



Closer Look

AN ADVERTISER PROFILE

Celebrate Cinco de Mayo with great Mexican Food at Elsa's

Folks looking for authentic Mexican cuisine can get their fix of hot peppers and tantalizing south-of-the-border spices at Elsa's Tex-Mex Restaurant and Sports Cantina.

This upscale, yet affordable neighborhood restaurant is located in the heart of downtown Lutz at US 41 and Sunset Boulevard.

Tucked into a retail center behind McDonald's, Elsa's caters to business people for lunch, families for dinners and fun-seeking adults socializing with neighbors in the evening.

Elsa's is owned and operated by the Hemmert family, a multigenerational restaurant family that has owned restaurants in Ohio for more than 30 years. Its Lutz store is the family's only Florida location and is managed by Justin Hemmert, son of company founder Bill Hemmert.

Justin took over as general manager of Elsa's Lutz store last summer. Before joining the family business four years ago, he spent 10 years as a CPA.

"Justin's financial expertise and understanding of business operations has been invaluable in his management of our Lutz store," said Bill Hemmert.

"We want local residents to know that Elsa's has a very strong capital base," he continued. "We can weather the normal up-and-downs of the restaurant business and now with Justin's financial background, our Lutz store is stronger than ever."

"We're here to stay," Justin adds.

One of the first changes Justin made after coming to Lutz was to add daily specials to its menu.

"We added specials because everyone loves a deal," said Justin. "We're delighted to offer customers even more value with our discounted pricing, on top of our large portions and made-from-scratch foods."

Elsa's most popular special is called "2 for \$20," which includes two appetizers, two entrées and two desserts every day of the week, all day long.

"The chains — in particular Chili's and Applebee's — do not include a dessert in their 2 for \$20-type offerings," said Justin. "We believe dessert is half the fun when going out to eat, and we're proud that our special comes with dessert at no additional charge!"

Other food specials introduced in the past six months are 50-cent wings on Sundays, \$1 tacos on Mondays and Kids Eat Free on Tuesdays.

Happy Hour at Elsa's fully stocked bar is seven days a week from 3 to 7 p.m.



Elsa's owner Bill Hemmert, left, and his son Justin, general manager of the Lutz restaurant.

During Happy Hour, well drinks are two for one and pint domestic draft beer is just \$1.75. If those prices are not enticing enough, Elsa's also offers \$5 margaritas on Mondays and half-price bottled Mexican beer on Tuesdays.

Elsa's bar is best known for its trademark Bad Juan margarita, by far its most popular mixed drink.

"We spent three years perfecting the Bad Juan," said Bill Hemmert, who describes it as a clear, lime-based drink made from tequila, lime juice and triple sec. Complementing the Bad Juan is the Bad Juanita, a strawberry margarita popular with women and young adults.

"Our Bad Juans are very smooth for a margarita," said Bill. "People like them because they are delicious and also for their strong alcohol content, which is equivalent to the amount of liquor found in a bottle of wine."

Customer demand is so great that the Bad Juan is now available in liter bottles at package liquor stores. Locally, Bad Juan liters can be bought at Liquors 41 (US 41 and Sunset Avenue, next to Ace Hardware), Jan's Wine & Boos (Dale Mabry Highway and W. Lutz Lake Fern Road, next to Publix) and Murphy's Pub (SR 54 in the Village Lakes Shopping Center, next to Ross).

In addition to package stores, you can find Bad Juan margaritas at Tampa Bay Lightning games and other events at the Tampa Bay Times Forum, where the Hemmert family has an exclusive contract for its famous brand.

There's no doubt that plenty of Bad Juans and Bad Juanitas will be sold a few weeks from now when Elsa's celebrates Cinco de Mayo the weekend of May 4 and 5. The restaurant will be honoring its Mexican heritage with discounted Bad Juan margaritas, Mexican tap beer and spicy, home-cooked Tex-Mex dishes.

Elsa's has an expansive menu of Tex-Mex and American appetizers, sandwiches, entrees and desserts. Its most popular menu item is the Super Burrito, a 10-inch flour tortilla filled with refried beans and choice of ground beef, shredded beef, chicken, chorizo or pork carnitas topped with a mild sauce, lettuce, pico de gallo and aged cheddar cheese.

The restaurant is open daily at 11 a.m. and closes at 11 p.m., except Sunday when it closes at 10 p.m.



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