

GOOD VIBES ONLY

AGUA BENDITA'S FOUNDERS
CATALINA ÁLVAREZ AND
MARIANA HINESTROZA
TELL US ABOUT THEIR FAB
SWIMWEAR LINE

WORDS BY VANESSA PASCALE

Bendito
Cranberries
Pareo



A truly great swimsuit makes you want to get out there and show the world what you've got. Trust me, I know they're not easy to find, which is why when I find a swimsuit that makes me feel good, I want to scream it from the rooftops.

Agua Bendita—established in 2003 by Colombian designers Catalina Álvarez and Mariana Hinestroza—creates gorgeous swimwear that give their clients supermodel-confidence. Meaning, when you're suited up in AB, you're likely to strut into that pool party like it's a catwalk and take *a lot* of photos in it for the 'gram.

Touting a variety of flattering cuts and styles that provide full to minimal coverage, AB's handcrafted collections boast intricate beadwork and embroidery that warrant calling their pieces works of art. Using ancient techniques, AB enlists the talent of hundreds of Colombian artisans to create their unique one-pieces and bikinis. The swimwear brand has grown tremendously over the last decade, and because of its success has expanded into resort wear and activewear. Currently sold in over 60 countries and consistently featured in *Sports Illustrated*, everyone, from models like Bar Refaeli and Irina Shayk to millennials, is suiting up in AB. Founders Catalina and Mariana, whose coveted line just graced the runaways of Miami Swim Week, share with us how their brand amassed its extraordinary clientele, the story behind the name, how they divvy up their duties, and more.



LOLITA
10403-102
TOP

ALEGRIA
10404-103
BOTTOM



MIA
10217-213
TOP

LOLA
10218-214
BOTTOM



**CATALINA ÁLVAREZ AND
MARIANA HINESTROZA,
FOUNDERS**

Tell me about your latest collection, Caribbean Dream, what inspired the designs?

Skyscrapers, traffic jams, paperwork, appointments, troubles, errands, bills, noise, insomnia, meetings, stress... Stop! Breathe! Watch the sunset falling into the sea, feel the sand beneath your toes, smell the fresh salty air, taste the flavors of sweet fruits and coconut water and listen to the rhythm of the tide, and let the tropical music feed your soul.

With our Caribbean Dream Collection, get ready to experience the vibrant colors of summer embodied in unique pieces made with love and passion by hundreds of Colombian artisans who combine knitting, embroidery, and beading with our original prints. Agua Bendita invites you to embrace the fun, the beauty, and the peace you can only find in the Caribbean. And if you can't go, daydream it with AB!

Agua Bendita is worn in over 60 countries, how did your brand become so popular?

We believe our product has an added value: the handcrafted input on our pieces by hundreds of Colombian artisans, most of them single mothers. This is also part of our social responsibility program, AB Hearts. They mix techniques learned from their ancestors and take them to our pieces with the hallmark of Colombian roots and the strength of our people. Some of those pieces require more than four workdays to be finished manually and that is why you'll recognize an AB piece at first glance, by its fine details, and its uniqueness. We also think that our brand has been noticed because of our Benditas Girls, supermodels, and celebrities that have been the image of AB and who want to wear our pieces and have become the brand's ambassadors. Finally, AB is not just a brand, it's a lifestyle: You can see how our customers share their moments with us using the #ABaroundtheworld on their social media.



EMMIE
10226-222
SHORT

LOLITA
10221-217
TOP



NINA
10417-105
ONE PIECE



ALEGRIA
10404-103
TOP

POLLY
10220-216
BOTTOM

How did you land on the name Agua Bendita?

When we started AB, we used to put some traditional Colombian scapulars on each one of our swimsuits as an amulet of good luck and good vibes! Then, we noticed that the mix between swimsuits and those scapulars were perfect for the name Agua Bendita, which means holy water and it was the perfect way to show that a woman who wears AB needs to reflect all the best energy and self-confidence.

What would you say are your best strengths when it comes to dividing tasks? Is one of you better at one thing than the other? How do you balance duties?

We are very different, but we share the exactly same dream and we both think of AB as our oldest baby, so we both take the same care to it. We both get involved in the creative process to develop the inspiration for each collection.

Catalina loves being part of the creative structure of the collection: finding new materials, textures, and designing prints!

Mariana loves the other part of the process, where she gets involved in patterns and sewing.

At the end, the two of us determine which pieces should have embroideries and work with the artisans, our AB Hearts, on the handcrafted pieces.

Can you share your favorite clients? Are there any stars you loved seeing your designs on?

We love the clients that are passionate about AB. The ones that feel AB is part of their lives. They usually share their photos on Instagram using #Abaroundtheworld: Sofia Vergara, Kendall Jenner, Bar Refaeli, Candice Swanepoel, Irina Shayk, Kourtney Kardashian, Josephine Skriver, Sara Sampaio, Izabel Goulart, Carmella Rose, Megan Williams, Rocky Barnes, Alessandra Ambrosio, J Balvin, Chrissy Teigen...

What do you think sets AB apart from other swimwear lines?

All the added value of our handcrafted pieces. Our prints are also made from sketch in-house, so you won't get that print in another brand. AB is very special; you get a contemporary design that combines handcrafts and industrial processes all in one piece! **ML**

Shop Agua Bendita at <https://aguabendita.com> and don't forget to tag them #Abaroundtheworld on social media.