

DRINK



friendly bar area includes a few cozy booths and access to a breezy patio. Craft brew enthusiasts like Marshall find no fewer than five draught and five canned or bottled Texas craft beers to keep their palates happy. He struggles with the tempting choices, finally settling on Buffalo Bayou Brewing's 1836

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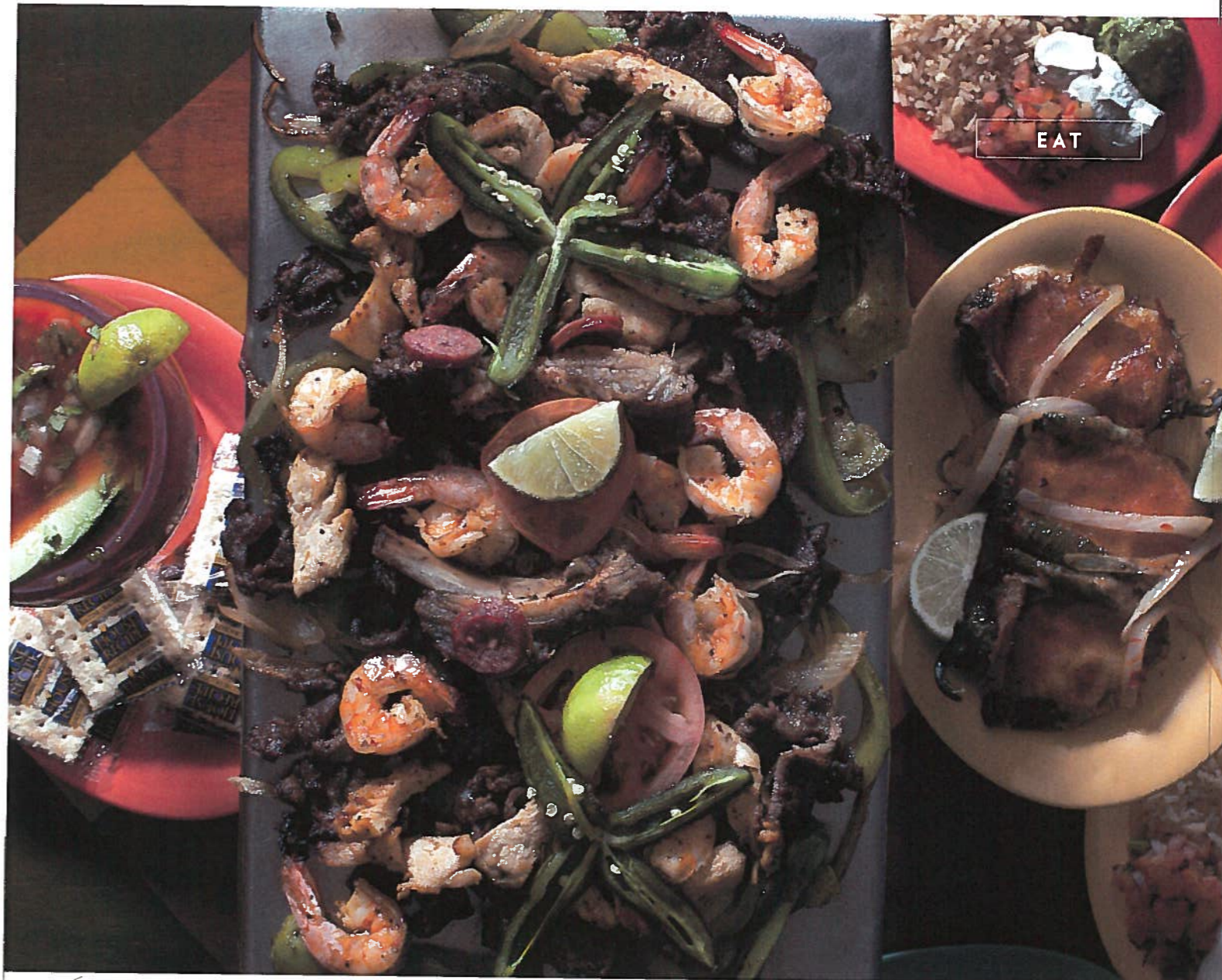
Copper Ale. Though I'm drawn to the frozen margarita that combines my beloved Mintade with Republic Tequila and Paula's Texas Orange Liqueur, I can't resist the pretty pink Bell of the Ball, blending Revolution Spirits Reserve Gin with ginger liqueur, a dash of bell pepper purée, and a basil garnish. Luscious proteins from the rotisserie include pork loin and free-range chicken, which are served with such sauces as balsamic reduction, salsa verde, Coca Cola au jus, and tomato relish. We find the pork especially juicy and a sweet, supple foil for the tangy

