

Jacobo's Offers More than a Taste of Mexico



Carlos (left) and Ramon have served three generations of customers from Omaha, Gretna, Lincoln, and as far away as Texas.

Since 1989, people with a need for authentic Mexican flavor, have found what they're looking for at Jacobo's Authentic Mexican Grocery, Bakery and Tortilleria, 24th and L streets.

Owned by Ramon Jacobo and managed by his son, Carlos, this cash-only business has been a South Omaha tradition since 1976 when the family opened its first grocery at 30th and Madison streets. Three years later, the family opened a bakery at 24th and B, which later merged with the grocery store when it moved to its current location.

"In the beginning, our customers were 90 percent Hispanic," Carlos recalled. "Back then, people hesitated to go into a store that represented one nationality, thinking there might not be anything there for them, but there is. We urge people to come in and

try something new and we're always accessible to answer questions."

Today, 50 percent of Jacobo's customers are Hispanic and 50 percent represent other nationalities. "Now, we're like the United Nations," Ramon quipped.

Among the store's specialties are homemade chips and salsas; corn tortillas made fresh daily; deli favorites such as enchiladas, tamales, rice, beans and burritos; and traditional Mexican bakery items such as empanadas, conchas, and bolillos. Other departments include meat and produce sections, and packaged and canned goods manufactured in Mexico.

"I got onto an airplane once and the flight attendant told me, 'Mr. Jacobo, your salsa, chips and enchiladas are fantastic,'" Carlos recounted. "She added, 'I'm based in Omaha and

I always get them for our crew going from one city to another.'"

Ramon moved his family to Omaha from Chicago where he had worked for more than 20 years. "We decided to move back to Omaha where I was born, thinking maybe there's a need for a Hispanic store here," he explained.

"When we opened the store at our first location, people didn't think it was going to last," Carlos acknowledged. "They told us there's no demand for this type of market, but we were determined to give it a try."

For their first few years in business,



Jacobo's is open weekdays, except Mondays, from 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and weekends from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Ramon drove round-trip from Omaha to Chicago every one to two weeks to load up his truck at warehouses specializing in Hispanic food products.

"I would leave in the morning at 4 o'clock, drive to Chicago, load up, then drive back about 2 o'clock the next morning," Ramon shared. "It was one of those things I never thought I would do in my lifetime, but I ended up doing it."

Jacobo's has experienced steady growth since those early days. The number of employees has grown from six to more than 20, and keeping the store's shelves restocked requires semi-trailer loads of fresh and packaged Hispanic food items.

The Jacobos take pride in being part of the Omaha community and having the opportunity to educate people about Hispanic food and culture. They also value their business relationship with First National Bank, which started 25 years ago at the recommendation of another small business owner.

"At first, we thought First National was a big bank and we're a small business, so we are not going to receive any attention from them," Carlos noted. "We were told, 'Try them, you'll be surprised.' So we started with First National and have been with them ever since."

Carlos added, "For us, it is important to deal with a bank that appreciates our business and we've seen that over the years with First National Bank."



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