

# Tijuana | Keeping food in the family

By Chris Hendrickson

For Moises Velasco, being a restaurateur runs in the family. The 23-year-old lifelong Monroe resident has been helping out in his parents' restaurant, Tijuana (118 E. Main St.), for as long as he can remember.

Located in the heart of downtown Monroe, Tijuana features homemade, traditional recipes with several specialty dishes, including handmade tamales, chile rellenos, aguachile and homemade Mexican soups. Owned by his parents, Felipe and Martha, Moises helps manage all aspects of the restaurant's operations along with his sister, Gaby. And when his father isn't serving as the head chef, Moises takes over in the kitchen as well.

Open since 1994, Tijuana occupies the space that was formerly the home to IXTAPA Family Mexican Restaurant, which is owned by Martha's brother, Mateo Barajas. Barajas, Martha and Felipe are all from a small town in Mexico called Cuautla, which is roughly 65 miles south of Mexico City.

Born and raised in Monroe, Moises graduated from Monroe High School in 2009 and is currently attending the University of Washington studying communications. He hopes to use his education to enhance his business acumen and help further his career aspirations in regards to both the restaurant and Tijuana's catering services.

He remembers spending time at Tijuana as a young child.

"As a kid, I'd come here and play with my cars," Moises said.

Moises worked his way up in the restaurant, starting out as a host when he was very young. He remembers greeting customers with a quiet, "Hi, how many?"

Since then, he's worked as a dishwasher, prep cook, server, busboy and waiter. Currently, he is responsible for menu design, catering and cooking.

Moises and his parents are constantly looking for ways to improve the menu by adding new items. On the advice of his Uncle Mateo, Moises recently added a seafood dish called aguachile, a zesty, fresh dish that features shrimp, tomatoes, avocado, onions, lime and spicy chiles. Moises explained that the ceviche-type dish is somewhat high-maintenance, since it must be created from scratch each time it is ordered, but he's happy to serve it because the customers are enjoying it.

"People are starting to know what it is," Moises said. "It's something that comes out as an appetizer in Mexico."

Tijuana is known for the authentic-style chile rellenos, a dish that features cheese-stuffed chile peppers that are dipped in egg batter and fried. Creating the chile rellenos is a distinct process that his parents have worked to perfect over time.

"It's something my parents are very proud of," Moises said.

Moises looks forward to continuing to develop the menu with different monthly specials and will also implement a new



(Left to right) Tijuana owners Felipe and Martha Velasco, their son Moises Velasco and cousin (Inset) Tijuana's "no name" dish. Photos by Chris Hendrickson

work station to accommodate handmade tortillas.

"That's coming up," Moises said. "It's more work but I think it's going to be worth it."

Moises enjoys the family aspect of the business and the opportunity to carry on the family tradition – despite the fact that the restaurant industry is considered a high-stress environment.

"Everything is stress. If there's no tomatoes, that's stress. When a guy doesn't show up, that's stress. When there's no people, that's stressful. If there's a lot of people, that's stressful," Moises said, laughing. "Everything is

stressful – my uncle told me that."

Tijuana is open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week.

"My dad's totally old school," Moises said. "We're only closed four days a year: Christmas, Easter, Fourth of July and Thanksgiving."

Tijuana's full bar offers drink specials including the "Martha-Rita," a regular margarita that has been infused with Spanish-style sangria. The restaurant is truly a family-owned and operated enterprise. In addition to Felipe, Martha, Gaby and Moises, there are just two other employees.

"I like being with my family," Moises said. "Helping out, working with my parents. Not everybody gets to do that."

Monroe resident Moises Schwartz loves eating at Tijuana's just as much as Moises. "Tijuana's just what I need to be happy. The staff is so friendly, so welcoming. It's a place I want and choose to go to if I have a night out. The food is awesome," Schwartz recommends this place to everyone.

For more information, visit [TijuanaRestaurant.com](http://TijuanaRestaurant.com) or call [TijuanaRestaurant.com/3876406413](http://TijuanaRestaurant.com/3876406413) on the timeline.



Photo courtesy of Dyana Stevens

## U-pick strawberries available at Bolles Organic Berry Farm

By Chris Hendrickson

Nothing says summer like picking fresh strawberries in the sun, and at Bolles Organic Berry Farm (17930 Tualco Loop Road) in Monroe, you can do just that.

Located off State Route 203 on the Tualco Loop Road, Bolles Organic Berry Farm owners Judy and Kelly Bolles opened their U-pick strawberry fields on Wednesday, May 27. The family-friendly U-pick farm features certified-organic strawberries and fresh honey made from its own hives. Open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., daily, Bolles Organic Farm has offered organic strawberries and raspberries since 1997.

Kirkland resident Dyana Stevens brought her 4-year-old daughter, Parker, on a strawberry-picking adventure last week.

"My daughter, Parker, and I went to the opening day of strawberries at Bolles Organic Farm and had so much fun. There were rows and rows of strawberries, and it only took me a few minutes to fill up a box," Stevens said. "Eight pounds of strawberries for \$20 – plus two jars of honey from their own hives. We'll definitely be back in July for U-pick raspberries!"

Daily picking conditions are available on the farm's Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/bollesorganic/timeline](http://www.facebook.com/bollesorganic/timeline).

## Qualities

The most common quality I receive from friends and family who know I'm a dentist is "What should I look for in a good dentist?" I answer by describing the type of dentist I would want creating my own mouth. A dentist I strive to be, a dentist to the same standards that I would want first, I would want a dentist to keep up with the latest technology because it has changed significantly.

## What is

Esthetics is the application of various treatments to the dermal layer. In other words, esthetics is all about the skin. Some of the techniques used by skin care professionals include facial steaming, wrapping exfoliation, pore cleansing, extractions, chemical peels. Professional esthetician personal guidance is the best in skin care and excel at helping

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