

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

La Monita Tortilleria

Third Generation Fresh, Handmade Tamales Worth Driving Out of Town For

Story and Photos
by Isa Fernández

Isa Fernández, MPA is a Legacy Corridor Business Alliance Program Manager at Westside Development Corporation, a freelance photographer and peace and justice advocate.

Selma, Texas resident Joe Valdez drives nearly 20 miles into San Antonio routinely and expressly for La Monita Tortilleria's masa-based, fresh, never reheated fare. "If it was not good, I wouldn't drive out so far," he went out of his way to tell me upon realizing I was profiling the business. A sweet gentleman, Mr. Valdez is a regular and chats with the friendly staff, some of whom have worked there for 20 years, while he waits for his order. After he gets his order, they wish him a safe drive home and a wonderful weekend. He poses for a photo for me, reciprocates the well-wishes and promises to return.

"This generation takes as much pride as the older generation," says Richard, telling me about the history of his family-owned business,

established in 1952 by his grandfather Henry Garza. In 1976, Henry sold the business to his son Joe, Richard's father. He ran the business for nearly 20 years until he passed away in 1995. Showing me photos of the family that prominently hangs on the walls, Richard tells me that not only did he lose his father, but a great friend. His mother Ramona took the helm of the business when Henry passed away and in 2015, Richard and his wife Nadine began running La Monita Tortilleria, which has since more than doubled in business.

Richard and Nadine are a sweet and benevolent couple. Knowing that I am a vegetarian, they ensure I sample their corn-based products, home-made salsas, with ripe avocado. They recently celebrated their 22nd wedding anniversary and have four children ages 14-20 who continuing the family legacy, help on the weekends, which not surprisingly is the busiest time of the week. The Garzas, along



with employee and friend Damarys Garza (unrelated), give me a tour of the facility. It is a hands-on operation full of friendly and cheerful staff, excited to show me an 80-year old metal machine that has been in the family for three generations. Each generation has used the machine to make masa out of corn which was then made into tortillas, tamales, gorditas and other maiz-based specialties.

La Monita Tortilleria is by any standard, a hands-on operation. Tamales, tortillas, carnitas, barbacoa, menudo, charro beans and chicharrones are all hand-made. Special orders of five dozen or more tamales using unique ingredients (for example, vegan "meats", non-animal-based oils, vegetables, basically any ingredient you could dream

off!) can be ordered two-weeks in advance. Their prices are less expensive than average for a dozen tamales and being hand-made, an artisan treat. Be sure to get there before noon on Sundays, because everything sells out quickly and for good reason.

La Monita Tortilleria name-sake t-shirts along with hojas de maiz for sale fill the interior of glass countertops which are covered in colorful sarapes. Potted plants in mosaic pots large and small line the floors and windowsills, along with silhouettes of pottery-form farm animals. Candy, toy and temporary tattoo dispensers are near benches where customers can wait for orders while the young and the young at heart have fun with their surprise coin purchases. Portraits of

cow with kind eyes line the walls, as well as original art work by local artist Joe Villarreal which depict Latino families and are available for purchase. La Prensa Texas papers are available for customers too and are a favorite among locals, Richard tells me. Meeting customers who demonstrate sincere camaraderie with owners Richard and Nadine Garza and staff, seeing the business cards of wonderful artist Joe Villarreal and being treated like family...it's a great indication that La Monita Tortilleria is a community staple and legacy business in the truest sense and worth visiting routinely.

3202 Guadalupe St, San Antonio, TX 78207 Wed-Fri (7:00 AM-4:00 PM), Sat-Sun (5:30 AM-3:00 PM) 210-432-0332



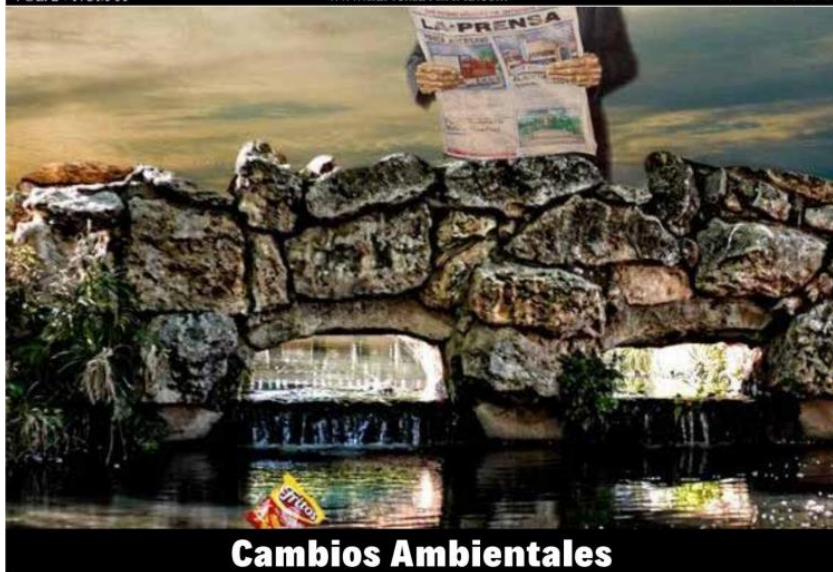
LA PRENSA TEXAS

SAN ANTONIO'S HISPANIC FAMILY OWNED NEWSPAPER

VOL. 2 • NUM 11

www.LaPrensaTEXAS.com

17 de Marzo de 2019



Cambios Ambientales

About the Cover
Artist
Patricia Ortiz



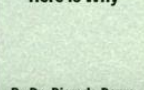
By AnArte Gallery

Non-Profit
Highlight
Gardopia



By R.Equia

Our Environment
Matters
Here Is Why



By Dr. Ricardo Romo

Meat Based
Environmental
Destruction



By Isa Fernández

Live SPURCAST at
Guadalupe
Cultural Arts Center



By R.Equia