**Jessa Rojas, Maria Rojas, and Mario Rojas**

**Sabrosura – Memphis, TN**

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Date: March 26, 2017

Location: Sabrosura Restaurant

Interviewer: Simone Delerme

Transcription:

Length: (1 hour, 12 minutes)

Project: (El Sur Latino: Greater Memphis)

Delerme: Okay. So it’s Sunday, March 26, 2017. It’s about 4:45 p.m., and I’m at Sabrosura Mexican and Cuban restaurant, and I’m here with Mr. Rojas, and his family’s here in the restaurant as well. And we’re going to learn a little bit more about the stories behind the food, so we’re asking questions and learn a little bit more about the restaurant and certainly more about you and your family today.

So to start, would you just start by saying your name, introducing yourself? So your name and then where you were born.

[0:00:39.0]

Mario Rojas: My name is Mario. It’s really nice to meet you and be here with you, and I feel really thankful for have the opportunity to share the food and the restaurant with community can hear this, and they’ll be able to know here. As you ask, I’m born in Mexico, and the state name is Chiapas. I am from the south, south of Mexico.

[0:01:08.1]

Delerme: Okay, okay. And when were you born?

[0:01:10.5]

Rojas: March 1972.

[0:01:13.7]

Delerme: Seventy-two, ‘72, okay. And how long have you been in Memphis?

[0:01:17.6]

Mario Rojas: Memphis, I’ve been here for almost fifteen years.

[0:01:24.4]

Delerme: Fifteen years. Okay, okay. And where were you before that?

[0:01:27.9]

Mario Rojas: I was in California for couple of months, three or four months, and after that, I moved to here.

[0:01:36.2]

Delerme: Okay, okay. Before California, were you in Mexico and went straight—

[0:01:39.6]

Mario Rojas: Yes.

[0:01:40.2]

Delerme: Okay, okay. Why Memphis? The big question. [laughs]

[0:01:43.7]

Mario Rojas: Well, you know, exactly what I said. I was in California looking for some work, and life in California is kind of busy. It’s really hard to find work. I had a couple of friends in here, and they told me about this place, and they say it’s plenty of work here when I moved fifteen years ago. And that’s why I decide to move to Memphis.

[0:02:12.0]

Delerme: Okay, okay.

[0:02:13.3]

Mario Rojas: In fact, after I move here, I really like because, you know, I don’t want to say the weather, but the summertime is like my place where I’m born. It’s almost like that. Not in winter, because in my town it’s never winter like this, but hot is always same all the time.

[0:02:38.4]

Delerme: Okay, okay. So you had friends here. Did you already have family here when you came, or you were the first?

[0:02:43.8]

Mario Rojas: No, I was the first from my family, and after me, my wife and my kids came here.

[0:02:50.3]

Delerme: Okay, okay. Has anyone else in your family followed or is it just your immediate family here so far?

[0:02:56.3]

Mario Rojas: I got two of my sisters in here.

[0:02:58.5]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:02:59.3]

Mario Rojas: They living in here in Memphis.

[0:03:03.5]

Delerme: Okay, okay. So are you able to go back to Mexico ever and visit family there?

[0:03:07.5]

Mario Rojas: You know, once we move, so busy right here, and we’ve been here for a little bit, yeah.

[0:03:13.3]

Delerme: Okay. And we’re being accompanied now by Mr. Rojas’ daughter. Would you say your name?

[0:03:20.5]

Jessa Rojas: It’s Jessa.

[0:03:21.4]

Delerme: Jessa? And how old are you? When were you born?

[0:03:23.9]

Jessa Rojas: I’m twenty. I’m twenty. I was born on October 9, 1986.

[0:03:28.2]

Delerme: Okay, okay. And where were you born?

[0:03:31.1]

Jessa Rojas: In Mexico.

[0:03:32.5]

Delerme: You were born in Mexico, Mexico? And how long have you been living here in Memphis?

[0:03:35.9]

Jessa Rojas: About fifteen, fifteen years.

[0:03:38.7]

Delerme: Okay, okay, okay. And before that, did you get to live in California ever, or you came straight from Mexico?

[0:03:44.4]

Jessa Rojas: No, we came straight to Memphis.

[0:03:46.1]

Delerme: Okay, okay. And how was that? How did you like the transition?

[0:03:50.3]

Jessa Rojas: It was pretty hard.

[0:03:52.4]

Delerme: Okay. It was hard?

[0:03:53.6]

Jessa Rojas: It was difficult because you leave people behind and you come to a new place that’s different.

[0:03:59.5]

Delerme: Okay, okay. How about for you, that transition from Mexico to California? You had a little time, I guess, in California.

[0:04:06.7]

Mario Rojas: It’s really hard to adapt everything because you leave friends and family, but the most important, I think, is I got my wife and my kids close to me, which is great, and I feel really happy about that.

[0:04:22.6]

Delerme: Okay. That’s wonderful. And how about the restaurant? How long has the restaurant been open?

[0:04:29.7]

Mario Rojas: We opened on October 1st—

[0:04:34.3]

Jessa Rojas: 2016.

[0:04:35.6]

Mario Rojas: Fifteen.

[0:04:39.7]

Delerme: Okay. So very recent, very, very recent. And before that, were you working at all in the restaurant business?

[0:04:45.4]

Mario Rojas: No, this is our first—

[0:04:47.9]

Delerme: It’s the first venture, first venture into the industry. Okay. So that’s exciting.

[0:04:52.9]

Jessa Rojas: My mom, she’s always wanted a restaurant, like, she loves to cook, and she’s always—you know, we had events at church, and she’s always done the cooking, and it’s always been something she loves. For a long time she wanted a restaurant.

[0:05:08.6]

Mario Rojas: That’s her passion. She really love to cook, really enjoy to cook, and the house, when we have some party, or church, she is the one who cook, and she’s really great, really.

[0:05:23.2]

Delerme: Okay. So I’m guessing, is she the one that does all of the cooking here?

[0:05:27.2]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:05:28.1]

Delerme: Okay, okay. And how about the two of you? Are you ever back helping in the kitchen or do you have another role?

[0:05:32.8]

Jessa Rojas: Well, she does everything, and I don’t like cooking.

[0:05:37.3]

Delerme: Oh, okay.

[0:05:38.4]

Jessa Rojas: Like, given the circumstances, I’ve started to do it, so I help my mom, and he does too. He does a lot of the—we make our own things here, like our own cheese dips, our own salsa, and he helps her with that.

[0:05:55.6]

Delerme: You make it from scratch?

[0:05:56.8]

Jessa Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[0:05:57.7]

Delerme: And can you tell me a little bit about how that gets prepared, without giving away your recipes? [laughs] What have you learned about the preparation? It’s, I’m guessing, your mom’s recipe that you’re using, or does it go further back?

[0:06:10.9]

Jessa Rojas: [Spanish].

[0:06:16.5]

Mario Rojas: One of my favorite plates in here is mole. It’s a Mexican dish that took about seven or eight hours to prepare, which has a lot of—[Spanish]?

[0:06:33.6]

Jessa Rojas: It has a lot of spices, and that recipe, my mom kind of mixed it together. My grandma, his mom, she makes mole, but I guess she makes it a different way than my mom’s mom.

[0:06:45.2]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:06:46.3]

Jessa Rojas: So different people make it different. So what my mom did is she would see how her mom made the mole and she would see how my dad’s mom made mole, and she kind of fused the two recipes together. So her mole is like a bit of both of their moles together.

[0:07:06.6]

Delerme: Okay. Have you had a chance to try each of the two?

[0:07:08.7]

Jessa Rojas: No, just my mom’s.

[0:07:10.7]

Delerme: Your mom’s. How about you? Have you got a chance to try each of the versions of mole before? Well, you know your mom’s.

[0:07:16.7]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, my mom, yes.

[0:07:17.6]

Delerme: How would you describe it? What does it taste like for someone who’s never seen mole the dish, it’s not familiar to anyone? What’s it like?

[0:07:26.0]

Mario Rojas: It’s exactly like my daughter says. What my mom cooks, it’s really different because she live more in the city, and my mother-in-law, she live in the country, and it’s different way to prepare the food and everything right there. But I tried both, and both are great. I love how my mom cooks, and also I love how my mother-in-law cook, and I always talk about them all the time. And once my wife start to cook when I get married, she start to combine both, which is really good, really. One of the things, she really has a big passion for the cooking, you know, and I think she does really good.

[0:08:16.1]

Delerme: Okay. And what city was your family from?

[0:08:19.9]

Mario Rojas: The city name is Huixtla.

[0:08:23.0]

Delerme: Huixtla?

[0:08:23.8]

Mario Rojas: It’s Chiapas from Mexico, yeah.

[0:08:25.7]

Delerme: Okay, okay. And how about the rural part where you mother-in-law was from? What part was that or the name? Do you remember?

[0:08:33.3]

Mario Rojas: Well, they lived in a place they call Las Delicias. It’s part of the country, and it’s not too far from where we live, but, you know it’s different how people in country cook from the people in the town.

[0:08:53.0]

Delerme: Okay, okay. Is it different spices or just seasoning or—

[0:08:56.2]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, seasoning.

[0:08:57.8]

Delerme: Ah, the seasoning.

[0:08:58.9]

Mario Rojas: The seasoning is different.

[0:09:00.7]

Delerme: Okay, okay. So she’s basically created her own fusion from both sides.

[0:09:05.1]

Mario Rojas: In fact, she does in every single plate she make, because she combine exactly how her mom cook and how my mom cook. That way she combine, and she’s really good, whatever she does.

[0:09:19.2]

Delerme: Is she the one who put together the menu, everything on here?

[0:09:22.4]

Mario Rojas: Well, the menu, everybody here worked really hard, and, yes, she’s the one who did everything on it.

[0:09:30.8]

Delerme: Okay, so did all the graphics—

[0:09:32.6]

Mario Rojas: Exactly.

[0:09:33.3]

Delerme: —and the design and the photography as well?

[0:09:35.6]

Mario Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[0:09:36.6]

Delerme: Okay. I’m impressed.

[0:09:37.8]

Mario Rojas: She’s the one.

