

Left and right: Cookbooks and Mexican heritage inspire Marcela.



## MARCELA VALLADOLID,

the Tijuana-born TV host and cookbook author beloved for her modern Mexican cooking and girl next door good looks, is so chill you'd never know she's raising three kids while running a culinary empire out of her San Diego home.



# EASY DOES IT

We asked her about motherhood, Mexican food, and how to host a spectacular summer party. Here's what she had to say.

BY AMANDA CARGILL



Mezcal Horchata cocktails greet dinner guests.

**You grew up in Tijuana. What makes the food there different from other regional Mexican cuisine?**

In Tijuana, we have cuisine from every region of Mexico and cooks from all over cooking in all of the restaurants, so there is a huge influence from sources like the Yucatán, Oaxaca, and Puebla. We have a little bit of everything so we're more permitted to experiment.

**Does the connection to San Diego—where you live now—have an impact on Tijuana's food?**

Absolutely. Those of us that were raised in Tijuana have so much access to San Diego. I was crossing the border every day when I was a kid, and that back and forth has a huge influence on the cuisine. There's this great blending, a great exchange.

**Let's talk entertaining. What makes a good host?**

The secret weapon is to figure out what you need so you can chill, because you, as the host, set the tone, and if it's negative in any way, your guests can tell.

**Did your parents host a lot of family and friends while you were growing up?**

Yes. We really are a family that likes to entertain and we all agree on what makes a great dinner: good food, good drinks, good music, good lighting, and good company.



At home in the garden with sons Fausto and David.

**What are your music and lighting recommendations?**

For me, candlelit is the only way to have a dinner. And I like to have Luis Miguel playing in the background.

**What about kids at dinner parties?**

Yes. I think it's necessary to educate kids about food and let them help with cooking and cleaning. That interaction is important for them.

**Your house is incredible. Do you feel like you hit the lottery?**

I do. There are days that it's really hectic around here, but when it's sundown and I walk through the hallway to the dining room and the birds and the crickets are chirping, I feel this sense of peace, like everything is coming full circle.