Guide to Latino Houston
June 2012
Cover Art: Looking Up by Lizbeth Ortiz

Lizbeth Ortiz was born in Mexico City, raised in Houston, and thrust into adulthood in New York City. These are just a few contributing factors that influence her work. Lizbeth also organizes the Frida Festival and curates shows at East End Studio Gallery. www.lizbethortiz.com
Welcome to the Guide to Latino Houston

To borrow the title of a novel by Houston author Gwendolyn Zepeda, HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEMA. The problem is that even though 44% of the 2.1 million residents of Houston, the largest city in Texas, the fourth largest in the United States, are of Latino or Hispanic origin, we still don’t see or hear much about Latinos in the hotel or airplane tourism guides.

The Latino Public Radio Consortium exists to make Latinos more visible. At our national Summit of Latino Public Radio we highlight the contributions of Latinos to the city in which Latino public radio stations from across the country and Puerto Rico are gathering. Some local Latinos, listed below, pointed us in the right direction and that direction was delicious, colorful and exciting. We invite you to enjoy the rich Latino culture of the city through this very small sampling of Latino accomplishments in Houston.

Florence Hernández-Ramos
LPRC Executive Director

Contributors: Carmen Abrego, Ernesto Aguilar, Carlos Calbillo, Jorge Piña, Pilar Torres, Marina Tristan, Jorge Valdivia
HISTORY OF Latino Houston

Houston, named after then-President of the Republic of Texas, former General Sam Houston, was founded in 1836, the year the Alamo fell, on swampland near the banks of Buffalo Bayou that had been cleared and drained by Mexican prisoners of war. Some parcels of land were given to 100 of the prisoners, who became servants. Throughout most of the 19th century most Mexican immigrants did not go to East Texas cities like Houston. Researcher and author Robert R. Treviño notes that “at various points between 1850 and 1880, six to eighteen Mexicans lived in Houston. Mexicans were almost invisible in Houston during most of the nineteenth century.”

Mexican migration into Houston increased with the expansion of the railroad system and dissatisfaction with Mexican President Porfirio Díaz. In the late 1800s and early 1900s Mexican Americans and immigrants from Mexico began to stay in Houston permanently. Many worked in unskilled labor as the burgeoning port and railroad industry, combined with oil discovery in 1901, induced a surge in the city’s population. 500 people of Mexican origin lived in Houston by the year 1900. This increased to 2,000 by 1910. The Mexican American community grew around two Catholic churches established east of downtown, Immaculate Conception Church on Harrisburg Boulevard in 1911, and Our Lady of Guadalupe on Navigation Street in 1912.

In the early 20th century the population further increased. Mexicans were driven to Houston by the 1910 Mexican Revolution by Mexican American enganchadores (labor agents) who recruited Tejanos and immigrants. As commercial agriculture increased unemployment, many rural Mexican Americans migrated to Houston whose economy was increasing. The labor shortage during World War II encouraged Mexicans to work in Houston. In 1920 Houston had 6,000 residents of Mexican origin and had grown to 15,000 by 1930. This was almost twice as many as first and second generation Eastern and Southern European immigrants in Houston. The Mexican American community took root and the “immigrant era” ended.

Today Houston is the home of the third-largest Hispanic population in the United States and has the largest urban-based Hispanic population in the state of Texas. People of Hispanic or Latino origin make up 44% of Houston’s population; 32% of Houston’s population has Mexican roots and the rest are of Salvadoran, Honduran, Guatemalan, Colombian and Puerto Rican heritage. It is this amalgamation of Latino cultures that makes the city so vibrant and such an exciting place to visit.
Aztec Muse is a magazine of quarterly musings on business, culture and art founded by Tony Díaz. Aztec Muse is available by subscription. www.aztecmuse.com

El Pueblo Newspaper is Houston’s premier bilingual newspaper whose award-winning journalism exposes stories that no other local newspaper does. It distributes in predominately Spanish-speaking areas inside Beltway 8. www.elpueblodehouston.com

Houston Association of Hispanic Media Professionals’ main goal is to raise money for its scholarship fund while promoting and encouraging young, aspiring journalists to follow in the footsteps of people like John Quiñones, ABC’s PrimeTime Live; Giselle Fernández, Access Hollywood; Elizabeth Vargas, ABC’s Good Morning America; and Art Rascón, CBS. www.hahmp.com

KPFT 90.1 FM is part of the Pacifica public radio network. It is a very multicultural format with programs such as Voz de la Tierra, Son Pacifico, Proyecto LatinoAmericano, Noticiero KPFT, Nuestra Palabra and Bailando en Tejas. www.kpft.org

Liana López is the producer and co-host along with Tony Díaz of Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say on 90.1 FM and www.KPFT.org. The weekly broadcast keeps the Latino literary renaissance alive. Lopez is a freelance writer and a multi-platform journalist with experience writing, reporting and editing photography, audio and video in multiple digital formats.

