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# COOKING UP AUTHENTICITY: LATINA CELEBRITIES, COOKBOOKS, AND CONSUMERISM

by

SIOBHAN ESTRADA COOKE

Under the Direction of Amira Jarmakani

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines contradictory stereotypes navigated by Latina celebrities within dominant representations of Latina identity. On one hand, Latinas are represented as traditional and family-oriented and on the other hand are understood as exotic and hypersexual. I argue that the marketing and content of cookbooks by Eva Longoria and Gloria and Emilio Estefan serve to perpetuate dominant stereotypes about what it means to be/cook/eat Latina, which limits the possibilities for relating to food and creates a narrative of a static, homogenous Latina identity. By performing rhetorical analysis of cookbooks by Eva Longoria and Gloria and Emilio Estefan, I illustrate the ways in which the cookbooks function to legitimize both the ethnic authenticity of the celebrity author and of the cuisine itself.

INDEX WORDS: Media Representation, Latina, Cookbooks, Celebrities

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CONSUMERISM

by

SIOBHAN ESTRADA COOKE

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Art

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2014

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2014

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## **DEDICATION**

Thanks to my grandmother Chris Estrada and mother Kathy Estrada Cooke for showing me that family and food are both wonderful things, but always best when put together (and that adding a shot of tequila never hurt).

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## **1 INTRODUCTION: STOCKING THE AUTHENTIC LATINA PANTRY**

In 2011, popular actress and political advocate Eva Longoria published a cookbook entitled *Eva's Kitchen: Cooking with Love for Family and Friends*. In the introduction to the cookbook, Longoria states, “I cannot count the number of times that I’ve found myself in a Gucci dress and heels—with full hair and makeup, about to run out to an event—pulling a roasted chicken out of the oven in order to make sure my family is fed before leaving the house to face a hundred photographers on a red carpet” (Longoria 9). Taken separately, the idea of Longoria cooking for her Latino family and her celebrity life on the red carpet are not in and of themselves particularly surprising. Predominant mainstream media representations show Latinas as having big, loud families with appetites to match, so picturing a Latina “making sure her family is fed” fits well within this narrative. Likewise, Hollywood actresses are expected to make red carpet appearances wearing expensive dresses in order to be seen by hundreds of entertainment photographers and writers. Longoria’s opening anecdote illustrates the seemingly contradictory nature of Latina celebrities: Longoria simultaneously appeals to readers who are invested in accessing the “genuine” Longoria who is family-oriented and authentically Latina, as well as readers who want a behind-the-scenes look at the glamorous life of Longoria the Latina celebrity.

My project analyzes commercial cookbooks written by Latina celebrities in order to examine the ways in which cookbooks function to legitimize both the ethnic authenticity of the celebrity author and of the cuisine itself. By looking at cookbooks by Eva Longoria and Gloria and Emilio Estefan, I illustrate the way that the ingredients, methods, photos, and introductory

materials within the cookbooks promote specific yet contradictory notions of what it means to be Latina. Countless media representations portray Latinas navigating simultaneous demands to be traditional and family-oriented as well as exotic and hypersexual. At the same time, Latinas in the U.S. navigate this contradiction in the context of immigration, U.S. nationalism, and expectations to retain desirable exotic otherness while effectively (unthreateningly) assimilating into the U.S. mainstream. In the process of marketing Latin food, dominant depictions mark Latinaness through the negotiation of Latina bodies as desirably curvy, and the overall fatphobia of popular culture. In their constructions of Latina food and family, *Eva's Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen* both describe and prescribe Latina relationships to heteronormativity, femininity, health and beauty, and cultural authenticity. The cookbooks participate in the construction of an “authentic” Latin food to be replicated and consumed by the cookbook reader, as well as the notion of an “authentic” Latina celebrity cook who performs the relationship between food and Latina identity with authority.

### **1.1 When Food and Stars Collide: Celebrity Chefs and Celebrity Cooks**

Interest in food television ranging from instructional cooking shows to eating competitions has intensified over the last several years with 2012 marking Food Network's highest rated quarter (Kondolojy). While not the only channel featuring cooking shows, Food Network is the most prominent source of food-related programming in the U.S. Even with a slight decline in ratings in 2013 (Gillette), food television continues to enjoy a significant following, producing a unique kind of celebrity termed the “celebrity chef” by cultural studies scholar Christina Mitchell. In 2012, the top ten best selling cookbooks included four cookbooks by chefs with successful Food Network shows and only one cookbook from an author who does

not have a television show (Forbes 2013). In spite of attracting less overall viewers after 2012, Food Network saw similar market trends: the top ten bestseller list for 2013 includes five cookbooks from Food Network stars, two cookbooks featuring recognizable figures who are not chefs, and only three cookbooks from authors without strong mainstream media presence (Forbes 2014). As Mitchell demonstrates, the prominence of cooking television and the rise of cooking television stars reshape the market and marketing of popular cookbooks.

On the cusp of this trend, celebrities from the realms of film, music, television, and politics have tapped into and expanded the emerging market of celebrity cookbooks. The last several years attest to a proliferation of cookbooks written by a wide variety of celebrities.<sup>1</sup> While some writing exists about people who have become celebrities through cooking, there is no other scholarship at this time addressing the recent rise in celebrities without training/expertise in cooking who publish their own cookbooks. Celebrity cooks use their recognizability to promote and sell their cookbooks in ways that are both similar to and distinct from celebrity chef cookbooks.<sup>2</sup> While the popularity of food television enables the existence of celebrities famous for being chefs, I turn my attention to the construction of what I call celebrity cooks, whose celebrity status is not based in cooking, have no training as chefs, but offer their experiences in the kitchen to consumers as a behind-the-scenes view of the celebrity's "authentic" life. Celebrity cooks such as Longoria and the Estefans manipulate constructions of

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<sup>1</sup> For just a few examples see: Maya Angelou 2010, Mayim Bialik 2014, Sheryl Crow 2011, Gloria and Emilio Estefan 2008, Teresa Giudice 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013, Eva Longoria 2011, Mario Lopez 2011, Mo'nique 2006, Gwyneth Paltrow 2011 and 2013, Dolly Parton 2006, Ann Romney 2013, Alicia Silverstone 2011, and Jessica Seinfeld 2008 and 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Celebrity chefs like Paula Dean, Ree Drummond, Emeril Lagasse, and Rachel Ray consistently release best selling cookbooks.

Latinaness and their own recognizability in order to promote, authorize, and authenticate the celebrity as well as her cookbook.

Continuing trends established by celebrity chefs, cookbooks by celebrity cooks incorporate personal narrative and recipes, and include less information on how to cook (techniques, method, etc.) than cookbooks written by authors who have training in culinary arts. Celebrity cooks blend memoir and cookbook, producing widely circulating best sellers through their cross genre appeal. U.S. consumers are obsessed with knowing the “real person behind the image” and as Molina-Gúzman argues, “the appearance of public access to the private lives of celebrities is at the cultural and economic heart of celebrity journalism” (Gamson 190 and Molina-Gúzman 56). By offering us a place at their kitchen table, celebrities market their cookbooks as both functional (recipes to be cooked) and indulgently personal (sharing childhood memories of the celebrity as well as her “everyday” life).

## **1.2 Cookbooks and Tradition: Retain, Reclaim, Create, and Adapt**

The interdisciplinary field of cookbook studies mostly emerges from revisionist projects in women’s history. Like historiographies that take up diaries in order to recover information on women’s lives at times when women were specifically barred/marginalized from other forms of written histories, feminist historians such as Bower, Floyd and Forster, and Neuhaus read between the lines of cookbooks as a way to learn about the everyday experiences of women in the past. Cookbook studies scholars interested in connections between food and tradition mark the ways in which cookbooks serve as vehicles to transmit foodways to new generations (Eves, Feinberg and Crosetto, Ferguson, Inness, and Nakhimovsky). These scholars highlight how cookbooks retain traditions through foodways even as communities move through time and

geography. Gloria and Emilio Estefan's cookbook, *Estefan Kitchen* is clearly aligned with this function of cookbooks as it attempts to provide recipes for authentically Cuban food even as the Estefans have relocated to the United States.

Not only do cookbooks serve as tools for passing down traditions to the next generation, scholars like Berzok and Yaa highlight the use of cookbooks to reclaim lost traditions. Writing in the context of Swedish immigration/assimilation and experiences of African diaspora respectively, Berzok and Yaa emphasize how readers and authors utilize cookbooks as tools to find and reclaim the tastes of their heritage and familial pasts in the specific context of U.S. based anti-immigrant ideologies that privilege assimilative food choices. In Emilio Estefan's introduction, he notes, "our cultural roots are very important to us, and we've never forgotten where we came from. We've actually made it our mission to share our culture and traditions not only with our family, but with the world as well" (Emilio Estefan 8). While the Estefans assert that they have never been out of touch with authentic Cuban culture, they suggest that other members of their family might not have this same experience. The Estefans share Cuban culture and traditions in order for their family to reclaim lost heritage and authentic Cuban culture.

While all cookbook scholars mentioned above argue that cookbooks serve to uphold traditions within an existing community, scholars such as Appadurai and Eves push this point further by exploring how cookbooks are used to establish a collective identity where previously there was none. For example, Arjun Appadurai explores the ways in which pan-Indian cookbooks work to establish a notion of "Indian food" despite regional differences, thus developing an overarching Indian way of eating (Appadurai 305). Cookbooks not only describe existing foodways and communities, but can also work to create new ones. Similar to the way

cookbooks function to develop notions of pan-Indian identity, cookbooks and other mainstream representations create the umbrella identity of Latino/a.

While many cookbook scholars and writers focus on retaining continuity with the past, other scholars directly address the importance of maintaining malleable and adaptable food traditions as a means of continuing those traditions (Eves, Feinberg and Crosetto, Foer, Taylor, and Yaa). Raymond Williams argues that although the concept of tradition has been “commonly understood as relatively inert,” it should instead be discussed as “selective tradition,” which points to how traditions are actively constructed rather than inherent or given (Williams 115). For some (Feinberg and Crosetto), the need for adaptability comes from experiences of diaspora and migration, demonstrating how shifting access to food items based on geography necessitates adaptation to new contexts. For others, the importance of adaptability emerges from strategies of environmental, personal, and economic sustainability (Foer, Taylor, and Yaa). While the Estefans and Longoria employ tones of direct continuity with the past, the value of adaptability is directly apparent in the case of vegetarian and vegan adaptations of Latin food, such as Latina vegan cookbook author Terry Hope Romero’s *Viva Vegan!*, which I will discuss more extensively in my conclusion.

