

Sonoma Latina Grill to open

Toast, Boulange also to open at Marketplace

By TIM OMARZU
Managing Editor

Michael Tamayo's family owns La Tortilla Factory in Santa Rosa, a business that's the embodiment of the American Dream.

Founded by his railroad worker father and farmworker mother, it's grown into a 150-employee concern that cranks out more than half a million tortillas a day at its facility on Tamayo Way.

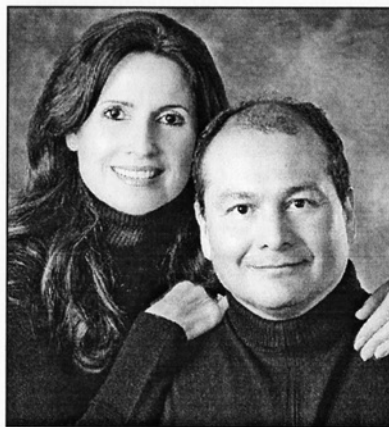
Now, Tamayo and his wife, Lucy, plan to make tortillas at Sonoma Latina Grill, a restaurant - with its own tortilla-making machine - that they hope to open this winter at the new Hamilton Marketplace shopping mall in Ignacio that's anchored by Safeway supermarket.

"It's all going to be fast casual," Tamayo said. "It's really for people who are on the go."

Regular-sized burritos will cost \$7.95, he said. The menu will include organic food that's locally grown and produced, he said.

"We're going to be making fresh tortillas. We're making fresh, organic ... tortillas for the restaurant, not for retail," Tamayo said. "Nothing's ever frozen. We (won't) even have a freezer in the restaurant."

The Tamayos plan to use heirloom tomatoes from Soda Rock Farm in Alexander Valley; chicken from Petaluma Poultry, the producer of the "sustainably farmed" Rocky Range Chicken; local microbrew beer; and wine from such producers as the



COURTESY PHOTO

Lucy and Michael Tamayo

Sonoma Valley's Robledo Family Winery, a Latino winery.

"Some of the families that own the wineries have very similar backgrounds that we do," Tamayo noted.

What the restaurant won't carry is food with preservatives, trans fats or high-fructose corn syrup.

"We're not going to have any fountain drinks. We're going to have fresh juices from fresh fruit," Tamayo said.

Meat served at the Tamayos' restaurant will be grilled over a wood fire.

Another departure from traditional Mexican restaurant food: Sonoma Latina Grill won't have any deep fryers, or vats of hot oil used to make such things as chimichangas and fried ice cream.

Speaking of deserts, Sonoma Latina Grill will have its own signature line of them, including tres leches cake, made from three types of milk from local dairies that will be made on the premises.

"The food that we're doing isn't necessarily Mexican ... it's very traditional with Latin infusion," Tamayo

said.

The restaurant's name is in honor of the Tamayos' mothers.

"My mother, her whole family, they were farmworkers as children," he said. "What we're doing, in the name, is dedicating this restaurant to the Latinas in our lives that have taught us our ... work ethic."

Sonoma Latina Grill is slated to open in leased space in building D of the shopping center. It will be near a new outlet of Toast, a Mill Valley restaurant at which people line up for breakfast and next to La Boulange, a small San Francisco-based chain of French-style café bakeries. Another Italian restaurant is in the works, he said.

"The synergy of the three restaurants so far that have been chosen are a big win-win situation for the customers," Tamayo said.

The restaurant will have about 60 seats, including outdoor seating. It will be decorated in Spanish Colonial style, the same as the architecture at the Hamilton Field.

The city of Novato's zoning administrator will hold a hearing on Thursday for a use permit to consider the on and off-site sale and consumption of alcohol at the restaurant.

"It's because they want to serve beer and wine that they have to get a use permit from us," said Elizabeth Dunn, the city's community development director.

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