[0:09:38.5]

Delerme: I’m impressed. Okay, so everyone contributes.

[0:09:40.2]

Mario Rojas: And when you want to impress, she did that in one or two days.

[0:09:45.4]

Delerme: Okay, I’m incredibly impressed. [laughter] Wow. Okay. So tell me how the menu came about. I mean, did you sit down one day and try and decide “What are our favorites?” How did you decide to put together a Cuban and a Mexican restaurant and then come up with a menu that brings together such wonderful family histories?

[0:10:06.8]

Mario Rojas: Well, exactly what we say in the beginning. My wife, she always liked to have a restaurant, her own restaurant. I really don’t want it because I’ve been working in construction all the time and I’ve been really busy, and I always say no, you know. Whenever she ask me, I say, “No. I have to think about it.” But in 2000—

[0:10:33.8]

Jessa Rojas: Sixteen.

[0:10:36.1]

Mario Rojas: Sixteen? Are you sure?

[0:10:37.3]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, [unclear].

[0:10:40.0]

Delerme: It’s been about a year you’re celebrating?

[0:10:42.5]

Mario Rojas: 2015.

[0:10:44.3]

Jessa Rojas: Fifteen.

[0:10:44.9]

Mario Rojas: Yeah.

[0:10:45.0]

Delerme: Okay, 2015.

[0:10:46.6]

Mario Rojas: 2015, yeah. You know, the business in construction is up and down, and for some reason, I decide to do something different because I was kind of stressed with work, and many people working for me, working for a lot of people. And I really was really stressed, and I decide to bring everything down a little bit and change the things in the house. We decide to open a restaurant in 2015, and really this place we bought from other people, you know.

[0:11:25.2]

Jessa Rojas: It was already Cuban and Mexican.

[0:11:27.5]

Delerme: Okay, okay. Did you know the owners beforehand or you just happened to kind of see that it was for sale?

[0:11:34.3]

Mario Rojas: First when I start to looking for a place to start and do a restaurant, but my wife, she was looking on Facebook.

[0:11:46.5]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, there’s a site called Cambalache. People sell things there and businesses and all that stuff, and she found it there.

[0:11:55.9]

Delerme: And what’s it called?

[0:11:57.6]

Jessa Rojas: Cambalache.

[0:11:59.3]

Delerme: Okay. And it’s a Facebook page where you can go?

[0:12:01.7]

Jessa Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[0:12:01.8]

Delerme: Oh, I wasn’t aware of that. Okay. So she found that it was for sale?

[0:12:04.8]

Mario Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[0:12:05.8]

Delerme: Okay. And the location?

[0:12:07.3]

Mario Rojas: And the owners was selling the restaurant, you know. They opened on May or June, I think, but I think that was too much for them. They can’t handle and they decide to sell it. The owner, he say he was ready to sell it or close the place, and that time I was looking for something. We came in here, and what I say, my wife, she really love to cook. And people who was here, the owner before, they was Cuban and Ecuadorian. There were no Mexicans.

[0:12:53.5]

Delerme: Oh, interesting.

[0:12:54.7]

Mario Rojas: But they has a Mexican food, but no one there was Mexican.

[0:12:57.5]

Delerme: Not even in the kitchen?

[0:12:58.9]

Mario Rojas: Not even in the kitchen. That was part of it. And I believe we make a huge change in the Mexican—

[0:13:05.4]

Delerme: To the menu? Okay.

[0:13:06.8]

Mario Rojas: In the Mexican side. For the Cuban, the owner, exactly what I say, he was a Cuban, he was the chef in here. He’s a great chef and he’s really good, and one of the agreement we made here, he had to teach my wife how to cook Cuban sides because I’m not Cuban, my wife is not Cuban, but exactly, and my wife, she love to cook, and he accept the agreement. He said, “Oh, definitely. I would love to teach her how to cook the Cuban sides,” and he teach everything. And another plate we didn’t put on the menu yet, but I think pretty soon we’re going to add something different to the menu that’s on the Cuban side. But he agreed to teach my wife how to cook, and she learn really fast.

[0:13:55.3]

Delerme: How long did it take her to learn everything?

[0:13:57.7]

Jessa Rojas: About a week or two.

[0:13:59.2]

Delerme: Wow. Okay. So, incredibly fast, an entire menu?

[0:14:03.4]

Jessa Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[0:14:03.6]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:14:03.9]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, she learned really, really quick. She didn’t take so long. She was watching him how to do it. He explain her what to do everything, and of course after he teach her—

[0:14:15.5]

Jessa Rojas: She made changes of her own. She liked to—

[0:14:19.3]

Mario Rojas: To put her own taste. That would make a bit different.

[0:14:26.2]

Jessa Rojas: And, like, Cuban people come here and they taste the food, and a lot of them say that it reminds them of home or reminds them of how their parents cooked or how their grandparents cooked. And then they find out that the chef isn’t Cuban, that she’s Mexican, and they’re, like, really surprised.

[0:14:43.3]

Delerme: Really? Okay, okay. Have you learned to cook any of the Cuban dishes?

[0:14:47.6]

Jessa Rojas: No. [laughs]

[0:14:49.2]

Delerme: No? Okay, okay. But people are surprised when they find out?

[0:14:52.3]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:14:53.4]

Delerme: Okay. Now, is she the only one who knows how to make the Cuban food?

[0:14:55.7]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:14:56.4]

Delerme: So she has to be here for it to happen.

[0:14:58.8]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, she has to be here all the time. Without her, I think that one isn’t going to work.

[0:15:03.2]

Delerme: Okay, so that’s really challenging, then. So I was just going to ask you what are some of the challenges that you faced with the new business? The market is always hard.

[0:15:11.6]

Mario Rojas: Like, she’s the one out of all of us that works the most.

[0:15:14.2]

Delerme: Okay, okay.

[0:15:15.7]

Jessa Rojas: So sometimes, like, sometimes we try to give her a break and I stay in the kitchen because, like, she prepares everything for me for it to be ready so I could just put everything together. So she takes a break and she goes and rests or something, and I stay in the kitchen. If orders come in, I do whatever needs to be done.

[0:15:37.1]

Delerme: Okay, okay, okay. And how about the other members of your family? Who else is in your immediate family? I remember you had an older son and then a brother as well?

[0:15:47.7]

Jessa Rojas: Mm-hmm, I have a little brother. He’s usually here after school.

[0:15:51.5]

Delerme: Okay, after school is when he comes. And how old is he?

[0:15:54.5]

Jessa Rojas: He’s fifteen.

[0:15:55.8]

Delerme: Okay, okay. And then the older son?

[0:15:58.0]

Mario Rojas: No, he’s not here. Just my little son, her, and my wife, mostly we’re here.

[0:16:06.6]

Delerme: Works with the restaurant. Okay. What kind of jobs do you have here? What do you usually—aside from when you’re taking a break in the kitchen?

[0:16:14.3]

Jessa Rojas: That’s what I do. I’m in the kitchen or I’m out here. Actually, I’m all over the place.

[0:16:19.8]

Delerme: All over, okay. And then obviously you do design also—

[0:16:22.5]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, I do.

[0:16:23.4]

Delerme: —for the family. Okay. And your brother is an artist, am I correct?

[0:16:27.3]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, he likes to draw. He can’t write to save his life, but he likes to draw.

[0:16:33.1]

Delerme: Okay. [laughs]

[0:16:34.1]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, I was speaking with her last time, and I was playing because you try to read whatever he write, you won’t understand because his writing is really bad.

[0:16:48.1]

Jessa Rojas: Terrible. Really bad.

[0:16:50.1]

Delerme: But he can paint?

[0:16:50.4]

Jessa Rojas: But he can draw. When he draws letters or things like that, he draws very nice.

[0:16:55.3]

Delerme: Amazing. Okay, okay. And how did you agree to let him paint here in the restaurant? How did that come about? What did it look like before?

[0:17:03.9]

Mario Rojas: Because we’re really trying to do different appearance to the place, make something different, and one of the plan is to have paints like the one you see right there in the corner in the whole place. That’s the plan will be maybe sometime, but that’s we try to do, make people when they came, because some people really like to see pictures or some stuff on the walls, and that’s what I want to people.

[0:17:36.3]

Jessa Rojas: Anything that, like, catches people’s attention and it stays with them.

[0:17:39.8]

Delerme: Okay, okay, okay. How long did it take him, do you remember?

[0:17:44.3]

Jessa Rojas: Oh, yeah. It took him two days.

[0:17:45.9]

Delerme: Two days?

[0:17:46.8]

Jessa Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[0:17:47.4]

Mario Rojas: Yeah.

[0:17:47.8]

Delerme: Just to do the mural?

[0:17:48.4]

Mario Rojas: Yeah.

[0:17:49.0]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:17:49.0]

Delerme: Wow. So, very, very quickly. I’m shocked. Okay. Wow.

[0:17:52.7]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, he start on one Saturday night after we close, and, you know, as you know, we close Sundays. He stay all day here—

[0:18:03.2]

Jessa Rojas: On Monday it was ready.

[0:18:05.8]

Delerme: Wow. So you didn’t have to close the restaurant?

[0:18:05.8]

Mario Rojas: He did really quick.

[0:18:11.0]

Delerme: Okay. Just like you, very, very quickly. [laughter] Okay, okay. You got a nice team, I mean really nice synergy going on here.

[0:18:18.6]

Mario Rojas: That’s exactly what I say.

[0:18:20.1]

Jessa Rojas: We say that we work pretty well under pressure. [laughs]

[0:18:22.0]

Delerme: Okay. Is there a lot of pressure?

[0:18:24.4]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah—

[0:18:24.9]

Delerme: Do you feel a lot? Is there?

[0:18:26.0]

Jessa Rojas: —there’s a lot of pressure here. Like during our lunch hour especially, when it gets really busy, there’s a lot going on. There’s just almost—sometimes a lot of people come in and there’s a lot of running back and forth, orders coming out or orders going in or something, or a person will say what they actually ordered are saying it wrong or not ordering without something, and it’s a lot of pressure, and, like, dealing with people, because you know people can be—sometimes they’re good, sometimes they’re not okay, and their mood affects us as well.