Pen Ya Project is the blog of Roseanne Peña who aspires to highlight 55 Houston area artists through interviews, photos and a strong on-line presence and eventually publish a book of the artists and their art. www.pen-ya.org

The Venture is a collegiate bilingual newspaper that is part of El Gato Media Network aimed at Hispanic students and distributed at college campuses around the Houston area. www.theventureonline.com
Arte Público Press is the nation’s largest and most established publisher of contemporary and recovery literature by U.S. Hispanic authors. Its imprint for children and young adults, Piñata Books, is dedicated to the realistic and authentic portrayal of the themes, languages, characters, and customs of Hispanic culture in the United States. www.arte.uh.edu University of Houston, 452 Cullen Performance Hall, Houston, TX 77204-2004

Arte Público Author of the Month is a radio program hosted by Eric Ladau on Classical 91.7 FM, one of the frequencies of Houston Public Radio. Eric interviews the citizens of the vast literary universe of the largest and oldest publishers of Latino literature in the United States, Arte Público. The program is available on the radio, world-wide through streaming, as a podcast and on mobile devices so there’s little excuse for not hearing it. www.kuhf.org

Sarah Cortez is a poet, author and freelance editor, whose writing is strongly influenced by the fact that she was born and raised in Houston. A member of the police force, Sarah has won prizes for her poetry, praise for her novels and has edited fine story collections including Hit List: The Best of Latino Mystery and Indian Country Noir. www.poetacortez.com

Tony Díaz is the author of the novel The Aztec Love God, the 1998 Nilon Award for Excellence in Minority Fiction. His work is included in major anthologies such as Hecho en Tejas: An Anthology of Texas Mexican Writers and Literary Houston while his essays have appeared in the Los Angeles Times and Houston Chronicle. www.tonydiaz.net

Lionel García succeeds in placing side by side mythic motifs and straight-forward, realistic narrative of contemporary life. García is an ethnic writer, but an ethnic writer to whom everyone is indebted. He has written several novels including Leaving Home, numerous short stories and fictionalized personal notes. lionelgarcia-novelist.com

Las Comadres and Friends National Latino Bookclub is an informal internet-based group that meets monthly in many U.S. cities to build connections and community with other Latinas. Las Comadres has been meeting at Houston Book Club, Barnes & Noble Booksellers, River Oaks Shopping Center, 2030 West Gray, Houston. www.lascomadres.org

Literal Magazine The Voice of Latin America, a bilingual electronic magazine started by Rosemary Salum, focuses on the art, reflections, culture and literature of Latin America. The winner of 2 CELJ Awards and three Lone Star Awards, it offers its pages as a forum...
literary

where the most important Latin American creative expressions converge and as a vehicle for the expression of new voices. www.literalmagazine.com

Nuestra Palabra.org Latino Writers Having Their Say 90.1 FM and www.KPFT.org (Pacifica-Houston Radio) The weekly broadcast highlights authors, playwrights, composers, activists and artists, keeping the Latino literary renaissance alive and thriving in the fourth largest media market in the country. Nuestra Palabra brings the Edward James Olmos Latino Book and Family Festival to Houston.

Alvaro Saar Ríos, poet, playwright, performer in one-man shows, has written works such as One Hot Texican Summer (Or the Summer I Found Out I Was a Mexican), Prison Boat, and Crazy Mexipalooza. He helped found The Royal Mexican Players. www.royalmexicans.com


Evangelina Vigil-Piñón, author of two poetry collections: 30 an’ Seen a Lot and The Computer Is Down reads with musical accompaniment, usually at Doneraki’s Restaurant. She is also the host of Community Close Up: Viva Houston, Sundays on KTRK TV Channel 13. Evangelina is a singer-songwriter with Houston Tranquility Base, a trio that performs Latin and Brazilian jazz. www.houstonculture.org/people/pinon.html