Claims to authenticity underpin conversations of tradition and identity especially in the context of marketing celebrities. Longoria and the Estefans manipulate authenticity narratives to validate the realness of their Latina identities. Cultural studies scholars such as Appadurai, Heldke, and Said show how the conflation between authenticity and purity produces understandings of tradition as static. Heldke notes the way that ‘we’ (her ‘we’ refers to U.S. consumers specifically, but outsiders to the community/cuisine more generally) equate

authenticity with difference (Heldke 27). She states, “What we identify as authentic in that culture is often simply new to us—which may or may not represent what insiders to that culture would identify as significant, traditions, or genuine elements of it” (Heldke 27). Utilizing Said, Heldke shows how notions of authenticity have more to do with exoticizing expectations and preferences of U.S. consumers than with the culture or community being constructed. Longoria and the Estefans strategically negotiate existing expectations of authentic Latinness in order to market their cookbooks to U.S. consumers.

One can also analyze the intersections between food and identity through the lens of marketing and consumerism. Many scholars have noted the way that ‘the Other’ has been used as a tool to market food to the general public (Heldke, hooks, hooks and Mesa-Bains, and Williams-Forson). The use of the exotic Other to attribute “authenticity” to “ethnic” food speaks directly to my project. My work extends conversations around marketing the Other to the private sphere of the home kitchen through the vehicle of the celebrity cookbook, and illustrates how similar exoticizing narratives and marketing strategies are perpetuated through the use of celebrities as authorities and spokespeople of Latin cuisine and culture.

While previous literature has not engaged with how the marketing of ethnic food describes and prescribes cultural narratives to community “insiders,” Arlene Dávila shows how the concept of Latino emerges through advertising and marketing, unifying diverse communities through messaging directed at both community “insiders” and the general U.S. population (Dávila, *Latino Inc.* and *Latino Spin*). Dávila traces the rise in Hispanic-specific marketing and the way that this marketing has “[sold] consumer products by shaping and projecting images of and for Latinos” (Dávila, *Latino Inc.* 2). I employ Dávila’s discussion of the construction of a



pan-Hispanic/Latino identity category to articulate how “Latino/a authenticity” is always already a constructed notion used as a marketing technique. Thus, Latina celebrity cooks must perform Latinanness in ways that conform to currently supported/recognizable images of Latina authenticity in order to claim authority over Latina identity, culture, and food.

### **1.3 Ethnic Excess: Fat Studies, Disability Studies, and Latino Studies**

Within Latino/a Studies, there has been much debate with regard to terminology to refer to the population within the U.S. that has its origins in Latin America. While I understand the need to problematize the potentially homogenizing effects of any umbrella term, I critically employ the term Latina to refer to the ethnoracial identities embodied by the cookbook authors. Myra Mendible notes that, “‘the Latina body’ is a convenient fiction—a historically contingent, mass produced combination of myth, desire, location, marketing, and political expedience” (Mendible 1). My project focuses on constructions of identity and the consumption of identities by U.S. mainstream markets, so using language derived from business models, rhetorical savvy, and stereotyping seems fitting.

Further, I use the term Latinanness to refer to the process of being/performing Latina. Though “Latinidad” is often used to refer to the “hybrid identity space” and experiences held by peoples of Latin American origin (Molina-Gúzman 6), I offer the term Latinanness in order to denaturalize the identity and highlight the process of construction that leads to an understanding of pan-Latino/a identity.

Popular discussions of Latin food fuse the rhetoric of “the war on immigration” and “the war on obesity,” constructing Latina excess as a threat to U.S. security and well-being. This connection continues to intensify as Mexico recently surpassed the obesity rates of the United

States, thus becoming the world's "fattest nation" (Althaus and Daniel). Reading between the lines of popular press coverage of Mexico's rise in obesity rates, Mexico's recent "weight gain" is attributed to the combination of the perceived indulgence of Mexican consumption habits and "the increase in U.S. based fast food chains throughout Mexico" (Althaus and Daniel). There seems to be an underlining message that while Mexico may be in and of itself dangerous, when U.S. products and Mexican "habits" combine, there is truly a threat to national security. Many fat studies theorists explore the construction of fatness and/or excess as un-American or anti-American (Belasco, Chamberlain, Farrell, LeBesco, Sánchez, and Schwartz). For example, Kathleen LeBesco traces how the "healthy body" becomes a physical marker of the "morally worthy citizen" and how the state has enlisted the general public to discipline their own bodies as well as the bodies of apparently unhealthy, fat people (LeBesco 154). The disciplining of fat bodies, particularly those of other fat people, is usually framed through a discussion about who deserves access to resources. Fat people are represented as undue burdens on the state as are immigrants (especially Mexicans). Both fat people and immigrants are told that in order to access full citizenship, they must be disciplined back into the norm and assimilated into existing standards.

Both *Eva's Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen* demonstrate the process of bodily assimilation by suggesting that they, like all authentic Latinas, formally had unhealthy relationships to fats, but now as a thoroughly integrated celebrities, Longoria and Estefan use photos to signal to their reader that they are not fat anymore. Losing weight and upward mobility intertwine in the rhetoric used by both cooks. Disability studies also offers frameworks for understanding the ways that "fitness" and citizenship interact to privilege specific bodily configurations as worthy

of full citizenship (Erevelles). The connections between the normate body<sup>3</sup> and access to citizenship within disability studies and fat studies inform my discussion of bodily difference and Latinanness. In current frameworks, Latinanness must conform to the normate to gain access to citizenship.

In order to maintain a sense of authentic Latinanness as well as market that Latinanness to white, middle class U.S. audiences, the cookbook authors I analyze perpetuate and perform dominant beauty and body norms constructed in direct opposition to stereotypes of Latina bodily excess. That is to say, in order for Latin food to sell in this context, it must be authentic without being seen as excessive, unhealthy, lazy, or un-American.

Latina feminist scholarship that addresses femininity and bodily excess tends to focus on Jennifer Lopez and her butt. Using Jennifer Lopez as a site of departure, this scholarship explores how Latina identity and notions of bodily excess are performed in popular culture (Barrera, Beltran, Burns-Ardolino, Molina-Guzmán, and Molina-Guzmán and Valdivia). By drawing attention to how bodily excess located in the breast and butt relates to notions of hypersexuality and otherness, some scholars assert that Jennifer Lopez has been cast as a modern day Hottentot Venus (Barrera, Beltran, and Mendible). Other authors use *Ugly Betty* as a foil to their discussions of Jennifer Lopez to trace the binary between hypersexualized excess and unattractive excess in relation to the Latina body (Molina-Guzmán and Molina-Guzmán and Valdivia). The Latina celebrity cooks I focus on carefully negotiate between hypersexuality and

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<sup>3</sup> Rosemarie Garland-Thomson coined the term “normate” to describe the ever narrowing set of characteristics that make up the position of authority granted to those whose bodily configurations are deemed normal in relation to those bodies marked as deviant (Garland-Thomson).

unattractive excess in their cookbooks by rhetorically and visually situating themselves as moderate and family-oriented, while also retaining dominant notions of Latina beauty and femininity. This negotiation is apparent in the short anecdote in Longoria's introduction at the beginning of this thesis. In the span of just a few sentences, Longoria demonstrates the impossibility and contradiction of the pressures Latina celebrities face when balancing stereotypes of the family-oriented authentic Latina and the sexy, red carpet Latina celebrity.

#### **1.4 Methodologies, Frameworks, and Methods**

Broadly, my project is situated within feminist theory, which by definition calls into question systems of power and provides a foundation for understanding identity as socially constructed. More specifically, my analysis lies at the intersections of cultural studies, fat studies, celebrity studies, food studies, and Latina studies. I aim to speak across these areas of inquiry by utilizing shared methodological frameworks from rhetorical analysis. Slight differences in terminology are inevitable when incorporating multiple areas of study, but I find this to be an exciting opportunity to weave together language from several fields in an attempt to understand the complicated interplays between representation, identity, and consumerism.

I use rhetorical analysis to perform close readings of the materials found within the binding of the cookbooks. Because of the multimodal characteristics of cookbooks, I approach my analysis through the use of textual rhetorical studies (Brummett) and visual rhetorical studies (Foss). Looking at both content and composition, my project pays particular attention to the interactions between ingredients, headnotes, photos, glossaries, and introductory materials in the cookbooks' construction of narratives of authenticity. I focus primarily on moments of the text that convey notions of femininity, heteronormativity, Latinanness, and the American Dream

signaled by terms such as: tradition, family, and authenticity. Also, I analyze photos that convey similar concepts through the depiction of family (both photos staged for the cookbook with family members and the use of old family pictures in cookbooks) as well as photos that illustrate the authors as the ideal Latina woman: feminine, thin, happy, family-oriented etc.

Within rhetorical methods, my project specifically engages questions of appeal, authority, association, omission, and audience (Brummett). In other words, I explore how celebrity cooks intentionally use aspects of the cookbook to do more than merely explain how to prepare food. Specifically, I analyze the ways in which photos and narratives (mostly in the introductions and headnotes) work together by proximity and association to promote specific ideas about the celebrity cook and Latin cuisine in general. Rhetorical analysis allows me to make claims about perceived audience, the constructed narrative of the author, the stated goal of the cookbook, and the implicit definition of Latin food produced through recipe choices. Different methodological choices could be used to address similar themes from other perspectives; for example, market/sales analysis could be used to find data on demographics and audience, or interviews with readers could provide insight to audience reception. I employ rhetorical analysis as a methodological tool because it allows me to engage a range of possible readings and responses to the text.

My use of rhetorical methods draws heavily from Christine Mitchell's article, "The Rhetoric of Celebrity Cookbooks." Mitchell performs close readings of cookbooks to analyze how celebrity chefs (she is looking specifically at cookbooks by chefs made famous through cooking television shows) position themselves as authorities on cooking in gendered ways. By tracking celebrity chefs' use of first person pronouns (overwhelmingly male chefs) versus second

person pronouns (overwhelmingly female chefs), Mitchell makes the argument that female celebrity chefs position themselves as encouraging, unthreatening teachers of cooking, while male celebrity chefs use their cookbooks as an opportunity for self-promotion and narcissism (Mitchell 530). She also notes that the use of step-by-step photographs versus photos of the chef himself falls along gendered lines as well, with the male celebrity chef more likely to include self-promoting photos (Mitchell 535). Cookbook analysis requires a blend of visual and textual rhetorical analysis since cookbooks rely on a combination of text and images to create meaning. In correspondence with text, Latina celebrity cookbooks use images practically (images of the finished products of the recipes) and in order to convey notions of Latina authenticity (the inclusion of family photos, for example).

