LA COCINA is a nonprofit business incubator dedicated to supporting talented, working-class food entrepreneurs, primarily immigrant women and women of color, in building successful food businesses in the San Francisco Bay Area. La Cocina’s vision is that everyone will be able to make a living doing what they love to do.

LA COCINA IS AN ORGANIZATION LIKE NO OTHER. It supports the development and recognition of good food and foodways from all over the world as a kitchen incubator—La Cocina means “kitchen” in Spanish—helping to develop food products, restaurants, food trucks, and food stall concepts. More so, La Cocina is an eloquent and powerful voice on social justice, inclusion, and equity for entrepreneurial women of color and recent immigrants to the United States.

It’s the people who make La Cocina. WE ARE LA COCINA chronicles La Cocina’s growth into the organization it is today—globally admired and profoundly influential—through more than 75 RECIPES AND STORIES from more than 40 SUCCESSFUL ALUMNI of the kitchen incubator.

These are diverse and amazing recipes for home cooking from around the world, perfected by dozens of testers in home kitchens all over the United States. This may be the only cookbook where you can find recipes for PEACHES PATTIES’ BEEF PATTIES, MOMOS FROM BINI’S KITCHEN, NYUM BAI’S KUY TEAV PHNOM PENH (CAMBODIAN NOODLE SOUP), and three different ONIGIRI FROM ONIGILLY in one place. These are different foods, from all over the globe, united in deliciousness.

More than 150 photos by award-winning photographer Eric Wolfinger capture the beauty and variety of the foods, personalities, and restaurants. These powerful stories are told in words and images—and of course through these delectable recipes.
THE BUSINESSES & ENTREPRENEURS FEATURED

- VERONICA SALAZAR - El Huarache Loco
- MARIA DEL CARMEN FLORES - Estrellita’s Snacks
- GUISELL HARITH OSORIO - Sabores del Sur
- DIONNE KNOX - Zella's Soulful Kitchen
- KELLY ZUBAL - Inticing Creations
- ISABEL CAUDILLO - El Buen Comer
- MARIA CASTILLO - Botanas Felicitas
- DILSA LUGO - Los Cilantros
- KOJI KANEMATSU - Onigilly
- ELVIA BUENDIA - La Luna Cupcakes
- ALICIA VILLANUEVA – Alicia’s Tamales Los Mayas
- GABRIELA GUERRERO – Delicioso Creperie
- MONICA MARTINEZ – Don Bugito
- FERNAY MCPHERSON – Minnie Bell’s Soul Movement
- GUADALUPE (LUPE) GUERRERO – El Pipila
- BINITA PRADHAN – Bini’s Kitchen
- MARIKO GRADY – Aedan Fermented Foods
- HEENA PATEL – Besharam
- CHARLES FARRIER – Crumble & Whisk
- STEPHANIE FIELDS - Sugarfoot
- SHANI JONES – Peaches Patties
- NITE YUN – Nyum Bai
- REEM ASSIL – Reem’s
- TINA STEVEN – A Girl Named Pinky
- NAFY FLATLEY – Teranga
- GUADALUPE MORENO – Mi Morena
- LAMEES DAHBOUR – Mama Lamees
- AISAN HOSS AND MEHDI PARNIA – Oyna Natural Foods
- ROSIE ORTIZ – Mission Boricua
- HANG TRUONG – Noodle Girl
- ALMA RODRIGUEZ - Mixiote
- AILEEN SUZARA – Sariwa
- ROSA MARTINEZ – Origen

As well as: Peas of Mind, NeoCocoa, Kika’s Treats, Clairessquares, Love & Hummus, Sal de Vida, Sajen, Endless Summer Sweets, D’Maize, and Hella Vegan Eats
La Cocina was born out of a belief that a community of natural entrepreneurs, given the right resources, can create self-sufficient businesses that benefit themselves, their families, their community, and the whole city. The food that has come out of this kitchen since 2005 reflects that aspiration and, quite simply, tastes amazing.

La Cocina (pronounced la co-see-nah, meaning “The Kitchen” in Spanish) was inspired by its current home, San Francisco’s Mission District. This ethnically diverse and economically vulnerable neighborhood that thrives in part due to the many small informal businesses that serve the community. Food lies at the heart of this community, and you don’t have to look far to find hidden entrepreneurs in the kitchens of many homes.

