

Frita Batidos: Get your chorizo loco and make a friend



Chorizo loco has all the toppings — and a sunny side up egg. PHOTO/KATERINA MIHAILIDIS

Looking for a place to have great food and a good time? OU News Bureau reporters have visited some distinctive eateries in Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties to learn more about what these places have to offer. Reporter Katerina Mihailidis visited Frita Batidos in Ann Arbor and spoke with general manager Paterno Johnson.

Tell me about the history of this place.

We have been open for seven years, officially from December 7th last year. The chef-owner is Eve Aronoff-Fernandez. She used to have her namesake restaurant Eve in Kerrytown, fine dining restaurant and we opened up this place seven years ago.

Describe what this place offers patrons.

Cuban-inspired street food. So, traditionally, chorizo, Frita's chorizo: spicy pork sausage and we make that here in house, fresh, daily and it comes with a handful of shoestring fries and a soft egg bun. We also have other versions of the Fritas, all her interpretations based on her cooking style. We have beef, fish, black beans and chicken fritas, also. And then, you can get it loco, which is all of the toppings, which is cilantro-lime salsa, avocado spread, tropical coleslaw, muenster cheese and a sunny-side-up egg. All this one big pile of frita. It's really, really good. It's so messy that we give you a fork and a knife automatically cause you're not going to be able to pick it up.



General Manager Paterno Johnson delivers a meal. He said the communal seating helps individuals make friends. PHOTO/KATERINA MIHAILIDIS

Why would someone want to come here?

I think it's the environment. To the best of my knowledge there aren't that many places that have our form of communality, you know. Walk in here by yourself, you could walk out with a friend ... because of the communal seating. We purposefully put the napkins and the stuff on the other side of the table so when it's like really packed, you have to ask someone, "Hey would you mind passing me a couple napkins." You might start a conversation. As you can see, the music is loud. We try to keep it like a fun, party atmosphere. ... Also, our staff. Most of the people here have worked with Eve for a very, very long time. Some people have worked with her for 10-15 years. We really care. It's not just a job to us. We care.

How many people work here?

We have about 15 front-of-the-house staff members and maybe 17 to 20 back-of-the-house members. The reason why we have more back of house, it might actually be more than that, but we make everything fresh here. Everything we make fresh, multiple times a day.



Ann Arbor's Frita Batidos is in its seventh year. PHOTO/KATERINA MIHAILIDIS

What do you do that's different from other places like this?

Besides the Cuban-inspired street food which is delicious? It's the attention to detail, also. Even though it's like a fast, casual hybrid, we still have the fine dining aspects, like Eve's, of a fine dining restaurant. When we clear the tables, we do the open-hand gestures, like the hesitation, like "may I get this out of your way?" We set the food squarely in front of you just like in a fine-dining restaurant. The biggest compliment that I've heard from most people that come here, besides how delicious the food is, is that our staff is above and beyond friendly and it shows in our Yelp reviews, for example. We have been open since 2011 and we have like over 1,200 reviews and most restaurants that have been open since 2000 only have 200 reviews.

What's the one thing everyone should order here?

Definitely the chorizo. We were actually on USA Today. Our website has one of the Top 10 must-have burgers in the United States. I highly recommend it, with the egg at least. We also competed in the burger-battle in downtown Detroit last year and our winning frita beat out 17 other restaurants.

What does the future hold for this place?

We are currently trying to open up in Detroit, hopefully by the end of May. A really, really good location downtown. But we don't want to be like a cookie-cutter restaurant. We're not trying to be like McDonald's. We want to put one in key big cities where there are good sources for produce and humanely treated meat —big college towns.

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