

## Reviewing EL TEPEYAC CAFE, East Los Angeles

LAHRC Restaurant Review By: Tony Barragan 1/15/2016

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(Tonight I will talk about a Mexican Restaurant,  
FAMOUS for its GENEROSITY )

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How many times have you heard of El Tepeyac Cafe?

I have heard about about El Tepetac Cafe hundreds of times, It began in the 1970s and continued into 1980s. At that time I worked as the Night Manager and Host at the very popular, Barragan's Mexican Restaurant in Echo Park. So many people flowed past our host stand\front door, and a certain number of individuals would stop ask if I had ever visited El Tepeyac Cafe or Manny's Tepeyac. I found it odd that very few other restaurants were ever mentioned by our guest.

I was to busy raising all my kids, and rarely left Echo Park, Glendale, & the San Fernando Valley, and sadly I never went to El Tepeyac Cafe.

So, for five decades I have carried the question, "Why are so many people so loyal to this one East LA Restaurant.

That all changed this Thursday. As I drove up, I was excited to explore this famous old restaurant and see why people spoke so highly about this place, and if those old loyalties live on.

I wisely, chose to drop-by in after their lunch time but I found a long line outside in front of the restaurant. It was a rather plain, old store-front building, with it's Name & Logo painted across the front.

On the left a parking lot with about 20 spaces. On the right, a narrow patio, with 5 tables, including two, for groups of 8-10 people. This covered out-door area is more of a take-out and self-serve dining space. I saw several construction workers dining out there.

The main dining room has about 10 tables. The walls are casually decorated with old photos of the restaurant, the neighborhood, and the most obvious photos, were of the late patriarch, Manny Rojas posing with his fist up like a boxer & his old-school paper-cook's-hat, slid-down over his fore-head.

I sat down at one of the 8 seats at the counter, facing a kitchen window, through which I could see the busy cooks at work. As the customers were coming and going around me at the counter, I politely asked five random customers, "How long have you been a customer here? Robert, Armando, Soyla, Rudy and Joe, all proudly told me, they had been customers for over 40 years or more, in-fact, Soyla was especially proud to be a customer for over 63 years. All of them enthusiastically wanted to tell me the El Tepeyac Cafe story.

I learned Each one of these customers & the working members of the family spoke of three things,

First and Foremost, Their RELATIONSHIP or FRIENDSHIP with the late MANNY ROJAS, the second generation cafe owner, \_ deceased 13 years ago.

They all spoke very warmly of his jokes, his hugs and his hard work.

Clearly El Tepeyac Cafe serves as a kind of living memorial to Manny Rojas, the life and the legend,

### Secondly the Food

They all directed me to the The Hollenbeck Burrito (named after the local police station), as an old sort of PR prank by Manny, to win Police Favor). Obediently, I Enjoyed the whole Machaca Hollenbeck Burrito with Sauce and Cheese on Top It was filled with lots of soft shredded Beef, Spanish rice, Pinto beans and Cheddar cheese, Then topped with more melted cheese and spicy Ranchera Sauce, made with Tomatoes and mild green pepper and a small touch of Chile.

It is more than enough for two people to share. I was too full & could not eat dinner that night. The Hollenbeck Burrito, at El Tepeyac. is a Bucket List, must do kind of thing.

THE Next Day I had Huevos Rancheros, and asked for it with Chile Verde on Top. The Cooks piled it on. It was enormous, and very savory and Juicy. I Couldn't help but eat all. Again, I did not eat dinner, for a second night.

Next time I go there, I'd like to try their Steak Picado.

### Thirdly, They spoke of the Large Portions

My Huge Hollenbeck Burrito and Huevos Rancheros confirmed that for sure.

That is were Huge GENEROUSITY comes into Play.

Their tradition of Giving More, Much More, feels like respect for us, the customer, and that is rewarded with Loyalty & Success.

The Menu has all our favorites, for Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner. The choices, including 15 "Dinners", 9 Breakfasts, Burgers, Individual Tacos & 13 Burritos, including some suitable for 4, others for 8 people.

The Service was fast and attentive, the Prices are very reasonable, especially for the Large Portions that they serve you.

You can dine quietly, or you can chat with the "Tepeyac Fans" that surround you, about Manny, or what is going on in East LA.

Finally my visit to El Tepeyac Cafe answered of my question. The people who were inviting me, wished for me the honor to meet Manny, to taste his food, to know his generosity and be blessed. I now wonder, whether they were also honoring me (the West Side, Echo Park) energetic host, to meet the (the East Side) Master Manny Rojas.

El Tepeyac Cafe hasn't survived 70 years on nostalgia alone. It survives and thrives because of generosity of food — the memories and the friendly hospitality that is still practiced here, daily, in East Los Angeles.

El Tepeyac Cafe is Located: 12 N. Evergreen Ave, Los Angeles

They don't sell alcoholic drinks.

Their Hours: 6:00am - 7:00pm Monday - Thursday  
6:00am - 8:00pm Friday - Saturday

Closed on Sunday

When you visit El Tepeyac, please tell Chuck and the crew, that you heard about them, from The Los Angeles Hispanic Republican Club Radio Show.