My project takes up the call to integrate rhetorical and cultural studies set by Thomas Rosteck in his anthology, *At the Intersection: Cultural Studies and Rhetorical Studies*. Rhetorical cultural studies provides a useful methodological framework for my project because it necessitates a kind of fluidity that incorporates both attention to close reading analysis (from rhetorical studies) and attention to larger contextual issues (from cultural studies) (Rosteck). As Rosteck outlines, this approach “bring[s] together production, textuality, consumption, history, and culture with the end of a more complete analytical practice” (Rosteck 21). The adaptive methods offered by rhetorical cultural studies are vital to the multidisciplinary work embodied by this project.

## **1.5 Outline of the Thesis**

My project explores questions such as: How is authenticity defined and defended through celebrity cookbooks, specifically those marketed as Latina? How does the celebrity status of the

cookbook author complicate or reinforce her position as an authentic spokesperson for Latinaness and Latin food? I argue that the marketing and content of *Eva's Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen* perpetuate dominant narratives about what it means to be Latina and to cook/eat Latina. These narratives establish legibility as well as limit possibilities for relating to food as a Latina, and create a narrative of static, homogenous Latina identity, cuisine, and culture. Longoria and the Estefans use their cookbooks to legitimize their own Latina authenticity as well as the authenticity of Latin food cuisine itself. I begin by exploring the contradictions produced by mainstream representations of Latinas, highlighting the way that Latinas are expected to be, on the one hand, traditional and family-oriented and on the other hand exotic and hypersexual. These two poles shape notions of Latina authenticity, and Latina celebrities are expected to navigate both simultaneously. If a Latina celebrity does not perform within these existing stereotypes, she risks appearing either inauthentic/too assimilative or beyond the scope of the desirable Latina for U.S. marketability. By falling outside of the established roles for Latinas, one would be charged with “not being a *real* Latina,” and thus denied authority to perform Latinaness in the context of celebrity. These rigid stereotypes guarantee that dominant scripts of Latinaness remain unchallenged, because they assert that any challenge to existing norms can be effectively dismissed as inauthentically Latina. By analyzing the photos and text in *Eva's Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen*, I illustrate how Latina celebrity cooks produce and reflect existing notions of Latina authenticity by describing and prescribing how to eat/cook as a Latina.

## **1.6 Moving the Conversation into the Kitchen: Being/Eating Latina**

Using Latina celebrity cookbooks as a site of analysis integrates previously disparate fields such as food studies, cultural studies, fat studies and celebrity studies. Working at these

intersections, my project speaks to broad themes within feminist research including identity, representation, authenticity, tradition, and commodification. As many feminist scholars have argued, cultural representations respond to and shape lived realities. This project extends conversations about how celebrity culture shapes identity formation in the context of seemingly endless consumption of popular media. As Latina celebrities become more prominent in both popular media and cultural studies scholarship, it is important to (re)evaluate the dominant images of Latina authenticity perpetuated through mainstream representations.

Food serves as a convenient (profitable) and recognizable short hand in the representation of Latina identity in film and television (Bower). *Eva's Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen* further extend the legibility, consumability, and commodification of Latinaness, taking a didactic approach that draws on family recipes and secrets to literally provide step-by-step instructions on how to cook and eat “like a Latina.” If you are what you eat, eating and being Latina have become significantly more consumable for U.S. audiences. Drawing on previous scholarship that notes the relevance of Latin food as a visible and readily consumable aspect of Latina identity, I explore the ways in which Latina celebrity cooks and cookbooks require a reassessment of cultural representations of Latina identity, and the implications of these representations for Latina and non-Latina consumers.

## **2 DIVAS AS DAUGHTERS: LATINA CELEBRITY COOKS IN THE FAMILY KITCHEN**

In the introduction to her book *Latino Spin: Public Image and the Whitewashing of Race*, Arlene Dávila notes the contradictory and multiple representations of Latinos as “illegal, tax burden, patriotic, family-oriented, hard-working, and model consumer...” (*Latino Spin* 1). By



examining the contradictory images of Latinos in the media, Dávila argues that, regardless of legal status, Latinos are always “potential aliens and outsiders” and are understood as perpetual immigrants (*Latino Spin* 73). Latinos’ potential to be understood as aliens/outsideers as they navigate the conflicting images generated by the mainstream media “positions Latina bodies in the media landscape as both...consumable and dangerous” (Molina-Gúzman 2). In order for Latina celebrities to succeed within current mainstream media, they must constantly negotiate these contradictions without erring too far in one direction or another. In this chapter I focus on the stereotype of the traditional, family-oriented Latina, and in the following chapter I turn my attention to the exotic Latina stereotype.

Media studies and Latino studies scholar Isabel Molina-Gúzman continues by noting that, “central to mainstream media representations of Latinidad is the production of ethnic authenticity...often grounded in familiar and marketable characteristics” (87). Within *Eva’s Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen*, “familiar and marketable characteristics” range from physical attributes like brown skin, dark features, and an hourglass shape, to more abstract characteristics like being family-oriented and performing Latina femininity. The celebrity cooks manipulate characteristics associated with representations of Latina identity in order to make legible their version of authentic Latina celebrity.

Writing in the context of exotic food more generally, food studies scholar Lisa Heldke notes the ways in which U.S. audiences rely on familiar (to them) characteristics to situate ethnic groups as desirably exotic, but within the realm of potential assimilation into dominant U.S. culture. She argues that ethnic food “needs to fit into some known category for us before we can even be fascinated by it” (Heldke 19). *Estefan Kitchen* and *Eva’s Kitchen* engage dominant

media representations of Latina celebrities and of authentic, exotic food, which alternate between the familiar and the unique. In fact, as Dávila argues, “the commodification of Latinos presupposes their disciplining into the ‘right’ way of being an ‘ethnic’ (*Latino Spin* 88). This is to say, that in order for Latinas to become marketable, they must already fit within the pre-established set of familiar characteristics associated with Latinaness. Conflicting representations of Latinas, however, mean that the required familiar characteristics are contradictory in nature as well. Latina celebrities must engage both the “culturally desirable and socially contested” aspects of the familiar characteristics (Molina-Gúzman 2). If a popular representation (of a product or celebrity) moves too far from what is recognizably Latina, it risks accusations of inauthenticity based on being perceived as assimilating too much and failing to “genuinely” embody what it means to be Latina.

## **2.1 Reading Celebrity Texts: Performance, Reality, and Authenticity**

Celebrity studies scholar, Joshua Gamson argues that through commercial enterprises, “celebrities are manufactured as attention-getting bodies, a process complicated but not negated by the fact that celebrities are human beings” (104-105). Thus, in this project, I do not make claims about Eva Longoria the “real” person; rather my analysis exists within the tangled web of constructed personalities orbiting Eva Longoria the actress, Eva Longoria the philanthropist/activist/political figure, and Eva Longoria’s narrative of her “authentic” self, which draws on her childhood and familial heritage and emerges in the context of interviews and self-representations. Similarly, in the context of Gloria Estefan, I analyze Gloria Estefan the musician and actress, Gloria Estefan the entrepreneur, and the mediated self-depictions promoted by Gloria and Emilio Estefan and their family, as a set of related presentations of Estefan’s

life/identity. I focus primarily on how Latina celebrities construct a public persona as celebrity cooks; in other words, “it is the mediated life of the performer, rather than the performance itself, that becomes the primary object of analysis” (Molina-Gúzman 52).

The celebrity cookbook serves as a bridge between two popular genres (celebrity memoir and cookbook), so it is important to reckon with not only cookbook readers but celebrity text consumers as well. Gamson’s work on audience reception of celebrity texts provides a useful context for understanding the role of the reader/audience of the celebrity cookbook. He notes that, perhaps surprisingly, celebrity publicists and media outlets are unable to predict audience desires (115). In spite of a proliferation of “celebrity-industry workers” who focus on constructing and mediating the public images of celebrities, they work to market their clients to the media industry, rather than to the general public (Gamson 114). In *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*, Gamson analyzes tabloids and other texts written by non-celebrities through which the media industry negotiates representations of celebrities. Celebrity cookbooks are thus beyond Gamson’s argument; however, I demonstrate that similar negotiations occur in celebrity cookbooks, in which celebrity cooks craft semi-fictional authenticating narratives.

Gamson also notes that as consumers become increasingly aware of the work necessary to develop and maintain celebrity personas, media texts instruct the reader to search for the next level of truth or authentic representation of a celebrity (48). The celebrity memoir and the celebrity cookbook are logical extensions of Gamson’s argument, and provide commodities to consumers who seek to unwrap yet another layer of celebrity persona in an unending attempt to reach the “true” and “real” person underneath.

Gamson continues, “identification-driven audiences want to know what these celebrities are ‘really’ like, a desire driven by a perceived gap between the celebrities and their screen images...” (170). The desire for identification and authenticity implicit in the search for celebrities’ “true selves” produces a celebrity consumer culture that generates meaning through the interplay between audience desire and celebrity realities. Audiences attempt to fill the gap between onstage and off stage celebrity personas through reading/watching interviews and memoirs. However, cultural studies scholar Myra Mendible describes how the information gained through “inside looks” at celebrities is mediated through the audiences’ already established understandings of any given celebrity; in other words, it is “where lived reality and public fantasies converge” (Mendible 5). So, even as audiences look for ways to “know” the “real” person underneath the persona, they fill in the gaps with an element of invention that builds off popular assumptions of the individual celebrity, and, I would argue, more general cultural stereotypes. In other words, audiences’ perceptions of Latina celebrities’ identities are mediated through dominant images that define authentic Latinaness.

