



YERIKA
MUÑOZ *Chef*

Chef Yerika Muñoz

Yerika is an enthusiastic woman who has always managed to stay close to her Mexican roots, even when her path has led her to many countries.





Who is Yerika?

Chef Yerika Muñoz is a highly accomplished Mexican chef who has gained international recognition for her expertise in Mexican cuisine. She is known for her innovative approach to traditional Mexican dishes, incorporating modern techniques and high-quality ingredients to create unique and flavorful creations.

Throughout her career, Chef Yerika Muñoz has consistently demonstrated her passion for Mexican cuisine, her dedication to excellence, and her ability to innovate. She has become an influential figure in the culinary world, inspiring aspiring chefs and elevating the appreciation of Mexican gastronomy on a global scale.

Today he is the great and brilliant mind behind exquisite restaurants such as: Zazil, Jardin and his most recent project Suspiro



The beginnings...

In Bosques del Lago, the metropolitan area of Mexico City, a girl was born in the middle of a loving family. This little girl with sweet eyes had the joy of spending time with two amazing women, her grandmothers who played a key role in her upbringing, and they became a big influence in her life. From one of them she learned how to be strong, courageous and a leader; from the other she learned to love the hearths.

From an incredibly early age and without realizing it, she uncovered her greatest passion: ***Cooking***. She could understand that cooking was not only a mix of ingredients, but the love you feel around a table when one person finds a way to embed all the feelings in a dish. Even more so when a family gets together to share life, this is when a meal becomes a reason to build memories.

Yerika started her education in the State of Mexico, part of the metropolitan area of Mexico City. Being born in a traditional family meant she had the pressure to obtain a bachelor's degree. She complied with the family rules by enrolling in the Tecnológico de Monterrey, one of the most prestigious universities in Mexico where she was pursuing a bachelor's degree in Tourism and Hospitality, but work opportunities got in the way, and she did not have the chance to finish the last year.

After attending college, she decided it was time to pursue her passion for cooking, and in a bold move, she moved to Pasadena where her journey began. The first stop was the California School of Culinary Arts where she had the opportunity to learn new techniques, and thanks to her accomplishments she commenced working at the Peninsula Hotel in Beverly Hills, where she had begun as an intern in the Pastry making department. There she worked in a relaxed environment, making sweet creations... but something was missing.

She began to feel attracted to the shouting and craziness happening in the kitchen.



Be aware of what you ask for...

Not long after, she was invited to be part of Beverly Hills Frida, an haute cuisine Mexican restaurant. Even though she had little experience, being the courageous woman she is, she was delighted to accept the challenge; there she spent many sleepless nights creating the concept, developing the menu, and helping to build the restaurant from the ground.

After a successful experience in Frida, she had the chance to join Crystal Cruises, so on May 13th, 2004, in South Hampton, England, she boarded Crystal Serenity. ***She had never been on a cruise ship before and there she was, overseeing three out of the six restaurants on the ship, being part of a crew of 180 cooks and ten chefs.***

Being the only woman and the only Latin in that position was not an easy beginning. Yerika had to prove herself over and over, she had to overcome the lack of experience in cruises and, to be honest, male chauvinism. ***She was the object of bets; her peers would joke about how long she would last.*** In the end, thanks to her strong personality, she was able to be on board for three years, and finally she earned the respect and friendship of the crew.



A Mexican with Peruvian soul...

While Yerika was onboard Crystal Serenity, she had the chance to meet Mexico City's Astrid y Gaston owners. ***They were so impressed with her abilities that they asked her to join them in their new adventure.*** They were sailing to Peru, it was the perfect opportunity to meet Gaston Acurio, the famous chef and owner of Astrid y Gaston; with only a few hours to spare she rushed to meet him in Lima. She was touched and awed by the warmth and generosity of Gaston Acurio and his staff, who despite being a celebrity in his country, and owned more than thirty restaurants all over the world, remained kind and humble. The decision was made, she would accept the offer.

Once again, Yerika made her bags and flew to Lima, Peru where she would spend four months getting to know Peruvian cooking, the ingredients, the flavors. ***It was then when she discovered despite being Mexican, she had found her Peruvian soul.*** It was a huge enterprise to learn the culture and then take it to Mexico City. The training in Peru was just the beginning, she had to find the perfect suppliers. The ingredients used were top quality and had extremely specific requirements, but that was just a part of the endeavor. It took two years to bring the project to life, to open a restaurant in an upscale area where customers are demanding, and always expect to get the best. It was a challenge to satisfy their palates, while being truthful to the Peruvian experience in a Mexican environment. The Mexican branch opened its doors in 2008 where she was the only non-Peruvian to become Astrid y Gaston Executive chef and manager. Of course she did it! Astrid y Gaston became a success.