Recognizing a need to formalize these food businesses and the opportunity created when you turn inconsistent and illegal home restaurants into sustainable legal businesses, organizations like Arriba Juntos, The Women’s Initiative for Self Employment and The Women’s Foundation of California and one very special and visionary anonymous donor created La Cocina. La Cocina is both the space—a modern building and commercial kitchen that has been featured in Metropolis Magazine—and the program—an innovative business incubator that supports a growing roster of small businesses.

By providing community resources and an array of industry-specific services, business incubators ensure small businesses can succeed. La Cocina follows this model by providing commercial kitchen space and technical assistance focusing on low-income women and immigrant entrepreneurs who are launching, growing and formalizing food businesses.

The food industry has a notoriously high cost of entry: the fees for licensed and insured commercial kitchen space, the start-up costs to open a restaurant, the standards set to compete for shelf space at specialty stores and large retailers. Burgeoning food entrepreneurs face an uphill battle for success in an overwhelming and incredibly crowded marketplace. La Cocina provides a platform for these motivated people to hone their skills and successfully transition into the highly regulated and competitive food industry.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ALL OF THE AUTHORS’ PROCEEDS FROM THE BOOK GO BACK INTO LA COCINA, TO SUPPORT NEW AND EXISTING ENTREPRENEURS.

CALEB ZIGAS AND LETICIA LANDA live and work in San Francisco, California. Caleb joined La Cocina as a volunteer in 2005, and Leticia joined shortly thereafter in 2008. Together, they have built La Cocina’s incubator program into the nationally recognized organization that it is today. Caleb is most proud, however, of his accolade as 7x7’s Best Waiter in San Francisco. Leticia is the daughter of immigrants and a talented home cook in her own right. They both hope that you loved this book as much as they love La Cocina, and that maybe you not only learned something but also laughed once or twice. Learn more about La Cocina at www.lacocinasf.org.

ERIC WOLFINGER is a traveling cook who found his calling behind the lens. Passionate and purpose driven, Eric works with brands he believes move the needle toward the greater good. With over a dozen award-winning books and hundreds of commissions as a photographer and director, he has built a reputation as a close collaborator whose immersive approach produces powerful storytelling. Eric started shooting at La Cocina as a volunteer in 2007. Photos from his first La Cocina project, La Luna Cupcakes, remain on the bakery’s wall.
PRAISE FOR WE ARE LA COCINA

“This book is important. These stories are joyous. These recipes work. We Are La Cocina celebrates our imperfect union and the many peoples who claim our nation. In this moment of doubt and turmoil, America needs the brilliance and brio of the women of La Cocina—and that recipe for Bai Sach Chrouk on page 191.” —JOHN T. EDGE

“In the same way that La Cocina upends our assumptions about the restaurant business, this book defies the limitations of the cookbook genre. In these pages, you’ll not only find recipes from several dozen remarkable chefs but also a crash course in empathy, curiosity, storytelling, and community building.” —CHRIS YING

“This book is a must-have! These women will inspire you, not only to cook their great recipes, but to follow your own dreams despite the adversities we all face. They shine a very bright light on life, and knowing their stories makes the world a better place.” —TRACI DES JARDINS

“This book is for those of us who’ve watched someone we love put everything they have into a business—the moms, aunties, sister-girls, and grandmas who never seem to stop moving—and while their work is far from done, for a moment, while turning these pages, you get to bask in the glory of their commitment and dedication come to life.” —OSAYI ENDOLYN

“It can be easy, these days, to feel overwhelmed, exhausted, and defeated by the problems of the world. Food has always been the balm to those emotions for me; it allows us to come together and be nourished, body and soul. The La Cocina cookbook goes one step further: it provides the inspiration, through the incredible stories of the women who make up the program, to keep fighting the good fight.” —ASHLEY CHRISTENSEN

“La Cocina is food at its finest: inspiring, instructional, political, and delicious. This book brings the vitality of La Cocina and its mujeres through wonderful recipes—and even better stories.” —GUSTAVO ARELLANO