



chef lala

heart of the community

Laura Diaz-Brown (known internationally to fans as “Chef LaLa”) has devoted her life to two passions: mastering and refining Latin cuisines (all 23 varieties) and educating her fans about how to enjoy this complex cuisine in a healthful fashion.

LaLa grew up in Los Angeles helping in her family’s Mexican restaurants where she inherited her father’s passion for cooking (he was the chef in the family). In college, she first studied to be a cardio-pulmonary therapist. But part of the way through her studies, she realized it wasn’t the career for her. She wanted to study cooking to find out how to make the great dishes that she loved to eat. So, she enrolled at Le Cordon Bleu and attended classes at both the Southern California and Paris campuses.

As she got more involved in her culinary studies, LaLa was struck by the need she saw for someone to link what she had learned about health and nutrition with her cherished Latin cooking. Today—as both a chef and a certified nutritionist with a specialty in weight management—LaLa has become that link.

“I believe that I can make a difference—maybe even on a national level—by educating people about how to choose food that is actually good for them and that tastes great, too. That’s my mission. And, I’ve learned that you have to give people appealing choices for them to be willing to change. They don’t want to know what they *can’t* eat; they want to know what they *can* eat.

“Things have changed for the better concerning general interest in eating well. I no longer feel like I’m ‘nagging’ people about eating right. They’re more aware and want to be empowered to take care of themselves; they want to be healthier. I encourage people to be conscious of what they’re consuming, even if they choose to eat

something that is high in calories or fat. I believe that if they know, they will make good choices most of the time.” Then, she added with a laugh, “Let’s face it—none of us are going to be perfect all of the time.”

Because she wants to impart the most up-to-date information about health and nutrition, LaLa has become a perpetual student, constantly studying the newest findings—especially regarding heart health and diabetes. And not without good reason. Three of her four grandparents died of complications arising from diabetes. Heart disease caught her attention because it is the number one killer in America, yet it is a disease over which an individual can exert some control. According to LaLa, a lot of the elements that contribute to heart disease are due to the American diet—informed decisions about what we eat and drink can save lives.


LaLa is pursuing her goal to create a healthier nation on many fronts. She owns SAVOR! Catering in Los Angeles, has one book in stores now (*Latin Lover Lite*) and three more coming in the next few years. She has produced the first season of a TV show called *U LaLa* (with separate versions for English-speaking and Spanish-speaking audiences). And she consults with restaurants and companies who want to introduce authentic Hispanic flavor to their menus and serve healthier food.

To round out this new mom’s very full plate, philanthropy and community service are practically another career for LaLa. In this last year alone, she has taught about nutrition or provided her support in other ways to charities as diverse as the American Heart Association, the Liver Foundation, Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles, Para Los Niños, L.A.’s BEST and V.I.D.A. In July of 2007, she received Macy’s ‘Star Award,’ for people who make a difference in their community, and General Mills’ ‘Corazon de Comunidad’ (literally, ‘Heart of the Community’) award.

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BUSINESS MEMBER PROFILE

Laura Diaz-Brown (a.k.a. Chef LaLa)
SAVOR! Catering
www.cheflala.com

Whether she’s teaching nutritious cooking at a Farmer’s Market or on a television show, LaLa is on fire with her desire to share everything she has learned to make people’s lives healthier and happier—one meal at a time. 



Salsa de mi Abuelita
(Grandma’s Salsa)

Recipe by Chef LaLa

Makes 12 servings (about 2 cups)

- 8 chiles de árbol
- 1/2 tsp. olive oil
- 12 oz. tomato, quartered
- 2 oz. onion, peeled and quartered
- 3 tbsp. canned tomato puree
- 1/2 clove garlic, peeled
- 1 tsp. salt

Directions:

1. In a skillet, add olive oil and roast chiles until brown.
2. Transfer to a blender. Add tomatoes, onion, tomato puree, garlic and salt.
3. Puree well.

(Caution: Open all windows and doors when roasting chiles; the odor of roasting chiles may cause you to cough.)