

# The Paradise Restaurant

If you are looking for a little taste of Heaven in Wenatchee, Washington, I highly recommend a visit to one of the best restaurants that I have had the pleasure of dining at in recent months.

Declaring this our favorite place to dine out in the area, my friend Scott and I became steady customers of this special place in the months preceding the pandemic shutdown



Maria preparing her Spanish rice for the day.



Adding a final touch to a popular homemade pie.

of many businesses in the area, including The Paradise Restaurant.

This family-owned oasis is a dream come true for Maria Hernández-López, who, along with her husband Alfonso López and son Mauricio, offers a variety of multi-culture homemade dishes that has something for everyone. In addition to traditional American and Mexican fare, Maria's menu also includes Greek and Italian cuisine, using her own recipe variations.

Our favorite so far is the Gyro, which Maria—who prepares everything from scratch—artistically alters a sandwich on the menu into a fantastic colorful salad for us.

## It all began with a dream

Recently, I had the pleasure of interviewing this close-knit family and learned about the restaurant's origin, family history, and of their heart-felt appreciation to the community for embracing them as it has over the years.

The López family opened the restaurant five years ago.

In the early years, prior to that event, Maria supported her husband Alfonso, principal of Wenatchee's Lewis and Clark Grade School, in reaching his education goal by selling cheese in the area, making regular deliveries, including deliveries to Wenatchee's Pybus Market. Made from cow and goat milk, cheese-making was something she learned from her parents as a youth in Mexico, who farmed, raised cattle, and made cheese.

In the process, Maria also took care of their three sons, Julio, Mauricio, and Ivan.

**With all else in place, Maria felt it was now her time to follow her dream of opening her own restaurant. Her family whole-heartedly agreed and supported her enthusiastically to make it happen.**

**Her earlier experience working in several local restaurants provided the necessary expertise to manage her own restaurant, and she has done well.**

Maria's desire is to make all visitors feel right at home. Her kitchen is her "baby" and she delights in presenting guests with beautifully-prepared meals in a relaxed "at home" atmosphere filled with family photos and pictures of their childhood home in the small village of Rancho Dolores, State of Oaxaca, in southern Mexico.

Alfonso shared his story about life in Oaxaca, growing up on a ranch, eventually becoming an educator and school principal in Mexico.

In his desire to learn English, he left that life behind and, at age 27, immigrated to the USA. Single, young, and full of energy, Alfonso began working in the orchards of Oregon. He soon realized this was not the place to learn English, as the workers spoke only Spanish.

After seven years in the orchards, Alfonso spent four years in Ellensburg, where he worked on a ranch with English-speaking ranch hands. It was here that he learned the language and the culture of his new home.

Meanwhile, during a trip home to visit his family in Rancho Dolores, Alfonso met a local señorita named Maria Hernández.

After a two-month engagement the couple was married, and before long, they found that Maria was expecting.

After a year in Mexico, Alfonso returned to the United States to complete his mandatory U.S. citizenship documentation. He went back to Mexico nine months later to bring his wife and young son, Julio, back to Ellensburg and the ranch.

## The move to Wenatchee

The family's move to Wenatchee thirty years ago was a result of Alfonso's desire to become an accredited English teacher and go back to Mexico to teach English. He attended Wenatchee Valley College, worked



The Paradise Restaurant, is a dream come true for Maria, Alfonso, and Mauricio. A family photo and floral arrangement by Maria, complete the background for this amazing family.

as a teacher's aide, and eventually became a full-time teacher. His plan to return to Mexico to teach was postponed indefinitely, as he was now embedded in the Wenatchee community with his wife and two more sons, Mauricio and Ivan. All three sons have helped out at the restaurant.

Alfonso began teaching at Lewis and Clark Grade School 25 years ago, first as a reading instructor and eventually as the principal of the school—the position he holds today.

The challenge of learning a new language and culture that Alfonso experienced resulted in the development of a "dual language" program at the school that has become a model program to help bridge the gap between the two languages. He continues to highlight the importance of life-long learning and parental involvement in education, and taught classes on how parents can help their children read at home.

For his efforts, Alfonso has become a

role model in his community. In 1998, he received the Washington Award for Excellence in Teaching.

**In 2019, Alfonso López was honored as Washington's Principal of the Year, which meant a trip to Washington, D.C., for national recognition with other state honorees. A highlight of their visit was a tour of the White House, which both Alfonso and Maria shared was a thrill.**

Taking no credit for his recognition, Alfonso humbly honors others for his success. "We are so blessed! We have met so many supportive people along the way. This country has embraced us," he said, adding how much his family has appreciate that.

Sharing the family's strong faith in God, this delightful family, grateful for the opportunities they have been given, represents the best in America!

Welcome to The Paradise Restaurant, a familiar sight on Wenatchee Avenue, across from Chelan County PUD. The restaurant is a great place to stop for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. It is also an oasis for an afternoon get-together with friends over a slice of one of Maria's delicious homemade pies, in a quiet, home-style atmosphere.



## On the Menu...

A photo is worth a thousand words, as these popular menu items indicate.



The Paradise Special



Greek Salad



Prawns in a skillet



Rib Eye Steak



Popular homemade pies ready for dine-in or take-out.



334 N. Wenatchee Ave.  
509-470-9595

• CATERING  
• DINE-IN • TAKE-OUT

HOURS:  
WEDNESDAY - SATURDAY  
8 a.m. - 8 p.m.  
OPEN SUNDAY  
8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

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by David Luyben, Freelance writer/designer  
d.luyben@outlook.com