

# Chef Stories

**Chef: Carolina Moratti**

**Recipe: Carolina's Sensational Corn Salsa**



So my name is Carolina Moratti. My background is Peruvian. I came to America in 2005 with prior studies of culinary arts, because I grew up in a kitchen! I grew up in a family restaurant, seeing my grandmother cook, seeing my mom cook, seeing Uncle, and how they were trying to promote ancestral cooking, seeing how they were trying to explore new recipes.

It's a family restaurant called "Picanteria." Picanteria is a traditional restaurant where you cook with wood, and where you use stones to make sauces. So, I grew up with those sounds. I grew up with that smell, and I grew up with that music. People coming in to enjoy our beautiful place, with a gorgeous meal, and smelling those flavors – because my house was on the second floor of that restaurant! So, I grew up with that excitement and with that love of food. Yes!

And I grew up by getting spoiled by all the chefs who worked in there, who were always trying to feed me up that extra flavor, because they noticed how much I enjoy and love food. So, my whole life I was just growing up with those flavors, with that environment, and spices, and, you know, different kinds of herbs for the food. Seeing those huge pieces of meat getting into the oven. The fire in there, and all the soups and different kinds of food... so that's how I got connected to food.

And sometimes I kind of felt a kind of resentment because it pulled me away from my family. They were always busy! We didn't have Mother's Day or Father's Day, or holy days. But then I understand that they do it for the people. So, when I got to interact with the people who were coming to eat at our restaurant, it made me realize that we have that love for food. And being able to make people fall in love [with] your food, [that's] what inspired me to do my own thing.

And to keep up my traditions, to the point that I bring – that stone, that I was talking with you in the beginning – I have one at home! I do have one at home, and I use it when I do my cooking shows, and I have some of the stuff here in America, because it is about that. I feel American because I moved, I do love this country, but I do love also my traditions and the food that I bring from my country, because it got me to explore new flavors here and put them together. So fusion, all those flavors, and make a dish for people to enjoy, explore the different options, with vegan, or meats, or – my favors, and my seasonings.

I'm fortunate enough to have my family bring me those special seasonings here. I have the spices that they make over there, and they send them to me. So I have that opportunity to be able to mix that up, and show my kids, show my mentees, how they can explore those flavors as well. It's all about that! It's about how you can invite people to explore your flavors, and show them your traditions, and show them your food, because it's about that. To keep those traditions wherever you go! Even if you're in America, or another country, or you go to Europe, *carry* those traditions with you! Carry those flavors with you! Because through the flavors, and through the food, we can transmit a *lot!* We can transmit love, inspire others through food. The amount of happiness you can provide to somebody who likes your food is just...*unbelievable!* And it has *no* price on it! So do that! Inspire others by cooking. Explore new flavors, don't be afraid to mix it up! Because you want to create something *amazing!*