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Cooking up Dreams in Denver



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Linda "Lindita" Torres-Winters calls herself a dreamer. Growing up in a Midwestern migrant farm family nurtured dreams she would harvest later on, such as launching a successful product line and hosting her own TV cooking show, where she demonstrates new and traditional recipes from her Hispanic culture and heritage.

Torres-Winters has happy memories of working in the fields. "When you don't know you're poor, you're not," she says. "I didn't understand that until I got older." When her father was disabled in an accident during her teens, she dropped out of school to help her family. "I was brought up that way. We take care of each other," she says. "I knew I was going back to school. I had dreams." She later earned her high school equivalency diploma and studied at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. That's where she met her husband, Michael, whose career brought them to Denver 35 years ago.

After years of dreaming about starting her own business, Torres-Winters launched a line of dehydrated salsa mixes in 1994 called Lindita's. "It's all natural," she says. "My mother was diabetic and had high blood pressure. I wanted to make something she would be able to eat." When Kroger agreed to pick up the product, business took off. "I think the first order was 400 cases," Torres-Winters recalls. Today, Lindita's is carried by supermarkets and stores around Colorado and the region.

Torres-Winters also demonstrates ways to use the mix in recipes she shares on "Lindita's Kitchen Cooking Show," which airs on a local news channel in Aurora, Colorado. Her late mother had

encouraged her to share family recipes. "She wanted to keep our traditions alive and educate others who want to cook our ways," she says. "My father would always say he could taste the love in our food. I want my viewers or the people who try my recipes and my salsa to taste that."

Inspiring kids to go to school and follow their dreams is one of her greatest passions. "Being a migrant worker, you're really kind of labeled that you're not going to be anybody," she says. "I went to school and it changed my life." On behalf of the High School Equivalency Program (HEP), she has traveled to migrant camps in the Midwest, including camps where she grew up working. "I was there recruiting [kids] to get educated," she says. "I mean, wow. I know I changed lives by using my own story."

She has also been involved with many Denver nonprofits, from the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to organizations that support women and children, whether sitting on boards or putting together "Salsa Survival" baskets for fundraising events. She recently sponsored the El Grito 5K Run/Walk, which raises scholarship support for kids to go to college.

When she isn't hard at work, she makes a point to enjoy all that Denver has to offer. For a night on the town, nothing tops [Lannie's Clocktower Cabaret](#) on the 16th Street Mall. "She does Patsy Cline, she does all kinds of impersonations, and she's really known in the music jazz community," says Torres-Winters of Lannie Garrett, the cabaret's namesake. She also enjoys the [First Friday Art Walk on Santa Fe](#), which is festive and fun no matter what the time of year.

Although there's a cookbook in the works, Torres-Winters has even bigger dreams for the future — getting her show onto a larger network, and taking her salsa line national. "What I'm doing now is the beginning of what's out there for me," she says. "My mother used to always say, 'You're going to make people happy. Be who you are and love who you are, and it all comes back to you.'"