[0:19:01.2]

Delerme: Of course.

[0:19:02.2]

Jessa Rojas: So dealing with that is—

[0:19:04.8]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, because some people come at lunchtime, one hours. Some are really happy when they saw the business is growing, and because I am the one who mostly know the names of my customers, I love to ask names, and if they came often, I remembered they names and I called them by the names all the time. And many people, they know me, and they say, “Oh, Mario, I’m so happy for this,” and I told them, “I’m sorry because we are getting a little—.”

[0:19:38.9]

Jessa Rojas: Really behind on some orders.

[0:19:43.9]

Mario Rojas: On some orders.

[0:19:45.2]

Jessa Rojas: So people have to—we have people coming in.

[0:19:47.5]

Mario Rojas: And they’re saying, “No, I’m okay. We happy with that.”

I remember one of my customer, he say, “Mario, I feel so good, because if people start to come and keep coming here, that means we got food for long time here,” and that make me feel really good.

[0:20:05.6]

Delerme: That’s really important. What are your hours, and what are these hours that are the busiest?

[0:20:11.6]

Jessa Rojas: Well, we open from 10:00 to 9:00, like, Monday through Friday, and Saturdays we’re open from 11:00 to 9:00, and usually our busiest are about from 11:00 to 2:00 in the afternoon, and then again at dinnertime, like from 6:00 or 7:00 to closing time.

[0:20:30.0]

Delerme: Okay. And who are primarily your clientele that are coming? Is it people that are working in the area or just diverse?

[0:20:37.1]

Jessa Rojas: Mostly during the lunch it’s people from the hospitals, from the bank right here, from the offices, clinics around. We also get people from the apartments. A lot of people from the apartments come here to eat.

[0:20:51.3]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:20:51.8]

Mario Rojas: And also a lot of people came from the—people saw us on website, you know, like Google or Yelp, wherever they—

[0:21:00.2]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:21:00.9]

Jessa Rojas: We have people, like, come in from—actually, we had a couple that came in two weeks ago and they were from Nashville, and they said that the only reason they came was because—the only reason they traveled to Memphis was to eat here because they had seen the Yelp reviews, and they said that a few of their friends had told them about the place, and they had traveled to Memphis just to eat here.

[0:21:27.1]

Delerme: Fantastic.

[0:21:28.7]

Jessa Rojas: And they left, and they liked it and said they would be back.

[0:21:31.6]

Delerme: Perfect. What kind of food did they get?

[0:21:32.4]

Jessa Rojas: They were vegetarian, so—

[0:21:35.3]

Delerme: Ah! Do you have vegetarian items?

[0:21:37.2]

Jessa Rojas: We do, and we try to do what they like, you know. We don’t have many options, but we tell them, “If you want something without meat or anything, we can give it to you with bell peppers or something, or vegetables. Anything that you want from the menu, we can make it vegetarian for you.” So we give them that option.

[0:22:02.2]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, encourage them to make their own, and we make it.

[0:22:06.2]

Delerme: Okay, okay. So you are flexible, because that’s certainly a challenge. Okay. Do you find that it’s usually the Mexican food people order or are people familiar with Cuban? Is it kind of equal?

[0:22:17.5]

Jessa Rojas: It’s probably both. Sometimes, you know, people want to try new things, so they go to the Cuban side because it’s different and they haven’t tasted it before, but other times it’s like a balance. It’s like half and half, half Cuban, half Mexican food.

[0:22:34.0]

Mario Rojas: But some days—I remember one time my wife and I, we was talking about that, and one day we don’t sell many Mexican food, mostly Cuban, and we was kind of, “Oh, my goodness. That was weird, right?” And the next day we don’t sell any Cuban and we sell a lot of Mexican. That happen, you know.

[0:22:59.2]

Delerme: Okay. So it just depends. Okay. Then people have been open to try the Cuban, even though Mexican is definitely more popular, better known in the South. Okay, okay. So what have been some of the other challenges or positive moments being here? I know you said with you moving here from Mexico, it’s—I mean, southern culture. Do you find any similarities between southern culture and Mexican culture being here?

[0:23:25.3]

Jessa Rojas: I don’t know. I came here when I was five, so I really don’t remember much of when we lived over there. But I think he can tell you a little bit more about that. [laughs]

[0:23:41.8]

Mario Rojas: One of the things I really like in here is because the nature is some kind of same with my town, [Spanish].

[0:23:55.0]

Jessa Rojas: Nature.

[0:23:56.1]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:23:57.2]

Mario Rojas: [Spanish].

[0:23:58.6]

Delerme: Uh-huh, with the trees.

[0:24:00.0]

Jessa Rojas: My mom actually said that she loves Memphis because it reminds her of her home town.

[0:24:05.8]

Delerme: Really? Okay. And what is her home town called again?

[0:24:09.9]

Jessa Rojas: She grew up actually in the same place that he did.

[0:24:13.0]

Delerme: Oh, okay, okay. So did you know each other there as well?

[0:24:15.7]

Mario Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[0:24:15.9]

Delerme: Okay, okay. So you knew each other beforehand from when you were younger?

[0:24:20.4]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, really young.

[0:24:21.4]

Delerme: Oh, wow. Okay, okay.

[0:24:23.7]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, that’s why she doesn’t ever want to move from Memphis. She says she loves it here.

[0:24:28.7]

Delerme: She loves Memphis? Okay, okay. Do both of you love Memphis equally or—

[0:24:32.3]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:24:32.6]

Delerme: —some challenges here?

[0:24:34.6]

Jessa Rojas: We all really like it here.

[0:24:37.1]

Delerme: Okay, okay.

[0:24:37.9]

Jessa Rojas: It’s home.

[0:24:40.0]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, someone told me if I want to go back to California, and I say, “I don’t think so.” The life, maybe it’s good, but life is too hurry, too busy, and I don’t want to go back there. I prefer to keep working in here and doing whatever we doing here.

[0:24:59.7]

Delerme: Okay, okay. Have you been able to pass down some of the traditions and things from the Mexican culture that you had back home to the kids?

[0:25:10.4]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, I really try to, and that’s why I talk to my kids about that. And also some customer, I share with them how my culture is, and also I encourage the people to visit Chiapas, which is my state, because it’s a really beautiful, beautiful state to visit, really nice places to go. It’s very beautiful, yeah.

[0:25:37.9]

Delerme: Okay, okay. We were just talking about Chiapas.

[interruption]

[0:25:45.7]

Delerme: Okay. We’ll continue, we’ll continue. And how about you growing up here? Do you remember certain things that were unique that you remember from maybe rituals or cultural aspects of Mexico as you were growing up, any experiences—

[0:26:01.6]

Jessa Rojas: Not really.

[0:26:02.2]

Delerme: —either through church—

[0:26:04.0]

Jessa Rojas: The only thing, I mean, it’s nothing ritual or anything, it’s nothing from customs, but the only thing that I talk to my parents about that I remember from when I was a kid in Mexico, because we start kindergarten when we’re, like, three, and the only thing I remember is that my grandpa—he passed away four years ago, my mom’s dad—he used to take me to school. He used to take me every day to school in his bike, and that’s about one of the only memories I have of when I lived there.

And when we came here, I had to do kindergarten again because I wasn’t old enough to go into the first grade, even though I knew a lot of those things because I already learned them. But I guess it was pretty good, because, you know, I’ve been here since I was in kindergarten, so I had all my education here, and it was easier to learn the language because of that, because I started school young and my mind just kind of like—it worked with that pretty well.

[0:27:08.2]

Delerme: Okay, okay. What was it like here in school? I mean, did you start in—you said kindergarten, elementary school. What was it like, I mean your experience here growing up in the South?

[0:27:17.9]

Jessa Rojas: I remember my kindergarten teacher, I always talk about her. Her name was Miss Rose, and she was very nice. She was very sweet. Everything was—from the beginning, you know, all the people we met were very nice and very—they were attentive. We met a lady, her name is Casey, and she introduced us to another woman, her name was Miss Laurie Graves, and she runs this program for international kids.

[0:27:49.3]

Delerme: Wow. Okay.

[0:27:51.0]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, it’s called Multinational Ministries.

[0:27:53.5]

Delerme: Multinational Ministries. Okay.

[0:27:54.7]

Jessa Rojas: She runs a program for kids, like from Africa, Asia, South America, and these kids, they come after school to that program and they help them homework, they help them teach them how to read, and, you know, anything. Before school starts, they give them supplies. But most of all, it’s, like, oriented around teaching about teachings of God and stuff, and we also have days where the kids go and they teach them Bible stories and things like that.

[0:28:28.6]

Delerme: Okay. Did you get a chance to participate as a child?

[0:28:30.8]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, I did. I did. I went from when I was five all the way to when I was about twelve, because then we moved from that area, because they only do certain schools because they’re located here on Poplar, so they do certain schools that are close to the area.

[0:28:49.5]

Delerme: Ah. Is that how it works with the school? So based on where you live, you go to school in the close kind of district, or is there an area?

[0:28:57.3]

Jessa Rojas: Something like that. But they actually couldn’t afford to go way out to other schools and bring the children, so they did schools closer to where they’re located.

[0:29:06.8]

Delerme: Okay, okay.

[0:29:07.9]

Jessa Rojas: And they also had summer camps, and I went to summer camps every year, so that kind of helped us transition because you meet people, and you don’t feel like you’re that different because you start seeing people who are your same age and you start sharing experiences and you help each other and you grow together, and that actually helped us transition too.

[0:29:34.0]

Delerme: Okay. And was it primarily Latino or was it really just everywhere in the world?

[0:29:39.5]

Jessa Rojas: No, it was everyone, yeah.

[0:29:40.8]

Delerme: So you really got exposed to a lot of cultures.

[0:29:41.9]

Jessa Rojas: Asians, Africans, South Americans, a lot of them.

[0:29:46.1]

Delerme: That’s wonderful. Okay. After that program, were you then—let’s see, twelve years old. Did you go into middle school?

[0:29:52.4]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, that’s when I started.

[0:29:54.4]

Delerme: Oh, okay, okay.

