



Business evolves one step at time

3/3/11 Green Bay Press Gazette By Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt-

Lisa Escalante-Ortiz is working on the recipe for small-business success. As the owner of Dos Chiles LLC, Escalante-Ortiz has been adding and modifying ingredients as the business evolves. The result has been steady growth.

A graduate of E-Hub and double major in business and marketing, she started the business in 2007 with her husband, Saul. The original focus was on catering and offering a wide variety of traditional and contemporary Mexican cuisine.

"We always had large birthday parties for the kids, as it is the custom for Saul's family, who would travel from Mexico City, to celebrate with us," she said. "We made traditional food, and our family and friends looked forward to it. From this, our friends would ask us to make certain things for them, which then extended to their family and friends, and we decided we should take this a step further."

Escalante-Ortiz started the business by catering events and selling tacos and fresh salsa at the Farmer's Market on Broadway. Other local farmers markets were added along with a number of unique sauces. The markets were also used to promote the catering business. The website, www.doschilescatering.com, was developed.

Escalante-Ortiz said she focuses on meeting individual needs and preferences. Even the sauces can be custom ordered depending on how hot the customer likes it. Since there is a great deal of competition in sauces, she has found a niche in making unique flavors like tinga sauce and chipotle steak sauce.

"We follow old family recipes with traditional ethnic ingredients and can customize the heat for individual customers," she said.

There will also be a line of canned sauces available at a few area retail shops and on the website.

"I think when we have accomplished one thing well, it is time to take the next step and work on that until we have accomplished that step," she said.

Her business plan shows structured ideas and clear goals, and is in the second round of the New North Business Plan Contest. Escalante-Ortiz envisions an expanded line of sauces offered at a regional level and the continuation of cooking classes. A restaurant or deli is in the future plans.

"As of today, our catering line of business has become successful; however, we believe that the line of sauces could reach a larger audience," she said. "We have been building our brand for the last four years. Our strengths are, among others, the knowledge of Mexican cuisine, management and operations background as well. Dos Chiles LLC is a family business, so we rely on our direct family members for support and hands-on help on the operation, from my parents to both of our children."

The children are also responsible for the business name. The two "little chiles" or "dos chiles" are her inspiration.

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