green salsa. We also sample the seared duck breast, which is rich and naturally sweet, tempered beautifully by a drizzle of balsamic vinegar. Alongside, baby yellow and green squash, sliced heirloom tomatoes, and a sumptuous gnocchi "mac" and cheese meet every need we have for fresh vegetables with a little side of indulgence.

Our only regret is that we can't possibly taste everything we'd like. I am certain I need to experience the frozen sangria, which combines Treaty Oak Rum from Austin and citrus juices with one of my favorite Texas wines, the McPherson Cellars rosé from Lubbock. Before departing, we make a vow to return yet again on our next Houston visit. ★



MAKE IT!
Drink recipes at texashighways.com/recipes-drinks?



EAT

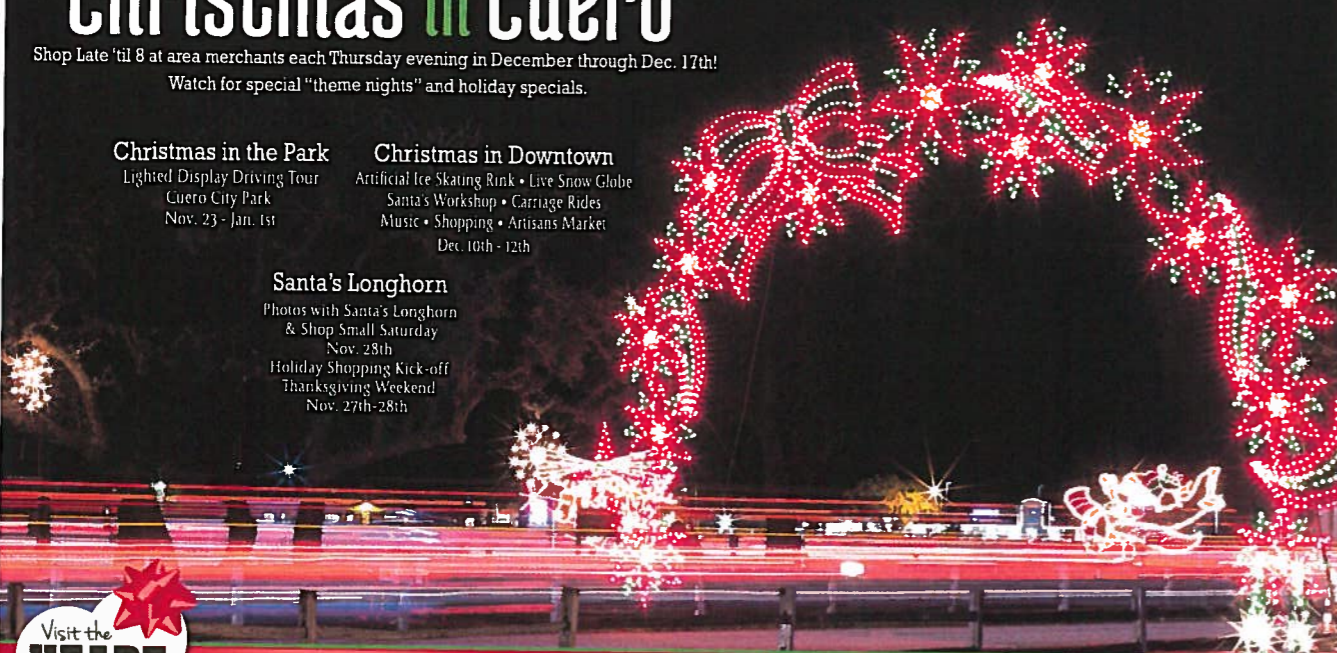
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Watch for special "theme nights" and holiday specials.

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Cuero City Park
Nov. 23 - Jan. 1st

Christmas in Downtown
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Music • Shopping • Artisans Market
Dec. 10th - 12th

Santa's Longhorn
Photos with Santa's Longhorn
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Food Familiar

TYLER'S TRIFECTA OF MEXICAN EATERIES

text by Randy Mallory

Low-carb a short word be added to top line (to help w/ spacing) Vastly?