[0:29:54.9]

Jessa Rojas: So that was different. I stopped going to the program because she couldn’t pick us up from our school and stuff, but we still kept contact. So it was a little bit more difficult in middle school because—which I changed schools. I actually changed schools in third grade, but I still got to see those people from the program because I was always going there. But once I stopped, I didn’t know anyone in middle school. Everything was pretty new, but that’s where I met my best friend. Her name is Diara. She lives in Murfreesboro right now. That’s where I met her. So her and I have been best friends since I was in sixth grade, since I was twelve.

[0:30:38.8]

Delerme: Wow. Okay. And you’re twenty years old, you said, now?

[0:30:40.1]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:30:40.5]

Delerme: Okay, okay. So it was a good thing you moved, because you met your best friend.

[0:30:43.2]

Jessa Rojas: We actually became friends because we both started taking a French class.

[0:30:52.0]

Delerme: Ah! What a coincidence. Okay.

[0:30:54.5]

Jessa Rojas: So I’ve been learning French since I was twelve.

[0:30:58.0]

Delerme: And you speak French?

[0:30:59.3]

Jessa Rojas: A little bit, yeah. [laughs]

[0:31:00.9]

Delerme: Okay. A little bit? Okay, okay.

[0:31:02.3]

Mario Rojas: She speak really well.

[0:31:03.5]

Delerme: She speaks really well? Okay, you’re being modest. You’re being modest.

[0:31:05.6]

Jessa Rojas: There’s a lot of customers that come here, and some of them speak French. Some of them are native.

[0:31:12.0]

Delerme: Really?

[0:31:13.0]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, and they come in and my dad talks to them. And I’m not much of a people person, so he drags me out here to speak to the customers.

[0:31:22.6]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, when I start to talk to the people, exactly what I told you, I ask the names and everything, and they say where they from and they speak French, and I always say, “Oh, my daughter speak French. Give me a minute.”

[0:31:34.7]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah. [laughs]

[0:31:35.1]

Mario Rojas: And I go inside and drag her out.

[0:31:37.1]

Delerme: That’s very funny. [laughs]

[0:31:39.9]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, and, like, they start talking to me, and sometimes I take their order in French because I tell them that I want to practice, and so I tell them, “Don’t speak to me in English. Tell me what you want in French.” And so they tell me their orders, and I do that for a few of them.

[0:31:55.8]

Delerme: Okay. Okay, so you are fluent. You were being humble.

[0:31:59.1]

Jessa Rojas: Not fluent, but, you know, I speak a bit.

[0:32:02.0]

Delerme: Okay, okay. And that’s all since school. What was it like in high school? Did you end up in a different school than for high school? Is that how it works here?

[0:32:09.8]

Jessa Rojas: I went to Central High School. That’s where my brother went, that’s where my sister went, and it’s where my little brother’s going.

[0:32:15.0]

Delerme: Oh, okay, okay.

[0:32:16.2]

Jessa Rojas: So all of us, we’ve graduated from there. My best friend went there, too, so we were together all of our high school.

[0:32:23.1]

Delerme: That’s nice.

[0:32:24.2]

Jessa Rojas: Actually, and my French teacher from middle school—her name is Miss Raglin—I think it was our tenth-grade year of high school she transferred to my high school, and she was my French teacher for all my three years of high school.

[0:32:43.1]

Delerme: Okay. Wow, wow. What a coincidence. So you’ve been able to stay within kind of a community of support. That’s wonderful. That’s wonderful. Okay.

[0:32:52.7]

Jessa Rojas: So high school was pretty good.

[0:32:54.2]

Delerme: Okay, okay. And when did you graduate? How long ago?

[0:32:57.4]

Jessa Rojas: I graduated 2015.

[0:32:59.6]

Delerme: Okay. And right around the time the restaurant was opened.

[0:33:03.1]

Jessa Rojas: I graduated in May, and we got it in October.

[0:33:05.8]

Delerme: Okay. So some of the skills—I already can already tell some of the skills you learned you’ve been able to use here at the restaurant. Are there other things that you’ve learned along the way that you’ve been able to use here besides French, the digital technology? What else have you learned along the way that’s been helpful?

[0:33:23.7]

Mario Rojas: She’s learning to talk to people.

[0:33:27.0]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:33:27.6]

Delerme: Okay. Okay, so you’re having to be the face, even though maybe you don’t want to always. [laughter]

[0:33:32.6]

Jessa Rojas: Yes. I’m starting to—you know, he has me call people who provide stuff for us, like the sodas and like the meats, and he has me make payments over the phone.

[0:33:51.7]

Delerme: Okay. So you’re learning a lot.

[0:33:53.0]

Jessa Rojas: So I’m learning a lot of things.

[0:33:54.8]

Delerme: That’s really smart. So a lot of the business aspects, too, then. So you’re getting to learn really the business. Okay. What are you doing when you’re not here?

[0:34:02.8]

Jessa Rojas: I’m actually—actually, I go to church. I’m the youth group person, I guess.

[0:34:15.1]

Delerme: Like coordinating it?

[0:34:16.0]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:34:16.8]

Delerme: Okay. Is that all? That’s a lot of work. Oh, wow. Okay.

[0:34:21.6]

Jessa Rojas: So, yeah, I do that too. We have church every Friday, Saturday, and Sundays.

[0:34:26.4]

Delerme: Okay. And what is your role in that? What type of activities do you do?

[0:34:31.5]

Jessa Rojas: Oh, we do a few things, like we try to get the kids to participate and to learn, learn about the Bible mostly. Sometimes they have conventions in the summer, and so in these conventions they have competitions. And, like, I guess there was two years ago that we participated in one of these competitions. We didn’t win, but—

[0:34:58.0]

Delerme: Okay, but you participated.

[0:34:59.3]

Jessa Rojas: We participated. [laughs]

[0:35:00.2]

Delerme: Okay, okay. You’ve got to get there, though.

[0:35:02.6]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah. They had to memorize verses and things like that, so, yeah, I kind of pushed them a little bit.

[0:35:10.4]

Delerme: That’s wonderful. Okay. And have you been participating in the church since you were a child?

[0:35:14.8]

Jessa Rojas: Mm-hmm. He’s the pastor, actually.

[0:35:17.1]

Delerme: I did not know that. So what is the name of the church?

[0:35:20.3]

Jessa Rojas: Iglesia Cristiana Las Américas.

[0:35:23.0]

Delerme: And where is it? Where is that located?

[0:35:24.2]

Jessa Rojas: It’s in—you go all up Summer. You know where the Putt-Putt is?

[0:35:28.2]

Delerme: I think vaguely.

[0:35:29.7]

Jessa Rojas: The Putt-Putt golf.

[0:35:31.1]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:35:31.1]

Jessa Rojas: You just kind of go past the Putt-Putt, and there’s a little street called Crestview, and that’s where it’s—it’s called Crestview Christian Church. In the morning, Americans go for the English service, and we get it in the afternoon at 1:00 on Sundays.

[0:35:49.7]

Delerme: Okay. And how long have you been a pastor?

[0:35:51.3]

Mario Rojas: Thirteen.

[0:35:55.0]

Delerme: Wow. Thirteen years? Wow. Okay, so you do construction, restaurant—

[0:36:03.1]

Delerme: Wow. So you have your hands full.

[0:36:05.3]

Mario Rojas: I try to be busy.

[0:36:06.8]

Delerme: When you say you’re busy, everyone stays very, very busy.

[0:36:10.1]

Mario Rojas: Try to be busy. In fact, she’s trying to get into college. She is starting college. But when we open the restaurant, this is a really big challenge for us, and we have to make really huge sacrifice to make this work, and we really need help in the kitchen because she was alone in the kitchen. Also, my another daughter has to come sometimes. She has two kids, but she has to be here sometime when I call her. I say, “Honey, will you please come? Because I really need you.” And she came here to help us to do whatever we have to do. And she has to stop to—

[0:36:52.6]

Jessa Rojas: I left school. I did one year.

[0:36:54.5]

Delerme: Okay. Where were you at?

[0:36:56.1]

Jessa Rojas: Christian Brothers.

[0:36:57.1]

Delerme: Okay, okay.

[0:36:57.9]

Jessa Rojas: I did one year, and I’m trying to go back this year in August.

[0:37:03.2]

Delerme: Okay. Fantastic.

[0:37:04.6]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, because business making a little difference right now, and thanks God, it’s working different, and I be able to hire a couple more people, and that way I let her go to do whatever she have to do in the beginning. But for us, she has to stop to doing it. But we just keep praying, and she can worry about—

[0:37:35.0]

Delerme: Do you know what you want to study? Do you have a sense?

[0:37:36.0]

Jessa Rojas: I do. I’ve always wanted to be an English major, literature. I love reading and writing.

[0:37:43.8]

Delerme: That’s fantastic.

[0:37:46.3]

Jessa Rojas: I really don’t know what I’m going to do with it, but that’s what I want. [laughs]

[0:37:49.0]

Delerme: Okay. But, hey, you’re going to learn along the way.

[0:37:51.8]

Jessa Rojas: And I want to get a minor in French, because I don’t want to lose that.

[0:37:55.0]

Delerme: Okay. Okay, so French. Wow. Now here I’m thinking business or maybe something in the food industry.

[0:38:02.0]

Jessa Rojas: No. I learn about it here, but, you know, I’m not attracted to it. It’s not what I’ve always wanted.

[0:38:10.3]

Delerme: Okay, okay.

[0:38:11.2]

Jessa Rojas: So I learned about it, though, and maybe along the way I might do something in business or something like that, but, you know, I’ve always wanted to do English literature.

[0:38:22.2]

Delerme: Okay, so English literature. Wow, wow, wow. Okay.

[0:38:26.9]

Jessa Rojas: I’m not very much of a businessperson.

[0:38:29.4]

Delerme: Not much into business? How about your siblings, the other kids?

[0:38:32.6]

Jessa Rojas: My little brother, he’s like—he says he’s not, but we see him as like—we call him the loan shark.

[0:38:40.8]

Delerme: The loan shark? [laughs] Why?