The readers (people who actually purchase the book) for *Estefan Kitchen* and *Eva’s Kitchen* are difficult to determine with any certainty, but both cookbooks address the reader directly. Both note that their cookbook is for Latinas and non-Latinas, including people familiar with Latin food as well as those new to the cuisine. Looking beyond the “official” statement on audience, it becomes clear that the cookbooks use various rhetorical devices to allow the reader to identify herself or himself strategically as an insider or outsider throughout. While it might seem counter-intuitive for a cookbook to situate any reader as an “outsider,” Heldke describes food adventurers as consumers who identify as outsiders to a particular culture/cuisine, but also

“tend to spend a lot of time trying to find out where They [perceived insiders to the culture/cuisine] eat, on the assumption that if They eat there, the restaurant must be authentic” (23-24). Similarly, Longoria and the Estefans employ rhetorical devices to situate their cookbooks as “insider” texts, confirming to outsiders the exclusivity of their experience of an “authentic” dish. While *Estefan Kitchen* and *Eva’s Kitchen* formally include “insider” audience members (often addressing an implied Latina “you”), I assert that the cookbooks function less as functional tools for Latinas and more as tools to develop what Heldke calls “honorary insiders,” who understand themselves to have gained “authentic” experiences of a particular culture to the extent that it becomes familiar. Even though the cookbooks themselves only offer clues about the desired audience of that particular cookbook, cookbook historian Jassamyn Neuhaus argues that cookbook readers are generally middle or upper middle class, “with the leisure and the money to pursue upwardly mobile eating and cooking” (Neuhaus 264). Despite Latin cuisine’s characterization as cheap, cookbooks are often expensive and seen as auxiliary to cooking at home. The ironic disjuncture between situating a text as “insider” while understanding that the majority of consumers of ethnic cookbooks tend to be “outsiders” produces a sense of authenticity and familiarity in terms of the ethnic identity of the cookbook author and in terms of how the cuisine is understood.

## **2.2 Latina Celebrity Cooks from the Kitchen to the Red Carpet**

Eva Longoria was born in Corpus Christi, Texas in 1975. She is best known for her starring role as Gabrielle Solis on the TV drama, *Desperate Housewives*, which aired from 2004-2012 (AceShowbiz.com and starplus.com). In addition to her acting career, Longoria founded the non-profit Eva’s Heroes, which is “dedicated to enriching the lives of those with intellectual

special needs” (evasheroes.org). In 2008, Longoria opened Beso, a high-end fusion restaurant serving “classic steakhouse and authentic Latin dishes” (besohollywood.com). In 2013, she received her MA in Chicano studies from California State University at Northridge and has been involved with the Democratic National Convention as well as other political/philanthropic endeavors (Longo). Interestingly, the year before she released her cookbook, she produced the documentary “Harvest,” which follows children working as migrant farmers (starplus.com). Through these efforts, Longoria attempts to establish herself as a popular and politically engaged figure, particularly focused on “Latino issues.”

In interviews, as well as the commentary in the cookbook, Longoria positions herself as a cosmopolitan, world-traveler. *Eva’s Kitchen* models this international perspective, and includes a mix of Mexican dishes as well as European, U.S. American, and U.S. Southern cuisines (CBS News, Scorcucchi). The cookbook is divided into ten sections ranging from appetizers to side dishes to desserts, each introduced by Longoria. *Eva’s Kitchen* was published in 2011 by Clarkson Potter, and costs \$29.99.

During an interview, Longoria states that “...the great thing about the cookbook, [is] it’s kind of like a memoir of my life told through food because in every major moment of my life I always remember its been centered around food and family...” (CBS News). The front matter of *Eva’s Kitchen* states that it will “entice her loyal fans and inspire home cooks to broaden their culinary horizons” (Longoria), illustrating how the celebrity cookbook is designed to reach both celebrity fans and cookbook readers. This description implies that Longoria does not imagine her average reader to be an insider to Latin cuisine, but rather, is writing to either fans of her acting career or cookbook readers interested in adding a little spice to their repertoire. Longoria

uses various rhetorical strategies to appeal to both sets of readers. For her fans, she includes plenty of “behind-the-scenes” material and childhood narratives. And for the cookbook reader, she includes cooking tips, instructions, and food justice information.

Turning to *Estefan Kitchen*, Cuban-born Gloria Estefan is perhaps best known for her singing career with Miami Sound Machine. As one of the first Latino bands with a female lead, Miami Sound Machine recorded in both English and Spanish establishing itself as a crossover band at the height of the band’s popularity in the 1980s and 1990s. Lauded widely for integrating pop, disco, rock, and traditional Latin rhythm, Miami Sound Machine made Cuban music relevant to a broader U.S. audience by adapting and weaving together a variety of different cultural influences. As former band member Juan Marcos Avila recalls, “our sound evolved from trying to please all the people. Here in Miami, we have Cubans, Anglos, blacks, South Americans. You have to be very versatile” (Phillips 47). The Estefans demonstrate the centrality of their desire to keep Cuban traditions alive and relevant by incorporating various popular genres. As one of the most successful crossover artists, it is not surprising that Gloria Estefan would release a book of Cuban recipes that supports her public image grounded in Cuban and Miami-Cuban authenticity. Her cookbook, written in collaboration with her husband, manager, and bandmate, Emilio Estefan, serves as the most recent manifestation of their project to, in Gloria’s terms, “showcase our culture to the world” (Gloria Estefan 5).

In 1997, the couple established a Cuban cuisine restaurant, Bongos Cuban Café at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Emilio Estefan describes their restaurant as “...a historic landmark as it places Cuban food front and center among American cuisines...to me, it’s an incredible opportunity to share our culture, and to maintain a piece of our homeland outside of

Cuba” (Emilio Estefan 8). Walt Disney’s fabrication and commodification of ethnic authenticity runs throughout Disney enterprises, but is especially apparent in theme parks centered around caricatures of “ethnic” cultures (Epcot offers a particularly obvious example). In Emilio Estefan’s narrative, Walt Disney World defines what is ‘front and center’ among American cuisine and culture, and he articulates the careful negotiations surrounding the Estefans’ cultural exchange enterprises by foregrounding the importance of ‘all-American’ spaces. These negotiations rely on a balance between becoming culturally relevant to U.S. consumers through assimilation on the one hand, while retaining an authentic, exotic, distinctively Cuban character on the other.

*Estefan Kitchen* weaves Cuban culture ever more thoroughly into American culture by moving beyond public spaces into the private space of the kitchen. Perfectly describing what Heldke refers to as an “honorary insider,” the front matter of the cookbook states, “now, whether the smell of *ropa vieja* takes you back to your *abuelita*’s kitchen or you’ve never heard of the Cuban delicacy, you can whip up tantalizing dishes in your own kitchen...and impress even your Cuban friends!” (Gloria and Emilio Estefan). The cookbook formally addresses the insider reader through the quintessential symbol of heritage, Grandma’s kitchen. Simultaneously, the cookbook engages the outsider reader, promising access to authentic Cuban experiences that can lead to a sense of expertise in Cuban culture/cuisine, and thus promoting an “honorary insider” status. By situating this cookbook within the legacy of cultural exchange generated by Miami Sound Machine and perpetuated throughout their career, the Estefans position themselves as authorities on Cuban culture and Cuban identity. Organized into seven sections ranging from appetizers to entrees to drinks, the cookbook potentially affirms a sense of authenticity for



insider audience members, while emphasizing an “authentic” and didactic experience for outsider audience members interested in preparing “Cuban delicacies” to the satisfaction of even their Cuban friends. Each section is introduced by either Gloria or Emilio Estefan and framed by a story about their family and/or upbringing in Cuba. *Estefan Kitchen* was published in 2008 by Celebra, and costs \$27.95.

### **2.3 Making You Feel Right At Home: Visual Rhetoric and Approachability**

Usually, celebrity cookbooks incorporate a combination of photos of completed recipes, food items, candid family photos and professional photos of the celebrity cooking/eating. While most celebrity cookbooks engage these photographic tools to varying degrees, *Estefan Kitchen* is unique because (with the exception of the cover) it does not include professional photos of the Estefans cooking. Alongside images of finished recipes, family photos are printed throughout and stylized to look like an old photo album. The rhetorical message seems clear: the Estefans’ love of cooking is not staged--it is ‘real’ and authentic and a part of their family history and daily lives. Photos spanning several decades are revealed throughout the cookbook as visual representations of family history and the longevity of culinary interest and cooking experience embodied by the Estefans. The use of a scrapbook aesthetic in *Estefan Kitchen* reinforces a sense of authenticity by suggesting that these photos were easy to find and effortlessly placed. The scrapbook aesthetic provides a particularly potent rhetorical tool for the Estefans because it resonates with their experiences of exile, conveniently positioning their Cuban past as contained within and expressed through nostalgia.

The use of family photographs featuring multiple generations validates the Estefans’ cultural authority (i.e., the Estefans must know how to cook Cuban food because they were

taught by their parents who were taught by their parents, etc.) and simultaneously humanizes Gloria and Emilio Estefan within the context of their families. One of the key functions of the celebrity cookbook is to make the reader feel as though they are gaining inside access to the “real” person behind the celebrity, so the Estefans’ use of family photos furthers this goal by making the reader believe that they are seeing the real (as opposed to constructed) identity of larger than life Latin diva, Gloria Estefan.

By comparison, *Eva’s Kitchen* uses a combination of photos of completed recipes alongside photos of Longoria cooking as well as eating and drinking with family and friends. Interestingly, Longoria’s cookbook features significantly fewer photos of herself and her family than most celebrity cookbooks, including only 21 photos of people preparing and enjoying food, compared to the 60 images she provides of completed recipes.<sup>4</sup>

*Eva’s Kitchen* features seven images of Longoria mid-conversation, giving the reader visual access to casual and exclusive dialogue already occurring between Eva and her “family and friends.” In each photo of people eating food, the camera positioning invites the reader into the intimate group using a loose frame and positioning the gaze at eye level with the people in the photo. For example, the final photo in the cookbook depicts a backyard table with plate settings all around. Eva’s father, mother, and four other women sit at the table, while Eva stands, poised to serve Mexican caprese to the group. The frame is cropped in such a way that the tip of a fork is just visible in the bottom right corner of the page signaling an empty chair just beyond the scope of the shot (Longoria 220). In one potential explanation of this image, the reader is

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Gwyneth Paltrow’s *It’s All Good*, includes 35 photos of Paltrow and 86 photos of food--many of which are not actually photos of the recipes, but of raw food ingredients (Orchant)

quite literally placed in a seat at the table due to proximity between the empty chair on the page, and the audience's position while holding the book. Eva invites you, the reader, into the intimate circle of "family and friends" referenced in the cookbook's title.