THE CITY OF TYLER HAS changed since I was a youngster, when only a few places served a bland version of the richly spiced cuisine favored south of the border. An influx of Hispanic families in recent decades, however, has spawned a variety of quality Mexican eateries. Three of my favorites—Don Juan Mexican Restaurant, Don Juan on the Square, and Mariscos DJ's, all owned and operated by the Barron family—have rekindled

Eating at the Barrons' restaurants takes me back to the summer I spent with my wife and kids in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

my love of interior Mexican cuisine and culture. The Barrons serve the foods they grew up with in the central Mexican state of Guanajuato.

Eating at their restaurants takes me back to the summer I spent with my wife and kids in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. Among the offerings, you'll find thick, fried *sopes* (corn cakes) topped with beans and meat and *queso blanco*; spicy chicken enchiladas topped with crumbly, slightly salty *queso fresco*; *tortas* (sandwiches) layered with avocado and meats; and giant chilled shrimp cocktails. Made from scratch using fresh ingredients, these dishes—along with brightly colored decor and hand-carved wooden furniture—remind me of our days in San Miguel. There's even wall art showing scenes of

PHOTO: © Randy Mallory

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BIENVENIDOS WELCOME
MARATHON
 Est. 1882 41°15'N 101°40'W

Marathon, TX
 Where
 Big Bend

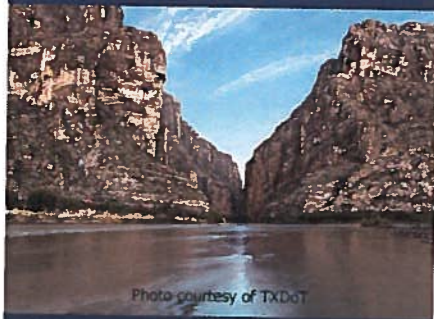


Photo courtesy of TXDOT

and Dark Skies
 Meet



Lodging
 Restaurants
 Shopping
 Galleries

MarathonTexas.com



PHOTO © Randy Mallory

Guanajuato state. And when I eat a soft corn taco filled with grilled steak, avocado, cilantro, and shredded cabbage, I recall the origins of the Barrons' true Texas success story.

Juan Barron first visited Texas from Mexico in 1977 on a mission. He was determined to bring his oldest child, Arturo, who was working in a Tyler meat-packing plant, back home to Salamanca, Guanajuato. Once in Tyler, however, Juan liked what he saw: a good place, nice people, and opportunity. So he moved in with Arturo and began working with his son at the plant.

In those days, Arturo played soccer every weekend at a field near downtown. For lunch, he often brought tacos that his dad had made—spicy *barbacoa* (Mexican barbecue) wrapped in fresh corn tortillas in the style Juan knew growing up. Other players and fans sampled Juan's tacos and wanted their own. So Juan obliged by loading a five-quart pot with his tacos and selling them on weekends out of the back

of his 1966 Ford Falcon. Soon, demand required a 40-gallon pot, and eventually Juan found himself selling tacos from a concession trailer at two soccer fields.

Taco customers began referring to him as "Don" Juan, a Spanish term of honor. By then, his wife, Prisca, had moved to Tyler to help out at the trailer. Prisca had learned to make traditional Mexican dishes from her mother while growing up, and she dreamed of running her own restaurant. "We worked three days a week at the soccer fields, and I liked it so much that I wanted to work everyday," Prisca recalls. "We had to have a restaurant."

In 1997, the Barrons took a leap of faith and opened Don Juan Mexican Restaurant in a former neighborhood grocery a mile east of downtown Tyler. The small eatery had only 10 menu items and 10 employees, mostly family members. Don Juan's reputation spread by word of mouth through the downtown business district and the nearby medical district, and workers packed

the place during lunch and came back for more at dinnertime. The restaurant, by now managed by the Barrons' daughter Juanita and her husband, Angel Alfaro, added tables and expanded the dining room and kitchen. Eventually the Barrons' five sons and two daughters all moved to Tyler to join the growing family enterprise.

