



CHARLOTTE'S CENTRAL AVENUE CORRIDOR

CHARLOTTE'S CENTRAL AVENUE reveals shifting demographics, from white working-class textile mill workers in the early twentieth century to a wave of immigration in the 1990s. These new Southerners revived abandoned storefronts and subdivisions, merging along this corridor to shape a new Charlotte.

La Avenida Central de Charlotte revela una demografía cambiante de la ciudad, desde la clase de trabajadores de raza blanca de las fábricas textiles a principios del siglo veinte hasta una ola de inmigración en la década de los noventa. Estos nuevos sureños llenaron negocios abandonados y subdivisiones, uniéndose a lo largo de este pasillo, dando forma a una nueva Charlotte.

VICTOR SANTIAGO
Tacos El Nevado

We try to maintain the tradition, maintain the culture, and maintain our gastronomy. What we want to do is let people see, living around us in our city. We can talk a lot about what Oaxaca is but many people do not know it. Our idea is to let our people know what we Oaxacans are.

Tratamos de mantener la tradición, mantener la cultura y mantener nuestra gastronomía. Lo que queremos hacer es dejar que la gente vea, viviendo alrededor de nosotros en nuestra ciudad. Podemos hablar mucho de lo que es Oaxaca pero muchas personas no lo saben. Nuestra idea es que nuestra gente sepa quienes somos los oaxaqueños.

Illustrations by Lauren Beltramo

DALTON ESPAILLAT
Three Amigos | Sabor

It's tough to sell Dominican food because nobody knows what that is. So I was swimming upstream. You think about Mexican food, you think about Italian, Chinese, it's part of the rotation. But Dominican food is really not there. We're a Latin restaurant. It's an amazing culture mixture that we have in here.

Es difícil vender comida dominicana porque nadie sabe lo que es. Así que estaba contra la corriente. Cuando piensas en comida mexicana, piensas en lo italiano, lo chino, como parte del giro. Pero la comida dominicana no está ahí. Somos un restaurante latino. Es una mezcla increíble de culturas que tenemos aquí.

DINO MEHIC
Euro Grill & Café

There are so many differences. Different people, different cultures, and everybody stays together. My home is here. I built my life here. I'm so happy when the people come here and eat and leave happy and say to friends, *We were in some Bosnian place*—nobody says Euro Grill, just Bosnian place—and ate good Bosnian food. That's my business. I present my country. That's important.

ZENIA MARTINEZ
Las Delicias Bakery

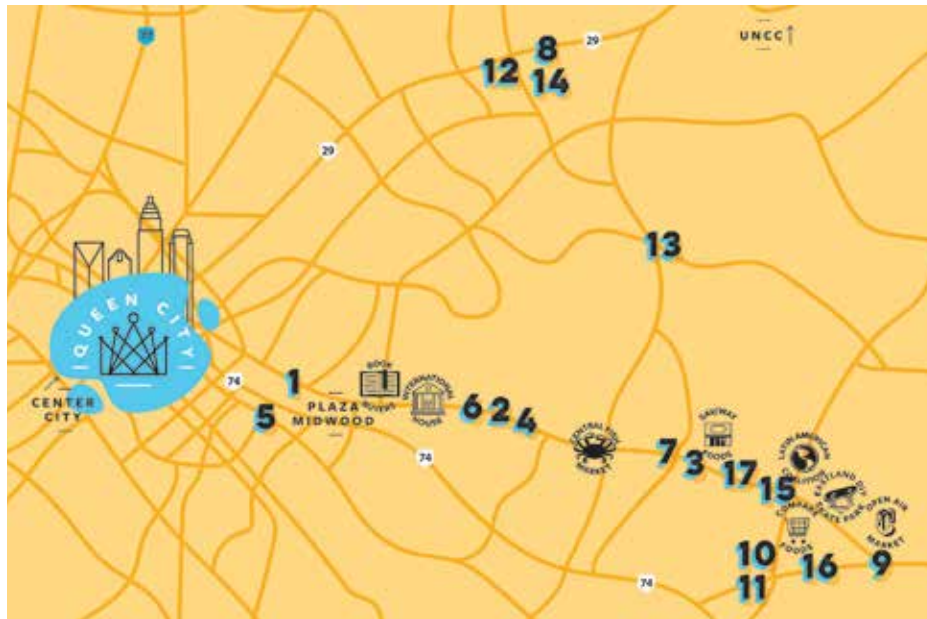
What started out as a Mexican bakery is now a Latin American bakery. I think what's happening in Charlotte, as we're growing so intertwined, we're seeing a lot more influx of other cultures and sharing with them. We're growing as a global culture and as a global business. Not tailoring to just one customer, but to everyone.