Gwendolyn Zepeda’s books include a short story collection To the Last Man I Slept With and All the Jocks Just Like Him and a novel Houston, We Have A Problema. Zepeda has also written two award-winning bilingual picture books, Growing Up With Tamales and Sunflowers. www.gwendolynzepeda.com
Magda Bowen’s paintings are a celebration of life and heritage; her favorite theme is *Día de los Muertos*. Her bright bizarre colors and dramatic, fantastical images reflect an inspiration from native Mexican art captured in her intensely brilliant yellows, oranges, with greens and chilling blues. www.magdaweb.com

*Sorange Castillo* was born in Venezuela and is a member of the Post-Diversionists art group. She combines Realism, Surrealism, and Symbolism but, most of all, she follows her intuition, her guts and perception of her own healing and growing process. www.onlyonceimages.com/blog/2006/09/sorange-castillo.html

*Iris Contreras* is a strong force in the Houston art community. She is a founding member of the Hispanic Advisory Board for the Houston Museum of Culture and her name always appears in connection with important initiatives like the East End Studio Gallery, the Frida Festival and more. www.linkedin.com/Iriscontreras

*Elvira Díaz-Ocampo* builds elaborate altars for *Día de los Muertos* and creates unique jewelry forging cultural images like *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, Frida Kahlo and *lotería* with bottlecaps, soda pop cans, cigar and match boxes, beads, silver and leather. www.spacetaker.org/profile/elvira-diaz-ocampo

*East End Studio Gallery* in collaboration with the Houston Institute for Culture (www.houstonculture.org) promotes the expression of culture, identity and social issues and works with artists in art shows, workshops, gallery talks, studio spaces, creative networks and educational outreach programs. 708 C Telephone Road, www.eestudiogallery.com.

*Frida Festival* was founded in 2005. It unites the community through creative expression by collaborating with local artists and businesses to celebrate the life, art and passion of Frida Kahlo, one of Latin America’s most highly respected visual artists. www.fridafestival.com

*Stephanie Guajardo* is a self-taught artist who has been drawing off and on since she was a little girl. She loves graphite, watercolors and working with her hands: crafts, drawing, sculpting, jewelry making. http://arteabla.ning.com/profile/StephanieGuajardo
Visual Arts

Laura López Cano’s works capture the beauty, strength, elegance and pride of Latinas and all women of color. The lush oversized canvases are striking and the large open faces are expressive and real. www.lauralopezcano.com

Frank Morales III’s photos of Houston resemble realist paintings through color intensification. Every time he shoots, this urban explorer deals with Houston’s schizophrenic weather patterns, its hostile pedestrian atmosphere, and often unfriendly security guards. http://bayoucityprints.com

Lizbeth Ortiz was born in Mexico City, raised in Houston, and thrust into adulthood in New York City. These are just a few contributing factors that influence her work. Lizbeth also organizes the Frida Festival and curates shows at East End Studio Gallery. www.lizbethortiz.com

David Pilgrim, nicknamed “Lowbrow,” is an assemblage artist making elaborate art from found materials. He frequently collaborates with other artists to construct elaborate Día de los Muertos altars. http://www.facebook.com/lowbrowpilgrim.

Christian Navarette’s artwork is surrealistic with a subtle satire and is a reflection of his daily encounters with everyday life experiences. He is versatile with many mediums including body art. www.twitter.com/artelibre

Montrose Art Society (MAS) founded in 2010 by artists with diverse backgrounds working and living in Houston, to strengthen the artistic careers of each individual member and engage with the community through the arts. Each member promotes art through workshops, teaching, volunteering or curating art exhibitions. www.montroseartsociety.com

Julie Zárate’s art is an amalgam of influences from Michaelangelo to Yepes, covering an array of genres and styles, ultimately fusing them to create something contemporary and iconic, yet timeless and infinitely familiar. www.arteabla.ning.com/profile/juliezaraté
**Apodaca Promotions** is a record label from Monterrey and Mexico City with offices in Houston. Their stable of talent includes Bobby Pulido, Emilio Navaira, and Pedro Fernández. 717 E. Tidwell Rd.; 713-691-6677 www.apodacapromotions.com

**Azteca Fairgrounds** hosted the GoTejano Super Fest, Gary Hobbs concert and Tejano Mania in March of 2012. Keep an eye on their schedule for more interesting shows. 7702 Lyons Avenue.

