

People

EDUARDO GARCIA

NEW HAND, NEW LIFE

Following a near-death accident, this bionic chef returns to the kitchen

Despite losing his left hand, "I knew I was going to cook again," says Garcia (in Bozeman on Sept. 26).



Photographs by ANDREW GEIGER



THE \$90,000 HAND Garcia's myoelectric prosthesis, which he's testing for Advanced Arm Dynamics, can perform 24 different hand motions, ranging from an incremental pinch to a clenched fist. "Now I can twitch my forearm muscles and move my fingers steadily," he says.

It was a motionless baby bear that caught Eduardo Garcia's attention during a hike in the Montana backcountry in 2011. Curious, Garcia nudged the animal with his knife and realized too late that the bear was covering a live power line that carried 2,400 volts. "There is no way to describe the warm symphony of noise that fills your body when being electrocuted," he says. "The next thing I remember was looking down at my left hand and seeing a charred mess."

The classically trained chef—luckily a right-handed one—then spent 48 days recovering in a burn trauma unit, wondering what was next for his career. "I was scared, but I was set on learning how to survive," says Garcia, 32, who traveled the world as a personal chef on private yachts before opening a Mexican food company in Bozeman, Mont. "The optimistic part of me was say-



ing, 'You can do it.' But the reality was *how* are you going to do it?"

The answer came in September when Garcia swapped his existing prosthesis for a new myoelectric arm. Now, with his "Ferrari of prosthetics," Garcia has mastered delicate tasks like removing seeds from a vanilla bean and whipping up dishes like scallop ceviche. "My goal is to cook with it once a day until I am a virtuoso," he says. "I'll never give up."

By Stephanie Emma Pfeffer in New York City