A more likely interpretation suggests a temporary empty space to which Eva will return after serving the food, foregrounding Eva's role as host/server. Longoria uses photos of herself preparing and serving food to illustrate her performance of domestic, family-oriented Latinanness in spite of her celebrity status. I will return to Longoria's status as host/server later in this paper. Similarly to the Estefans, Longoria's cookbook photos function to humanize her as "Evita," giving her audience access to her role within her family while conveying her down-to-earth and laid-back personality<sup>5</sup>, and erasing the effort implicit in performing Latina celebrity authenticity.

Both *Estefan Kitchen* and *Eva's Kitchen* use photos to represent the celebrity as approachable and authentic. The Estefans are humanized through the use of a scrapbook aesthetic of candid pictures, which provide a "behind-the-scenes" look at the Estefan's family photo album through the years. Longoria, on the other hand, strategically manipulates camera orientation, opening up her home and food to welcome the reader. Both approaches achieve authenticity by positioning larger than life Latina divas explicitly within family-oriented roles and responsibilities as mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters.

## **2.4 Picturing Gendered Food: Cooking Latina, Eating Latino**

Family photos serve another purpose when analyzed alongside the introductory texts in *Estefan Kitchen* and *Eva's Kitchen*. In her historical analysis of gender in cookbooks in the U.S.,

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<sup>5</sup> Longoria also uses bare-feet in photographs to demonstrate her laid-back personality, which is a strategy that other celebrity cookbook writers (most notably Gwyneth Paltrow) use repeatedly.

Jassamyn Neuhaus notes, "cookbooks continue, in the new millennium, to reinforce our ideas about gender and domesticity. We have not escaped assumptions about what men eat and cook and what women eat and cook" (Neuhaus 264). Both celebrity cookbooks perpetuate fairly clear assumptions about what men (should) eat and what women (should) cook, employing visual and textual strategies to engage associations between Latino masculinity, virility, and meat eating.

For example, Longoria provides a short anecdote about growing up on the Rio Grande to introduce her chapter "Fish Main Courses." She notes how location played a role in her relationship to seafood, claiming that by age seven she could "catch, gut, and fillet a fish" (Longoria 67). This comment seems like it might be a bit of an exaggeration,<sup>6</sup> but it provides a clear example of Longoria's use of authenticating narratives to locate herself within a landscape of ranchero-style self sufficiency through catching and preparing fish. Longoria places this account opposite a photo of her and her father preparing fried catfish, employing the rhetorical strategy of association to legitimize the fish narrative and situate Longoria firmly within a persistent trope of authentic Latino culture, the family (Longoria 66). In the image, Eva and her father are standing next to each other with a plate full of fried catfish; her father holds a lemon as he garnishes the dish. In order to promote her image as authentically Texan and working-class, in spite of her current celebrity status, Longoria employs a narrative about a "hands on" experience with food. The image of Longoria preparing catfish with her father accompanying her narrative of catching and cleaning fish from the river authenticates her working-class roots, accessing her father's authority as a Latino and patriarch in order to make her narrative more

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<sup>6</sup> Online reviews of the cookbook have cited this example as a particularly noteworthy (and possibly questionable) narrative in *Eva's Kitchen* (Cookbooks Of The Stars: Eva Longoria's 'Eva's Kitchen').

legible. Throughout the cookbook Longoria works actively and intentionally to distance her “authentic” persona from her role as Gabrielle Solis from *Desperate Housewives*. In sharp contrast to the spoiled, hypersexualized Gabrielle who resides on Wisteria Lane, the cookbook represents Longoria as thoroughly practical and family-oriented – capable of performing an authentic working-class Latina identity on the ranch.

The photo of Longoria preparing catfish with her father mobilizes gendered understandings of meat eating and masculinity. Writing as a scholar of nutritional science, Jeffrey Sobal argues that, “to eat in a masculine way is to eat meat, accomplishing maleness by the relict behavior of eating animals that were (or at least could be) hunted” (Sobal 138). In the image, Longoria’s father prepares a meat dish that presumably has been caught by hand. As the singular visual representation of her father cooking/preparing food in the cookbook, the photo firmly situates Latino masculinity with meat eating. Cooking self-caught meat is consistent with dominant stereotypes of Latino men, or as Neuhaus asserts, “the link between gender and certain kinds of food preparation remains strong” (Neuhaus 264).

The two photos of Longoria and her mother in *Eva’s Kitchen* further demonstrate gendered dynamics of food preparation, as both images depict the two women preparing vegetables (Longoria 6 and 205). Taken alongside the photo of Longoria and her father, the two photos of Longoria and her mother produce clear gendered expectations of the kind of food men and women need to eat/cook within Latina families.

*Estefan Kitchen* also describes and prescribes notions of Latina authenticity and food choices through meat eating. Throughout the cookbook, the Estefans repeatedly assert that Cubans do not eat many vegetables and that they eat lots of meat. Gloria Estefan introduces the

singular salad recipe included in the cookbook, stating, “as you might notice, there are not a lot of green salads or conventional vegetables in Cuban cuisine...but a simple and delicious salad that is a regular offering with a typical Cuban meal is *ensalada de aguacate*, or avocado salad. That’s one salad that we love, love, love” (Gloria Estefan 43). Sobal notes that salad and fruit are often considered feminine, so it is not surprising that Gloria introduces the recipe (Sobal 137). Perhaps more interestingly, Gloria Estefan’s positioning of green salads and vegetables as antithetical to Cuban identity, internalizes and perpetuates masculine, nationalist projects through discourses of meat eating. The Estefans’ narrative fundamentally ties Cuban authenticity and nationalism to meat eating, advising that to be Cuban is to eat meat while eschewing vegetables. In contrast, although she also uses meat eating to authenticate her Latinaness, Longoria’s cookbook also emphasizes the importance of vegetables specifically in the context of farmworker’s rights. Throughout the cookbook, Longoria situates animal and vegetable ingredients as important parts of her version of being/eating Latina, extending her focus beyond preparing food to include issues of food justice that relate to Latina populations.

*Eva’s Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen* reinforce dominant assumptions about the gendered aspects of food and ingredients in the context of Latinaness. Representations of Latina authenticity and heterofemininity are promoted within the cookbooks by linking Latino masculinity with meat eating as well as depicting Latina women with fruits and vegetables. Throughout the cookbook, as well as in many interviews and artifacts accompanying her career, Gloria Estefan is firmly located as the wife and band mate of her manager, Emilio Estefan and clearly presents herself in service of his masculinity especially in the context of serving meat. While Longoria uses similar tropes to attribute legibility and authenticity to her narrative, she

also complicates them by mentioning her year as a vegetarian as well as consistently addressing the need for more responsible food sources and practices.

## **2.5 Serving the Family: Enchilada Night and Rituals of Latina Heterofemininity**

Gendered dynamics between who cooks and who eats run throughout *Eva's Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen*, both of which implicitly define Latina femininity in service to Latino masculinity. The cookbooks consistently depict Eva Longoria, Gloria Estefan, and other female family members cooking and serving food, while images of Emilio Estefan and other male family members depict them eating and enjoying food. In both cookbooks, narratives and photos of women in the kitchen serve to reflect and reinforce heteronormativity and heterofeminine gender norms.

Longoria's enchilada recipe characterizes cooking as a ritualized event for Latina families, but unlike the fish recipe discussed earlier in this chapter, the cookbook represents the preparation of enchiladas as an entirely feminine affair. As one of the most recognizable Latin cuisine dishes, enchiladas are almost commonplace; therefore, Longoria authenticates her version of the dish by positioning the recipe as a family tradition. Longoria positions herself as an authentic Latina who works in the kitchen with her mother and sisters through her description of enchilada night. Her narrative focuses on the importance of family in Latino households, ensuring that despite slight differences in taste preferences (which, importantly, come from her father), they all "sit down to enjoy the same meal" (Longoria 94). Longoria, her sisters, and her mother perform authentic Latina femininity by cooking enchiladas together as a family, but also, by serving the dish to her father, and adjusting the family recipe to accommodate his specific preferences.

Turning to gendered notions of food preparation and the Latino family in *Estefan Kitchen*, Emilio's introductions focus primarily and consistently on eating food, whereas Gloria's often discuss preparing and cooking food. So, even though Emilio and Gloria both position themselves as celebrity cooks, the text reaffirms normative gender roles by deemphasizing Emilio's role as cook/server and emphasizing his role as recipient. Within the context of a cookbook co-written by a heterosexual couple, the distinction between who cooks and who eats is particularly pronounced. Additionally, of the 11 photos of the Estefans, Emilio is shown eating three times and cooking zero times, compared to Gloria who is shown cooking three times and eating zero times. Also of note, two photos of Gloria cooking feature her posed with other women (one of her and her daughter Emily and one of her and her mother). *Estefan Kitchen* makes clear that Latina femininity serves (and feeds) Latino masculinity, even as the Estefans formally profess a more egalitarian culinary arrangement.

Both *Eva's Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen* represent the Latina family as traditional and upholding conventional gender norms, reflecting and prescribing notions of Latinaness and family. As Mendible notes, "critical in the production of a nonthreatening, predictable, and generic pan-Latino market and imagined citizenry is the trope of the Latin family, which serves to communicate values associated with Hispanic culture" (Mendible 14). Longoria and the Estefans work to perform versions of the acceptably "authentic" Latina family by adhering to strict gender norms with regard to food preparation. Continuing their articulations of the Latina family, both cookbooks address cross-generational dynamics in the context of recipes and cooking.



## 2.6 Passing Down Traditional Gender Norms

The family photographs throughout *Estefan Kitchen* visually represent the Estefans' well-established narrative regarding the importance of passing down traditions through generations and across geography. The cookbook represents four generations, incorporating several cross-generational pictures (for example, Gloria and Emilio's son Nayib with his grandmother). In her work on African-American community organizations, Rosalyn Collings Eves analyzes how cookbooks function as memory texts for transmitting not only food traditions, but also shared history and values (Eves). Following Eves, children hold a particular kind of currency in discussions of race, tradition, and food, and cookbooks are commonly positioned as mediums for teaching the next generation of cooks the value of preserving foodways. Emilio exemplifies this mentality in his introduction when he states, "Cuban food is a part of who I am. It connects me to my past, and helps to keep the traditions alive for my children. I want them to know what I have enjoyed since childhood and to create their own memories when they smell the sweet aroma of *arróz con leche* or the strong smell of Cuban coffee brewing" (Emilio Estefan 8). The multi-sensory engagement cooking entails (tactile, olfactory, gustatory, and visual) provides an important touchstone for connecting across generations, situating cooking as one (particularly potent) way to preserve traditions and cultural memory.

