

# EAT THIS: 'MEXICAN DINNER PARTIES' ALL ABOUT GOOD FOOD AND FAMILY

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Growing up, GTA woodworker and chef Hendrik Varju spent a lot of time in the kitchen with his mother.

"Cooking was always a massive part of our life and really the most pleasurable part of life," he said. "You did your homework in the kitchen, you talked in the kitchen, the kitchen was the main room of the house."

Varju's mother was born in Mexico and his father was born in Hungary. As a child, he grew up eating a variety of dishes from both cultures and became familiar with his family recipes, taught to him at a young age.

12 years ago, Varju began to seriously get involved in cooking, and in 2011, he began offering cooking seminars at woodworking shows, which he attended for his business, Passion for Wood.

He soon opened up a second business, Passion for Food, where he offers one-

on-one cooking instruction, either at his location in Erin, Ontario (not far from Acton), or the home of the student, as well as group seminars and dinner parties. He also teaches classes at Longo's and PC Cooking School.

Varju recently published his first cookbook, titled Mexican Dinner Parties, where he provides six complete menus for readers to choose from to host their very own festive dinner party for family and friends, based on their food preferences and skill level, as well as the season.

"It's called Mexican Dinner Parties, so it's meant to allow the reader to invite friends and family over and have an actual formal dinner party," he said.

Each menu has an average of ten recipes, but readers will be able to alter them to their preferred convenience level. For example, Varju said that rather than a cook making the tortilla chips from scratch, they may want to substitute that



Veronica Appia/Metroland

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portion of the menu for a store-bought alternative.

"But if you are going to buy the salsa, at least make sure it comes from Mexico," he laughed. "To keep it authentic."

In the cookbook, Varju has added 50 pages of instruction on Mexican cook-

ing techniques that are required for a variety of recipes. He has also included photographs to go with virtually every menu item.

"To me, the picture is inspiration, and tells the cook who's making it, what it is supposed to look like and how to plate it, so that it's

beautiful when it comes to the table," he said.

Varju added that when it comes to his cooking, his cookbook, and the classes he teaches, he aims to show people the importance of sharing a meal together.

"To me, it's really all about the family connec-

## ABOUT MEXICAN DINNER PARTIES

Business type: Cooking instruction  
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tion. I mean the food is obviously important, but it's the fact that you're eating together."

For further information on Mexican Dinner Parties, or to purchase the cookbook (available both in paperback and hardcover), visit [www.mexicandinnerparties.com](http://www.mexicandinnerparties.com).

Mexican Dinner Parties can also be purchased through Amazon.ca, Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble and Chapters/Indigo (in store and online). An ebook version is available for Amazon Kindle, iBooks (Apple) and Kobo (Chapters/Indigo).

To learn more about Passion for Food, visit [www.passionforfood.ca](http://www.passionforfood.ca).

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