Viva Mexico serves south-of-the-border favorites

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VIVA MEXICO

BY MARY QUINLEY CORRESPONDENT

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Ramon Castaneda is backi In mid-April, he and his wife, Vicki, the former owners of Old Mexico, opened Vixa Mexico in Farmington. "Customers are happy that we are here; said Castaneda, who has owned four restau-rants, including the Old Mexico eateries in West Bloomfield and Livonia. Viva Mexico is nestiled in a virp mall on the north side of strip mall on the north side of Grand River Avenue west of Orchard Lake Road. The

Orchard Lake Road. The restaurant is open everyday except Sunday. We serve 54-99 inch spe-cials that change each day. Castanced as add. The special might be flour tortillas, pri-mavera quesadillas or wet bur-ritos. It all depends, he said, on what's available. Serving sizes are generous. The taco sailable (57.25) is made with crushed corn ships, onions, chcese, olives and sour cream.

cream

ground ober, lettice; tottades, onions, chece, olives and sour cream. Botana, a hcaping portion of corn ships covered with a mix-ture of pinto beans and Mexican sausage, and then topped with melted cheese, slices of avocado, tomatoes, onions, olives and jalapeno peppers, costs \$10.45. Castaneda is constantly try-ing different recipes. "If somebody comes into the restaurant I'll ask them if they would like to try whatever I'm cooking," said Castaneda, who no a recent tafternoon, was preparing caldo for himself and his wife. "Caldo, a Mexican soup, is a blend of calbace, postocos, carrots, corn, zucchini and meat. It's not on the menu, but perhaps some day it will be. Sue Comptois is hooked on the restaurant's Mexican face. In the sping, she just hap-pened to drive by Viva Mexico and decided to check it out. "Everything is good," said Comptois of Novi, who imme-diately recognized the couple from Old Mexico. "To me, the food tastes as authentic as Mexicantown without the drive."

drive. drive." During her frequent jaunts to the eatery – two or three times a week – she feels like family. "They call me by my first name."

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and, combination plates run from \$5.50 to \$6.25. Credit cards: Cash only. No credit cards accepted.

sons that customers return. Several weeks ago, two young women wandered into the restaurant, studied the menu on the wall and, not see-ing it listed, inquired about runcempel.

menu on the wall and, not sec-ing it listed, inquired about guacamole. No problem, Castaneda said. He then busied himself slicing and mixing the fresh avocados, tomatoes, onions, jalapenos and a hint of cilantro. Avocados are very expensive, explained Castaneda. When he propares a four-ounce side of guacamole (\$2.25) he uses almost a whole avocado. Xummy, exclaimed the duo, as they scooped the guacamole into tonsted chips. Andy Sirvio, who works in Farmington, is another satis-fied customer. The restaurant open, Sirvio said, who with his family, used to frequent Old Mexico. His favorite cilah is the "Viva" Quesadilla, a large grilled flour tortilla filled with chicken, spinach and cheese: Guacamole, lettuce, tomatoes, onions, jalapenos and sour crean are served on the side. Rice and beans are also included. Merina's Combo (\$7.99) is named after the Castanedas

Incluided. Merina's Combo (\$7,99) is named after the Castanedas' granddaughter. The dinner features a ground beef taco, an enchilada, a tostada, and sides of rice and beans. Burritos, enchiladas, tostadas, quesadillas and tamales are available as a la



One of the new Items on the menu, an open-face taco is presented by Victoria and Ramon Castaneda. carte items. The menu lists five Favorites carte items. The menu lists five Favorite of Viva Mexico. Each of the "favorites" is served with rice and beans. Prices for these dishes range from \$5.50 for the Bean & Cheese Tostada and Ground Jung Theo combo. to the

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Chicken Floor Land and Ground Deef Theo combo, to the Chicken Floor Theo served with a Chicken Enchlinda for \$6.28. We train our employees to put all the dishes together, Castaneda explained. Ti takes me awhile to teach them because I want to be sure they have the love and the care." Wixa Mexico is compact. There are eight tables and cash is the only acceptable form of payment. Carryout is available. "In the future, we hope to

'Everything is good. To me, the food tastes as authentic as Mexicantown without the drive. Sue Comptois Customer

have fish on the menu and see what people think," said Castaneda. And, what do the patrons wish for? Viva Ramon!

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