[0:38:43.2]

Jessa Rojas: Yes. He saves. Ever since he’s been little, you know, they used to give him money, and he’s always saved his money. He *always* saves his—he *never* spends his money. He always saves it. And so when we need money, that’s who we ask. [laughter]

[0:38:56.4]

Delerme: Smart.

[0:38:58.1]

Jessa Rojas: I don’t know if he keeps record of it or anything, but he knows how much you owe him and when he gave it to you and that you have to pay it back. [laughs]

[0:39:06.4]

Delerme: Wow. Okay. So he’s someone to do the accounting for the business, then, perhaps.

[0:39:11.5]

Jessa Rojas: Maybe. But he does that. He likes to keep his money in check.

[0:39:17.4]

Delerme: Okay, okay. So everyone has their strong point, I see.

[0:39:21.3]

Jessa Rojas: Right now—he’s always wanted to be a doctor, so that’s what he’s been looking into. He’s in JROTC program in school right now, and he really likes that.

[0:39:34.4]

Delerme: Oh, wow. Okay, okay. What type of activities were you involved in—

[0:39:38.2]

Jessa Rojas: In school?

[0:39:39.3]

Delerme: —when you were in school? Yeah, what did you like?

[0:39:40.5]

Jessa Rojas: I was in the National Honor Society.

[0:39:42.7]

Delerme: Okay, so great grades. Good for you.

[0:39:45.3]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah. I was in French Club. Well, we had French Club. And sometimes I helped out with the Student Council because it was my history teacher. I wasn’t in Student Council, but, like, sometimes I would help her out with stuff. And with my French teacher, she was the rugby coach as well, so sometimes I would stay after school with her too. I wasn’t in the team, but, you know, I just helped her.

[0:40:13.8]

Delerme: Okay, so you were really active and busy.

[0:40:16.3]

Jessa Rojas: I tried to. I took a lot of AP classes, so I sometimes didn’t have time, but I tried to make time for extracurricular activities because they said that it was good for your résumé, whatever, but I actually liked it. See what I mean? It was things that I liked to do, French Club and tutoring and things. Those are things that I’ve always liked. I kind of like teaching. I’m into teaching. I’m a fast learner, so when I teach others, I try to do it in a way that they can understand. That’s what I do at church, too, with little kids. I’m like a Sunday School teacher.

[0:40:54.3]

Delerme: Oh, are you?

[0:40:56.1]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:40:56.6]

Delerme: Okay. Sunday School. Okay. So are you there kind of at the same time as the family on some days and the activities? Okay. And it’s Spanish-language service that you do?

[0:41:06.8]

Jessa Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[0:41:07.3]

Delerme: Okay. Have you found a lot of challenges for the Latino community in Memphis? I mean more recently with immigration and everything going on. Has there been a lot of changes that you’ve seen since—well, you’ve been here your whole life almost, I mean since five.

[0:41:20.1]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:41:20.6]

Delerme: Have you seen a lot of growth in the population?

[0:41:23.4]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:41:24.5]

Delerme: Yeah? Okay, so I’m guessing membership in church, or maybe it’s about the same.

[0:41:28.6]

Mario Rojas: It’s a lot of church in Memphis, many churches. It’s a huge, huge—my church is a small—

[0:41:36.9]

Jessa Rojas: A small church.

[0:41:37.6]

Delerme: Oh, it’s a smaller church? About how many people do you have?

[0:41:40.8]

Mario Rojas: When everybody want to come to church, maybe twenty, twenty-five.

[0:41:45.9]

Delerme: Okay, okay.

[0:41:47.0]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, we’re pretty small.

[0:41:49.1]

Delerme: Okay, okay. And then the families and the kids and everyone. Okay, okay, okay. And have you seen a lot of growth in the larger Latino community just around in terms of people coming into the restaurant more and more?

[0:42:00.8]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, actually a lot more Latinos have started coming into the restaurant. When we first started here, it was mostly doctors and nurses and, like, people in the apartments, but as time kept going by, we had a lot of Latinos start coming in as well.

[0:42:15.8]

Delerme: Okay, okay. I was wondering, seeing the menu and the authentic food and things like mole.

[0:42:21.2]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, and they like the food, they like the menu. A lot of them—like one time, construction workers, four of them came in and they sat down and they ordered food, and one of them ate the enchiladas, the mole, and he said it was really good. He was like, “Well, where’s the cook so I can take her home with me?” [laughter]

[0:42:46.8]

Delerme: Oops.

[0:42:50.6]

Jessa Rojas: “She’s my mom. You can’t take her.” [laughs]

[0:42:53.4]

Delerme: “No, sorry.” Wow. But people are positive about the food, then. It’s important when you can have a diverse population that loves the food as well. Okay. Has the menu changed since you first opened?

[0:43:07.3]

Jessa Rojas: Not yet. We’re getting ready to change it.

[0:43:10.4]

Delerme: Okay. Okay, that’s good.

[0:43:11.5]

Jessa Rojas: Actually, it hasn’t changed, but there’s things on there that people order that we don’t have on the menu, but we can make it because we have everything to make it, so we make it for them.

[0:43:24.0]

Delerme: Like what? What are some of the things that people specially ask for?

[0:43:27.5]

Jessa Rojas: They don’t specially ask for it, but, you know, sometimes once in a while they come in and they want it. Like on our menu we don’t have camarones a la diabla, but she makes them.

[0:43:40.4]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish].

[0:43:42.1]

Jessa Rojas: But she makes it. And you know how I was telling you about the vegetarian way where they want—

[0:43:51.1]

Delerme: The vegetarian. Oh, a lot. Oh, wow. So you have a lot of vegetarians. Maybe because of the hospital. I don’t know.

[0:43:56.8]

Jessa Rojas: Maybe. And also we have dishes—like we don’t give many soups. We only have chicken soup and stuff like that, but we have special days where we make beef stew with caldo de res.

[0:44:12.4]

Delerme: Wednesday.

[0:44:13.7]

Jessa Rojas: Wednesday. And people like it. And Fridays we also make pozole, which is pork and hominy.

[0:44:21.8]

Delerme: Do you? Yes, Fridays, okay.

[0:44:24.2]

Jessa Rojas: And people like it.

[0:44:25.6]

Delerme: Okay. So growing up, did you get to eat this at home?

[0:44:28.2]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah. Most of the time, yeah. A lot of the foods—I was telling her. We were talking, and, you know, a lot of the foods that she would make at home sometimes we get to eat them here almost all the time. So it gets a little difficult for us because, you know, those foods that were special, we get to eat them all the time now, so it’s kind of like—

[0:44:55.5]

Delerme: You don’t have to order them, but you can’t help it, huh? [laughs] What are some of these special foods, though? Which would be the ones that are special?

[0:45:03.6]

Jessa Rojas: Sopes, because those are handmade tortillas. We used to eat sopes at home. We used to eat sopes at home every once in a while when she would make them, because, you know, we have to make the tortillas by hand, and we pinch them while they’re hot, to make the little edges rise up. So that was one of the special foods we used to eat, but now we eat almost all the time, so they’re not that special anymore.

[0:45:30.7]

Delerme: But you have to make them—you still make them by hand here?

[0:45:32.5]

Jessa Rojas: Yes, we still do.

[0:45:33.4]

Delerme: Oh, wow. So what is the process of making sopes? Explain to me what they are for people who have never seen a sope before.

[0:45:39.9]

Jessa Rojas: It’s like a tortilla, but it’s a bit thicker. It’s corn. We make it from—we call it maseca, and we put water in the maseca kind of to make it like dough, but dough is like flour. It’s not flour; it’s corn. And we put water in it and we mash it all together. I think it’s, like, doughy, but it’s—you know how dough is sticky and stretchy?

[0:46:08.3]

Delerme: Right. It doesn’t do that?

[0:46:10.3]

Jessa Rojas: No, maseca is not like that. It’s soft, but it doesn’t stick to your fingers unless you add too much water. Then you’ve messed up. And you roll them up into little balls. You have to measure the balls because you can’t make them too thick. If you make them too thick, they won’t cook through. So you have to know how big to make the little balls. And then she actually makes them by hand. She, like, hits the little balls into tortillas and she, like, does this weird thing that I still don’t know how to do. [laughs]

[0:46:41.9]

Delerme: Wow. Okay, okay.

[0:46:44.2]

Jessa Rojas: And once she gets—if she gets it really nice and round, and she puts them on the stove, on the little—

[0:46:51.1]

Maria Rojas: Grill.

[0:46:52.6]

Mario Rojas: Grill.

[0:46:52.6]

Jessa Rojas: —grill thingy to warm up, and when both sides are, like, looking kind of like hard and it looks like it’s been cooked through, she takes them out and we pinch the edges around in a circle, so we pinch the edges. I don’t know if you can see it there.

[0:47:09.8]

Delerme: Yep, you can see it. So it makes almost like a—

[0:47:11.4]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, it makes like a little risen edge, and that’s to keep all the food inside.

[0:47:16.2]

Delerme: I see.

[0:47:17.7]

Jessa Rojas: Because we put beans inside of it, and, like, we do chicken and chorizo. Growing up, that’s what she made us, chicken and chorizo, and we put lettuce, cheese and cream, Mexican cheese and cream, on there, and salsa.

[0:47:36.1]

Delerme: And salsa. Okay. And what kind of salsa? Red salsa?

[0:47:38.5]

Jessa Rojas: No, green salsa.

[0:47:41.0]

Delerme: Okay, so salsa verde.

[0:47:41.9]

Jessa Rojas: Right.

[0:47:42.4]

Delerme: Okay, okay. And when would you get to eat it usually when you were growing up? Would it be for holidays or—

[0:47:48.0]

Jessa Rojas: Not really holidays. We got it—sometimes when she was in the mood to make them, she’d make them. But holiday foods, we don’t really have holiday foods here. Those are—

[0:47:59.3]

Delerme: So they’re still special?

[0:48:00.5]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, those are much harder to make and they take longer. You want me to tell you some of them?

[0:48:06.3]

Delerme: Yeah, definitely. What were some of those special foods?

[0:48:08.3]

Jessa Rojas: We call it [Spanish]. It’s pork, pork sirloin, I think, a pork loin.

[0:48:16.4]

Delerme: Okay, pork loin.

