

# Have a 'Delicioso Night In' With Aarón Sánchez This Valentine's Day



By Aarón Sánchez, celebrity chef and TV personality

*This Valentine's Day, forgo waiting hours on end for a table at a busy restaurant when you can have a fabulous night in right at home. Not only is it a great opportunity to intensify connections with family, friends and significant others, but it's much easier on the wallet! Celebrity chef and TV personality Aarón Sánchez agrees, and has some easy tips to creating your own "Delicioso Night In." You can join the Delicioso movement [here](#). Not only does this give you the opportunity to take part in great conversations, but by joining the movement, you're automatically entered for a*

*chance to win the ultimate Delicioso Night In, prepared by Chef Aarón himself in New York City. After flying to New York for this special evening, one lucky winner and three other people of his or her choosing will be whisked away to Veracruz, Mexico, the home of Kahlua. In the meantime, enjoy the following tips from Chef Aarón to start your Valentine's Day off right:*



### **The Nose Knows**

You don't have to be a chemist to create memorable aromatics for your next evening of entertaining at home. In my home of Veracruz, there is a huge influence of African spices that were brought over when Cortez sailed across the Caribbean. Let such robust spices (think cloves, canela – the *real* cinnamon, cardamom, and black pepper) help set the mood with the help of a standard frying pan. Toast the spices just to their smoking point, and the room will fill with an inviting – and delicious – bouquet.

### **Team Chef**

It's like that old saying goes: those who sauté together, stay together. Collaborate on a menu and invite your guest(s) to help you bring the menu to life. Start the party early and enjoy cocktails as you cook; I like to keep it simple with a glass of Kahlua on the rocks with a splash of ginger ale. Cooking your creations together as you enjoy cocktails will allow for plenty of lean-in moments over the stove top, and eating those creations will be the reward for your labors over

delicious conversation.

### **Pairing is Caring**

When prepping for a perfect evening, pairings are a fun way to turn any meal into a special occasion and spice up the fun. Plan three courses and pair each with a small cocktail; use one base spirit in three different ways. Keep in mind when choosing your menu to pick a spirit that embodies the flavors you are working with; for example Kahlua – from the heart of Veracruz, Mexico – will bring out beautiful notes of vanilla, another Veracruz staple that pairs lovely with complex and robust dishes that involve such flavors as molé.

### **Forget the Utensils**

Feeding someone can be a loving, playful proposition (especially sans fork). In Mexico, we love to entertain with botanas – small bites – that incorporate foods indigenous to the region like seafood and black beans. Reconnect with your partner over a selection of botanas like plantains, garnachas (a small fried masa topped with pork or chicken), mushrooms, or fresh cut fruit. Watch those teeth.