

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Delicious Tamales

Legacy Business Selling Traditional & Vegan Tamales Nationally

By Isa Fernández

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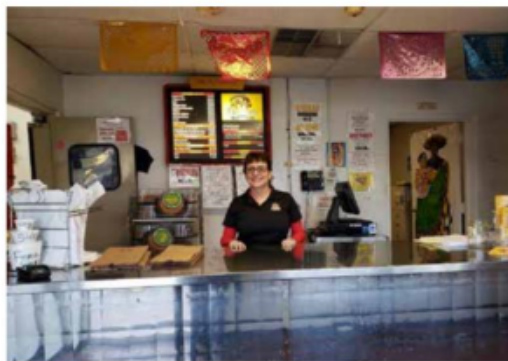
Both of my Grandmothers made tamales – my maternal Grandma Concha had her recipe, which used Crisco, not animal-based oils. The recipe was shared with family in a book replete with photos of her and my cousin preparing them at the family dinner table. My paternal Grandmother, Guadalupe, added raisins in hers at times. They were both hands down, better than anything you could buy, anywhere. But today, when an occasion (or just a meal) calls for traditional tamales that could rival theirs of past, I go to Delicious Tamales for their vegan black bean, corn, red pepper and cilantro blend version, which is popular with health-conscious and meat eaters alike.

Making tamales is labor intensive – you must soak corn husks, mix corn masa by hand and spread it over wet hojas (corn husks) and carefully mix spices that will be added to the filling – various meats, beans, sometimes even vegetables and fruits for desserts, which are molded into a tamal and then steamed until cooked. Delicious Tamales owner Valerie Gonzalez did this annually in her hometown of Laredo, Texas

like so many of us with her grandmother, aunts, cousins, and six siblings.

After completing her bachelor's degree in Social Work in Austin, TX, where Gonzalez was active in the Chicano movement, she came to San Antonio in 1979 to complete her master's degree in Social Work from Our Lady of the Lake University, where she received a full scholarship, (the now defunct "Chicana Scholarship"). Bringing her love of serving the com-

and over-scheduled lifestyles that make the age-old, time-dense tradition of preparing tamales with family less practical. Delicious Tamales is the leading manufacturer of tamales in San Antonio, producing 3.8 million individual tamales per year from its 30,000-square foot factory, located on Culebra Rd. All tamales are gluten-free, with the exception of the dessert tamal, which includes raisins, pecans, and coconut. The dessert tamal,



munity with family, she invested \$500 to open Delicious Tamales in 1980, with a second location opening in 1983. Today, she runs the successful business with her daughter, Herlinda Lopez, operating seven locations and even shipping products nationwide (1-800-TAMALE-1).

The success of the business is attributed to the fast-paced

along with the jalapeno and cheese and the vegan tamal (a by-product of the local "Por Vida" health program which approached Delicious Tamales five years ago about producing a vegan tamal, which uses canola oil instead of traditional animal oil), are only available on weekends, unless they are special ordered a day in advance.

The Culebra location



also has a restaurant, which opened in 2003, which serves traditional food like tacos, plates, rice, beans, sidos, menudo and barbacoa. The interior of Delicious Tamales is decorated with flower-painted arched hallways that display the years of accolades received (Express-News Readers' Choice Awards, Current "Best of San Antonio" Award, write-ups from AARP, the San Antonio Business Journal, and others. Walls display tamal husks fashioned into Mexican dolls, countertops that have flower baskets made of husks and hanging husk ornaments held by colorful ribbons. There are full-size, plastic sheet art of Mexican folkloric dancers and mariachis on walls and doors and Loteria cards underneath glass on the dining tables, where the San Antonio Spurs decal graces the napkin holder.

As a Latina-owned business, Delicious Tamales has become, over thirty plus years, a staple to the San Antonio community. And Gonzalez and Lopez, the mother and daughter owners of Delicious Tamales, are

mentors to the small business community and the community at large, sharing their story of success and love of community by giving back through the "Laredo Martin High School Scholarship" for students from the Laredo, Texas high school (where Gonzalez graduated from), as well as through multiple fundraising programs that benefit community members living in and around San Antonio.

At 65, Gonzalez is in her fourth year of training with Cross Fit, the intensive constantly varied, high-intensity exercise training philosophy that coaches people to improve their physical well-being and cardiovascular fitness, which appears to be one secret to her success in thriving in a fast-paced environment as the owner of a multimillion-dollar family business, co-run by Gonzalez and her daughter and protégé, Herlinda Lopez.

1330 Culebra Rd., San Antonio, TX 78201; 210-735-0275 <https://delicioustamales.com> 210-735-0275 or nationwide, 1-800-TAMALE-1.

LA PRENSA TEXAS

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