[0:48:17.7]

Jessa Rojas: And she puts eggs inside of it and chiles and ham, and then she rolls it up. She rolls it up and she ties it with some string, just like sewing string, to keep it closed, and she cooks it. She puts all of it to cook in a big old pot, pan thing for three hours.

[0:48:48.3]

Delerme: Three hours?

[0:48:49.0]

Jessa Rojas: She has to keep turning it, flipping it around so it cooks on all sides, and it tastes really good. And the secret ingredient, like, thing that makes it taste really good is ketchup. She cooks the ketchup.

[0:49:03.2]

Delerme: No one would have ever guessed.

[0:49:04.7]

Jessa Rojas: No.

[0:49:05.4]

Delerme: Wow.

[0:49:05.8]

Jessa Rojas: You wouldn’t have ever known that ketchup was in the food.

[0:49:08.3]

Delerme: Okay. It helps to make it—

[0:49:10.8]

Jessa Rojas: I’m giving her recipes away. [laughs]

[0:49:17.4]

Jessa Rojas: So she does that. That’s actually one of her secret—her main ingredients, that ketchup, that puts taste into everything because she cooks it. She cooks it in while the food is being made and stuff, and that lets out the nice taste. And we usually eat that during Christmas.

[0:49:36.5]

Mario Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[0:49:37.5]

Delerme: At Christmas. Okay, okay. Is there any other special dishes that are Christmas or other things you—

[0:49:43.7]

Mario Rojas: One of the special dishes for us was the mole.

[0:49:47.8]

Delerme: The mole? Okay. When would you eat that during the year?

[0:49:50.5]

Jessa Rojas: Thanksgiving or Christmas.

[0:49:52.0]

Delerme: Thanksgiving or Christmas?

[0:49:52.6]

Jessa Rojas: Well, we would rotate. Sometimes. One Christmas we—

[0:49:56.0]

Delerme: Oh, at weddings too? Okay.

[0:49:57.7]

Jessa Rojas: For a wedding day.

[0:49:58.6]

Mario Rojas: But now it’s not special anymore because [laughs].

[0:50:01.6]

Delerme: [laughter]

[0:50:04.3]

Mario Rojas: Well, it’s still special because I really love it. It’s one of my plates I be able to eat every single day because I really like it, you know.

[0:50:12.2]

Delerme: Okay. And for someone who’s never ordered it or seen it, what is the dish composed of? Is it a meat dish? Chicken?

[0:50:20.3]

Jessa Rojas: Actually, mole, you can eat it by itself. It’s that kind of—I don’t know how to explain it. You can eat it—you mostly eat it with tortillas. It’s a sauce, but it’s very thick sauce.

[0:50:31.1]

Delerme: It’s a thick sauce? Oh, okay.

[0:50:33.0]

Jessa Rojas: So it’s not like a sauce that goes on top of your food or something. No, it’s its own dish in itself.

[0:50:38.9]

Delerme: Okay. So it’s like taking your chicken in a stewed mole?

[0:50:42.3]

Jessa Rojas: Sometimes, like if, she usually makes it in chicken. That’s how we usually eat it, with chicken.

[0:50:47.7]

Delerme: Okay, with chicken. Okay.

[0:50:49.0]

Jessa Rojas: But, you know, it’s so different that in itself, it’s its own plate. Mole is the food. The sauce *is* the food. So chicken is kind of just like a little flavor or adding, if you want.

[0:51:02.9]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:51:04.2]

Jessa Rojas: And we love to eat it with cheese, with fresh cheese.

[0:51:07.4]

Delerme: With fresh cheese? And what type of cheese do you use? A certain type?

[0:51:10.7]

Maria Rojas: Mexican.

[0:51:11.7]

Jessa Rojas: It’s called queso fresco.

[0:51:13.7]

Delerme: Okay, it’s like the white cheese. Yeah, yeah. Okay. And then with tortillas, you said?

[0:51:17.1]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:51:17.8]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:51:18.4]

Jessa Rojas: And that’s how we eat it, and it’s like a reddish thick sauce, and, you know, it takes a while to make.

[0:51:26.5]

Delerme: And you said, what, six hours or so? And you have it available on the menu every day?

[0:51:32.4]

Jessa Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[0:51:32.8]

Mario Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[0:51:33.3]

Delerme: Wow.

[0:51:33.8]

Mario Rojas: And some people, they came here, they really like it, but they don’t want to eat the whole plate, and they ask for a mole dip. We got a mole dip for them, too, you know.

[0:51:43.4]

Delerme: Wow. Okay, okay. Interesting, interesting.

[0:51:47.4]

Jessa Rojas: And she makes everything. She makes all of it from scratch. Like, we peel the chiles here and we do all of that.

[0:51:59.3]

Delerme: Everything? So everything is fresh.

[0:52:02.0]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, you have to be very careful with the chiles because if you don’t put gloves on, your hands will be burning. [laughs]

[0:52:07.9]

Delerme: Did you learn the hard way?

[0:52:09.4]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, I did. I did, I did. I did learn the hard way. You know, I had to sleep with my hand in a bucket of water all night. [laughs]

[0:52:18.5]

Delerme: Oh, wow. So they’re that—

[0:52:20.1]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, they’re that spicy that they’ll, like, burn your fingers.

[0:52:24.0]

Delerme: What kind of chiles are they?

[0:52:25.4]

Jessa Rojas: She uses three types.

[0:52:26.6]

Delerme: Oh, okay, okay. Okay, so there’s three kinds.

[0:52:29.3]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, she uses three types of chiles. Sometimes, because of all the other ingredients she puts in it, it’s not spicy, but sometimes it is spicy.

[0:52:40.4]

Delerme: It just depends? Okay.

[0:52:41.8]

Jessa Rojas: It just depends on, like, the chiles and the other spices she puts in it.

[0:52:44.9]

Mario Rojas: It’s kind of sweet and spicy at the same time. It’s a combination of that.

[0:52:48.4]

Jessa Rojas: I don’t like sweet and spicy stuff, but that is—

[0:52:53.6]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:52:53.6]

Delerme: So you would say that was one of the specialties definitely that you’d recommend people need to try if they were to come?

[0:52:58.4]

Jessa Rojas: It’s an acquired taste. Some people don’t like it, but others do. I love it.

[0:53:06.6]

Mario Rojas: We got a customer, he came from Arlington, Tennessee, just to buy mole.

[0:53:11.0]

Delerme: Just to buy mole. Okay. Wow. So you have people from Nashville that are coming just to try food? Wow. Really making the distance. Are there any other foods on the menu that are some of your special foods that you love?

[0:53:23.0]

Mario Rojas: Everything is really good. When my customer ask me, “What is good in here?” I always say, “Everything is good.”

[0:53:30.6]

Delerme: Everything is good?

[0:53:31.6]

Mario Rojas: Everything you want to try, it’s good, you know.

[0:53:34.5]

Jessa Rojas: One thing that surprises us, though, is how much people love the chicken soup.

[0:53:38.8]

Delerme: Really? Okay.

[0:53:40.8]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:53:41.2]

Delerme: So you get a lot of orders for chicken soup.

[0:53:43.0]

Jessa Rojas: A lot. So many. And during the lunch hour we can get about ten or eleven chicken soups coming out.

[0:53:48.3]

Delerme: Wow. And looking at just the ingredients, what do you do to make it that’s really different than—

[0:53:54.0]

Jessa Rojas: I have no idea.

[0:53:54.6]

Delerme: —American chicken soup?

[0:53:56.0]

Jessa Rojas: They just—they like it.

[0:53:56.8]

Delerme: They like it? What’s in it?

[0:53:58.0]

Jessa Rojas: I like to say that it’s because of us. [laughs]

[0:54:00.1]

Delerme: Okay, okay.

[0:54:02.1]

Jessa Rojas: We put potatoes, carrots, chicken, and that’s about it, and we do our—

[0:54:10.0]

Delerme: And seasoning.

[0:54:12.3]

Jessa Rojas: Seasonings.

[0:54:12.8]

Delerme: Okay, okay.

[0:54:13.6]

Jessa Rojas: But they like it. We have one guy who comes here almost all the time. His name is Mr. Todd. Every time he comes in, he says, “Oh, I don’t need a menu. I’ll just have the chicken soup.” Or sometimes a chimichanga, but usually it’s the chicken soup.

[0:54:31.1]

Delerme: Okay, okay. So not what you would expect, but it’s the spices and the combination.

[0:54:35.6]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, and we never thought that the chicken soup would be such a big sale, you know. Everybody—people like it.

[0:54:39.0]

Mario Rojas: It’s really simple.

[0:54:39.4]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish].

[0:54:44.9]

Jessa Rojas: My boyfriend, the first time he came here, he had a burrito fajita because he said that in that is where you taste the meats, and you taste the vegetables, and you taste the cheese dip, and you taste the lettuce that goes on top, and the rice and the beans. So you get a taste of everything in that one dish.

[0:55:06.8]

Delerme: Is this your invention?

[0:55:07.7]

Jessa Rojas: No.

[0:55:09.0]

Mario Rojas: No, it’s mostly—

[0:55:09.7]

Delerme: No? Oh, at other restaurants? Oh, okay.

[0:55:11.5]

Mario Rojas: Yeah.

[0:55:11.9]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[0:55:12.3]

Delerme: Oh, okay. I’ve never seen a burrito fajita. I’ve seen burritos and I’ve seen fajitas, but it’s a combination?

[0:55:17.8]

Jessa Rojas: But they like it because that’s where they get the taste of—well, that’s what he said. He said that he got the taste of everything in that one dish. And a lot of people, they like that, because it’s not a fajita, you know. It’s not a big fajita. It’s just, you know, a portion that you can eat.

[0:55:32.3]

Delerme: Okay, okay. Yeah. No, I wasn’t sure if that was an invention or—

[0:55:36.8]

Jessa Rojas: It’s pretty good, though.

[0:55:38.4]

Mario Rojas: I think it’s because, they put on the—

[0:55:41.8]

Delerme: Into the cooking?

