

Wimauma Sabor and Soul Food – The Script

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“Wimauma Sabor & Soul Food Tours”

(Script)

Tour Guide - Starting Point: Good afternoon y bienvenidos, everyone! Are you excited about the tour? I'm _____, your tour guide, and it's my pleasure to take you on this tour of Wimauma. On behalf of Enterprising Latinas and our sponsors, I'd like to welcome you all to Wimauma! Let's start our tour by telling you more about this organization. Enterprising Latinas is a non-profit organization that *“creates pathways of opportunity for Latinas in Tampa Bay by teaching new skills, creating networks of mutual support, and advocating for innovative solutions to promote economic mobility and equity. We believe in Latinas being both contributors as well as beneficiaries of a thriving economy”* (Enterprising Latinas, 2022).

Tour Guide – On the trolley: by the way, I would like you to meet our driver Mr. XXXX. Everyone, say hello to Mr. XXX! Regarding rules and regulations, first XXXXXXXXX, second, it is important to follow the itinerary given to you and to always stay with the group. Does that sound good to everyone? If so, vamonos! Our trolley ride to our first destination will be very short, so before we go, let me share some details about Wimauma with you.

Wimauma is a community that dates to the late 1800s. It was named by Captain Davis (who created the community) by taking the first letters of the names of his three daughters: Willie, Maude, and Mary. Beautiful recreation and agricultural lands surround the Wimauma area. This community is part of Hillsborough County's Southshore area, which is one of the fastest growing parts of the county.

This tour is an amazing opportunity not only to highlight the high degree of entrepreneurial and cultural activity here in Wimauma, but to learn about the diversity and richness of the community assets through its food, its entrepreneurs, local historic sites, and the community's history.

Tour Guide – Stop 1/Maria Galvan – Antojitos & Raspados: Now we are here at our first destination. Welcome to Antojitos & Raspados. Maria and her husband David are from Guanajuato, Mexico, and they came to the United States 20 years ago. Valerie and Mya, their daughters, help them run the business. They describe the style of the food they serve as “cravings”, or some people even call it street food. According to Maria, her mother was an entrepreneur, so she feels the spirit runs in the family. Maria describes herself as a fighter, an entrepreneur, and a driven person. She was inspired to open her own business after experiencing an episode of depression.

Maria initially started her business by selling elotes (corn) on the street, but she has been working in the food industry since she was 14 years old. Back in Mexico, she would help her mother prepare tortillas and sell them at the family's food stand. In 2012, When Maria first started her business, she only had a table and a big pot with boiled corn. Valerie and Mya, her daughters, have always helped her. Back then, you could find them receiving the money from the customers and putting it into their fanny packs. When Covid hit, in 2020, Maria's husband decided to buy a trailer to try to keep her and her daughters safe by avoiding direct contact with customers.

They decided to establish their business in Wimauma because they have always lived here, and their family is here. Moreover, the grocery store where the trailer is, Jose's Market, belongs to David's grandfather. Don Jose is very well known for making one of the best “carnitas” around Wimauma. What Maria and her children enjoy the most about having a business is serving people and meeting people from different cultures. Val and Mya take delight in talking to people and explaining to them what their products are. All three of them are proud of their teamwork and how well they communicate with each

other. In addition to Val and Mya, Maria has two more employees working at the business. Maria is grateful she can have her daughters with her and for the fact that they do not need to go out to look for a job. According to Maria and her daughters, what is special about being in Wimauma is that everyone knows them. Mya enjoys seeing familiar faces and meeting people she went to school with. One thing they feel makes their business unique is that everything is homemade and well presented. The way they present their product to the customers is crucial. They want customers to remember them by the uniqueness of their products and the quality of their service.

Antojitos and Raspados is open Fridays and Saturdays from 12:00 – 8:00 pm. Their specialties are raspados, esquites, and fruit cups. Mangonada is highly recommended!

Tour Guide – Stop 2 Sweetee NYammings: Now, you are going to meet Latoya James with Sweetee NYammings. She describes the style of food she serves as Modern Caribbean fusion. Latoya was born in the US Virgin Islands. Specifically, on the Island of Saint Croix. Her parents are from Antigua, so she has both influences on her cooking style. She describes herself as a happy, innovative, and driven person. Latoya works as a technology supervisor and holds a master's degree. However, she has always dreamed of having her own food business. Food has been her passion for so many years, but she was afraid to take the leap. During the pandemic, things slowed down and that gave her time to think about what she wanted to do with her life and how she could step out and make her lifelong dream her business.

