

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

SEPTEMBER 15 - OCTOBER 15

Independence and heritage Scenes from 'Diez y Seis' in Mesilla

**DAVID SALCIDO AND
ALGERNON D'AMMASSA**

Las Cruces Bulletin

Mesilleros and visitors packed the historic Mesilla plaza last Saturday for the annual parade and fiesta marking the Diez y Seis de Septiembre, undaunted by harsh sun and

temperatures north of 90 degrees.

Audiences found every inch of shade on the plaza to take in the festivities, while many braved the aluminum bleachers facing the bandstand and performance area. Umbrellas provided many spectators with shelter

from the sun, but could not prevent the metal from heating up underneath them. Children ran and played throughout the plaza, while some student dancers, waiting in costume on the sidelines, passed the time practicing songs or trying to tie knots in lengths of ribbon with feet clad in traditional dance shoes.

The celebration marks a traditional date of Mexican independence from Spanish rule as well as Mesilla's ancestral heritage. On Sept. 16, 1810, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a Catholic priest, gave a speech

in the city of Dolores, Mexico, urging the people to throw off the shackles of servitude to the Spanish Empire. Leading a ragtag group of untrained men, women and children who were quickly defeated, Father Hidalgo led what would eventually become known as the

start of the battle for Mexican independence – a dispute that wouldn't be finalized until Sept. 27, 1821.

For those of Mexican descent, Diez y Seis de Septiembre is the equivalent of the Fourth of July, conjuring up a deep

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Student dancers perform ballet folklórico in Mesilla's historic plaza on Sept. 14, 2024. (Las Cruces Bulletin photos by Algernon D'Amassa)



Students from the La Academia Dolores Huerta in Mesilla Park perform ballet folklórico in Mesilla's historic plaza on Sept. 14, 2024. (Las Cruces Bulletin photos by Algernon D'Amassa)



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Students from the La Academia Dolores Huerta in Mesilla Park perform ballet folklórico in Mesilla's historic plaza on Sept. 14, 2024. (Las Cruces Bulletin photos by Algernon D'Amassa)

DIEZ Y SEIS

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sense of pride and patriotism.

The village of Mesilla was established in 1848, when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo moved the U.S.-Mexico border south of the village of Doña Ana. Five years later, in 1853, the Gadsden Purchase placed Mesilla once again within the boundaries of the United States. Though the village would henceforth be recognized as an American colony, it held fast to its ancestral Mexican pride, continuing to celebrate Mexican holidays and honoring its binational beginnings. Diez y Seis de Septiembre, being one of the most important of those holidays, continues to be celebrated to this day in the village of Mesilla.

The parade made its way down Avenida de Mesilla from Calle de Mercado to Union Street, followed by an all-day party at the plaza featuring mariachi and ballet folklórico performances, in a program emceed by KRWG host Emily Guerra, with vendors ringing the plaza and the shops open for business as the Basilica of San Albino, one of the oldest churches in the region, stood over the canopies and food trucks.



Top Left: Spectators of the Diez y Seis fiesta in Mesilla brave the sunshine with umbrellas as they sit on aluminum bleachers facing the plaza's bandstand and performance area on Sept. 14, 2024. Bottom Left: A pineapple serves as fruit and vessel for a fresh beverage prepared during the town of Mesilla's Diez y Seis. Right: Emily Guerra, host of "Fiesta!" on KRWG public media, emceed the performances.

La Posta de Mesilla marks 85 years on 'Diez y Seis'

JUAN CORRAL

For the Bulletin

Quotes in Spanish have been translated to English by the reporter.

Just two miles from Las Cruces, La Posta de Mesilla – found at 2410 Calle De San Albino in Mesilla – is known for its rich menu, but their food is only the appetizer. The entrée you find is written in its long history.

La Posta was established in 1939 by Katy Griggs-Camuñez, who owned a small portion of the restaurant at the time. The restaurant was an 800-square-foot chile joint before becoming the historic adobe compound it is today, according to co-owner Tom Hutchinson.

Hutchinson is married to Jer-ean Camuñez Hutchinson, the founder's great niece. The pair acquired La Posta in 1996, keeping the enterprise in the family.

The restaurant has been featured in USA Today as a Top 10 Great Mexican Food Restaurant in 2013 and on the program America's Best Restaurant Roadshow. It also had the honor of passing down its name to the USS New Mexico SSN 779 submarine's galley, La Posta Abajo de Mar – La Posta under the sea.

