A Star Chef’s Farmhouse Kitchen

JOSE GARCES IS SUCH AN OVERACHIEVER (WITH 17 RESTAURANTS AND COUNTING) THAT HE TURNED HIS COUNTRY RETREAT INTO A HARD-WORKING FARM AND THE WORN-OUT KITCHEN THERE INTO A DESIGN SHOWPIECE.

BY CHRISTINE QUINLAN  FOOD PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTINA HOLMES

WHEN JOSE GARCES bought Luna Farm in Ottsville, Pennsylvania, he wasn’t quite sure what he was getting into. “The soil is clay and rock, so you look at it and wonder how anything will grow,” he says. (The property now produces ingredients for many of Garces’s 17 restaurants, including his Philadelphia flagship, Amada.) The Iron Chef knew one thing, though: The farmhouse kitchen, which hadn’t been updated since John F. Kennedy was in office, needed an overhaul. Working with designer Gretchen Kubiak, he transformed the space, installing professional-grade equipment, like a BlueStar range (right). Now, the kitchen is both a great place for Garces to cook dishes like chicken and rice (above) for his family, and also perfect for the farm dinners he plans to offer to the public. His kids are ready to help: “My daughter and I once baked 64 cookies in 12 minutes,” Garces says.➤
**Time-Lapse Renovation**

Shortly after buying their farmhouse, the Garces family made some easy upgrades to their 1960s kitchen. Two years later, they were ready for a major overhaul.

**A TIRED KITCHEN**

The 50-year-old kitchen had outdated cabinets, worn floors and old appliances.

**LOWER CABINETS**

Though antiquated, the cabinets and hardware were still in good shape and not in need of immediate replacement.

**BACKSPLASH**

The new metal backsplash echoes the cabinet hardware and hood detailing. It’s made from brass sheeting, which has an unpolished finish and is widely available.

**CABINETS**

The black Platinum series cabinets are by Medallion. Garces inverted the color scheme from his city apartment, which has white cabinets and black appliances. medallioncabinetry.com.

**HARDWARE**

Brass pulls from Colonial Bronze and exposed hinges add warmth to the sleek black cabinets. From $21 each; colonialbronze.com.

**FRIDGE**

“My commercial Kelvinator fridge holds three times what a residential fridge does,” Garces says. “And you can see what’s inside.” $3,865; kelvinator.com.

**OPEN SHELVES**

Garces replaced the upper cabinets with open shelving to make the space feel brighter and bigger. The copper backsplash looks like it’s always been there.

**FRESH PAINT**

The lower cabinets, which still had their original hardware, got a makeover with a coat of Benjamin Moore paint in Collector’s Item.

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**RANGE HOOD**

The curved stainless steel Wrangler hood from Prizer is vented through an old, unused fireplace chimney. Garces added brass-studded black steel edging to complement the cabinets. $5,500; prizerhoods.com.

**DOUBLE OVENS**

The 30-inch BlueStar gas wall ovens are ideal for cooking dinner for 20 or for baking large batches of cookies. $3,800 each; bluestarcooking.com.
Marcona Almond Blondies
Active 50 min; Total 2 hr
Makes 20 blondies

Jose Garces swaps out the usual walnuts in these blondies for Spain’s salted, olive oil–toasted marcona almonds.

2½ sticks unsalted butter, plus more for brushing
3½ cups light brown sugar
5 large eggs, lightly beaten
1/2 cup roasted almond butter
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
1½ teaspoons kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
3 cups all-purpose flour
2 cups marcona almonds, chopped (9 ounces)
1 1/4 cups chocolate chips (11 ounces)

1. Preheat the oven to 325°. Lightly brush a 9-by-13-inch metal baking pan with butter.
2. In a medium saucepan, cook the 2½ sticks of butter over moderate heat until golden brown, 5 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and let cool to room temperature, 30 minutes.
3. Add the sugar, eggs, almond butter, vanilla, salt and cinnamon to the butter and whisk until smooth. Stir in the flour, then fold in 1 1/2 cups of the almonds and 1 1/2 cups of the chocolate chips. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and spread it evenly with an offset or a nonstick spatula. Scatter the remaining 1 1/2 cup of almonds and 1 1/4 cup of chocolate chips over the top. Bake for about 1 hour, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out with a few moist crumbs attached. Transfer the pan to a rack and let the blondies cool completely before cutting.

