

## **Chorizo opens new Latin eatery in the Grove Arcade**

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by Meegan Kelly

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Chorizo, a new restaurant serving Latin fare, opened April 3 along what has been referred to as “restaurant row” in the Grove Arcade.

The most recent project from restaurateur Hector Diaz, who owns two other downtown eateries, Chorizo serves breakfast and lunch, but plans to add a dinner menu in April. Latin countries from Mexico down to Argentina influence the fare.

“The basic foundation is Spanish cuisine,” said Diaz. “Dinner is going to be more Spanish. Get it? More roots. The daytime stays more Latin with just a little Spanish, but the nighttime will be more Spanish with your paella and your tapas.”

To Diaz, Chorizo represents elegance and class. Compared to his other ventures, Salsa’s on Patton Avenue and Modesto in the Grove Arcade, this is closer to Diaz’s own upbringing in his native Puerto Rico. “It’s more of me,” he said “It’s more who I am and how I was raised.”

After looking at the location on Page Avenue six years ago, Diaz was concerned about investing at that time. Then, he said, the space was not meant for locals. Now, he says it’s a good opportunity and he has a future there because that area of downtown is growing.

“This is like the Park Avenue, Fifth Avenue, or the Boulevard in L.A. It’s art deco. It’s New York. There is nothing like this side of town,” he said.

With the addition of Chorizo, Diaz hopes to continue to feed the community hearty food.

“I just want to cook for the community so we can all eat food, stay healthy and smart,” said Diaz.

He said his goal for Chorizo is to serve free-range meats and organic produce. He buys from local farmers and is willing to help others start their own businesses. “I might know someone who says, ‘Hey, I have ten acres but no money,’ and we’ll say, ‘Here is the money, pay us back in produce,’” Diaz said.

In fact, he had help of his own becoming the famed chef that The New York Times called “the Emeril of Asheville.” In order to open Salsa’s he received donations from more than 100 people in the community and \$3,000 from Mountain BizWorks, formerly known as Mountain Microenterprise Fund. “They gave me money and knowledge,” Diaz said. “It’s hard to be in business in the United States.”

The biggest challenges Diaz experienced opening Chorizo were finding money, good employees, and more time. As a father of four, he said making sure his family was fine with him spending more time working was the biggest issue.

“I had to talk to my family to be okay to do this. I said, ‘Okay, Papa is going to have another job,’” he said. Even so, Diaz fans should expect something new early next year.

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