In 2019 Yerika packed her bags again and she went back to her beloved California, that special place that will always hold a piece of her heart. This time she moved to San Jose where she has been consulting, and doing what she knows best... ***She has been involved in the creation and operation of three restaurants, Zazil, El Jardin Tequila Bar, and Suspiro.***



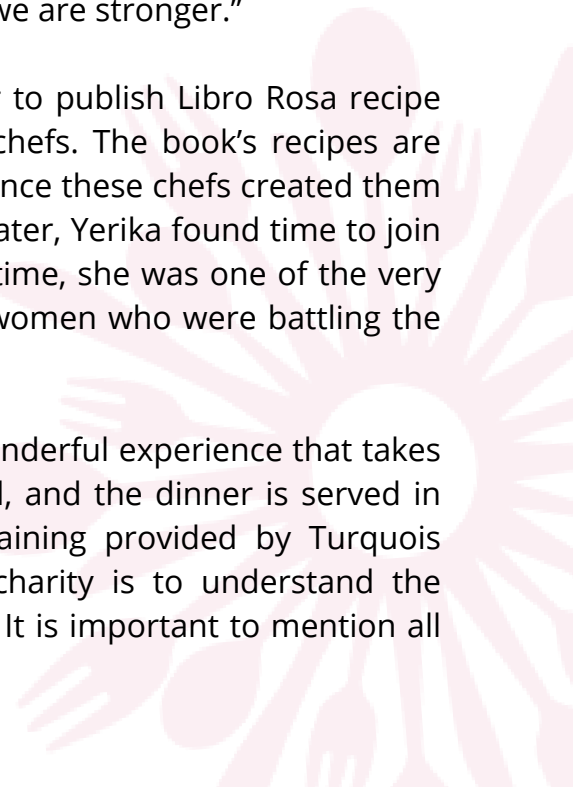
A helping hand...

Yerika is an accomplished chef, but more importantly, she is a human being. She has shown empathy for social causes, despite all her hard work, she finds time to lend a hand to causes she believes in.

She joined the TV host Rebeca de Alba, in her Foundation, to support her cause in several events by putting her talent to the Fundacion Rebeca de Alba service. This foundation helps cancer patients and their families. Among those events we can name a wine-pairing dinner "Chefs and Sommeliers Joining Flavors, Cooking Hopes," we can mention another one called "Women with a cause: united we are stronger."

She partnered with other women chefs and Estee Lauder to publish Libro Rosa recipe collection, with recipes from these well-known Mexican chefs. The book's recipes are something else, these recipes show support and respect since these chefs created them with medically approved ingredients for cancer patients. Later, Yerika found time to join the Estee Lauder Foundation, in another adventure. This time, she was one of the very well-known chefs who selflessly gave cooking lessons to women who were battling the disease.

Yerika was the inventive mind behind "Blind Tasting," a wonderful experience that takes place in several countries, where all the servers are blind, and the dinner is served in complete darkness. This was possible thanks to the training provided by Turquoise Foundation and La Casa de Francia. The idea of this charity is to understand the challenge and show empathy to visually impaired people. It is important to mention all the proceeds from this event go to the servers.





An awarded Journey...

After a long journey full of accomplishments, *Yerika's abilities have received recognition. In 2014 she was rewarded with the Universal Excellence Award*, to honor her professional career. The French René Cassin created this prestigious award, to celebrate people and companies whose actions promote human development.



When people know who you are...

Yerika's abilities put her on the Gourmet Festivals stage. She has taken part in many events, like the International Gourmet Festival, in which this Mexican chef has taken part in two out of the twenty-two editions. In her first appearance she was a guest at the River Café and in the second one, she served dinner at Blanca Blue restaurant, at Garza Blanca Resort.

She was also a distinguished guest at the Wine and Food Festival in Cancun, Riviera Maya in 2015, where she was one of the Mexican Kitchen Divas.

The Wine and Food Festival 5th edition took place in Mexico City. In that occasion the theme was New York City visits Mexico City. Astrid y Gaston functioned as a seat to welcome Betony's chef Bryce Schuman (2013 Best young chef in the USA) where he and Yerika shared the hearths to create a fusion dinner.

Sanborns is a chain restaurant and department store with more than three hundred branches all over Mexico. Every year they have a Food Festival, where famous chefs create dishes for their restaurants giving a broader public the opportunity to taste haute cuisine creations. Yerika has been in the 2017, 2018, and 2019 editions.



Being a woman who knows how hard it can be to work in a male dominated field, made Yerika the perfect chef for a homage dinner offered at El Cielo for the pioneer women in the wine industry in Ensenada, Baja California. She had the privilege of being one of the two chefs involved in the event.

Chefs Yerika Muñoz and Eduardo Palazuelos presided over the jury for the 2016 Food Service Certification. This recognizes the best products in the food industry.

Yerika Muñoz has attracted the attention of the media; she has been interviewed many times and her talents have been praised by many journalists. She has been published by magazines and newspapers such as Women's Health, Tendencias, Soy Chef, Siglo de Torreon, Sanborns magazine, Reforma, Life and Style, Gente, Food and Travel, Esquire, Gusta, Club Reforma, El Universal, El Conocedor, Capital 55, Barrio, AD Cocinas and Aire, among others.

Famous Mexican journalists like Eddy Warman, Paco Zea and Enrique Castillo Pesado have had Yerika on their shows.