Latoya has been in the kitchen from an early age. She grew up surrounded by family members who are professional chefs. In addition, she has taken some courses such as baking and cake decoration. Her business started when she had a potluck at work, and she brought a dish. Everyone kept asking her to sell food, so she began selling food to coworkers on Fridays. By Wednesday, she would send out a menu by text and people would text her back and preorder. During the pandemic, she saw the opportunity to focus on her goal and open her own business. What she enjoys the most about having a food business is seeing people enjoy her food; that gives her the most pleasure. Just making people happy and watching them enjoy her food just puts a smile on her face.

One of Latoya's favorite dishes to make is her mac and cheese because it is different and contains a lot of secret ingredients. Also, she likes being able to prepare traditional recipes such as Ducuna, which is like a tamale but made of sweet potatoes, coconut, brown sugar, and nutmeg. It is often wrapped in grape leaves or banana leaves and boiled. Ducuna is usually eaten during Good Friday. Another traditional recipe is the VI (Virgin Islands) stuffing, which is a sweet potato base with lots of spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, and sweets.

Latoya currently does pop-up events but is looking to permanently establish her food truck in Wimauma because there is not this type of Caribbean cuisine here in Southeastern Hillsborough County. The closest to it is a Jamaican place in Valrico, so she feels there is a need for this type of cuisine in the area. For her, just bringing something different to the area and exposing the community to a new cuisine would be special about having her business located in Wimauma.

Latoya is proud of having her own business and considers that alone a huge accomplishment. For her, it is not about the money, but about the food. She is also proud of her customer service. She uses the customer service skills learned at her IT job and applies them to the food business industry. Her specialty dish is pasta. She makes a dish called Rasta-pasta, which is a creamy coconut base sauce, almost like Alfredo, but with the coconut flavor. It also has red, yellow, and green peppers (Rasta colors) tossed all together with a choice of oxtail or jerk chicken.

Sweetee NYammings has been in business for 6 months now. Latoya's daughter is going to culinary school, and she is also her assistant at the food truck. Whenever there is a major event, where the volume is expected to be big, her mom helps as well. Recently, Latoya's business was at the Pride parade at St Pete. The Jerk chicken was a total hit. More than 700 plates were sold in one day.

One thing Latoya considers a unique aspect of her business is the type of cuisine. Even the flavors and spices she uses. She does a twist on the tradition, growing up in the US and going to college in Maryland, she has some Soul food in her recipes, which is something you will not see in traditional Caribbean food. For heat, she uses Scotch bonnet, which looks similar to a habanero but tastes different. She recommends people try Ducuna and Salt-fish, or bacalao. Both are traditional recipes from Antigua.

Latoya wants customers to remember her business by the stories, and her food always tells a story. Sweetee NYammings hours of operation are Wednesday - Saturday, 11:00 am – 8:00 pm.

Tour Guide – Stop 3/Taqueria Los Angeles, la Casa del Huarache: We are here at taqueria Los Angeles. Esther and her siblings are from Mexico City, and their mother is from Oaxaca, Mexico. Esther describes herself as hardworking, a perfectionist, and an overall happy person. What inspired her family to start a food business was seeing how sad their mother was after she arrived from Mexico. Her mother always worked back there. Because of that, being here in the United States without doing anything was difficult and made Esther's mom want to go back to Mexico. That's how Esther's brothers decided to open their mother a restaurant and that way she would stay in the US.

Esther's mother had a restaurant back in Mexico and she always helped her prepare the food, so she feels she got all the secrets from her. Therefore, she has over 20 years of experience in the food industry. She and her family came to the US in 2004, and it took them about 1 year to open the restaurant. The business began as a grocery store. The building was previously an auto repair shop, so it was very small. Over the years, they have done some renovations to the structure and the façade to make it look the way it is today. Back then, they only had a couple of wood tables, and they didn't have an outside area.

What Esther enjoys the most about having a food business is cooking. Her mom loves cooking too, but she doesn't do it at the restaurant anymore...but she still comes and checks everything is being done correctly. Esther's favorite dish to make is Mole. The preparation can be a little difficult, but she enjoys making it. It can take up to two days for her to prepare mole for a whole week.