Lo que empezó como una panadería mexicana es ahora una panadería latinoamericana. Creo que lo que está sucediendo en Charlotte, a medida que estamos creciendo tan entrelazados, estamos viendo mucha más afluencia de otras culturas y el compartir con ellos. Estamos creciendo como una cultura global y como un negocio global. No se hace a medida de un solo cliente, sino para todo el mundo.

REGINA ADAME GALAN
Dai-Sing Restaurant Supply

When someone doesn't know how to explain to me what they want, I have a few basic questions: What do you do with it? What material is it made out of? What color? And if they can answer me two out of those three questions, I can find it for them. I only speak English and Spanish,





THIS IS CHARLOTTE

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Jimmy and Louisa Kleto
<i>Central Coffee</i>
719 Louise Avenue | 7 Regina Adame Galan
<i>Dai-Sing Restaurant Supply</i>
4500 N. Tryon Street #5 | 13 Le Thi Le Nguyen
<i>Le's Sandwiches and Café</i>
4520 N. Tryon Street #41 |
| 2 David Ragoonath
<i>Soul Central</i>
2903 Central Avenue | 8 Caroline Coke
<i>Island Grocery & Caribbean Restaurant</i>
5861 Albemarle Road | 14 Hally Chirinos
<i>El Pulgarcito de America</i>
4816 Central Avenue |
| 3 Angelo Kaltsounis & Larry Kaltsounis
<i>Landmark Diner</i>
4429 Central Avenue | 9 Izzat Freitekh
<i>La Shish Kabob</i>
3117 N. Sharon Amity Road | 15 Juan Sanchez Gonzalez
<i>Carnitas Guanajuato</i>
5534 Albemarle Road #101 |
| 4 Dalton Espailat
<i>Three Amigos Sabor</i>
2917-A Central Avenue | 10 Tsigé Meshesha & Zerabruk Abay
<i>Nile Grocery and Café</i>
3113 N. Sharon Amity Road | 16 Nereyda Mali, Vianey Juarez, Victor Santiago, Christopher Santiago, Isela Juarez
<i>Tacos El Nevado</i>
4715 Central Avenue |
| 5 Dino Mehic
<i>Euro Grill & Café Bosna Market</i>
2719 Central Avenue | 11 Swen Harmon
<i>Zoewee's Restaurant</i>
4112 N. Tryon Street | 17 Nora Guerra
<i>Guate-Linda</i>
6016 The Plaza |
| 6 Zhenia Martinez
<i>Las Delicias Bakery</i>
4405-C Central Avenue | 12 Dan Nguyen
<i>Lang Van</i>
3019 Shamrock Drive | |



REGINA ADAME GALAN
DAI-SING RESTAURANT SUPPLY

IZZAT FREITEKH
LA SHISH KABOB

JIMMY & LOUISA KLETO
Central Coffee

I think this place gives everybody that comes in a little special feeling like, *Oh, this is my place, too.* It's very much come here and be yourself. Everybody's just a little funky enough that it's a great place. Nobody's super weird. Nobody's not weird. They're just the right amount of kooky. —Louisa Kleto

CAROLINE COKE
Island Grocery & Caribbean Restaurant

Moving to Charlotte was a big difference, and we realized that there was a need. And we're striving every day to fill that need. You walk into the store, you hear the music, you hear the language, and you find camaraderie through that. You get to build relationships and even maintain some of your culture and some of the things that you're familiar with, the foods and the music or the smells.

