



No portion of this article may be reproduced without
express written permission of Style Publishing Group, LLC.
©2007 • All rights reserved.



Style Publishing Group
P.O. Box 1676
Frisco, Texas 75034
Phone: 972.335.1181
Toll Free: 877.781.7067
Fax: 214.722.2313

E-mail: info@friscostyle.com
Web: www.friscostyle.com

Ad Sales: (972) 335-1306



LaPaloma produce (left); Joel Ramirez, one of three owners (right)



photos by Chris Johnson

La Paloma: Bridging Cultural Gaps and “A Taste of Home”

By Susan Bland

SOME HERALD THE OPENING OF LA PALOMA Meat Market and Taqueria in downtown Frisco as a benchmark of progress in the Hispanic community. Others greet it as a way to strengthen ties to their cultural heritage. For many, it's just a long-overdue taste of home.

Imagine this: You search every grocery store in a 20-mile radius for the ingredients to make the family that favorite green bean casserole and come home empty handed. Or, you scour the local grocery stores for Cheerios, or frozen chicken nuggets, or even just a pack of your favorite gum – and they're nowhere to be found.

The foods that we're accustomed to, whether they are traditional favorites or part of our weekly meal routine, bring a certain level of comfort to our lives. It's that feeling of familiarity that makes La Paloma, which opened its doors last April, such a valued addition for local Hispanics and those looking for authentic Mexican items.

“There's nothing that compares,”

says Adrian Salinas, La Paloma's manager. “We want to give our customers that feeling, even if it's just for one moment, of being home. The groceries, the vivid colors, the music – and most importantly, the tenderness of our Mexican food, helps create that experience.”

La Paloma, open daily from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., is set apart from the usual grocery store not only by the food they serve, but also by the items they import. On its shelves are cans of Mexican-style carrots prepared with vinegar and jalapenos, a litany of exotic spices, candies made of tamarind and guava that are laced with chili powder (popular with children in Mexico), and brand names of everything from detergent to fruit juices that are Mexican staples. Because of the large number of imported items, there is even a contingency in the Nigerian community that has begun to make requests and do their shopping there, Mr. Salinas says.

Their “taqueria,” or restaurant, seats about 50 people. Most of the tacos

are made with corn tortillas filled with beef or pork, and fresh avocado, chilies and salsas accompany the traditional Mexican menu. However, upon request you can order what's called “La Gringa” – a flour tortilla with “el pastor” (grilled beef) and American cheese. “You really won't find ‘Tex-Mex’ here,” Mr. Salinas says. “We serve more of a fine Mexican cuisine.”

“We want to give our customers that feeling, even if it's just for one moment, of being home.”

Their Cuban-style “tortas” – sandwiches made on La Paloma's own specialty bread – are a popular choice, especially for the Anglo-American

customers whom Mr. Salinas says make up about 40 percent of their customer base. In their meat market, the number one seller is a prime fajita meat and specialty steaks, he says. They also carry a variety of cheeses, chorizo (Mexican sausage) and other delicacies specific to the Mexican culture.

The bakery is a treat for those longing for a taste from their childhood. Most popular are the “conchas” or small, round loaves of mildly sweet bread flavored with a hint of anise. The loaves are encrusted with a sugary topping that makes them look like a seashell. The giant-sized cookies, which have a shortbread-like texture, are also popular.

The Frisco location is the first of eight La Paloma stores in North Texas to offer a fully stocked grocery store and meat market, in addition to a taqueria and bakery. Mario, Joel, and Zeferino Ramirez, three brothers from Mexico City, began the chain of stores in 1992 with the opening of the first La Paloma bakery in Plano.

Mr. Salinas says the demographic analysis in Frisco indicated this was a prime location for such a store. Adult Hispanics make up about 11 percent of Frisco’s population, city officials estimate.

“La Paloma’s offerings in Frisco’s Hispanic community go much further than just satisfying appetites...”

There are also a large number of transient Hispanics in the area that work here, especially in the construction industry, but live in other parts of the D/FW Metroplex. The city’s Hispanic community was ripe for supporting this kind of store, Mr. Salinas says. Next on the horizon for the Ramirez brothers is the possibility of opening stores in McKinney and Lewisville.

City Councilman Matt Lafata says the city welcomes the attention that



LaPaloma deli case

photo by Chris Johnson

La Paloma generates. “The city is very focused on downtown revitalization efforts: We want to liven it up – you know, make it more of a destination spot,” he says. “The Hispanic community was the majority of Frisco for years – a lot of people don’t know we have such a vibrant Hispanic community.”

Indeed, the significance of La Paloma’s offerings in Frisco’s Hispanic community go much further than just satisfying appetites, says Barbara Gallegos, who has lived in Frisco since the mid-1960s when she says Frisco was about 33 percent Hispanic. “It’s a way for more “Americanized” generations to reconnect with their Hispanic culture,” she says.

That connection is very important, agrees Ms. Gallegos’ friend, Adele Garza, who heads the city’s chapter of League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). Ms. Garza also settled in Frisco during the mid-1960s

“when it was just ‘cowboy country’ around here,” she says. Many in the city are disconnected from their roots, she adds: “It’s kind of sad for me, that even though we’re Chicanos (Americans of Mexican descent), we know very little of Mexico.”

Ms. Gallegos says having such a highly visible Hispanic-based business may also be a stepping-stone to getting other prominent merchants the community has needed for quite some time. She says there are no halls to have a traditional “quinciniera,” (a debut party when a girl turns 15 years old) or other traditional cultural gatherings that are now mostly held at St. Francis Catholic Church, where she is a founding member. “Hopefully, we can bring more attention to the needs of our community and get these kinds of things built.”

Susan Bland is a freelance writer living in Frisco.



chamber business news

THE FRISCO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DIAGNOSIS: A ROBUST, HEALTHY BUSINESS CLIMATE

The Frisco Chamber is fulfilling its mission to "enhance Frisco's quality of life by welcoming, uniting and promoting business." Innovation is the prescription for improving interaction with community leaders and citizens. The diagnosis for an even healthier business climate is exceptional and the Chamber will continue as a leading business advocate in North Texas.

Through the years, the Chamber has grown to more than 1,200 members. Assuming a proactive role for business and community service, the Chamber is more than business networking. It also advocates for local issues through its Legislative Affairs Committee, and recently hosted a Legislative Roundtable to discuss relevant issues. Another way the Chamber supports existing businesses is by sponsoring the Business Retention and Expansion Program, a joint effort with the Frisco Economic Development Corporation.

Meeting the challenges of growth, existing staff positions have been reorganized and two new positions added, balancing the team and increasing efficiency. Keeping pace with advances in technology, new computers and software have been purchased and the new website will help blend an improved database with updated online services.

For more information visit www.friscochamber.com or call 972.335.9522.



frisco STYLE MAGAZINE



Style Publishing Group
P.O. Box 1676

Frisco, Texas 75034

Phone: 972.335.1181

Toll Free: 877.781.7067

Fax: 214.722.2313

E-mail: info@friscostyle.com

Web: www.friscostyle.com

Ad Sales: (972) 335-1306

