



**Floricela Medrano
La Espiga Panaderia
Memphis, Tennessee**

Date: June 29, 2021

Location: La Espiga Panaderia, Memphis, TN

Interviewer: Simone Delorme, Kelly Spivey, and Annemarie Anderson

Transcription: Annemarie Anderson

Length: Twenty minutes

Project: Summer Avenue, Memphis

[00:00:00]

Simone Delorme: This is Simone Delorme. Today is June 29, 2021. And I'm at La Espiga Panaderia recording this interview for the Southern Foodways Alliance Summer Avenue documentary project. To start, can you introduce yourself? Tell us when and where you were born.

[00:00:17]

Floricela Medrano: Yes, Okay, my name is Floricela Medrano. And I was born in Mexico. I came to United States in 1999. I live in Texas for one year, and later we moved to Memphis, Tennessee. And we started La Espiga in April 27, 1997. We made La Espiga the family only, and we have 24 years here in La Espiga.

[00:00:54]

Simone Delorme: Were you always here on Summer Avenue?

[00:00:55]

Floricela Medrano: Yes.

[00:00:56]

Simone Delorme: Always on Summer Avenue. And when were you born?

[00:01:00]

Floricela Medrano: I was born in December 22, 1969.

[00:01:05]

Simone Delorme: And what part of Mexico?

[00:01:06]

Floricela Medrano: Guerrero.

[00:01:09]

Simone Delerme: How did you select this location on Summer Avenue?

[00:01:13]

Floricela Medrano: Well, we're looking for a little place to put a bakery. My brother, he found this place, and he say he liked Summer to put a bakery, and we, everybody was working, and we put a little money for the bakery. And my brother, he moved a lot of things to put the bakery. And he come back to Mexico because we made bread, but we made bread the house make in cooking, like the house. And my brother he went to Mexico for he knows the bread, the como shell bread. And he learned in Mexico how to make the concha shell bread. And he stayed in Mexico for three months. And we start to we're going to start working for La Espiga and when my brother came back, he started to work to make bread here in La Espiga because we have machines and everything. And he started to make the bread, like Mexico, you know. We bring the flavor to the United States, the Mexican Flavors. And we worked for twenty four years to make the flavor of Mexico.

[00:02:53]

Simone: I want you to take me back to when you first moved to Memphis. What was it like? What was your experience like?

[00:02:53]

Floricela Medrano: Well, I was very young. I was twenty years old, and I come to Memphis because in Texas, I don't have work. And I come to Memphis for one friend. And he moved for three days, and I found work. And later, my father and my mom moved to Memphis. They left Texas behind [Laughter]. Well, I love Memphis when I get here because it's a lot of trees, it's a lot of nature. Like my country, you know. I said, "Well, Memphis, it's for me." That's why we

live here almost thirty one years almost. And later, later sometimes we move, you know, but we come back to Memphis. [Laughter]

[00:04:03]

Simone Delorme: Where else have you lived when you left Memphis?

[00:04:07]

Floricela Medrano: Well, I lived in Tupelo, Mississippi. Yeah, but I like Tupelo too. But when I come back to Memphis, I still like it. [Laughter]

[00:04:20]

Simone Delorme: I want you to tell me a little bit about your childhood growing up in Mexico. What was it like? Do you have any memories you can share with us?

[00:04:27]

Floricela Medrano: Oh yes.

[00:04:28]

Simone Delorme: Tell us about it.

[00:04:29]

Floricela Medrano: I have a very beautiful remembrance. When we live in Mexico City, and my grandma, she lived in Guerrero. Out of the city, out of everything. I remember one big river. I remember always I liked to walk, to play in the river with my cousins. That's the most I remember from my childhood. Playing in that river, sometimes kill the chickens. [Laughter] because we play, and I remember my grandma cooking. She made fresh tortillas every day. And cook, I like the beans with a lot of tomato and onions. And my grandma, she made me that and fresh tortillas. Um-hm.

[00:05:30]

Simone: What were meal times like when you were growing up? Was it your grandma who usually cooked?