"I'm sure it was an anomaly to have this little taco joint back in the late 1930s because none of the streets were in place, just dirt roads. The little town lost much of its prominence to El Paso and Las Cruces," Hutchinson said. "In the 1800s it was not known as the La Posta. The Foreign Exchange Hotel owned much of this property. In time we started to own more of the buildings around us that you know as La Posta



The outside patio at La Posta de Mesilla. (Las Cruces Bulletin photos by Juan Corral)

today which you see on the walls."

Hutchinson said that much of the art and signs of heritage within La Posta were the work of Griggs-Camuñez because of her love for travel. He added that the menu was also inspired and based down through generations by Mescalero families.

"I think what distinguishes us from other restaurants is the historical establishments - the ceilings, the adobe walls have been here for over 150 years," Hutchinson said.

La Posta celebrates its anniversary every five years, with each celebration being a little more elaborate than the year before.

"We try to change it up every time, but it usually runs around the last three to four months of the year because our

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NMSU observes Latinx Heritage Month

Bulletin Report

New Mexico State University is hosting a series of events during Hispanic Heritage Month, styled as Latinx Heritage Month and organized by the university's department of Latin American programs in association with the Latin American Student Council.

Latinx is a term coined as a gender-neutral alternative to Latino or Latina in reference to Latin American culture and identity.

In a news release, the department explains, "Latin American Programs has shifted from Hispanic to 'Latinx Heritage Month' in alignment with the program's new name and ongoing efforts to increase inclusion and access for all identities. This choice reflects LAP's commitment to addressing the limitations of traditional terms and to challenging the colonial/Eurocentric frameworks they may represent."

Per a news release, the NMSU events will include virtual and in-person events open to the entire campus and the general public.

"We have organized a series of student-centered events that focus on community building, networking, and collaborating with local organizations," Latin American Programs director Rio López stated in the release. "These events help create a vibrant and inclusive environment, ensuring that educational and cultural opportunities are accessible to everyone."

The opening event was a presentation named "Indigenous Science: From local to global context" by Jessica Hernandez on Tuesday.



New Mexico State's Latin American Programs department has organized a series of events commemorating Latinx Heritage Month on campus and by video conference.
(Courtesy photo from New Mexico State University)

NMSU Latinx Heritage Month Events

◆ **Sabores Salvadoreños: Pupusas by La Pupusona:** Noon until supplies run out, Thursday, Sept. 19, outside Corbett Student Center Union

◆ **Voces: A panel by NMSU students, staff, faculty and community members:** 11 a.m. to noon Wednesday, Sept. 25, at Corbett Center Senate Chambers, followed by coffee and pastries in Garcia Center room 144

◆ **Undocu-Entrepreneurship Webinar by Immigrants Rising: 12 – 1 p.m.,** Wednesday, Oct. 2 via Zoom (To register: bit.ly/3Yimmigrant)

◆ **Salsa Tasting and Tour by the Chile Pepper Institute:** 4 to 5 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 3, at Fabian Garcia Research Center, 113 W. University Ave.

◆ **Jotx y Recuerdos Live Podcast: Documenting Queer Stories from the Border:** Noon to 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 8, at Corbett Center West Ballroom (RSVP to cga-mex@nmsu.edu by Sept. 27 to have lunch during the event)

◆ **LACumbia Night Sonido Cachimbo Live:** 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 16, at Corbett Center Outdoor Stage (event is free and open to the public)



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LA POSTA

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anniversary is actually on the 16th of September, which aligns with the Mexican Independence Day celebration,” Hutchinson noted.

La Posta participates in Mesilla’s annual September 16 parade where the entire staff attends, and the mayor recognizes La Posta’s anniversary. This year, La Posta gave out 300 cupcakes at the celebration. La Posta also hosts a large fiesta every night on September 16.