Within *Estefan Kitchen*, the Estefans speak as both children and parents in the process of cultural transmission. In contrast, *Eva's Kitchen* firmly situates Longoria within her roles as a daughter and niece, primarily through the use of tips from her aunt scattered throughout the cookbook in subsections entitled "From Aunt Elsa's Kitchen." These tips from Longoria's Aunt Elsa authenticate her cross-generational relationships to women in her family, and also provide

the reader with a deeper sense of Longoria's Latina upbringing. In the cookbook's introduction, Longoria notes that during her lifetime Aunt Elsa provided a constant source of cooking advice, which Longoria "soaked up like a sponge," and now offers to readers (Longoria 10). Aunt Elsa acts as a symbol of cross-generational knowledge transmission throughout *Eva's Kitchen*, extending this familial knowledge to the reader via her tips and tricks. Aunt Elsa also legitimizes and attributes authority to Longoria by providing a sense of longevity and time-tested recipes.

*Estefan Kitchen* and *Eva's Kitchen* utilize family photos to convey authentic Latina identity. In *Estefan Kitchen*, scrapbook style photos function to humanize the Estefans, while in *Eva's Kitchen* Longoria uses camera placement and open framed shots to make the reader feel at home in the cookbook. The texts perform authenticity based on direct and indirect rhetorical messaging, suggesting that to be a true and authentic Latina means to uphold the continuation of cultural traditions through maintaining gender norms and heteronormativity within the Latina family as well as passing these traditions down to the next generation.

### **3 PERFORMING EXCESS: WHEN LATINAS BECOME TOO SPICY, DRUNK, AND FAT!**

While the previous chapter analyzed stereotypes of traditional, family-oriented Latinaness, I now turn my attention to stereotypes of exotic and excessive Latinaness. *Estefan Kitchen* and *Eva's Kitchen* oscillate between recognizability and Otherness within their cookbooks in order to market the cuisine and the celebrity cooks as authentically exotic as well as non-threatening and legible. Through negotiations of perceived exoticism, Latina celebrity cooks perform their relationships to stereotypes of excess. Dominant heterofeminine beauty norms and intolerance of fatness draw on stereotypes of Latina indulgence, raising questions

about the limits of the desirability of the exotic, excessive Latina. As supplementary/optional categories of food, the dessert and drink recipes engage stereotypes of Latina excess and indulgence more directly than more family-oriented main meals and sections.

*Eva's Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen* alternate between the familiar and the exotic in terms of ingredient choice, spiciness, and relationship to fatness. In his analysis of Indian cookbooks, Appadurai notes, "when written by insiders, [the cookbooks] represent fairly complex compromises between the urge to be authentic and thus to include difficult...items and the urge to disseminate and popularize the most easily understood and appreciated items, and to promote those already popular, from one's special repertoire" (Appadurai 301). Similarly, Longoria and the Estefans make compromises between "authentically" unfamiliar ingredients and items that are popularly understood by their U.S. audiences, defining "staples" of Latin cuisine (such as churros and jalapeños) as they reassure and welcome their English-speaking readers. I extend Appadurai's argument to Latina celebrity cooks, acknowledging how the successful marketing of Latina exoticness requires just the right amount of both distinctive and recognizable items/recipes.

### **3.1 Craving Something the Same, But Different**

In her discussion of Euroamerican eaters' relationship to exotic foods Heldke argues, "food adventurers may be enthralled with the exotic, but there *is* a limit to our adventurousness. We need to whittle the exotic down to size, so it isn't too odd for us; we like our exoticism somewhat familiar, recognizable, *controllable*" (Heldke 19). While exotic ingredients mark the cookbooks and cultures as unique throughout *Eva's Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen*, they readily move back into assimilative frameworks when necessary to maintain market appeal. Longoria

and the Estefans draw comparisons between “unfamiliar” foods and Euroamerican foods in order to position their recipes as simultaneously exotic and recognizable/legible.

For example, in *Estefan Kitchen* Emilio states, “people often think of these fruits [papaya, mango, and mamey] as exotic, but to Cubans, they’re as common as oranges” (Estefan 214). Emilio acknowledges perceptions of Cuban/Latin food as exotic, but then quickly draws a comparison to a familiar food for non-Latino readers. The momentary exoticism of the cookbook resolves into the familiar, embodying the Latina celebrity cooks’ negotiation between the specific and the universal. The Estefans’ use of the orange serves a dual purpose, to make Cuban fruits legible to a U.S. audience as well as to reestablish the Estefans’ connection to Florida.

Longoria also utilizes this strategy of association when she describes chalupas, recalling, “when I was a kid, chalupas were to us what PB&J is to other families” (87). By drawing a connection between chalupas and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches as one of the most recognizable/familiar U.S. American foods, Longoria conveys, by association, the simplicity of chalupas as well as its widespread appeal and status as a kid-friendly comfort food. Significantly, Longoria does not employ racialized language in her description; instead she simply uses “us” to refer to her family (which the reader knows is Latino), and “other families” which the reader understands as U.S. American and white by default.

The final recipes of *Estefan Kitchen* make noteworthy use of this strategy, featuring three versions of authentic Cuban coffee (Café Cubano, Cortadito, and Café con Leche). Emilio Estefan introduces the recipes stating, “there is nothing more Cuban than café cubano” (Estefan 239). While there is no doubt that Cuban coffee is distinct from other kinds of coffee, the

assertion that café cubano is the *most* Cuban recipe in the cookbook serves as a tool of relatability to U.S. American readers. Emilio continues his introduction by observing that “a typical Cuban breakfast is to...dip the hunks [of Cuban bread] in a sweet blend of milk and coffee...the same way Americans might dunk a doughnut” (Estefan 239). Establishments such as Starbucks and Dunkin’ Donuts situate coffee as a familiar and daily beverage that comprises part of U.S. American identity (Dickinson). Relating authentic Cuban identity to U.S. (white, middle-class) American identity through our shared cups of coffee, the Estefans conclude their cookbook with universalizing rhetoric that leaves their non-Latino, U.S. readers with a sense of connection to authentic Cuban foodways.

Relatability clearly functions as an important marketing technique aimed at avoiding the alienation of the non-Latino reader. However, as Heldke notes, the exotic cannot become too familiar, or it will no longer be understood as exotic (Heldke 20). Therefore, in order to maintain a sense of exotic authenticity, *Estefan Kitchen* and *Eva’s Kitchen* incorporate ingredients understood and designated within the cookbooks as unfamiliar or potentially difficult to find. Even as they use exotic ingredients, they maintain the reader’s capacity to cook the recipe by offering easy-to-find substitutions. The negotiation between exotic and familiar shapes the representation of Latin food in the context of celebrity cooks and commercial cookbooks geared for both non-Latino and Latino audiences.

### **3.2 Spicing It Up, But Not Too Much: Appeasing and Pleasing the U.S. Palate**

Latina celebrity cooks frequently negotiate the incorporation of exotic ingredients in terms of spices, which go against Euroamerican tastes and preferences. Speaking of a recipe for chili-rubbed skirt steak tacos served at her upscale restaurant, Beso, Longoria narrates, “Guests

often look at the dish's name and exclaim, 'I don't like spicy!' but I always assure them that the chili powder adds only beautiful color and nice flavor. I promise it does not *pica*, as my Aunt Elsa would say, meaning that it's not spicy" (102). Longoria's illustrative comments echo Uma Narayan's observation that, "the level of 'spiciness' and 'hotness' of the dishes served are often evidently toned down to suit the less seasoned palates of many Western consumers" (Narayan 174). Longoria's restaurant and cookbook privilege the U.S. American palate, and she negotiates the range of spice tolerance accordingly, encouraging her reader to taste-test often and adjust the spices to their preferences. The concept of "spice tolerance" clearly resonates with U.S. readers' notions of "tolerance" in a more general sense, relating to other forms of difference, most prominently constructions of the immigrant Other. For example, phrases like "I can't tolerate that much heat!" reflect ideas about containing immigrant presence or promoting a politic of respectability and assimilation, such as the notion that one must "earn" tolerance or the fear that the U.S. can only "tolerate" so many immigrants. Bereft of the excessive spice, but retaining the red hue, both the dish and Longoria can be effectively marketed as authentic--maintaining their color/appearance, but emptied of the less palatable aspects of their ethnic origins to fit the tastes of U.S. consumers.

*Estefan Kitchen* also engages discussions of spiciness and Latin food by addressing the common misunderstanding that all Latin food has the same level of spice and the same set of ingredients. While spiciness may be a key feature of Mexican food, the Estefans clarify the misconception that Latino is synonymous with spiciness, distinguishing Cuban cuisine from U.S. consumers' idea of Mexican food. In Gloria Estefan's introduction, she notes, "generally speaking, people think that Cuban food is very spicy, and it's not that way at all. We marinate a

lot, so the dishes are very tasty and richly flavored, but not very spicy” (Gloria Estefan 5). By recoiling from spiciness, Gloria Estefan subtly asserts that both the food and the Estefans are not Mexican. The Estefans draw on their class background as well as the “good immigrant” status of Cubans to distance themselves from the racialized subject position of Mexicans. Through their discussion of spice level (or lack thereof), the Estefans isolate themselves from dominant Mexican representations, especially in terms of excess. If Mexican excess is represented through the conflation of spiciness, fatness, and perceived immigration numbers, then the Estefans separate from all of these dominant tropes by separating from one very prominent signifier, spiciness. By remarking that Cuban food is *not* spicy, the Estefans resist the homogenizing umbrella term of Latino/Latin food and instead assert the distinctiveness of Cuban cuisine and identity, especially in opposition to U.S. perceptions of Mexican excess.

### **3.3 Negotiating the Drunk Latina Stereotype**

Alcohol and drinking provide a site to explore the desirability of Latina exoticism and excessiveness. Media images of Latinas commonly show excessive drinking and drunken partying as a fundamental part of Latina identity and experience. Depictions of Mexico in popular culture often cast it as a space of no-rules and excessive partying where U.S. Americans can escape “reality.” Amalia Mesa-Bains describes how the U.S. cultural imaginary understands the border as “a place of transgression, prostitution, drugs, alcohol, and pleasure...” (hooks and Mesa-Bains 78). Latina celebrities negotiate stereotypes of the drunk Latina, often in tandem with other dominant representations like the lazy or dirty Latina, or conversely with the hypersexualized Latina partyer.