[00:05:34]

Florice Medrano: Well, my grandma right now, she is one hundred and one years, and right now, she don't cook nothing right now. She's sick. When she was— she came here to the United States when she was eighty years old, I think. And when she come, she wants to cook for everybody. And everybody cook with her to help her. And she says she love the United States, but she don't want to leave her land in Mexico. Um-hm. That's why she stays in Mexico, right now she's one hundred one years. And right now she's sick. And she stays there. [Laughter] Yeah.

[00:06:24]

Simone: How about other people in your family, your parents? What was it like with them and cooking? Do you have any memories?

[00:06:32]

Florice Medrano: Yes. My father he makes chicharrons and carnitas. I love when my father cook chicharrons and carnitas. My mom, she makes a delicious mole, and I can cook mole.

[Laughter] My mom, she makes mole, and my father sometimes he gives, well, right now, he's eighty four years old. And when we ask to make carnitas, he makes carnitas, but my brothers help him. And my mom, we help her when we want mole. Yes. [Laughter]

[00:07:14]

Simone Delorme: What did you parents do for a living in Mexico?

[00:17:17]

Floricela Medrano: Oh, well, oh no, my father, he's in Texas because he loves Texas. Yeah, and he lived there. Right now, he's retired. And my mom, too. And my mom used to stay in the house.

[00:07:28]

Simone Delorme: How about when you were a kid?

[00:07:32]

Floricela Medrano: When I was a kid, well, I have a lot of memories, you know. Playing and fighting with my sisters and brothers. [Laughter] but it's a lot of memories, very good memories.

[00:07:46]

Simone Delorme: What have been the challenges in opening the business and running the business? Have there been anything that has been difficult?

[00:07: 53]

Floricela Medrano: Yes. The first years, it was difficult. Because you don't know nothing about the business and it was difficult. But right now, it's, right now I think we are okay.

[00:08:14]

Simone Delorme: And how about COVID, did it impact at all when the pandemic happened or did it change customers or did you find it slower?

[00:08:24]

Floricela Medrano: Yes, it was a, last year it was very slow. It's still slow, but the pandemic changed everything. Last year, we closed like three months. When it started very hard, the pandemic, we closed for three months, and it was very difficult. Very difficult time, yeah.

[00:08:50]

Simone Delorme: But you reopened?

[00:08:51]

Floricela Medrano: Yes, we reopened in May? Yeah, we opened in May again, and it's still a very hard time for us because a lot of people that say, "Well, we think you're closed, we think for the pandemic that you're closed forever." They say no, we come back. It was very hard, very hard time. But right now, it's hard, but it's not hard like last year. Um-hm.

[00:09:28]

Simone Delorme: And you've been on Summer Avenue for a long time. How has it changed over the years? Have you seen a lot of transformation over the years?

[00:09:36]

Floricela Medrano: Yes. Well, like 27 years it was, Summer was slow. Today, it's a lot of traffic. Twenty years ago, it's not too much traffic. But right now it's a lot of—that has changed.

[Laughter] And well, somethings have a lot of change.

[00:10:03]

Simone Delorme: With the businesses, have you seen the businesses change?

[00:10:07]

Floricela Medrano: Yes, some businesses change, some businesses close because here was like one store, I think the man he was from Costa Rica, and he closed long time ago. Well, it's a lot of things changed on Summer Avenue. Um-hm.

[00:10:28]

Simone Delorme: Do you have any questions you'd like to ask, Annemarie?

[00:10:30]

Annemarie Anderson: I do. I was wondering if you could tell us how you learned to bake and then also what was the name of your brother who started La Espiga?

[00:10:42]

Floricela Medrano: The name of my brother is Benjamin Medrano. Um-hm. That's his name, and well, he's in Winchester right now because he wanted to run his own business. He's there with his family.

[00:11:05]

Anneamrie Anderson: How did you learn to bake?

[00:11:09]

Floricela Medrano: For the years and years we have, we learned a lot of things. For bake, make the bread. My brother, he come back to Mexico for three months. He learned how to bake, he know how to make the bread, and he come and showed us all he learned in Mexico. I think every year we have a lot of things to learn. Right now, it's my nephews to try to learn the breads and cooks and everything.

[00:11:56]

Annemarie Anderson: I was wondering maybe too, if you could describe a little bit of the names of some of the things that you feature at your bakery and maybe talk a bit about what they're like.