**Chingo Bling**, born Pedro Herrera III, is a Mexican American rapper. His gimmick is as a Tamale Kingpin, dressed in cowboy boots adorned with the Nike logo. His musical style parallels that of “Weird Al” Yankovic. Although he is fluent in English, he parodies popular rap songs in broken English. www.myspace.com/officialchingobling

**Discoteca Memo** is the place to go without a doubt if you want to load up on all manner of Latin music or want to find CDs from local artists. 703 75th St., Houston, TX 77011 713-928-9291

**El Mariachi Loco** has been around for a long time. They have a huge repertoire and can play for a single hour or all night long. A guaranteed crowd pleaser! Juan Medina, 713-240-2950; www.youtube.com/elmariachloroco

**Espantapájaros** is a psychedelic-rock band with lyrics in Spanish and English founded by Pablo and his brother Mariano in early 1996 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In 2006 Pablo moved to Houston, where he’s put together a new band to play shows like the International Festival and Houston Press Music Awards where the band has been nominated in the Best Latin Contemporary category three years in a row. (832) 431-9821; www.espantapajarosmusic.com

**Nick Gaitán & The Umbrella Man** is a Gulf Coast combo that is a gumbo of styles from the Texas-Louisiana region including rockabilly and conjunto. The band is scheduled at the Conjunto Festival in San Antonio to demonstrate new directions in conjunto. Gaitán is a songwriter who received the Houston Press Music Award for Best Bassist from 2004–2008 and Local Musician of the Year 2010. www.nickgaitan.blogspot.com

**Bob Gallarza** is a Grammy Award-winning producer and guitarist extraordinaire who developed a new Tejano form by applying his 15 years of experience as lead guitarist for 5th Dimension and evolving a signature sound. He has produced or had as guests on his CDs
Tejano greats like Little Joe, Ruben Ramos, David Lee Garza and more. 281-703-1498; On The Edge Productions, P.O.B. 132194, The Woodlands, Texas 77393; www.bobgallarza.com

**Gente de Teatro** es la única organización teatral en Houston que ha presentado sin interrupción obras de teatro en español desde 1995, en su mayoría en la Universidad de Rice. Sus miembros trabajan arduamente para enriquecer la calidad de vida de la comunidad de Houston a través de la educación, la cultura y el entretenimiento. www.gentedeteatro.org

**La Sien** is a Latin funk-rock band from Houston. www.lasien.com

**Los Guerreros de La Música** play Latin rock and world beat with live brass and more. Although the band has weathered personnel changes and a hiatus while one of the founders went to Iran, their music has consistently been great. thelgmwebsite.com

**Los Pistoleros de Tejas** is the essence of Gulf Coast music with influences of traditional Tex-Mex conjunto, Norteño, cumbia, rock, Cajun, blues, and soul with English and Spanish lyrics. Boundaries are non-existent for Roberto Rodríguez on accordion and the rest of the Pistoleros who are always trying to find the next party whether it be in a club, galas, bars or the back yard of your 85-year-old abuelito ¡hechando un grito! myspace.com/pistolerosdetx

**Los Skarnales** is fast approaching 16 years on the Texas music scene. The band rose out of the ashes of local punk rock band Desorden with help from original members Felipe Galván and José Rodríguez. Always true to roots music in all forms, Skarnales performs a mixture of ska, reggae, rockabilly, swing, mambo, cumbia, and danzones, all with a punk attitude. Booking@lskarnales.com; www.facebook.com/losskarnales

**Mariachi Los Gallitos** is a classically trained Mexican folkloric group that has earned wide popularity and acclaim through their unique combination of technical and theatrical abilities. Los Gallitos has performed professionally for the past thirty-four years locally and nationally including for the Queen of England. marilu@losgallitos.com; 713-640-1043; www.losgallitos.com
Performing Arts

José Pepe Martínez is Music Director of the famous Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán of Mexico, who wrote the first mariachi opera: Cruzar la Cara de la Luna. As a joint project of Talento Bilingüe Houston and the Houston Grand Opera, this stunning musical presentation had its world premiere in 2010. www.mariachimusic.com

Multicultural Education Counseling through the Arts

MECA Houston provides alternative arts activities for the city’s youth and families. Housed in the historic Dow School building built in 1912 in the Old Sixth Ward, MECA programs are nationally recognized as a Point of Light by President George H. W. Bush. In June-July 2012 the Children’s Prison Art Project holds a public exhibit. 1900 Kane Street, Houston; 713-802-9370; www.meca-houston.org

Rebel Crew Latin is an electronic/hip-hop collaborative founded by Joe B. the jack of all trades in the global underground. DJ, poet, producer and label owner Joe B. brings a unique blend of beats and breaks with a twist of Latin electro. This “future funk b-boy’s” roots lay in all aspects of breaks since the ‘80s. www.reverbnation.com/rebelcrew