*Estefan Kitchen* concludes with “Beverages,” which contains 14 drink recipes, half of which contain liquor. Interestingly, the introduction to the chapter begins with a quote from Ernest Hemingway, “My mojito in La Bodeguita del Medio, my daiquiri in El Floridita” (Hemingway quoted in Estefan 213). By allowing an American writer to frame the section on authentic Cuban drinks, the Estefans further link the Cuban story with the American story. The impetus behind this move becomes clear as Emilio continues with a narrative about the *Cuba Libre* and the significance of the name and the drink, especially for Cubans in the United States who “long for the day Cuba will be free” (Estefan 213). The Estefans perform the role of “good refugee” by renouncing Cuban communism in favor of American capitalism, maintaining the exoticism fundamental to their marketability without threatening U.S. Americans. By situating Cuban alcoholic beverages within U.S. American literary history, the Estefans can include these recipes without fear of being perceived as excessive Latinas. The Estefans eschew the stereotype of the drunk Latina to support ideas about nationalism and the American Dream. So, the Estefans do not deny their relationship to alcohol, but rather shift the connotations associated with Latinas and alcohol through the rhetoric of American identification.

In contrast, Longoria’s beverage section contains 6 recipes, only one of which includes liquor in the recipe (a Long Island Iced Tea measured in tablespoons). In the introduction to the section, Longoria notes that liquor may be added to several of the recipes, but states that she does not “drink much alcohol” (Longoria 213). Longoria goes on to cite the “functional” purpose of her drinks: to “quench the considerable thirst caused by the Texas heat” (Longoria 213). Longoria’s status as a Mexican-American from the borderlands opens her up to a number of stereotypes, including dominant representations of Mexicans as lazy and excessive drinkers.



Longoria distances herself from these stereotypes throughout the section by positioning herself as a non-drinker, while simultaneously using her friends' love for cocktails as an excuse to avoid isolating readers. In the photo adjacent to this clarification, Longoria is shown with two friends drinking strawberry daiquiris. Longoria appears to be caught mid-conversation, gesturing and giggling with all three women seated, drinking, and smiling against a backdrop of pink florals. The photo, like many in the cookbook, situates the reader as part of the conversation. By positioning the camera to orient the reader within the circle of friends, Longoria mediates her relationship to the stereotype of the Latina drinker through the positioning of the reader. Whether you drink or not, you assume that you are like Eva, or at least one of her close-friends. Also, Longoria's inclusion of mostly non-alcoholic drinks with the option of adding a shot or two of rum asserts that drinking alcohol is neither synonymous with nor excluded from the possibilities of authentic Latina identity.

### **3.4 Fattening Up For Abuelita and Slimming Down for Fame**

The perceived excessive nature of Latinas also relates to the (over)consumption of food, associated with the fat Latina body. Amy Erdman Farrell's book, *Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture* traces how fatness serves as evidence of "one's uncivilized status, and thus incapability for the full rights of public citizenship" (Farrell 16). Farrell analyzes how the intersection of fat and primitive status plays out for ethnic immigrants in the U.S. in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in order to show how specific characteristics get placed on the fat body. The characteristics associated with the concept of 'fat' include lazy, primitive, excessive, and downwardly mobile (Farrell 64) -- tellingly, these are also characteristics associated with Latinos/as (Dávila *Latino Spin*, hooks and Mesa-Bains, *Mendible*). The double stigma of fatness

and Latinaness produces a context in which Latina bodies are hyperscrutinized in their attempts at upward mobility and full citizenship, with food and consumption serving as visible markers of Latina assimilation to U.S. American culture and markets.

The imperatives of celebrity link thinness and upward mobility in particularly pronounced ways, especially in the context of Latina celebrity cooks. Molina-Guzmán argues that celebrity bodies are a space of “cultural contestation, especially for marginalized ethnic, racial, and gendered groups” (Molina-Guzmán 52). This contestation results in what Beltran calls “a symbolic battle-ground upon which the ambivalent place of Latinos and Latinas in U.S. society is acted out” (Beltran 82). The racial flexibility and ambiguity of Latinas enable Latina celebrities and celebrity cooks to actively negotiate their relationship to markers of white heterofemininity (lightened and straightened hair, thinness, speaking “without an accent”, etc.) in order to become more marketable, profitable, and consumable (Molina-Guzman 12). By electing to engage white beauty norms, Latina celebrities distance themselves from some of the stereotypes of Latina women, performing a highly marketable, ambiguous ethnic identity.

Latina celebrities’ rejection of racially marked beauty aesthetics serves as a tool for upward mobility in ways related to Farrell’s description of stigmatized individuals’ use of fatphobia as a tool for upward mobility. Farrell argues that, “those who sought to shed stigmatized backgrounds, whether of gender, race, or class, often took part in weight reduction schemes and in fat mockery of their own in order to validate themselves as ‘civilized’” (Farrell 175). Within the logic of American individualism and upward mobility, Latinaness must conform to the normate body in order to be understood as fit for citizenship.

On the other hand, some scholars argue that Latina communities do not necessarily accept white U.S. American standards of attractive femininity (Beltran, Delgado, Massara, Mendible, Riley). As Beltran notes, however, the export of U.S. media and representations has started to change this distinction and many younger Latinas privilege a thin, light beauty aesthetic (72). Latina celebrities must constantly negotiate between white, U.S. consumer cultural preferences, which value thinness, and more “traditional” Latina beauty norms, which typically identify curvier women to be most attractive. Even as cultural standards of beauty shift within Latina communities, white audiences assume that beauty norms in Latina communities differ from their own and expect Latinas to have alternative relationships to beauty and the body.

Given the pervasiveness of debates around weight/obesity directed toward the Latinas in a general sense, it is perhaps no surprise that Latina celebrity cookbooks would intentionally engage prevailing discourses around fatness and Latinanness. As Mexico surpasses the obesity rates of the United States, and becomes marked as the world’s “fattest nation,” debates around fatness and citizenship ground mainstream discourse about Latinas and Latinanness (Daniel). The Estefans and Longoria mediate between marketability and authenticity through visual and textual rhetorical strategies related to Latinas and body size.

In particular, Gloria and Emilio Estefans’ *Estefan Kitchen* performs a similar narrative to Connie Razza’s reading of Oprah Winfrey. Razza argues that Winfrey’s focus on individual responsibility, especially in the context of weight loss narratives (and accompanying best selling books/videos), identifies the same kind of self-determination in imperatives of weight loss and upward mobility (Razza 274). The Estefans connect weight loss narratives to the American Dream in their cookbook and more generally in their cultural representations. Several times

throughout the cookbook, Gloria Estefan notes how Cubans value the “full” body in contrast to the thin-obsessed U.S. understandings of desirability. She states, “My grandmother loved to feed me—she made it her mission. From her point of view, I was too skinny as a child. I was really just a normal-sized kid, but to Cubans normal is still considered skinny” (Gloria Estefan 4). She later notes that, “*Arróz con leche* and *natilla* were the best ways for Cuban grandmothers to show off their cooking abilities, and fatten up us ‘skinny’ kids” (Gloria Estefan 186). Within the fuller context of Gloria Estefan’s career, it is appropriate and perhaps even desirable to convey authenticity through descriptions of Cuban childhood beyond the U.S. American white standards of beauty. However, as the Estefans crossed over into mainstream U.S. culture, her body became understood through U.S. notions of heterofeminine beauty, and was subsequently disciplined into legibility/desirability.

In the late 1980s, as Gloria Estefan and Miami Sound Machine were beginning to gain popularity with U.S. audiences, Emilio Estefan urged Gloria Estefan to lose weight and “improve herself” (Phillips 61). While the newly apparent importance of music videos sparked the expectation of musicians to embody appearances perceived to be sexy/cool/attractive, it is significant that the disciplining of Gloria Estefan’s curvy Latina body occurs at the precise moment of cross over. In other words, in order to solidify her role as American-enough to succeed as a pop diva in U.S. culture, Gloria Estefan must look the part. Her upward mobility toward the American Dream relies on her ability to demonstrate, through weight loss, the characteristics necessary for full citizenship (modern, civilized, self-motivated). While her childhood body and eating habits can be read as a manifestation of Gloria Estefan’s authentic Cuban upbringing, the Estefans’ focus on upward mobility and the American dream necessarily

separates the modern, civilized body of the adult Gloria Estefan from her previous, uncivilized fat body. In fact, it is *the movement* from her primitive fat childish body to her modern appropriately thin heterofeminine body that positions Gloria Estefan as authentically Latina.

Though perhaps less explicitly than the Estefans, Eva Longoria also engages narratives of upward mobility alongside the shedding of unwanted fats. In her section “My Pantry,” Longoria notes that when she was growing up, many dishes were made with lard or shortening, but that now she avoids trans fats and buys nonhydrogenated palm oil as a substitute (Longoria 13). Again, the link between childhood and the consumption of “bad fats” enables Longoria’s current image as a developed and civilized consumer while simultaneously situating her Latina childhood as typical and authentic.

Stories from childhood illustrate the difference between Euroamerican body ideals and Latina beauty norms, and give the reader insights to other ways of relating to weight, but as Sirena J. Riley notes in her discussion of black identity and body image, “they nod their heads and say how great it is that we black women can embrace our curves, but they don’t want to look like us” (Riley 368). Similarly, the non-Latina reader can appreciate the way that Latinas think differently about their own bodies, but needs to be reassured that the cookbooks contain a disciplined form of cultural authenticity, which will not render them fat or unhealthy like the lard-laden diets of the Latina celebrity cook’s childhood. This reassurance comes in the form of images of the current, clearly assimilated Latina celebrity, who is not chubby or fat like her childhood self, she ascribes to Euroamerican (or at least Euroamerican friendly) beauty norms.

### **3.5 Constructing the Immigrant Struggle to Achieve the American Dream**

While both Longoria and the Estefans rely on perceived success within the logic of the American Dream, their repeated mention of working-class roots makes their current celebrity status legible to a mainstream audience as the result of individual hard work. As Dávila notes, the present landscape differs from the 1960s and 1970s image of the “monolithic ‘imagined working-class community’” of Latinas (*Latino Spin* 8). While Latinas now occupy a wider range of class experiences, the cookbooks negotiate the fact that representations and expectations of Latinas’ class status have not witnessed the same shifts.