[00:12:13]

Floricela Medrano: I don't understand.

[00:12:15]

Simone Delorme: Can you tell us about the food.

[00:12:16]

Floricela Medrano: Oh, okay.

[00:12:17]

Simone Delerme: What kind of cookies or what the different pastries are. What are they called? And describe them. What do they taste like?

[00:12:15]

Floricele Medrano: Okay, can I get up or? Okay, I'll start right here with empanadas. This one is with filling with pineapple. That is a flavor, I can't describe the flavor, but the pineapple gives a very good flavor. It's not sweet. But the pineapple it's put a little sweet in the bread. Well, it's different. And this one has vanilla cream inside. And we call it **pechugar**. That's a little more sweeter than this one. And this bread is cinnamon bread. The flavor is, how do you say? Like, it's cinnamon, but a little sweet. Not too sweet, but a little sweet. And this bread is very sweet. We call it **beso**. We cover it with icing and sugar. I love this one, but I'm diabetic. I can't eat too much. [Laughter] But I love it with milk, and it's a kind of flavor like vanilla and a little sugar. And that's really good. And this one is a cookie. My favorite cookie is this one because it's not very sweet. And this one has sprinkles and this one has chocolate. It's like chocolate chip. And that's not very sweet. And this one is cinnamon bread, and this one has strawberries in the middle. And sesame seed. And all these are cookies, too. Every cookie has a different flavor. We put some colors because some people like the colors. The colors sometime mean different flavors. This is only for color, because it makes the bread more interesting. [Laughter] All of these breads are sweet. And this we call concha. That's not too sweet. That one is very good with coffee or chocolate because it's not very sweet. And this one has vanilla cream inside. And this one has pineapple, that's not very sweet. And this we call niños envueltos. That's sweet because we put strawberry, pineapple, coconut for different flavor. And this bread has a strawberry in the middle. And icing and sprinkles. That strawberry gives it another flavor. And that one has vanilla cream inside. And powdered sugar on the top. The powdered sugar puts a little more sweet in the

bread. And this one has icing with sugar. That's how [uncertain]. And this one we call quesadilla. And that means we put cream, sour cream and cheese. That's because when you buy, you taste the taste of cheese and sour cream. It's kind of salty and a little salty and a little sweet. Well, and this one is **gonas** and chocolate, covered with chocolate. And this bread is not too sweet. That has a flavor like butter. If you want, you can open it up in the middle, you can get something you like and it really will be good. And this one has strawberry. It's not too sweet. The flavor of the strawberry is another flavor, like a little sweet. This, all of these are conchas, it's got the color. This one has cocoa. This one is only yellow, it doesn't have another flavor. It only has the color.

[00:17:50]

Simone Delorme: Thank you. Do you have any other questions?

[00:18:00]

Kelly Spivey: I'm so distracted by the snacks. [Laughter]

[00:18:04]

Simone Delorme: Are there any other questions? Is there anything you want to add? As an end statement or anything we should know?

[00:18:13]

Floricela Medrano: Well, thank you for coming. And I hope this helps everybody to know something about Mexico and the food. Especially that it is very good. [Laughter] and I'm sorry for my English, too.

[00:18:32]

Simone Delorme: No, it's perfect, perfect. Thank you so much.

[00:18:38]

Annemarie Anderson: I have one more thing. If you could just say La Espiga and then describe what it is. Tell us the name of your bakery and where it is located. If you could say that.

[00:18:49]

Floricela Medrano: Okay. Yes. It is La Espiga. It is 3969 Summer Avenue, and La Espiga is a, it's a, I'm trying to think. It's a wheat. Something coming from the—I forgot.

[00:19:17]

Annemarie Anderson: Does it mean spike?

[00:19:20]

Floricela Medrano: No. You know when the rice come a little, I don't remember.

[00:19:28]

Annemarie Anderson: Like a stalk?

[00:19:29]

Floricela Medrano: Uh-huh. It's like that. I'm sorry. I can't say.

[00:19:30]

Annemarie Anderson: That's okay.

[00:19:42]

Simone Delorme: Thank you. That's perfect.

[End of Interview]