



Small Business Saturday is the day that hometown businesses show the public why shopping local makes sense. Friendly service, convenient proximity, and unique options translate to sales in the frenzied rush of holiday shopping.

## Reviewers rave about El Molcajete in Delano



It's not uncommon for patrons to clean their plates at El Molcajete in Delano.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

GABE LICHT  
Editor

The reviews are in and it's clear many people think highly of El Molcajete in Delano.

With 48 reviews on Facebook, El Molcajete has an average rating of 4.6 out of five stars. Another 11 people reviewed the local restaurant on Google, giving it an average rating of 4.4.

"El Molcajete just blew my mind," wrote one reviewer, who went on to say he had tried many Mexican restaurants in the western suburbs since moving from Chicago, and had been disappointed. "Then, we moved to Delano and found this gem we hope will flourish for a long time. Real Hispanics were running the place, which is always a good sign . . . These guys know what they're doing in the kitchen . . . So, folks, if you live in the area or are visiting, give El Molcajete a try. You won't be disappointed, and you'll be supporting a small local joint (that's always a good thing)."

"Awesome food, drinks, and atmosphere," wrote another reviewer. "Best service I've had at a restaurant in a long time. You won't leave hungry."

Another reviewer raved, "If you want truly authentic Mexican food and drink – this place is it!! The owners are local, (it's) family-owned, (and) they work their butts off to bring the highest quality food and experience."

Owner Jerry Lopez is pleased with the positive reviews.

"It's working out really well," Lopez said of the restaurant that will celebrate its second anniversary in early 2017.

Lopez has a long history in the Mexican food business.

He got his start working for Monterrey's in South Carolina. When the business opened a location in Lino Lakes, Lopez moved to Minnesota. He worked there until 2004.

"When I left, I didn't have a Plan B," Lopez said. "I was going to go back to South Carolina. I talked to my wife, and we decided there was too much competition out there. We started looking for something here. We found a little place in Buffalo. That was 10 years ago this December."

After four years of success at that location, Lopez wanted to add a Delano location. The problem was, there was already a Mexican restaurant here.

So, Lopez waited for the right time.

A friend drove by the country mall at 45 Babcock Blvd. and told Lopez there was an opening there, so he started talking to the landlord.

Then, he began a conversation with the city, because the ordinance at the time limited alcohol licenses based on the size and value of the property.

"The city amended its ordinance and granted us a liquor license," Lopez said.

He said he always wanted to open a business in Delano due to how the town is laid out.

"One of the things I like is

the way the town is set up with Highway 12," Lopez said. "It's busier than Highway 55 . . . We have a lot of exposure here."

Lopez said the main cook at his Buffalo location moved to the Delano location. New cooks are trained in Buffalo and then moved to the Delano location, which has a smaller menu due to the smaller kitchen and less storage. Instead of serving all 70 items at both locations, Lopez said he picked the most popular dishes for the Delano location.

That includes the Molcajete, which is a dish featuring chicken, shrimp, steak, and Mexican sausage served in a lava rock bowl. For those who like a little – or a lot of – spice, they can choose Jerry's burrito and select how spicy they'd like it to be.

To wash down those favorites, El Molcajete offers a wide variety of alcohol, including margaritas, mixed drinks, and beer.

The Over the Top margarita features an original mix recipe paired with Cian Anos tequila.

"It's really popular," Lopez said.

Margaritas are especially popular during happy hour, when small house margaritas, rail drinks, and 24-ounce draft beers are \$3, and medium house margaritas are \$6. That takes place from 4 to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 3 to 6 p.m. Sunday.

For more information, or to order carry-out, call (763) 777-9277.