Sister, Sister y Los Misters is a music group of eight featuring singer/songwriter Mimi Durango, Patricia Lynn Hernández, Nancy Thibadeaux and a male rhythm section. Their roots are American but their soul is Latino. Their music is a mixed bag with jazzy influences and the sultry soul of their Latino heritage; it’s “Latin-Soul-With-A-Twist.” 713-514-0212; www.myspace.com/sistersisterylosmisters

Talento Bilingüe de Houston (TBH) was founded in 1977 as a small troupe. This non-profit organization has now evolved into a Latino Cultural Arts Center that offers a year-round series of performing arts and exhibits, alongside educational programming such as ongoing multidisciplinary workshops, a summer arts camp for children, and school touring productions. Kiss of the Spiderwoman is on the main stage while Lucha Libre is the topic of the art exhibit in June 2012. 333 South Jensen Drive; 713-222-1213; www.talentobilingue.org
Yelba’s Variety Band has been nominated Best Female Vocalist 2011 and Best Latin Band 2010 and 2011 by the Houston Press Music Awards. Their repertoire is unmatched and wonderfully varied, including dance music, Top 40, rock, R&B, jazz, country and, of course, Latin, everything from boleros to merengue. www.yelba.net

Norma Zenteno, multi-award winning Latin singer songwriter, is one of the city’s most talented and well-liked performers who is regularly seen at Sambuca’s. Norma’s husky vocals lend themselves to slow, smoky ballads and bugalooning merengues on self-released CDs like “Endúlzame” and “Best of the Zentenos.” www.facebook.com/normazenteno

Baldemar Rodríguez of Adelante Productions is producing In Search of the American Dream (El Nacional). Learn about the Martínez and their heralding journey to deal with the issues that threaten to tear their family apart. El Nacional will grip you and your family. www.elnacionalmovie.com
AVANCE works with poor and marginalized communities to promote better parenting, school readiness, literacy, health and personal development to help participants move from historic cycles of poverty and illiteracy to a future of opportunity and economic prosperity. www.avancehouston.org

Casa Cuba Houston preserves Cuban culture, roots, customs and traditions for future generations with plans of one day having their own Casa Cuba with social, educational and charitable programs. www.casacuba.org

Colectivo Flatender was founded in 2002 to build a stronger popular movement for social, economic and racial justice in the South and Southwest by providing grassroots immigrant rights groups and organizers with tools, political analysis, training opportunities and spaces for dialogue. www.colectivoflatlander.org

El Centro de Corazón is at the heart of making the predominantly Latino East End a healthy community, through quality care that reaches the entire family, treating the whole person through prenatal, adult and pediatric primary care, dental, and mental health services at its five clinics. www.elcentrodecorazon.org

Familias Inmigrantes y Estudiantes en la Lucha (FIEL) is a local organization working on immigration issues, on keeping families together, preserving Spanish and advancing the education of the children of immigrants. www.fielhouston.org

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Houston (HHCC) is the leading regional advocate for the economic and civic interests of the Hispanic business community. 1801 Main St. Suite 1075, Houston, 713-644-7070 www.houstonhispanicchamber.org

Houston Association of Hispanic Media Professionals provides networking and professional development opportunities for working and aspiring media careers. The organization produces “On The Move,” a television show that features individuals and groups who are making their mark in our community, helping Houstonians in need, or moving Houston culturally. www.hahmp.org
The **Houston Hispanic Forum** was founded as the Houston Hispanic Round Table in 1984 by local Hispanic leaders who met to address social issues impacting the Hispanic community and the community at-large. The mission of the organization is to improve Hispanic achievement through education. [www.hispanic-forum.org](http://www.hispanic-forum.org)

**Houston Historical Tours’ Hispanic Tours** take you to the oldest church in Houston that was built in 1901 but only began serving Hispanics after World War II, and to several other churches. Tours include cemeteries, a former Hispanic shopping mall, Latin American owned and operated businesses, inspirational murals, traditional Hispanic high schools and middle schools, and community centers. 713-392-0867; [www.houstonhistoricaltours.com](http://www.houstonhistoricaltours.com/hispanic.html)

**Houston Latino Summit** creates a network for local Latino elected and appointed officials, business and professional organizations, civil rights, immigration and education groups, non profits, and community activists to identify common projects and goals. [www.houstonlatinosummit.com](http://www.houstonlatinosummit.com)

