

News and views that inform, inspire, and connect the Drummond Island and De Tour Village communities and points west.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

ESTHER'S AUTHENTIC MEXICAN CUISINE

By Sunny Covell

"Have you been to Esther's yet?" We heard that question a lot when we returned to Drummond early in June. It was well worth the wait. Like the saying goes "good things come to those who wait." Esther Parris knows that as much as anyone.

Esther was born and raised in Mexico City, which is second in size only to Hong Kong. She was one of seven kids. This meant she was required to help her mom with chores, including meal preparation. With time she learned the art of true Mexican cooking. She also taught herself English and eventually became a United States citizen. So how did this city girl come to Drummond Island? Well, her new husband's relatives lived on Drummond Island, but I am getting ahead the story.

One day many moons ago, Esther started a new job as a waitress in the border town of Tijuana, Mexico. Roger Parris was a regular customer at that restaurant and Esther waited on him. After their first meeting, Roger told the manager that he was going to marry her. A few months passed before she and Roger finally shared their first kiss.

At the request of his sister, Roger became the caretaker of Meade Island,

one of Drummond's surrounding islands; he also works at the quarry. Mr. and Mrs. Parris have been full time D.I. residents for 18 years and have two grown sons, Jonathan and Daniel who both served proudly in the United States Army.

Esther had perfected the art of being a good waitress. She believed that whatever you choose to be, be the best. She did it. Now she has succeeded in putting the authenticity into her "authentic Mexican cuisine." Nothing but quality ingredients go into all her dishes with generous helpings of TLC. The annual Drummond Island Cinco DeMayo celebration was Esther's idea. With Roger's support and a little help from her friends, they did this free of charge for ten years, complete with entertainment. Esther was frequently encouraged to open her own restaurant. She had been thinking about it for many years, but the timing had to be right.

Until this year, Esther served delicious meals from her food trailer in her backyard. The trailer was colorfully decorated and outfitted. On it are the words "I cook, you enjoy." That phrase says it all.

She knew she was rapidly outgrowing this arrangement. Deb's



Restaurant, located near Four Corners, had been for sale for five years. So Esther talked to the bank, the credit union, the health department, and even a lawyer. In her words, "I had to make sure I had all my ducks in a row." She had all the info to forge ahead. After looking more closely at Deb's, she knew she wanted it. Now all she had to do was convince Roger.

Esther epitomizes the American Dream. We all know the phrases "be all that you can be" and "dare to dream, prepare to fail." Esther also knows the power of prayer. One slow day soon after she opened the restaurant, she sent up a silent prayer, "Please let...

...the people come.” Wow! It wasn’t long before her waitresses were saying “stop with the prayers!” Esther is still in awe of the fact that she has her own restaurant. In Esther’s words, “Who woulda’ think?” We agreed that her mom would be proud.

The day I interviewed Esther was one of her two days off. As I was about to leave, a lady came in with a request. She apologized for the short notice, but would it be possible to have Ester cater a party for the next night? Yikes. Turning out a quality catering experience takes time. This potential customer got lucky. Seems the number in the party was less than 20. Not to worry. Esther’s huge smile returned, “That’s like a large take-out order. No problem.”

Esther aims to please and her smile radiates with pride. She especially enjoys meeting her customers. When time permits, she escapes from the kitchen to have a few words at each table. And those chips everybody gets when they first arrive - she makes them herself.

She seems to be in complete control over her new business, but there are “what ifs?” Like, what to do when somebody calls in sick? Or, how soon can you get a back-up dishwasher? And what if Esther herself is too sick to get out of bed? How do you teach authentic Mexican cuisine to your replacement and be sure it has plenty of Esther’s TLC? Esther says it ain’t gonna happen. The “closed” sign will have to be hung on the door. I guess she will have to take to heart the saying on one of her many signs decorating the walls - “Remember, stressed spelled backwards is DESSERT.”

So have you been to Esther’s yet? You can’t miss it on Channel Road and all the colorful decorations!

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