IZZAT FREITEKH
La Shish Kabob

I have something special. Charlotte's becoming bigger and North Carolina is a big place, big state—there are no fresh eyes for Mediterranean in North Carolina. I need all the people coming. I need all the people. I need the world!

TSIGE MESHESHA & ZERABRUK ABAY
Nile Grocery & Café

There are many things that make you proud as an Ethiopian. One of them is the hospitality of the people. And this is a deeply rooted tradition. You don't feel like an outsider when you go to Ethiopia. —Zerabruk Abay



TSIGE MESHESHA & ZERABRUK ABAY

NILE GROCERY AND CAFÉ

Oral History



HALLY CHIRINOS *El Pulgarcito de America*

Salvadoran food is this beautiful piece of gold that's trapped within the quartz. Not a lot of people can find it. Not a lot of people will be able to appreciate it. But whoever has seen it, whoever lived through it, they cherish it so much. If it weren't for it, I would not have any of the things that I have today. I would not have any of the privileges that I have today.

La comida salvadoreña es esta hermosa pieza de oro que está atrapada dentro del cuarzo. No mucha gente puede encontrarla. No mucha gente será capaz de apreciarla. Pero quienquiera que la haya visto, quien la vivió, la aprecia tanto. Si no fuera por eso, yo no tendría ninguna de las cosas que tengo hoy. No tendría ninguno de los privilegios que tengo hoy.

TUAN (JOHN) NGUYEN *Le's Sandwiches & Café*

When my parents took me to Vietnam for the first time, the culture, the hard work, the working people, it made me feel something. So when I came back, I

wanted to show that small part of Vietnam to the people of Charlotte, so it's a part of me now. It's a Charlotte thing. We brought something to Charlotte.

NORA GUERRA *Guate-Linda*

It's different to work for someone than to be your own boss. There's a lot of difference. My brother is my partner. When he opened his bakery, he said, *Why don't you start doing tamales?* When I got here, I made tamales and I started selling them out of my house. And there, little by little, I started to say, I want to have a business, I want to have a restaurant. And then the day came. And here I am.

Es diferente trabajar para alguien que ser tu propio jefe. Hay mucha diferencia. Mi hermano es mi socio. Cuando abrió su panadería, me dijo: ¿Por qué no empiezas a hacer tamales? Cuando llegué, hice tamales y empecé a venderlos de mi casa. Y allí, poco a poco, empecé a decir, quiero tener un negocio, quiero tener un restaurante. Y entonces llegó el día. Y aquí estoy yo.

TUAN (JOHN) NGUYEN

LE'S SANDWICHES & CAFÉ



Visit the SFA oral history archive at southernfoodways.org/oral-history.

Recipe Box



DIRTY PAGES

Nelssy Toro's Colombian empanadas

AS TOLD TO JENNIFER JUSTUS BY NELSSY TORO

Dirty Pages is an ongoing recipe exhibit based in Nashville, inspired by the time-worn recipe pages in home collections. In this installment, we hear from Nelssy Toro, an Atlantan by way of Colombia. She learned to make empanadas from her mother, who learned from her mother. One day, Toro hopes to teach her three grown children how to make them. Until then, the instructions remain, handwritten, in her kitchen. —Jennifer Justus

Photos by Vanessa Toro

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, I always wanted to do what my mother was doing. But when she made empanadas, she would say, "No, no. You're going to get burned or hurt." So I just watched, and that's how I learned to make them.

My mother made them once a week and when we had company. I remember making my first batch when I was maybe eleven years old.