

LOOK WHO'S TALKING


BY MARIA C. HUNT
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MARCELA BITES! Tijuana's star chef Marcela Valladolid with her tequila-apricot ice cream.

DINNER BELLE *With a TV show that's already wooed millions in Mexico and Latin America, chef Marcela readies a bilingual book series. Watch out, Nigella*

Emeril has "Bam!" and Rachael Ray has her EVOO. For Marcela Valladolid, who's poised to become the next one-name star in TV cooking, the signature hook will probably be adding a dash of chipotle chile to everything. "I can't live without chipotle," says Valladolid, 29, whose cooking show *Relatos con Sabor* airs to 12 million homes in Mexico, Central and South America. Even while at Paris' Ritz Escoffier culinary school, Valladolid—who lives in Tijuana but rocked Our Lady of Peace plaid as an S.D. schoolgirl—couldn't live without the flavors of home. "Dinner was a baguette with butter and canned chipotle in adobo," she says. Valladolid is the perfect domestic double agent to help people discover modern Mexi-terranean dishes that break nacho-cheesy stereotypes, whether it's her game hens seasoned with pasilla chiles and tequila or crème brûlée studded with dates. Even as a

contestant on *The Apprentice: Martha Stewart*, Valladolid scored a big win with her cross-cultural cilantro-rosemary Wishbone dressing. She didn't get the job, but Valladolid stood out. In one tense boardroom scene, Valladolid declared she didn't want to be the Mexican Martha Stewart. But that appears to be happening anyway. Valladolid is spending long days in the kitchen, creating and testing recipes for a cookbook that's being released in the fall of 2009 by Clarkson-Potter, which just happens to be Ms. Stewart's publisher. If that's not pressure enough, it'll be printed in both English and Spanish as she attempts to straddle the two cultures that made her who she is. "On the *Martha Stewart Show* I was the Mexican girl with the big earrings. I'm totally happy with that label," she says. "It's hard to get pigeonholed when there are 40 million Mexicans in the United States." www.chefmarcela.com 

HOTS: Chipotle anything, Wüsthof Culinar chef's knife, my tequila-apricot ice cream, boys with accents, 4 a.m. tacos, Manolo Blahniks, Dolce & Gabbana, homemade mayonnaise, tamarind Margaritas, convincing skeptical Americans that Tijuana is a cool place with incredible food
NOTS: Tex-Mex (no yellow cheese!), cooking with dirty hands, white chocolate, faux celebrity chefs, oatmeal, food snobs