
Chef LaLa's Homemade products, a must-have in Mexican cuisine

Chef LaLa

The influence of **Mexican food** in the United States has created an industry that is growing faster than any other food segment, according to a study.

"Preserving regional authenticity and seeking to preserve Mexican cultural integrity are increasingly important trends in the restaurant and retail supermarket industries. New flavors are part of this trend but the emphasis remains in cultural authenticity," said professor Michael Boland from Kansas State University who conducted the study.

Recognizing this trend, nutritionist and author **Chef LaLa** has dedicated her life to re-creating traditional **Mexican flavors** into new and healthier food combinations through educating her public about changes in ingredients and ways of cooking.

Now, all that effort has been translated in a new line of products for her followers and fans to enjoy.

Launching the **Chef LaLa's Homemade** line of marinades and sauces, she offered a cooking demonstration at the fabulous Kings Market Short Hills Cooking Studio, located in Short Hills, NJ, where VOXXI met with her personally and attended the cooking class.

Chef LaLa's Homemade line of marinades and sauces.

Chef LaLa's new line is designed with traditional ingredients from **Mexican cuisine** combined with healthier choices to reduce fat content and increase flavor. The line includes four marinades: Carne Asada, Fajitas, Orange Chipotle and Tequila Lime Cilantro; two sauces: Tomatillo-Jalapeno and Tomato-Serrano; and a chipotle flavored oil.

"All the same ingredients our *abuelita* used to add separately now are blended together in an easy to use bottle so busy moms and dads who like to cook can prepare their favorite dishes without missing any ingredients," Chef LaLa told VOXXI.

Women attending the cooking demonstration offered by Chef LaLa at the fabulous Kings Market Short Hills Cooking Studio, located in Short Hills, NJ.

During the 3-hour demonstration, Chef LaLa prepared several dishes that all participants tasted with great enthusiasm. My two absolute favorites were the **steak fajitas** and the **orange chipotle torta de pollo**.

For her steak fajitas, Chef LaLa used her 100-year recipe for **carne asada marinade**, which comes from her *abuelito Donato*, who was a chef in Mexico. "This marinade's secret is the addition of spices, citrus and citrus flavors to beef, chicken and pork. My grandfather used to charbroil the tacos over mesquite coals," Chef LaLa said.

The **orange chipotle marinade** was the secret ingredient for her **torta de pollo** – chicken burger. A mixture of the sweet California orange with the fiery Mexican smoked jalapeno, or chipotle, this marinade works perfect with chicken, ribs and shrimp, adding orange juice and **chipotle en adobo** (chipotle peppers, tomatoes, onions, salt, vegetable oil, sugar and spices) to the blend.

While preparing her delicious and healthy recipes, Chef LaLa told VOXXI stories of her family of origin, her childhood, cultural values and traditions of her Mexican ancestry and stories of food and nutrition, which, paired with the dishes we tasted, was a real treat for the senses.

Chef LaLa and her marketing and distribution partner Joseph (Joe) Profaci, president and founder of Good Stuff Marketing.

Marketing specialty food is a challenge

Mexican food is rapidly becoming the next "big" specialty food following the steps of Italian food. When Italian immigrants arrived from different regions of Italy, they became Italian-Americans, fusing both cultures into their cooking. Italian food was not known as gourmet cuisine until the '80s, when the influence of the Mediterranean's healthier diet became popular.

It was then that extra-virgin olive oil and other specialties started to enter the American market. As part of the family who built the Colavita brand in the United States, **Joe Profaci** has extensive experience in the promotion and sale of **ethnic specialty foods**. His father, John J. Profaci, met Enrico Colavita –the Italian manufacturer of extra virgin olive oil and other specialty foods– during his honeymoon visit to New York in 1978.

"My father was a visionary. He believed back then that the American consumer was ready to be introduced to genuine Italian gourmet and specialty food. When he met Colavita, they agreed with a simple handshake to start an import business that became a staple among 'foodies' in the United States."

In 2000, while participating at the Culinary Institute of America conference for Colavita, Profaci met Chef LaLa. “She stopped by our booth and liked our products. We developed an immediate synergy that was the kick-off of our joint initiative,” Profaci told VOXXI.

A chicken fajita (Left) and a Steak fajita prepared during the cooking demonstration.

Being a recognized leading personality in Hispanic cuisine, Profaci immediately saw Chef LaLa's line of product as a promising “*déjà vu*” business situation.

“My father introduced Italian extra virgin olive oil and specialty products to the American market. Likewise, partnering with LaLa was now an opportunity to introduce a new category of “*nuevo auténtico*” (new authentic) Mexican products, which are not just authentic but also use only the finest natural ingredients.”

Torta de Pollo or Chicken Sandwich

Profaci branched out his own company Good Stuff Marketing in 2010, after LaLa agreed to have him represent her line of products. They share a passion for food and health, which became the “rules of engagement” for selecting their products: using only real ingredients and authentic flavors, keeping the number of ingredients to a minimum, using only the smallest amount of natural preservatives such as natural citric acid, and also lowest levels of salt content.

Chef LaLa's line of product is manufactured in New Jersey and distributed only through the finest gourmet stores nationwide.

“In addition to being a charismatic public personality and a great business woman, LaLa stands out from other Latin celebrities and TV chefs because she is serious culinary professional,” Profaci concluded.

Watch video of Chef LaLa talking about nutrition as she prepares food

References

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