



SERRANO'S MEXICAN BAR & GRILL

An on-the-road standout awaits in Woodland Park.

Any parent knows that hungry children and long car rides don't mix. When I was growing up, my family often piled into the Volvo for the three-hour drive to our cabin in Goldfield, southwest of Colorado Springs. We stopped at Sonic Drive-In in the Springs, even though we knew chili dogs and switchbacks didn't mix either. So when we discovered Serrano's Mexican Bar & Grill, perched on a hillside in Woodland Park, we were overjoyed to find an alternative.

Just like its canary yellow exterior, Serrano's stands out among the lackluster chains in this mountain town. If it weren't for the stunning view of Pikes Peak from the large windows and wraparound porch, you could (if you squinted real hard) be beachside in Mexico. Between margarita sips, you're greeted by owner Pepe Serrano's authentic pollo en mole, sizzling fajitas, and tender carnitas Uruapan.

The mole is a must-try. The saucy dish is equal parts sweet and spicy, with a hint of chocolate. The fajitas emerge sputtering, and the slow-cooked pork carnitas come topped with a dollop of fresh guacamole.

While the hearty provisions are the main draw, Serrano's simply offers something special, and it is, evermore, our go-to road-side stop. 730 E. U.S. Highway 24, Woodland Park, 719-687-7150

—CAMILLA STERNE

A Vital Oasis

One woman, four farmers' markets, and our evolving food deserts.

DENVER NATIVE Beverly Grant is part activist, part community leader, and part food fanatic. Grant, who has had a string of careers in computer science and radio, loves the community-building that can come from sharing food. So, when she became aware that her neighborhood north of City Park and North Park Hill, where she grew up, were considered food deserts—areas that lack sufficient access to affordable, healthy foods—she took action. “[This realization] was like TNT dropped, and in putting everything back together I had this epiphany about starting a farmers’ market.” Now in its fifth year, Mo’ Betta Green MarketPlace hosts four weekly markets that range in location from Highland to Stapleton; Grant chooses spots “where the built infrastructure doesn’t allow grocery stores,” she says. “Those are the places where pop-up markets are ideal.”

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5280: When did fresh food become a focus for you?

Beverly Grant: My relationship with food was very much shaped by my family. My grandmother lived in the Whittier neighborhood. She turned her entire backyard into a garden in the 1950s and raised all the food my family ate. She told stories of canning two thousand, three thousand jars because that was the food for winter. She also made medicine, dried food, froze food. I call those things the lost kitchen secrets of yesterday.

In talking about food literacy and social responsibility, you use a lot of acronyms. Tell me about HEAL and TOLD.

HEAL—Healthy Eating, Active Living—is part of food literacy. I spend most of my time helping people shift their personal eating habits. To deal with our fast-food convenience culture, I do cooking demos. I’ll say, “I’m gonna show you, and you’re gonna eat it right here and tell me if you like it—and if I just made it, you can go home and make it.” Another is TOLD: Our food should be of Traceable origin, Organic, Local, and Delicious.

Now that the markets are established, what’s next?

In my food policy work, I help shape, advocate, and lobby to create urban agribusiness initiatives. But just having the initiatives isn’t enough if you don’t do the outreach and education getting people to use them. That’s what I’m looking to do. It’s hard work, and it takes a lot of repetition. The awakening starts at the personal level, then it’s me and you, then we build synergy with others. It’s like a spiral that keeps growing, growing, growing.