Taqueria Los Angeles has been in business for 17 years now. Their cuisine can be described as Mexico City style. They are mostly family-operated. Currently, there is a team of seven people working here: Esther, her sister Maria, her two sisters-in-law, her mother, and two other ladies who assist them. Los Angeles has a different menu for breakfast that includes eggs and chilaquiles, which consist of fried corn tortilla chips simmered in a brothy sauce. Main plates are served all day—from open to close.

Esther and her family chose Wimauma to establish their restaurant because they knew some people from their neighborhood back in Mexico who lived here. For Esther, what makes it special to be here is to have a large representation of Mexicans in the area, and to show their culture to others. She is proud of how her business has grown over the years, and how despite having several competitors in the area, they have established a clientele that supports them. During farm season (October -April) workers usually come here for lunch. However, the clientele has decreased a little because they used to go to the fields and sell breakfast, now they mainly have contractors who bring their food.

On the other side, according to Esther, one positive thing that is happened during the last year is the new customers from all the new developments in the area. They have a more diverse customer base now. A lot of new customers are from Colombia, Costa Rica, and Cuba.

Taqueria Los Angeles specialties are corn quesadillas and Huaraches. The name Directly translated from Spanish, "Huarache" refers to sandals that are commonly worn. Because the shape of the masa looks like these sandals, they came to be known as *huaraches*. This is one thing Esther feels distinguishes them from other places as not many restaurants offer Huaraches on their menu. She also recommends the Chiles Rellenos, which are green chili peppers stuffed with minced meat and coated with eggs.

Esther wants people to remember her business by the food, and good and fast service. When they have people from the fields that come to have lunch, they need to serve them fast because they have a limited lunch break. Their hours of operation are Monday- Sunday, 5:30 am – 9:00 pm.

Tour Guide – Stop 4/Garcia's Bakery: Now, we are at Garcia's Bakery. Bricelda was born here in the US, but her aunt Marisela, who owns the bakery, is from Matamoros, Mexico. Her grandparents are from San Luis Potosi, Mexico. Bricelda describes herself as a friendly, responsible, and considerate person. Her family arrived in the US in the late 70s to work in the fields. Her father, grandfather, and aunt got tired of the hard labor and that inspired them to open a business. Plus, they wanted to have something to provide for the family. Bricelda's grandparents, Juan and Maria, would prepare barbacoa at their house using the traditional recipe, which consists of steam cooking the meal in an underground oven until very tender and succulent. Then, his father would jump on his truck and drive around Wimauma to sell the barbacoa by the pound. His barbacoa was very famous around town. A couple of years after, Bricelda's dad and her aunt decided to open a food business after seeing the need for a bakery in Wimauma. They even went to Mexico to get a baker and had to convince him to come over to work. The business started selling bread and pastries. Later, barbacoa and tacos were incorporated into the menu.

Bricelda has been in the bakery since she was 14 years old. Back then, her mom would pay her \$3 to come and help around. Once she turned 16, she started working part-time while attending school. When she was 24, she started working full-time. What she enjoys the most about having a business is when the customers compliment the food and are satisfied with the service. Like Bricelda, all 7 of her siblings and 4 cousins have worked at the bakery. This has been their first job and the starting point for their professional careers.

Garcia's bakery has been in business for almost 30 years now. They chose Wimauma because this is the place they arrived at after leaving Mexico. Bricelda's grandmother still lives at the house they bought when they first got here. During this time, the business has changed a lot. This was originally the post office, and it was small, so they took over a small grocery next door and expanded the building. They also changed the way they did things. They did not have any technology before. When they first started, we had to memorize the prices and orders. Now, they have a point-of-sale system. The cuisine style offered at this place can be described as authentic Mexican bread baked fresh every day.

Currently, 16 to 18 people help run the business. There are 2 shifts. Usually, 2-3 people are in the front with the customers, and the rest of the people are in the back. Bricelda is most proud of the clientele they have built and the loyal customers who come from afar. Garcia's bakery has a long-time tradition of customers during the weekend waiting in line outside the building before the place gets open just to buy bread. Per Bricelda, the special part about having the business in Wimauma is the people. She gets to see familiar faces every day.

Garcia's bakery specialties are bread, which normally sells out during the cold season, or farm season (October – April), and Barbacoa, which is gone by 10:00 am. Tortas, or a Mexican sandwich with meat and assorted toppings, are also very popular since the bread is baked here. Bricelda's recommendations from the menu are the flour tortilla tacos of any kind and the conchas, which are a sweet Mexican bread with a white topping that resembles the surface of a seashell. What makes this place unique is that its food is fresh and original. Bricelda also wants you to know that the flour tortilla is a secret signature recipe unique to their establishment. Bricelda wants customers to remember her business by the goodness and freshness of the food they offer.

