

A small business-owner from Chula Vista and the mother to a family of four, Aurenny Aranda has overcome financial and personal difficulties during a pandemic, emerging stronger and more successful than ever.

But how did she get here?

According to Aranda, years ago, she and her family did not have “very good eating habits”, but the chef from Mexico City *did* have some of the best granola on the block.

Her passion for cooking caught the eye of Patty Corona, the coordinator of the [Cooking for Salud<sup>®</sup>](#) program. Corona invited Aranda to give a presentation at [Olivewood Garden & Learning Center](#), a local garden and nutrition education center that hosted Aranda’s granola demonstration. Afterwards, Aranda enrolled in the Cooking for Salud!<sup>®</sup> Program, and her cooking style changed dramatically.

Not only did Aranda cook more at home than before, but she also invited her husband and daughters to be “part of the cooking”, ensuring that the experience was a shared activity. Her cooking became more plant-based as she learned new recipes, and she stayed involved at Olivewood for the next four years, helping with running the very program she’d participated in.

Aranda described the staff she volunteered alongside as “magical”, and she felt both useful and at home with Olivewood.

When COVID-19 hit, Aranda lost her business. She had to return to the start of her culinary career: baking bread.

Though this was a struggle at first, after contacting one of the chefs from Olivewood Gardens, Aranda invested her time and money into a new business. Since then, she has attained a cottage food operation permit, a catering permit, and a rented commercial kitchen. Due to health issues, Aranda is actually rarely able to eat bread herself, but she is passionate about the process, finding the process of change through fermentation “incredible”, especially in her favorite bread to bake, sourdough. “Looking at it after the long waiting process and slicing it is an indescribable feeling,” she says, and when she does eat bread, it’s usually sourdough.

Aranda has been so successful in her self-made ventures that she has been invited to a webinar as a guest speaker, educating other people on starting a food business and food permits. She has been featured in a film, *The Kitchenistas*, which focuses on programs from Olivewood Gardens. Aranda has also been recently featured in a [Star News](#) article.

“I had to reinvent myself,” says Aureny Aranda about the impact of COVID-19. But despite all of the hardships, she is thriving.

Aranda’s family often eats their own variations of Cooking for Salud® recipes, favoring whole grains with vegetables, vinaigrettes, and hummus. Her daughters are now also “completely independent in the kitchen, and they always have fun cooking.”

Aranda still volunteers at Olivewood Gardens, attributing the Cooking for Salud!® Program to completely changing her cooking style. Now, Aranda plans to expand her bread business and sell more plant based meals.