Arroz con Pollo
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Active 1 hr 30 min; Total 2 hr 30 min; Makes 6 Servings

“I poured all of my culinary knowledge into this peasant one-pot meal,” says Garces, whose family is from Ecuador.

1/2 cup canola oil
3 tablespoons annatto seeds
7 parsley sprigs
3 thyme sprigs
2 bay leaves
1/4 cup fresh orange juice
7 garlic cloves
1 tablespoon dried oregano
Kosher salt and ground pepper
2 boneless skin-on chicken breasts (1 1/4 pounds)
4 chicken legs (21/2 pounds)
1 carrot, chopped
1 celery rib, chopped
1 small shallot, thinly sliced
1 leek, white and light green parts, thinly sliced
1 onion, finely chopped
1 1/2 cups dry white wine
2 tablespoons tomato paste
5 cups chicken stock
1/2 green bell pepper, sliced
1 Anaheim or poblano chile, seeded and thinly sliced
2 cups long-grain white rice
1/2 cup canned chickpeas
4 jarred piquillo peppers (2 ounces), thinly sliced
1/2 cup pitted green olives

1. In a saucepan, simmer the oil and annatto seeds over low heat for 2 minutes. Let the oil cool to room temperature, 15 minutes. Strain the oil and reserve the seeds.
2. Wrap and tie the reserved annatto seeds with the parsley, thyme and 1 bay leaf in a double layer of cheesecloth.
3. In a bowl, combine the orange juice, 3 tablespoons of the annatto oil, 2 minced garlic cloves and 2 teaspoons of the dried oregano. Season with salt and pepper. Add the chicken breasts and turn to coat. Let marinate for 1 hour.
4. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350°. In a large enameled cast-iron casserole, heat 2 tablespoons of the annatto oil. Season the chicken legs with salt and pepper; add to the casserole and cook over moderate heat, turning, until browned all over; transfer to a plate. Add the carrot, celery, shallot, leek, 2 sliced garlic cloves and half of the chopped onion to the casserole and cook, stirring, until softened. Add the wine, bring to a boil and cook until reduced by half. Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes. Stir in the stock, chicken legs and herb bundle and bring to a boil.
5. Cover and transfer the casserole to the oven. Bake for 1 hour, until the chicken is very tender. Transfer the chicken to a baking sheet. Strain the braising liquid; you should have 4 cups (if necessary, add water). Clean out the casserole. Shred the chicken meat; discard the skin.
6. Increase the oven temperature to 425°. In the casserole, heat 1 tablespoon of the annatto oil. Add the bell pepper, chile and remaining 3 minced garlic cloves, 1 teaspoon of oregano, 1 bay leaf and chopped onion. Cook over moderate heat, stirring, until the vegetables are softened. Add the shredded chicken and braising liquid, season with salt and pepper and bring to a boil. Add the rice and chickpeas and stir once; arrange the piquillos and olives on top. Press a 9-inch square of parchment paper on the rice. Cover and cook over low heat for 25 minutes, until the rice is tender. Let stand off the heat for 5 minutes. Remove the paper.
7. Meanwhile, in an ovenproof cast-iron skillet, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of annatto oil. Pat dry the chicken breasts. Cook in the skillet, skin side down, over moderately high heat until well browned. Turn the chicken, transfer the skillet to the oven and roast for 20 minutes, until the juices run clear when a knife is inserted. Transfer to a plate and let rest for 5 minutes, then slice 1/4 inch thick. Top the rice with the chicken breast and serve with plantain chips and hot sauce.

WINE Fruit-forward California Chardonnay: 2012 Luli.