Garcia's hours of operation are Monday -Friday from 5:00 am to 8:00 pm, and Saturdays from 5:00 am to 6:00 pm.

Tour Guide – Stop 5: Taqueria El Sol: Now we are at Taqueria El Sol. Mireya Pimentel owns this restaurant. The food served here is “Mexican and Central American dishes made by a Guatemalan.” Mireya's goal with the food she serves is to always try to have the best flavors. She is from Champerico, a port in Guatemala. Mireya describes herself as a humble, hardworking, and responsible person. She came to the United States 35 years ago to work for a boat company in North Carolina. After some time of working for the boat company, her siblings came to the US. One day they decided they needed to do something different because the work at the company was very demanding. She and her siblings grabbed a map of Florida and flipped a coin. The coin landed on Wimauma, and that's how they decided to come here. They cut tomatoes for a while, but that was extremely hard. She and her brother saw the opportunity to sell food instead of working in the fields. One of her sisters had a restaurant, so they took that as a starting point for their own business. The desire to get ahead and prosper so her parents and siblings could have a better life was what inspired Mireya and one of her brothers to open a food business. They did not have any experience in the food industry, but they saw the need for a restaurant, especially considering the large concentration of Hispanics in the area.

Mireya decided to bring her mother to the United States. She was a really good cook and guided them through food preparation. Her mother was the one with the secret touch and was very meticulous and strict when it came to cooking. They started renting a corner space from a Puerto Rican neighbor across the street and brought a trailer where they would make tortillas and taquitos. In 2003, after 15 years of sacrifices and legal battles for the property, they were finally able to open the restaurant. Back then, this place did not have an enclosed room, so everything was open and there was no AC. People were sweating all the time. They had several fans that kept blowing the napkins away, but according to Mireya, people supported them no matter what.

This place has been in business for 34 years. What Mireya enjoys the most about having a business is talking to people. Her favorite dish to make is grilled steak. She is proud of the cleanliness of the place and their customer service. For her, what makes it special about having her business in Wimauma is how the community has accepted them and played a huge role in their success. She loves being recognized by almost everyone here. Currently, Mireya has 5 people working in the kitchen and 4 waitresses. Sometimes, her brother and niece come to help as well.

Taqueria El Sol's specialty dishes are Bistec Ranchero, which consists of a beef steak, pan seared and cooked. Loaded with potatoes, chiles, onions & a tomato base sauce. Pollo a la Plancha (Grilled chicken), and Camarones a la Diabla (shrimp seared in a skillet and then tossed in a rich, fiery sauce made from dried chiles). Mireya also recommends the fajita mixta.

Also, their salsa verde is one thing that distinguishes them from other places. Mireya wants people to remember her business by the delicious food.

Taqueria el Sol's hours of operation are Monday – Sunday, 8:30 am – 10:00 pm.

Tour Guide – Stop 6– D&D Eats and Treats: Here, we have D&D Eats and Treats owned by Dakota and Desiree. The style of food they served can be defined as Soul Food and Flavorful. Dakota is from Delaware and moved down here two and a half years ago. Desiree is from St Thomas, one of the Virgin Islands, but she has been in Florida for almost 20 years. Dakota describes himself as a lover, a student, and a server. The words he uses to describe his wife would be organized, passionate and dedicated.

What inspired Dakota to open a food business was the reminiscence of a hot dog stand he used to frequent with his mom and family when he was a kid. Coming up in what they call “Cow Town”—which is like a flea market—his mom used to take his family to shop there for anything they needed from food to clothes or special events. She would give them an allowance and he would run to a hot dog stand since it was the cheapest food they could buy. He loved the enjoyment he got from buying that hot dog and wanted to be the person behind the counter to provide that same enjoyment for others. He saw success, saw growth, and pursued it.

His experience in the food industry comes from working at Restaurant Depot, commercial kitchens, and from being a manager of different establishments. In the commercial kitchen, he cooked for an average of 800+ people. His mom and aunt are the cooks of the family, and he learned a few tips and tricks from them. What Dakota enjoys the most about having a business is serving people and their reactions to the food. For him, making people happy is a big motivator. His favorite dish to make is chili.

