

Star Kitchen

Marcela Valladolid turned her California kitchen into the best room in the house.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVE LAURIDSEN

Most chefs' priority after buying a house would be renovating the kitchen. At the top of Marcela Valladolid's list: installing killer speakers. The host of *Mexican Made Easy* and cohost of *The Kitchen* bought her Chula Vista, CA, home about a year and a half ago and kept much of the kitchen intact. But she added a Sonos wireless sound system so she could listen to music (Carlos Vives is a favorite) while she tested recipes. Her other priority for the space: putting in a breakfast nook where she and her 10-year-old son, Fausto, could eat most of their meals. They stick to a fairly traditional Mexican dining schedule: a large breakfast around 6:30 a.m., a mid-afternoon "comida" close to 3 p.m., and then a small dinner in the evening. Though Marcela left the kitchen mainly white, as she found it, she livened up the eating area with color, including cushions made from Huipil, a traditional Mexican fabric used for costumes. "This is my happy place," she says.



So much sun

Marcela loves all the natural light that comes through the big windows. "It's like a fresh start every time I walk into the room," she says. "Sunlight is everything for me."

A nod to Mom

Hummingbirds remind Marcela of her late mother, so she keeps them in some form in every room of her house (there's one on this vase). "I've always considered them a sign of her presence in my life."

Personal pottery

An artist friend, Genaro Garcia, painted these Talavera-inspired mugs for Marcela and Katie Lee, her cohost on *The Kitchen*. Katie's mugs bear her name, but Marcela's say "La Kitchen," in reference to her Instagram hashtags.

Goods from the garden

Marcela keeps chiles and vegetables from her yard within reach in these ceramic barro bowls.

Turn the page to get Marcela's look.