In 2002, the family opened Don Juan on the Square. It offers the same menu as the original Don Juan, a list now boasting 42 items ranging from flavorful tortilla soup and *besitos* (mozzarella-stuffed jalapeños), to *chiles rellenos* and *enmoladas* (mole-topped enchiladas). The two eateries also serve breakfast dishes such as *migas*, *huevos rancheros*, and *chilaquiles*. In 2011, the Barrons opened a seafood restaurant and sports bar called Mariscos DJ's. Its 50-item menu specializes in dishes from Mexico's Pacific coast, ranging from



TYLER'S DON JUAN MEXICAN RESTAURANTS

Don Juan Original is at 1313 E. Erwin St. Call 903/526-2999.

Mariscos DJ's is at 1201 E. Erwin St. Call 903/533-1220.

Don Juan on the Square is at 113 E. Erwin St. Call 903/526-0702.

For menus and hours, go to www.donjuantylor.com.

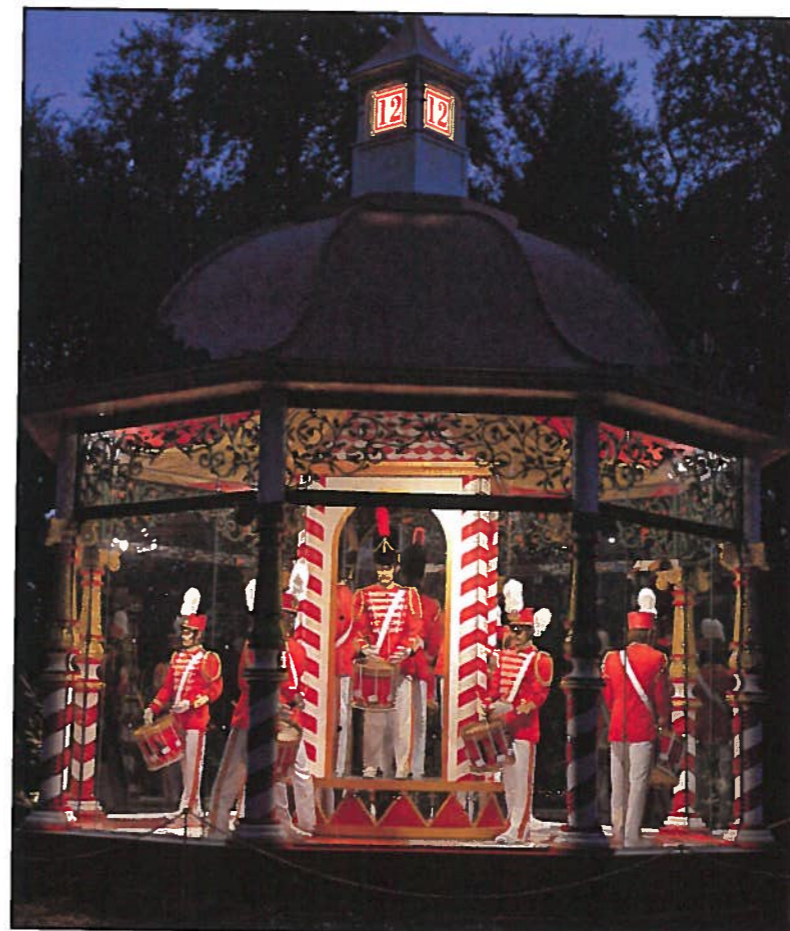
various seafood cocktails and soups to a dish called Enpapelado de Mariscos (a saucy shrimp, octopus, and fish dish that's baked in a foil wrapper). I love dining at Mariscos DJ's on Friday and Sunday nights when a six-piece mariachi band entertains. (The music recalls Don Juan Barron's early years in Mexico as a street singer and guitar maker. He still makes stringed

EAT

instruments for family members.)

The Barrons also run a catering service that has handled private events for as many as 600 people. No wonder the Don Juan family of restaurants was named Tyler's Hispanic Business of the Year in 2014. The three restaurants embody togetherness ... literally. All sit within a mile of each other along East Erwin Street. Together, they boast 100 or so employees, roughly half of them family members, comprising a new generation of Barron restaurateurs in the making.

At 78, Juan monitors the goings-on at all three locations. Prisca, now 76, retired from the kitchen a few years ago to oversee the restaurants' finances. She and Juan also remind all who will listen of the secret ingredient contributing to their culinary success. Says Prisca, "Everything we make here, we make and serve with love." ★



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