When Dakota worked at Restaurant Depot, he saw so many people who came in at first with small orders and as their business expanded, they came back and bought more and more to fulfill orders. He saw there was enormous potential in the food industry and decided to give it a shot. He had a conversation and saw a hot dog stand was the safest option but with great profit potential. He started his hot dog stand in September 2021. Dakota resides in Wimauma, and he knows a lot of people in the area; that is the reason why he located his business here. For him, Wimauma is a great area to start a business. As of right now, only he and his wife run the business.

One of the things he is most proud of is that his business belongs to him and his wife and that they have full control of it. They do not have to report to anyone. What makes it special about being in Wimauma are the people and the connection he feels with this town. He comes from poverty, so he knows what it is like to grow up in communities like this one. He loves the connections he establishes here. It feels personal.

D&D Eats and Treats' specialty dish is brown stew chicken, which is a classic Jamaican stew made with chicken, vegetables and a heavy amount of aromatic spices. Something that makes them unique is the total experience. For the owners, it is not only about the food, but the connection between them and the customers. Dakota wants people to remember business by the love he puts into everything.

Tour Guide – Stop 7: Custom Cakes by Carmen/Carmen Galarza: Our last stop is at Custom Cakes by Carmen. The style of food they served can be described as multicultural cakes and desserts; she has customers from different cultures, and she accommodates all requests. Carmen and her family are from Michoacan, Mexico. She describes herself as a humble, creative, and loving person.

Necessity inspired Carmen to start a business. Her husband was involved in a car accident that left him in the hospital for 8 months, so she found herself being the only one providing for her family. She started thinking about what she could do to make more money. She worked at the school board from 7:00 am to 3:30 pm. After that, she would go to Walmart to work as a bakery manager. Being a bakery manager

inspired her to start her own business. Plus, she wanted to spend more time with her family. A friend of Carmen's mom invited her to a baking class at Wilton. Since then, she became even more interested in the baking industry. She began making cakes at home and practiced for hours until finally found the recipe that people wanted. She used to give away cakes during celebrations and people asked her if she would sell them. That is how everything started.

Carmen started at home. She had always dreamed of having her own business and having something to make her children proud of. She used to hear stories of entrepreneurs and thought: if they made it happen, so can I! In 2016, she joined Enterprising Latinas, and since then, this organization has supported her in being an entrepreneur. Carmen leaves her job at ELI at 5:00 pm and immediately starts working on the cake business. Her favorite cake to make is Tres leches.

Besides the Wilton baking class, Carmen has taken several courses and classes. She holds a food management certification. Her husband and daughter, who help her run the business, have the food management certification as well. Her two sons are also part of the family business. Carmen's sister and her niece help her when she does candy/dessert bars. She has trained them to decorate the tables, but Carmen is the one who does all the baking. What she enjoys the most about having a business is having her family together. Every one of them has a specific task to do. According to Carmen, it fills her heart to see them working together every time they all go to deliver a cake to a customer. She also enjoys the outcomes and loves receiving feedback from customers. Making them happy makes her happy, too.

Carmen has made cakes since 2005, but the business was registered in 2019. She decided to locate her business in Wimauma because she is part of this community and has been here all of her life. She knows Wimauma, and Wimauma knows her. What makes it special about having her business here is that she was raised here, and this is the community she belongs to. Over the years, the business has changed a lot. When she first started, only a couple of people knew her around. After she joined ELI, they helped her with marketing her business and creating social media accounts for it. Also, the menu changed. She has added more cake flavors and fillings to the menu. What Carmen is most proud of about her business is the fact that she is a Latina Entrepreneur.

Custom cakes by Carmen's specialty are the Tres leches; the traditional, and the nuts and caramel one. Carmen also recommends the pineapple and vanilla cake. Something special about this business is that cakes are made from scratch, and Carmen uses local ingredients. Also, clients love her customer service and payment plans. Carmen is recognized by the height of her cakes; they are usually very tall. She wants people to remember her cakes for the good flavor and having the perfect amount of sugar.

Custom cakes by Carmen's hours of operation Carmen: Monday- Saturday, 9:00 am – 6:00 pm.

Tour Guide: Thank you, everyone. I hope you enjoyed our tour here in Wimauma. I hope that this experience will be memorable for all of you and that you learned not only about the diverse culinary delights, but the history of some of the key locations around here. It has been our pleasure to tell you the story of Wimauma through the sights, the people, and their food. We look forward to having you in our town again.

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