In order to present a legible image of authentic Latina identity, the narrative must begin with the controlling image of Latinas as fundamentally working class. U.S. American audiences are only able to understand upper middle class and middle class Latinas through a narrative of becoming, that is to say that an authentic Latina must achieve upward mobility from her initial status within a working class immigrant family. Dávila notes another purpose of Latina upward mobility narratives, stating, “images and discourses of immigrants ‘making it’ as consumers, for instance, simultaneously help feed and establish the myth of American democracy safeguarding the attainability of social and economic prosperity for all, while veiling the actual inequalities” (Dávila, *Latino Spin* 73). Not only is upward mobility necessary for the legibility of celebrities understood as authentic Latinas, but this same narrative perpetuates the myth of the American Dream within Latina families.

In her reading of commercial self-help/motivational books geared toward Latinos, Dávila notes that three themes emerge from the authors: putting down Latinos for not “pulling up their bootstraps,” encouraging the adoption of mainstream values/keeping their “self sabotaging values in check,” and strategic use of Latino culture/intrinsic Latino strengths (Dávila, *Latino*

*Spin* 86). These steps are mirrored in both the Estefans' and Longoria's cookbooks, which provide tools for managing Latinaness in marketable ways. By visually and textually illustrating the American Dream (pulling up their bootstraps) and balancing mainstream values with strategic use of Latina culture, Latina celebrity cooks model how to perform authentic Latinaness to their Latina readers.

Whether in the context of unfamiliar ingredients, spice levels, relationship to fatness, or the American Dream, Longoria and the Estefans strategically move between the exotic and the recognizable in order to market their cookbooks as both unique and useable for U.S. mainstream audiences. The stereotype of the excessive Latina is the driving force in each context. In terms of unfamiliar ingredients, Latina celebrity cooks avoid appearing excessively ethnic through the use of relational frameworks that compare Latina food and culture to recognizable U.S. food. With spice levels, Latin food, like many other cuisines, is tapered down for U.S. audience preferences, although some flavor and color must be retained or the food might become too familiar and uninteresting. In both cookbooks, the relationship between Latina celebrity cooks and fatness reveals the ways in which narratives of Latina childhood must perform "authentic" Latina body norms, while the adult bodies of both celebrity cooks must fit within Euroamerican beauty ideals in order for readers to desire the recipes in the cookbook without fear of becoming the excessive, fat Latina through eating Latin cuisine. And finally, in the context of the American Dream, Latinas formulate narratives of upward mobility in order to be legible as worthy citizens/potentially worthy of citizenship. These upward mobility narratives are necessarily based on the idea that an authentic Latina comes to the U.S. as a poor immigrant, but through hard work and individual autonomy, works her way to middle/upper middle class status.

Negotiating the excessive Latina stereotype remains central for maintaining the delicate balance between exotic authenticity and legible assimilation in the context of *Eva's Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen*.

### **3.6 Conclusion: Loving “Tacos, Tofu, or Both”**

Descriptions and instructions about how and what Latinas eat are embedded throughout *Estefan Kitchen* and *Eva's Kitchen*. Latina identity is consistently positioned as synonymous with Latin food, and as I have demonstrated, *how/what to eat* quickly becomes *how/what to be* in the context of Latina representations. Because of the unrelenting connections between Latinas and Latin food, reframing what Latinas eat has the potential to reframe what Latinas can be, especially in the context of U.S. American formulations of identity.

The themes I focus on: authenticity, orientation toward the family, heterofemininity, and the American Dream share investments in the construction of meat eating as essential to human development and particularly as central to “traditional” non-white foodways. In both cookbooks meat-eating serves as a salient symbol of Latinaness. In the Estefan’s narration, and to a lesser extent in Longoria’s text, heteronormativity, sexism, and nationalist ideologies combine to suggest that eating meat is central to an authentic Latina identity. The celebrity cookbooks analyzed in this project address food and Latinaness in ways that are fairly typical compared to other Latin food cookbooks. *Estefan Kitchen* includes only a handful of vegetarian recipes and even fewer vegan recipes -- none of which are entrées. The recipes included in the cookbook suggest that authentic Cuban cuisine is not suited to vegetarians, and by default, suggest that there are no Cuban vegetarians—or that Cuban vegetarians are not authentic. In fact, Emilio overtly asserts that, “most Cubans have an ongoing love affair with meat. Whether it’s beef,



pork, or chicken, we love it!” (Emilio Estefan 71). *Estefan Kitchen* uses both direct assertions like Emilio’s, and indirect messages based on what is and is not included in the cookbook to assert the necessity of meat eating for the performance of authentic Cuban identity.

Longoria, on the other hand, provides a balance of vegetarian and meat-based options, and talks at length about the importance of sustainable sources of both meat and produce. In fact, the cookbook informs us that Longoria herself was a vegetarian for a year. But in *Eva’s Kitchen*, Longoria divides the entrées into “Fish Main Courses,” “Poultry Main Courses,” and “Beef Main Courses” reinstating the notion that vegetables and non-meat dishes are marginal or supplementary to a Latin food diet. Importantly for my argument, few vegetarian options appear within the dishes directly marked as “authentic” or specifically Latino. Longoria implies that while she “personally” enjoys eating vegetables, she gleans most of her vegetarian-friendly recipes from her experiences traveling internationally. So again, even for Longoria, vegetarian/vegan food and authentic Latin food are oppositional and require her careful narrative positioning.

While the exclusion of vegetarians/vegans from the possibility of Latina identity produces an erasure that I, as a Latina vegetarian, find personally harmful, analyzing the use of meat eating and animal-based dishes in the cookbooks demonstrates how the conflation of meat-eating and Latina identity reach beyond the personal, affecting more general ideas about what it means to be a Latina in the U.S. In particular, feminist food studies scholars note the connections between meat and masculinity, nationalism, and heterosexuality, arguing that, like all aspects of identity, speciesism takes root in the same master/slave dichotomy that serves to oppress women, people of color, queers, working class and poor folks, etc. (Adams, Buerkle,

Harper). As I have shown, *Estefan Kitchen* and *Eva's Kitchen* do more than just teach the reader how to cook; they bolster specific normative ideologies that seek to depict and define Latina identity as static and homogenous. I conclude by briefly exploring the ways in which Latina veganism pushes against dominant stereotypes, challenging and potentially shifting understandings of how Latina identity can be explored.

Despite scholarship and activism that uses the concept of interlocking oppressions to draw connections between antiracist/antisexist movements and vegetarianism, popular representations of veganism are depicted in and by the media as mostly white, middle-class, and thin (or in the process of becoming thin). Thus, many people of color believe that vegetarianism and veganism are products of white, middle class culture and do not see worthwhile connections between non-white food traditions and vegetarian/vegan cooking (Harper). In fact, Adams has been charged with cultural insensitivity by feminists of color who read her petition to eliminate meat from feminist conferences/spaces as an attack on their ethnic identities and an attempt to erase difference (Adams "The Feminist Traffic in Animals" 122-123). Additionally, highly visible vegan industries like PETA and *Skinny Bitch* demonstrate how fat phobia, racism, and sexism are frequently invoked to sell veganism (Adams, Drew, Dunham, Harper).

Clearly, veganism/vegetarianism is not *inherently* useful in the promotion of less harmful representations of people of color. However, I argue that in the context of celebrity cooks, the incorporation of a critical vegan of color perspective potentially disrupts other dominant stereotypes described/prescribed through Latina celebrity cookbooks. Meat-eating is tied to heteronormativity, so challenging the assumption that meat-eating is synonymous with Latinanness disrupts dominant notions of masculinity and femininity. Sobal argues that,

“vegetarianism provides an identity that transgresses masculinity in Western society” (Sobal 141). Since, as I have shown, Latina celebrity cooks offer more than just cooking tips or recipes, they perform ways of being authentically Latina that reinforce dominant stereotypes and limit the possibilities for what it means to be Latina in the U.S.

In order to explore how veganism might complicate existing Latina stereotypes such as the adherence of traditional, heterofeminine Latinas to dominant gender roles, I briefly turn to Terry Hope Romero’s Latin vegan cookbook, *Viva Vegan!* Published in 2010, *Viva Vegan!* boasts “200 Authentic and Fabulous Recipes for Latin Food Lovers” (Romero). Similarly to both *Eva’s Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen*, rhetorics of authenticity run throughout the cookbook. In Romero’s cookbook, this rhetoric situates vegan cooking as a return to, not a revision of, authentic Latin food. In her cookbook, Romero “aim[s] to keep things authentic” and encourages the readers to “learn to master delicious vegan adaptations of traditional dishes” (Romero 3 and 5). Using the rhetoric of tradition and authenticity, Romero situates her Latin food vegan cookbook as a way of extending and continuing cultural identifications, not rejecting these identifications (the dominant charge against vegans of color).

In keeping with my analysis of how Latina identities are market-driven, Romero notes, “interest in vegan cooking is exploding; the Latin community is expanding, and compassionate, healthy, affordable cuisine is more accessible than ever to anyone who loves tacos, tofu, or both” (Romero 3). Here, Romero anticipates that the changing culinary market will incorporate Latina vegans into mainstream consumer culture. This incorporation will require new boundaries to distinguish between “authentic” Latina identity and characteristics that fall outside of that framework. So, while the discourses of Latinaness could potentially expand to include veganism

and vegetarianism, other dominant stereotypes of Latinas will continue to shape what “counts” as Latin food, and who “counts” as a Latina. In particular, stereotypes of Latinas as traditional, family-oriented, and heterofeminine remain central to Romero’s performance of Latina authenticity. I think that it is important to explore what possibilities arise when a Latina vegan performs Latina authenticity through cookbooks, while also recognizing the stereotypes that remain in tact. Romero’s cookbook extends my assertion that challenges to what we assume to be authentic Latin food will also shift what is understood as authentic Latinaness. What additional stereotypes might be challenged based on a fat Latina cookbook or a queer Latina cookbook?

*Eva’s Kitchen* and *Estefan Kitchen* negotiate between polarizing stereotypes of Latinaness as traditional/conservative and Latinaness as exotic/excessive. By strategically performing the Othered/exotic Latina at moments and familiar/universal Latina at others, Longoria and the Estefans effectively market their authentic Latina identity to a wide U.S.-based audience. Through both visual and textual rhetoric, Latina celebrity cooks and their cookbooks describe and prescribe ways of being authentically Latina, drawing on themes of exoticism and excess as well as family and tradition in complicated ways that are legibly, though not statically Latina.

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