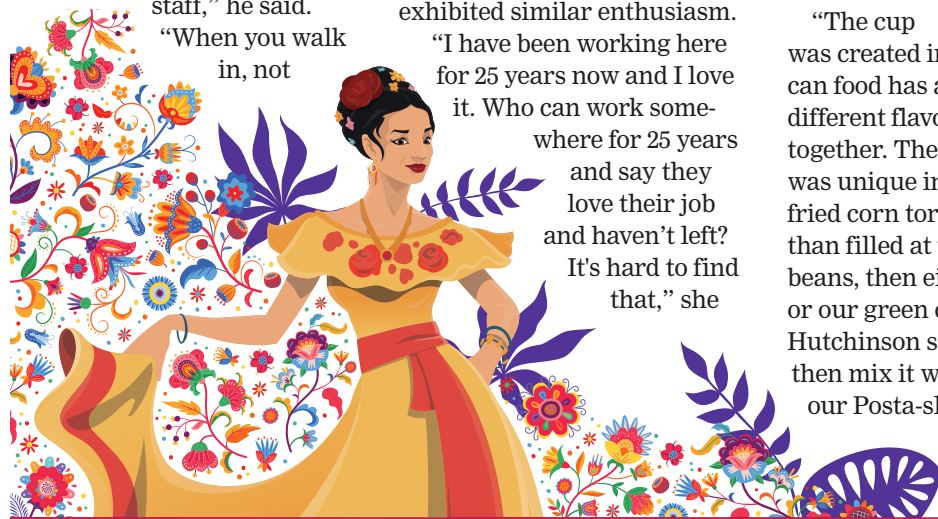
Every five years, La Posta sells tickets to attend the celebration for \$19.39, commemorating the year La Posta opened its restaurant. The kickoff event sold out this year with 300 tickets sold.

To continue the Mexican Heritage celebration, La Posta partnered with the Mesilla Valley Film Society to show 1939 vintage films for five days right inside the restaurant.

Aside from the history, Hutchinson takes pride in his long-lasting staff.

“We have a staff of about 115 right now. When we first acquired La Posta in 1996, we were only at 50. You don’t last 85 years without a wonderful staff,” he said.

“When you walk in, not



La Posta de Mesilla co-owner Tom Hutchinson stands by the kegs that transport their signature tequilas.

only are you going to get a taste of tradition, but a taste of history through our staff as well.” He added that some employees had worked there for decades, participating in some of the history documented on a wall labeled “Legends of La Posta.”

Bertha Sierra and Vicky Emiliano are two examples.

Bertha Sierra has been a line cook for 19 years and she said she wouldn’t change her job for the world.

“I am so happy because, I mean, I haven’t left, right?” she chuckled. “The owners take really good care of me. I work a lot because I ask for it and they allow me to.”

Vicky Emiliano has been a taco cook for 25 years and she exhibited similar enthusiasm.

“I have been working here for 25 years now and I love it. Who can work somewhere for 25 years and say they love their job and haven’t left? It’s hard to find that,” she

explained. “But I love it here, I’m treated right and that’s why I stay.”

The food

Hutchinson describes La Posta’s menu as authentic but with an item for everyone.

“Back in the day the menu only had about eight or nine items, but now it is much larger,” he said. “We continue to follow old recipes to this day. Our salsa has been the same recipe for 85 years now.

“Our red enchiladas are probably our go to dish but our red chile is what were known for. Anything red is usually a requested dish in this restaurant. Our sour cream green enchiladas are a big one.”

Hutchinson said one of his favorite dishes is the original creation of Griggs-Camuñez’ compuesta cup.



“The cup was created in 1939. Most Mexican food has a combination of different flavors that ties it all together. The compuesta cup was unique in that you had this fried corn tortilla cup, which is then filled at the bottom with beans, then either our red carne or our green chile chicken,” Hutchinson said. “She would then mix it with garnish or our Posta-slaw which is then topped with some cheese, which

really makes it a special dish.”

Hutchinson prefers the compuesta cup with red carne himself, but said he also loves their folded tacos.



Vicky Emiliano celebrates her 25th year with La Posta de Mesilla as one of the taco cooks.
(Las Cruces Bulletin photos by Juan Corral)

“Most of our tacos are prepared where the meat is already in the folded tortillas. The meat has been cooked but the tortilla hasn’t been fried yet” he explained. “So, we get a toothpick to hold together the taco, so the meat won’t fall out and when we fry it, what happens is, the flavors from the tortillas and meat tie in good together. Then we’ll open them up and stuff them with whatever the customer wants: lettuce, tomatoes and cheese.”

Another signature dish is the green chile cheeseburger.

“It’s a good half-pound burger, which you can either get the green chile diced or with strips. We can use whatever

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cheese the customer would want from cheddar, to asadero to Monterrey, whatever the customer wants.”

With such a large menu, La Posta aims to win fans across the country and make itself a landmark destination for travelers as well as the community.

“A lot of people bring a lot of family and visitors form out of town. When you want to capture the spirit of the village and the ambiance, you’d come here,” Hutchinson said. “You want to go to a place where you get real Mexican food at a very authentic location, and I truly believe that is us.”



Bertha Sierra, a line cook employed with La Posta de Mesilla for 19 years, displays a fresh chile relleno.
(Las Cruces Bulletin photos by Juan Corral)