**Instituto de Cultura Hispánica** since 1965 has celebrated the Hispanic culture and language inherited from Spain and Latin American. It hosts an annual Folkloric Festival, the José Martí Award literary contest and cultural fundraisers for their scholarship fund. 3315 Sul Ross Houston, TX 77098 [www.ihch.org/blog/tag/instituto-de-cultura-hispana-de-houston/](http://www.ihch.org/blog/tag/instituto-de-cultura-hispana-de-houston/)

**Latino Learning Center of Houston** is a multi-service organization that offers job training, ESL and Spanish classes, elder housing and daycare as well as working with youth and families. [www.latinolearningcenter.org](http://www.latinolearningcenter.org)

**Mayor’s Hispanic Advisory Council** and [www.houstonhispanicheritage.com](http://www.houstonhispanicheritage.com) are dedicated to promoting Hispanic Houston businesses, organizations, educational programs, politics and community engagements.

**Mexican American Bar Association** MABA supports diversity in the legal community, awards scholarships to law students and mentors students interested in pursuing a higher education in the legal profession or government. MABA also provides low-cost and pro bono legal assistance to the community. [www.mabaattorneys.com](http://www.mabaattorneys.com)
Community Organizations

Migrant Health Promotion-Houston uses the Promotor(a) model to provide culturally-appropriate health education and outreach and sustainable community development to farmworker, migrant, and border or isolated communities throughout the nation. www.migranthealth.org

National Society for Hispanic Professionals provides a place for professionals to meet, greet, and assist each other and the community. http://network.nshp.org/group/houstonchapter

National Hispanic Professional Organization joined forces with Houston Community College (HCC) Southeast Campus to create the NHPO Leadership Institute to train and prepare individuals to become better leaders. New NHPO leadership training programs are emerging across the country and growing rapidly. www.nhpo.us/houston/

Progresista Voter Union is an independent group geared toward organizing and directing the Latino vote through endorsements, independent analysis and organized boycotts of certain races where PUV will direct them whom to vote for. www.facebook.com/progresista-voter-union

Rice University Office of Multicultural Community Relations was established in 1998 to enhance relationships between Rice and the minority communities by extending Rice’s enrichment opportunities through coordination with local multicultural groups, students, alumni, and neighborhood and city associations. www.staff.rice.edu/staff/Home5.asp

Sociedad de Puertorriqueños en Houston produces numerous cultural events, provides scholarships and engages in community service work. Incorporated in 1977 as Las Damas de Puerto Rico, it changed its name and is now celebrating its tenth anniversary. P.O. BOX 441733 Houston, TX 77244-1733, 281-731-3572, www.sociedadprenhouston.org
Restaurants

100% Taquito is a restaurant built to resemble a taco wagon parked on a street in Mexico City. The menu goes beyond tortas, sopes and molletes to offer chicarrón picado, oranges with chile and dulce de mango. 3245 Southwest Freeway; 713-665-2900; www.100taquito.com

Bohemeos Art Coffehouse In the historic East End at Tlaquepaque Market, local musicians Lupe and Sid Olivares (a husband and wife team, Sid is the wife) have opened a coffee house/restaurant that’s gaining a reputation as a live music venue and local art gallery. 713-923-4277; www.bohemeos.com

Café Piquet’s gorgeous patio rivals the wonderful Cuban fare that includes moros, tostones, pernil and ropa vieja. Can’t decide? Try the Carnaval Cubano or Rumba variety plate. And keep an eye out for their special events. 5757 Bissonnet Street; 713-664-1031; www.cafepiquet.net

Chapultepec Lupita is a 24-hour restaurant whose prices won’t break your budget. People rave about the great salsa, tortas and enchiladas. 813 Richmond Avenue; 713-522-2365;

Doneraki With the slogan “Houston’s Authentic Mexican Restaurant” the food better be good. People swear it is. Doneraki’s menu of parrilladas, tacos al trompeta and fajitadillas is accompanied by mariachis every day of the week. 7705 Westheimer Road, Westhill Village Center; 713-975-9815; www.doneraki.com

El Bolillo Bakery panadería is one-stop shopping for Mexican breads (bolillo) and pastries (tres leches cake) in a truly festive atmosphere with lots of neat artwork. The original is in The Heights but two more locations are coming. 2517 Airline Drive; 713-861-8885; www.elbolillo.com

El Gran Malo has creative cool cucumber mint margaritas and a variety of cocktails to complement the empanadas of plantain, crab, poblanos and cotija cheese as well as diablos a caballo. 2307 Ella Boulevard; 832-767-3405; www.elgranmalocom

