LaLa, such as using chiles, lime and cilantro. It's also key to stay away from stuffing entrees with cheeses and creams, using more natural ingredients instead.

The chef recommends staying away from processed foods because they are high in fat and limited in nutrients.

"It really boils down to a healthy cooking method and the quality of ingredients. I always say, if it comes from its own package like an apple, it's a good idea," LaLa says. "Cooking methods like boiling, baking, steaming, sauteing and also adding flavor mechanisms of the heritage like cilantro or lime or herbs or spices."

LaLa provides more tips and recipes on her website, [sazonesusalud.com](http://sazonesusalud.com), which offers content in Spanish and English.

"There's all kinds of fun and healthy solutions because what we want to do is to provide solutions to make your life better and healthier and have a better quality of life for you and your entire family," LaLa says.

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## CARNITAS TACOS

**1 1/4 pound pork tenderloin**

**1 medium orange**

**1 teaspoon garlic salt**

**1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**

**1 tablespoon canola oil**

**12 6-inch corn tortillas**

**Pico de Gallo (see recipe below)**

**Snipped fresh cilantro**

**Lime wedges (optional)**

**For Pico de Gallo:**

**1 cup chopped tomatoes**

**2 tablespoons chopped red onion**

**2 tablespoons snipped fresh cilantro**

**1 tablespoon minced fresh jalapeno chile pepper**

**2 tablespoons lime juice**

**2 cloves garlic, minced (1 teaspoon)**

**1/8 teaspoon salt**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Trim fat from pork. Juice orange over a bowl (you should have about 1/4 cup orange juice). Brush orange juice evenly onto pork tenderloin. Sprinkle with garlic salt and black pepper; set aside.

In a large oven-going nonstick skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add tenderloin. Cook tenderloin for 5 to 10 minutes or until golden brown on all sides, turning to brown evenly. Drain off fat.

Roast tenderloin for 25 to 30 minutes or until an instant-read thermometer inserted near the center registers 155 degrees. Remove from oven and let stand for 5 minutes before serving.

Meanwhile, wrap tortillas in foil. Heat in the 350-degree oven about 10 minutes or until warm, turning once.

Chop roasted pork or cut into bite-size strips. Serve in warm tortillas; top with Pico de Gallo and cilantro.

If desired, serve with lime wedges.

**Servings:** 4

**For Pico de Gallo:**

In a small bowl combine 1 cup chopped tomatoes; 2 tablespoons chopped red onion; 2 tablespoons snipped fresh cilantro; 2 tablespoons lime juice; 1 tablespoon minced fresh jalapeno chile pepper; 2 cloves garlic, minced (1 teaspoon); and 1/8 teaspoon salt.

Makes about 1 1/4 cups.

**Chef Tip:** The natural sugars in the orange juice help caramelize the pork, while the juice's acidity helps tenderize the meat.

**Note:** Because chile peppers contain volatile oils that can burn your skin and eyes, avoid direct contact with them as much as possible. When working with chile peppers, wear plastic or rubber gloves. If your bare hands do touch the peppers, wash your hands and nails well with soap and warm water.

If your skillet has a rubber or plastic handle, do not put it in the oven. Instead, transfer the tenderloin to a baking dish and then bake it.

**Nutrition per serving:** 383 calories, 11 g total fat (2 g saturated), 92 mg cholesterol, 427 mg sodium, 38 g carbohydrates, 6 g dietary fiber, 4 g sugar, 34 g protein.

**Daily values:** 19 percent vitamin A, 45 percent vitamin C, 9 percent calcium, 17 percent iron.

**MUSHROOM SILVESTRI**

**1 tablespoon olive oil**

**2/3 cup diced carrot**

**1/2 cup diced celery (1 stalk)**

**4 cloves garlic, minced**

**1/2 cup dry red wine**

**8 ounces fresh button mushrooms, sliced (about 4 cups)**

**8 ounces fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and sliced (about 4 cups)**

**1 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth or vegetable broth**

**2 tablespoons snipped fresh parsley**

**2 tablespoons cold water**

**2 teaspoons cornstarch**

In a large nonstick skillet heat 1 teaspoon of the oil over medium heat. Add carrot, celery and garlic; cook about 5 minutes or just until tender. Remove from heat. Add wine, stirring up any brown bits from bottom of skillet. Cook over medium heat for 2 to 3 minutes or until liquid is reduced by half. Transfer carrot mixture to a large bowl; set aside.

In the same skillet heat 1 teaspoon of the remaining oil over medium-high heat. Add button mushrooms; stir-fry for 3 to 5 minutes or until tender. Spoon cooked mushrooms into bowl with the carrot mixture.

In the same skillet heat the remaining 1 teaspoon oil over medium-high heat. Add shiitake mushrooms; stir-fry for 3 to 5 minutes or until tender. Return the carrot-mushroom mixture to skillet. Stir in the broth and parsley.

In a small bowl stir together the cold water and cornstarch; stir into mixture in skillet. Simmer on low heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

**Servings:** 4

**Chef tip:** Cook mushrooms separately so they will brown evenly without becoming overcooked and mushy.

**Nutrition per scant 2/3 cup:** 112 calories, 4 g total fat (1 g saturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 173 mg sodium, 12 g carbohydrate, 3 g dietary fiber, 4 g sugar, 4 g protein.

**Daily Values:** 72 percent vitamin A, 11 percent vitamin C, 3 percent calcium, 5 percent iron.

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