[0:55:43.8]

Mario Rojas: In the cooking stuff. One of my customer, one day he came and they eat the shrimp fajita, but he’s on some kind of diet and he don’t eat tortillas, nothing, no beans, just the—

[0:56:06.5]

Jessa Rojas: Shrimp fajita.

[0:56:07.5]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, shrimp and the peppers, not anything else. But after he asked me, they can’t eat anything sweet, you know, and he say, “Oh, Mario, is something sweet in this? Because we cannot eat sweet.”

And I told him, “Man, I don’t know you be able to handle that, but the only sweet that fajita has is the sweetness of my kitchen. People in the kitchen, they put the sweet on it.” [laughter]

[0:56:38.2]

Delerme: Yes, okay, okay. Too funny. And how about the—

[0:56:41.8]

Maria Rojas: Horchata.

[0:56:42.4]

Delerme: Horchata? What is this?

[0:56:43.6]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, she makes horchata.

[0:56:44.6]

Delerme: Okay. And what is it? Explain to me what—

[0:56:47.1]

Jessa Rojas: It’s like a rice drink. It’s made out of rice mainly, water, and condensed milk , sweetened milk.

[0:57:00.0]

Delerme: Okay, okay. Is it popular?

[0:57:01.4]

Mario Rojas: [Spanish].

[0:57:02.9]

Jessa Rojas: And cinnamon.

[0:57:03.2]

Delerme: Oh, and cinnamon?

[0:57:03.8]

Jessa Rojas: And sugar.

[0:57:04.8]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:57:05.3]

Jessa Rojas: It is quite popular. People like it. They come in, and they’re starting to order it more now, and they really like it. And we charge $2 for it because we make it. Like, we don’t buy the little packets and—

[0:57:19.3]

Mario Rojas: And it is cheap.

[0:57:19.6]

Jessa Rojas: —like, water and stuff.

[0:57:20.4]

Mario Rojas: It is cheap here, because you go to another places, it’s two-fifty or three dollars and it’s no make—

[0:57:25.8]

Delerme: It’s not homemade?

[0:57:27.2]

Delerme: But she makes it?

[0:57:27.3]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, but we make it here.

[0:57:28.6]

Delerme: And what’s the other one?

[0:57:29.1]

Jessa Rojas: hamaica.

[0:57:30.7]

Jessa Rojas: Which is hibiscus. Hibiscus tea.

[0:57:33.5]

Delerme: Oh, it’s a tea? Okay.

[0:57:35.8]

Jessa Rojas: It’s a tea, but we call it freshwater. Yeah, it tastes really good.

[0:57:41.3]

Delerme: Okay, okay. And what’s the flavor like to you? How would you describe it? Oh, thank you. So I’m going to get to try it. This is the horchata.

[0:57:47.8]

Jessa Rojas: It’s kind of sweet, but bitter-ish, bitter at the same time, the hamaica. People like it, too, though.

[0:57:58.5]

Delerme: I mean, this is fantastic, now that I get a sense of what it tastes like.

[0:58:00.9]

Maria Rojas: It’s natural.

[0:58:02.0]

Delerme: It’s cinnamon.

[0:58:02.2]

Maria Rojas: It’s natural. It’s never the—

[0:58:05.2]

Jessa Rojas: She doesn’t make it from the baggie or anything.

[0:58:07.4]

Delerme: Okay. And that’s what you see in the store for sale, just kind of the packet baggie?

[0:58:10.9]

Jessa Rojas: You have to leave the rice, like, overnight to soften.

[0:58:15.7]

Delerme: That was going to be my next question. How long does it take to make it?

[0:58:19.7]

Jessa Rojas: If you wanted to make it very quickly, you can make, like—put it in hot water and leave it for a few hours, but if you want to get the rice to soften up, you leave it in water overnight.

[0:58:32.9]

Delerme: Okay, okay. Gotcha. Okay, okay.

[0:58:35.9]

Jessa Rojas: And that’s how we do it.

[0:58:38.1]

Delerme: Anything else on the menu that I should know or describe?

[0:58:41.6]

Mario Rojas: Well, the Cuban stuff.

[0:58:43.3]

Delerme: Tell me about the Cuban food.

[0:58:44.5]

Mario Rojas: Many people like the Sandwich Cubanos. It’s right here.

[0:58:47.7]

Delerme: Ah. Okay, okay.

[0:58:48.5]

Mario Rojas: It’s a Cuban sandwich, you know. This is it. It has three different ways that Cuban sandwich—

[0:58:51.9]

Delerme: And you make it the traditional way?

[0:58:52.5]

Mario Rojas: Cuban sandwich, pan con lechon, or pan con bistec. A lot of people like Cuban sandwich.

[0:58:59.7]

Delerme: And what’s in a Cuban sandwich, for those who’ve never tried it?

[0:59:02.6]

Jessa Rojas: We put ham in it, and we put cheese, pickles, mustard, mayo, and pork.

[0:59:14.4]

Delerme: And pork. Okay.

[0:59:15.6]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah. We have a guy that comes in and he orders a 6-inch Cuban, and he always says, “No pickles.” He’s like, “I know it wouldn’t be a Cuban sandwich without pickles, but no pickles.” And you’re like, “Okay.”

[0:59:26.7]

Delerme: Okay, okay. What kind of bread is it that you use?

[0:59:29.5]

Mario Rojas: It’s homemade bread too.

[0:59:33.3]

Delerme: It’s kind of like a gyro bread? Okay.

[0:59:34.2]

Mario Rojas: From a bakery

[0:59:35.6]

Delerme: Okay, and it’s popular, I’m guessing, too, of the Cuban sandwiches?

[0:59:38.4]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, people, they like our bread. They like the bread. I was serving a lady about two, three weeks ago, and she said, “You know, it’s scary that you could put whatever this bread and I’ll eat it.”

“I’m glad you like the bread.”

[0:59:54.5]

Delerme: Do you order it from somewhere local?

[0:59:56.5]

Mario Rojas: Yes.

[0:59:57.2]

Delerme: So that’s why.

[0:59:58.9]

Mario Rojas: And they ask—some ladies, they came and they buy just bread.

[1:00:03.7]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, they buy just the bread.

[1:00:05.2]

Delerme: Just the bread?

[1:00:05.2]

Mario Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[1:00:06.6]

Delerme: And you’ll sell it that way—

[1:00:07.3]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, we sell it.

[1:00:07.6]

Delerme: —just the bread? People want to—okay, okay.

[1:00:09.1]

Mario Rojas: We try to—one thing I say is I want to make my customer happy, and I trying to do better we can, and if I be able to do whatever they ask me, I do. If I can’t, unfortunately, I say I don’t, but if I be able to do it, I do it, you know.

[1:00:26.7]

Delerme: Okay, okay.

[1:00:28.4]

Maria Rojas: [unclear].

[1:00:30.9]

Delerme: [unclear]

[1:00:49.0]

Mario Rojas: Whatever he think, that what she makes.

[1:00:54.6]

Maria Rojas: [unclear], she will come in and she will just say, “[unclear]. Can you prepare me [unclear] for me?”

[1:01:04.1]

Delerme: And you’ll do it?

[1:01:05.5]

Maria Rojas: Yes.

[1:01:06.1]

Delerme: Wow.

[1:01:06.4]

Maria Rojas: I do it.

[1:01:08.2]

Delerme: That’s really important to know. Okay. So these fusions, and people get creative.

[1:01:11.8]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, but they has to know is that takes a little time, and they have to be patient, to wait.

[1:01:16.3]

Maria Rojas: One lady’s coming and she say, “I’m veggie. Please prepare the enchiladas verdes, no chicken, only the fajita vegetables.”

[1:01:29.2]

Delerme: Okay. Wow, wow. So you just invent and fusion, and you make it, but with the love so that people still—

[1:01:38.5]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish].

[1:01:49.0]

Jessa Rojas: There was a guy who was, like, from the Middle East, and he asks for his sopes the same way. He wanted fajita veggies in his sope, the bell peppers and onions and, like, no meat. And they like it that way.

[1:02:04.5]

Delerme: And they like the way it tastes? Okay. The flavors of the vegetables and seasonings.

[1:02:08.0]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, it’s not very many, but—

[1:02:09.3]

Delerme: You’ll make it? Okay. Wow, wow. So when you as a family aren’t here and busy and working, what are some of the things you enjoy doing together? Is it being in church and being together as a family when you’re not here?

[1:02:23.5]

Maria Rojas: On Sundays—

[1:02:25.1]

Mario Rojas: That’s why we got Sundays, Sundays off. We don’t open on Sundays here. We open Monday through Saturday, and to me, it’s enough. [laughs] It’s enough to work. And many people ask me to open on Sunday, because people say, “Oh, Mario, we out of the house on Sundays and we want to come to eat.”

But I said, “Well, you in the house. I gotta be in my house, be with my wife and my kids, you know, be in church, because if God is the one handle us and take care for us, we have to pray him, right?”

[1:02:56.9]

Delerme: Right, right, right. No, it’s so important to know. I had no idea that you were a pastor the whole time, and I’m thinking restaurant owner the entire time, and that’s it, and construction, but okay. Keep very, very busy.

[1:03:10.9]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[1:03:12.1]

Delerme: Very busy, but that’s wonderful.

[1:03:14.9]

Mario Rojas: And that doesn’t means I’m a rich person, but I work every single day and try to do better we can in everything, you know. I don’t like to depend for anyone, only from God, and that’s why we do better we can. Everything we do, my business and construction and restaurant, it’s our passions, and we do the best way we can, you know. We serve with passion.

I got another girls help me here, and I told them, “If you are sad or you are mad for something—,” because people came with a different mood, you know, and if they tell you something, just leave it in here, whatever they—don’t take that to the kitchen because they working on it. “They make you mad in here, go to the kitchen and smile to my cookers.” Because I don’t want they get so the things. Some people are really happy, some people are mad sometimes, always are our customers, and we try to tell them, “Be happy, smile, serve better you can.” That’s it, you know. And I think now we are doing pretty good. She’s learning a lot to treat people, because in the beginning she was so serious. And I really enjoy to talk. I talk too much. I talk to everybody here and I ask their names. Really, one other thing I really like, many people when they came here, they call me from my name, and that’s what I really like.