El Jardín offers traditional items and combo nachos with both chicken and beef nachos and queso mexicano asado con aguacate, thin tabs of white cheese browned on a griddle
and served with sliced avocado and strips of chiles toreados, tucked in tortillas and drizzled with Italian salad dressing. 7849 Harrisburg; 713-921-3633; www.eljardinhouston.com

**Fernando’s Steak House** keeps the menu simple and the steaks juicy with the philosophy that serving a select few dishes with skill and passion is better. But the Latin influences are there with outstanding empanadas, grilled chicken breast with chipotle cream sauce, and camarones. 14135 Southwest Fwy; 281-494-9087; www.fernandosrestaurants.com

**Hugo’s** is housed in a beautiful old building and serves one of the city’s most expansive Sunday buffets and a daily comida corrida. Equally scrumptious is dinner with a salad of avocado, mango, blue cheese and pumpkin seeds and taquitos of wood-grilled snapper. 1600 Westheimer Blvd; 713-524-7744; www.hugosrestaurant.net

**Joe Soto’s Taquería Laredo** where eating is a wondrous experience. When you get in line to order your tacos, you find yourself standing in front of the griddle where the hand-formed flour tortillas are being prepared. The ladies at the griddle turn out a couple of dozen tortillas every few minutes. It’s those hot, fluffy, just-off-the-griddle tortillas that make all the tacos here so good. 113 Cavalcade and 311 Patton St.

**Julia’s Bistro** has innovative takes on traditional Latino dishes – empanadas de queso with brie and raspberry-chipotle coulis, yuca fritters, grilled nopales, agave glazed pork belly. Can’t decide? Try the prix fixe special menus. 3722 Main; 713-807-0090; www.juliasbistro.com

**La Fogata** is the best Colombian food! The empanadas, the chorizos and the chicharrón are very good. The bandeja paisa and the grilled fish and all the soups are quite delicious. Call them ahead of time for their schedule. 11630 S Wilcrest Dr.; 281-575-8736

**Los Arcos Mexican Restaurant** serves four varieties of nachos, fried mushrooms accompanied by chile con queso, quesadillas and fajitas with vegetables, and extensive parrilladas. Wash it all down with one of their jumbo margaritas. 9211 West Road #101; 832-634-2325
Maggie Rita’s Tex-Mex Bar & Grill Comedian Carlos Mencia has created a restaurant chain that serves fabulous food around the legend of a woman born in Tequila, Mexico on Cinco de Mayo fathered by the wife of the Irish Ambassador to Mexico and her lover, General Pancho Villa. 600 Travis St # B1 Houston, TX 77002; (713) 229-8596; www.maggieritas.com

Mamacita’s menu offers traditional Mexican fare but also things like a spinach burrito, stuffed avocado and dishes from Mexico’s Yucatán region like pibil, which gives diners a chance to sample something new. 15355 North Freeway; 281-876-3663; www.mamacitasmexicanrestaurant.com

Martin’s Café is a neighborhood landmark. As one reviewer put it, “The area is straight up hood, but these are the BEST breakfast tacos in Houston. Everything is...amazing from the carne guisada, to the chorizo con huevo, to the papa con huevo, to the fresh warm tortillas, and even the joya (think he meant jugo) de manzana.” This place is incredible. 1302 Lorraine St.; 713-226-7478

Mérida Mexican Restaurant serves specialties from the Yucatán such as huevos a la montulena, a barbacoa breakfast, nachos and queso flameado with shrimp, and cochinito pibil in all forms – as a dinner plate, as tacos, as a torta. The service is so over the top, if they’re not busy and you can’t get a taxi, they offer to drive you back to your hotel. 2509 Navigation Boulevard; 713-227-0260; www.merida-restaurant.com

Ninfa’s is a name licensed across the country but this is the original. This is where Mama Ninfa first stuffed chargrilled steak into a tortilla and started the fajita craze. One of the most unusual menu items is their chicarrón de queso with meat, cilantro and onions. 2470 Navigation Boulevard; 713-228-1175; www.ninfas.com

Ruchi’s Taquería El Rincón de México opened in 1985 with a small location that seated just 35 people. Now Ruchi’s has nine locations, all open 24 hours and all serving up a taste of Mexico that has people singing its praises. www.ruchistaqueria.com

Sombreros Coffee Shop & More is owned by Yolanda Black Navarro and Lolita Guerrero and offers coffee and coffee drinks, sandwiches, pastries, salads and soups. But the description can’t convey the ambience, the staff’s friendliness, the spirit of community and sense of renewal inspired by the sunny color, poster décor, the empanadas, free trade coffee and delicious fare. 2910 Navigation Boulevard; 832-767-3403
Spanish Flower serves up everything from traditional mole to mouth-watering fajitas, menudo and caldo de res to breakfast burritos and sopapillas—a taste of Mexico 24 hours a day. Whether for lunch or a late-night snack, meals are consistently superb. 4701 North Main; 713-869-1706; www.spanish-flowers.com

Tacos a Go Go is an arty, funky place in midtown Houston, located by the Continental Club on the Metro Rail at the Ensemble/HCC stop, minutes from Downtown. People rave about the food, the old Mexican movie posters and the Jarritos bottles chandeliers. Under the giant Carmen Miranda! 3704 Main; 713-807-8226; www.tacosagogo.com

La Tapatía holds the world record for the biggest fajita ever made, but they’re also available in regular size. Start your meal with jalapeños wrapped in bacon, a poblana quesadilla or shrimp cakes. 6413 Hillcroft Street; 713-995-9191; www.latapatiamexcafe.com

Taquería Jesús María’s mojarra frita (some people say it’s tilapia) was on Robb Walsh’s 100 Favorite Houston Dishes and was a Critic’s Top Pick by the Houston Press. 1106 Spencer Highway; 713-943-8822; www.taquerialesusmaria.com

Teotihuacán Mexican Restaurant or “Teo” Mexican Café uses authentic Mexican recipes and has been recognized as a great place to enjoy homemade tortillas, tender flavorful fajitas, a very unique “Caliente Shrimp” or an original Teotihuacán parrillada. If you want to enjoy a warm home-style meal, visit any of three locations. 4624 Irvington; 713-695-8757; www.teomexicancafe.com

Tex Chick is now famous for its home-cooked Puerto Rican dishes but in the 1950s it was a hamburger place. Thank goodness Teo and Carmen bought the place and expanded the menu to include Puerto Rican food which then logically gained dominance. 712 1/2 Fairview St.; 713-528-4708; www.puertorricanrestaurant.com
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Products & Businesses

**Casa Ramírez Folk Art Gallery** If your interests lie in anything having to do with Día de los Muertos, Frida Kahlo, luchadores, lotería, and general Mexican arte awesomeness, check this place out. Best of all, Mr. Ramírez, the owner, is a great guy, ready with a story and a wealth of information. 241 W 19th, 713-880-2420

**Gabbanelli Accordions** started as a mom-and-pop operation fifty years ago and now manufactures the instruments of choice of numerous Tejano, conjunto and norteño artists. Gabbanelli accordions are hand-made and world-renowned for their beauty, quality and legendary status. 4991 West Bellfort Ave; 713-728-9898; www.gabbanelliaccordions.com

**Las Manos Mágicas** has been in Houston since 1971 with one of the finest collections of work by Mexican artists. The shop also sells ethnic art and textiles from Guatemala, Peru, Mexico, Bolivia, and the San Blas Islands. 4819 Blossom; 713-802-2530; www.lasmanosmagicas.com

**López Negrete Communications** was founded in 1985. Alex López Negrete’s passion and vision for Hispanic marketing has steered the company to become the country’s second largest independently owned Hispanic firm in the country. 3336 Richmond Avenue, Suite 200; 713-877-8777; www.lopeznegrete.com

**Más Branding** was founded by Pilar Torres to help organizations reach out to the Hispanic market. The Hispanic community is a growing population and by tapping into this market, businesses can gain a lot of exposure. Más Branding believes that marketing efforts should not “get lost in translation.” 281-748-0804

**My Flaming Heart** A magic-mushroom cowboy shirt? Frida and her monkey-patterned dress? Boots and bling to go with them? And wouldn’t baby look good in a onesie with a muertos calavera? Where? Right here, peoples. Right here at My Flaming Heart. 3622-C Main Street; 713-533-1147; www.myflamingheart.com

**Rosario’s Mistic Yerbería** has been in business for over 35 years and is the largest of many in Houston. It offers religious artifacts, bright crystals, aromatic incense, items for luck in love, lemon grass to help cure ulcers, passionflower for insomniacs and even a concoction to make men virile. 5306 Canal St.

**Taxis Fiesta** is a 24-hour bilingual taxi service that offers clean mini-vans and cars and four people can ride for the price of one. 713-225-2666; www.taxisfiesta.com
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