[1:04:58.8]

Delerme: Okay, okay. That close sense of the customers and knowing people that come back.

[1:05:05.3]

Mario Rojas: Doesn’t matter if they are from wherever they are. We can make some friends. Last time, there was a couple that was traveling, and they came—they was [Spanish].

[1:05:27.2]

Jessa Rojas: [Spanish]. They were vegans. No cheese, no nothing.

[1:05:31.0]

Delerme: That’s hard.

[1:05:32.5]

Mario Rojas: That’s really hard, and they came in here, they asked for food, and we fix it, we prep, we prepare it here. And they are from suizo?

[1:05:43.1]

Jessa Rojas: Switzerland.

[1:05:44.9]

Delerme: Oh, okay.

[1:05:46.1]

Mario Rojas: And we make really good friends, and then [unclear] friends and faces. They write me when they are [unclear], text me.

[1:05:56.2]

Delerme: That’s so nice.

[1:05:56.7]

Mario Rojas: That’s really good. That made me feel pretty good. They asked me how the business are—

[1:05:59.8]

Delerme: That’s wonderful.

[1:06:01.2]

Mario Rojas: —and that made me feel really good.

[1:06:02.1]

Delerme: That is wonderful. That is wonderful. That’s fantastic. Is there anything else that you’d like to add to the interview, anything about your experience?

[1:06:10.8]

Mario Rojas: Cuban. I want to say Cuban. You know, people ask for—

[1:06:13.1]

Delerme: Tell me about the Cuban.

[1:06:13.6]

Mario Rojas: My wife, she always complain at me because when people came in here and ask me, “I want to eat something Cuban” and they ask what’s my favorite plates of Cuba—

[1:06:26.0]

Delerme: Okay. What is your favorite?

[1:06:27.3]

Mario Rojas: —and I always say, “My favorite plate is the churrasco.”

[1:06:32.5]

Delerme: The churrasco? Oh, with chimichurri sauce. Okay.

[1:06:35.4]

Mario Rojas: I love churrasco.

[1:06:36.3]

Delerme: Churrasco. Okay.

[1:06:37.3]

Mario Rojas: It’s a steak, but it’s really tender, and the taste is really good. And I told them, “If you really ask me, I want to say churrasco. But you ask someone else, maybe they gonna say something different.” Many people came and ask [Spanish] or [Spanish] because it has the vegetables on it.

[1:06:58.1]

Maria Rojas: [unclear].

[1:07:00.0]

Mario Rojas: They really like that, but I’m [unclear].

[1:07:02.2]

Delerme: You like the [Spanish]. Okay.

[1:07:03.9]

Mario Rojas: She likes [Spanish].

[1:07:05.4]

Delerme: Okay. [Spanish] and churrasco.

[1:07:07.1]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, but she complain at me. She say, “Why you always say that?”

“Because they ask me what I like, and I say what I like.”

[1:07:14.1]

Maria Rojas: The problem with the churrasco is, you cook it not well done. Medium.

[1:07:20.9]

Delerme: Oh, okay.

[1:07:22.8]

Mario Rojas: You have to see the [Spanish].

[1:07:25.4]

Jessa Rojas: You have to see, like, a little red in the meat.

[1:07:28.0]

Delerme: Okay, and you have to—and some people don’t realize that?

[1:07:30.3]

Maria Rojas: A lot of guys—

[1:07:32.1]

Jessa Rojas: Men are okay with it, but women—

[1:07:35.9]

Delerme: They don’t like it? Okay. And what is—for those who don’t know what chimichurri sauce is, how would you explain the flavor, what that is, for someone who has never seen that?

[1:07:46.4]

Jessa Rojas: It’s a minty flavor. It’s a little green sauce that—well, it has a lot of different herbs.

[1:07:55.1]

Maria Rojas: Five kind of—

[1:07:55.9]

Jessa Rojas: Five herbs in it. We use—

[1:07:57.4]

Maria Rojas: Cilantro.

[1:08:01.3]

Jessa Rojas: Cilantro, mint, I think.

[1:08:03.1]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish].

[1:08:04.3]

Jessa Rojas: Mint, the mint leaves.

[1:08:05.4]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish].

[1:08:07.0]

Jessa Rojas: Parsley.

[1:08:08.9]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish].

[1:08:09.4]

Jessa Rojas: [Spanish].

[1:08:12.3]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish].

[1:08:14.9]

Jessa Rojas: I think it’s basil. Might be basil.

[1:08:16.9]

Delerme: Ah. Okay.

[1:08:18.0]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish]. It’s parsley.

[1:08:24.2]

Delerme: Oh, like the curly parsley, maybe?

[1:08:26.6]

Jessa Rojas: I think so.

[1:08:27.9]

Maria Rojas: Five, and then—

[1:08:30.2]

Jessa Rojas: Five, and then she, like, puts it in the blender.

[1:08:33.5]

Maria Rojas: [unclear].

[1:08:35.8]

Delerme: Oh, oil.

[1:08:37.0]

Jessa Rojas: [unclear] in oil, olive oil.

[1:08:37.8]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish].

[1:08:40.8]

Jessa Rojas: Then mayo.

[1:08:41.9]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish].

[1:08:44.7]

Jessa Rojas: [unclear].

[1:08:46.4]

Delerme: The seasonings. Okay.

[1:08:46.8]

Jessa Rojas: But the taste that mostly stands out is the mint.

[1:08:51.3]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish].

[1:08:53.1]

Jessa Rojas: But it depends on who makes it, because there’s different types of chimichurri sauces.

[1:08:59.8]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish].

[1:09:04.3]

Jessa Rojas: There’s this guy that comes in, and his wife, she cooks at another restaurant close by.

[1:09:09.0]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish].

[1:09:12.6]

Jessa Rojas: But they like her chimichurri. [laughter]

[1:09:14.8]

Delerme: Ah!

[1:09:19.9]

Maria Rojas: It’s good when they come in for here to say, “I need a sope and chorizo.”

[1:09:27.7]

Jessa Rojas: [Spanish].

[1:09:29.8]

Maria Rojas: “and chimichurri.”

[1:09:32.4]

Delerme: Just chimichurri. [laughs] So you have people who order just the bread; they want chimichurri. Okay. So they want your actual ingredients.

[1:09:41.6]

Maria Rojas: And everything, I make it here.

[1:09:46.6]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, the ground beef, you know, in their restaurant they buy the whole package of the ground beef.

[1:09:52.5]

Jessa Rojas: We ground the beef here.

[1:09:54.6]

Delerme: You ground your own beef?

[1:09:55.4]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[1:09:56.0]

Mario Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[1:09:56.3]

Delerme: Really?

[1:09:56.8]

Mario Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[1:09:57.6]

Delerme: Okay. I don’t know that. Wow, wow, wow. That’s amazing.

[1:10:02.4]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, we do a lot of stuff because—

[1:10:05.0]

Delerme: Are there any other things that we should know?

[1:10:06.9]

Mario Rojas: I really like to people feel it’s not just a restaurant; it’s something homemade, you know.

[1:10:13.7]

Maria Rojas: [unclear].

[1:10:15.3]

Mario Rojas: I really want people feel that thing.

[1:10:17.8]

Delerme: That it’s homemade.

[1:10:18.3]

Mario Rojas: You know?

[1:10:18.6]

Delerme: Okay. I’m glad that you said that, and I can communicate that, the fact that everything is homemade, down to you grounding the beef that people are eating. That’s really special.

[1:10:27.7]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, he sets up the little—

[1:10:29.3]

Maria Rojas: I made my meat—

[1:10:30.1]

Delerme: Here?

[1:10:30.8]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah.

[1:10:31.3]

Delerme: You do the cutting?

[1:10:32.2]

Jessa Rojas: Mm-hmm.

[1:10:32.3]

Mario Rojas: We do everything.

[1:10:33.0]

Jessa Rojas: [unclear].

[1:10:33.4]

Mario Rojas: It’s a lot of work, but we enjoy it. We enjoy it.

[1:10:37.8]

Delerme: It’s so important to know that.

[1:10:37.9]

Maria Rojas: The package, then you open it. No!

[1:10:40.5]

Delerme: No. Okay.

[1:10:42.0]

Maria Rojas: [unclear].

[1:10:45.1]

Jessa Rojas: Not even the lettuce.

[1:10:46.4]

Mario Rojas: And I try to buy the lettuce and everything every single day to be able to my customer has fresh, you know. It’s not just take out from the fridge and serve. No. If I buy four, five, six, all depends on how many we use every single day, that’s what I buy. Doesn’t matter if I have to go every day to the store. Doesn’t matter to me. I go. I go to the store every day, try to make fresh everything.

[1:11:15.3]

Delerme: Okay, okay. Thank you. Is there anything else you want to add? I know I’ve taken so much of your time. I appreciate it. Anything else you’d want people to know about your experiences, about the restaurant? I’ve learned a lot about the wonderful food. And I’m here with the cook and chef, who’s been here, but do you want to say your name so we can give you the credit for this wonderful food?

[1:11:40.5]

Maria Rojas: Thank you very much. My name is Maria Rojas.

[1:11:44.9]

Delerme: And this is our wonderful cook here who we’ve been talking about. Thank you. Is there anything else?

[1:11:51.8]

Mario Rojas: Yeah, it’s a lot of things we can add, but I just want to say all people want hear this interview, we are located in Memphis on 782 Washington Avenue. The name of the restaurant is Sabrosura Memphis. “Sabrosura” means “delicious,” and that’s what I want to add. And Simone, thank you very much for your time.

[1:12:20.4]

Delerme: Thank you. Thank you for your time and for having us.

[1:12:23.4]

Mario Rojas: We really appreciate that, and we hope many people can see this and they can come see us.

[1:12:29.1]

Maria Rojas: [Spanish].

[1:12:34.4]

Jessa Rojas: Yeah, she’s saying that she’s not Cuban, but she tries to give that taste and prepare the food.

[1:12:43.1]

Mario Rojas: I try to make the Cuban proud about us. [laughter]

[1:12:48.5]

Delerme: Yes, yes. Wonderful, wonderful. Thank you.

[End of interview]