

Report on the Latino Contributions to the Wheaton Arts and Entertainment District

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Introduction

This study is a follow-up to a survey of folk and traditional arts activities in and around downtown Wheaton, Maryland. The Wheaton Arts and Entertainment District (A & E) was designated by the State of Maryland in 2006, and surveyed by folklorist Jason Morris in 2016. In his report, “Survey of the Wheaton (MD) Arts and Entertainment District,” he recommended the following: 1) conduct a more detailed survey of foodways in the A & E District, 2) explore how foodways are linked to and link the people who live in the study area, and 3) that future studies should proceed in a “slow and iterative” way. The following report takes into account these recommendations and focuses on foodways and music within the Spanish-speaking community in the Wheaton A & E District.

The information for this study was gathered through frequent visits to the Wheaton A & E District beginning in the spring of 2018, online social media (e.g. Facebook and YouTube) and newspaper articles and advertisements. The data from these sources show that the District has a vibrant, although somewhat ethnically separated, food, music and entertainment scene during both the daytime and evenings. The many Latino¹ restaurants and clubs cater to a mostly Latin American and fairly recent migrant community though it appears that this has started to change through a revitalization process. Much of the food and music comes from Central America but Peru, Colombia, Bolivia and other Latin American countries are also represented. Restaurant menus are often written in Spanish with English translations and reflect a range of cuisines from Latin America. Menu choices are also highlighted by images on the physical menus, affixed to walls and on television screens. Restaurants boast that dishes are prepared fresh using authentic

¹ I use Latino and Hispanic interchangeably to refer to all the diverse people whose ancestry and cultural ties are linked to Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula. Other terms used for this community include Latin@, Latinx and LatinX. The terms Latino and Hispanic (Latin@, Latinx, LatinX) reflect the shared language, religions, values, connections to Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula, immigrant narratives, and the experience of navigating the US’s racial and ethnic structures. Although outdated in some circles, I continue to use the term Latino as it is the term most often used by the folks who I was speaking with in the Wheaton community’s Spanish-speaking sector. While conducting fieldwork in Wheaton, I only heard the term Latinx once; it was mentioned by a non-Latino artist in a conversation about ethnic labels.

ingredients and methods of preparation. For example, restaurants often make corn tortillas, pupusas and other staple foods by hand in their kitchens. These *authentic* dishes provide a contrast to those made commercially.

The A & E District also has a vibrant and diverse live music scene dominated by mostly Latin American artists and attended by mostly Central American patrons. Restaurants and clubs bring both local and international musicians and bands to play, mostly on weekends. In addition to the variety of foods and live music, restaurants and clubs also offer televised sports, mostly *fútbol* (soccer), Spanish-language programs, karaoke and pool.

The arts, entertainment and foodways of the Wheaton A & E District underscore the positive ways in which a mostly migrant community comes together to share in particular locations and times. It also highlights the overall sense of belonging of the people who work and live there. The arts, including foodways and music, link people together but also provide a cultural and personal bridge to those somewhat or not at all a part of the community. The restaurants, businesses and entertainment places in Wheaton are extremely important for the mostly Latino community but also for the County. The arts, foodways and entertainment of the District, although mainly generated for the Latino community, is also changing to include non-Latino patrons. Wheaton is unique, and it is this unique quality that contributes to a better and culturally livelier County for everyone.

While the District merits a longer study, the snapshot provided by this report will hopefully contribute to a broader understanding of the community. The paper is organized into sections including the following: Background, Survey Area Description, Restaurants, Markets and Bakeries, Other arts and Entertainment, Westfield Mall, Murals and Conclusion.

Background

The US Census² estimates that in the Wheaton C DP³, where the Arts and Entertainment District is located, 45.6% of the people are foreign-born and 41.2% of the population is Latino. (For comparison, the population of the Latino population in the broader Washington, DC, metropolitan area is just over 15%). The census data on the size of the Hispanic community is a low estimate because the people who are out of status are not fully represented. As an anthropologist, college professor, Spanish-speaker and longtime resident of Montgomery County, I am particularly interested in this community and studying the area.

Immigrants and migrants often construct places that provide a sense of belonging in dynamic and fluid ways (e.g. sporting events, religious processions and street festivals) rather than through static and permanently fixed places (e.g. restaurants, markets and store-front businesses) within their receiving communities. This is particularly the case with the Latino community in the

² <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/wheatoncdpmaryland/PST045217>

³ CDP – Census Designated Place

broader DC metropolitan area where the Latino residential pattern is relatively dispersed. It is often difficult for individuals and families in the region to construct a cultural sense of belonging tied to a specific neighborhood.⁴ Wheaton, however, is a notable exception to this.⁵ As previously noted, the Latino community comprises more than 40% of Wheaton's population.

The demographic shift from a mostly middle-class white neighborhood to a Latino one took place during the early 2000s. In 2011, a Washington Post article underscored the change with an article in the local section titled, "Wheaton neighborhood is the face of Montgomery's shift to majority minority."⁶ Today, in the Wheaton A & E District there are more than forty Latino restaurants and other businesses.

Wheaton has long been known for its diversity of non-chain restaurants and as a destination for dining for decades (for example see Zibbart 1998⁷). An integral part of the District's unique quality is the Latino foodways. Foodways is defined as the wide range of activities and ways of thinking about food. The concept of foodways incorporates more than the idea "you are what you eat."⁸ Foodways include much more than what is eaten. They include the customs, beliefs, and habits surrounding food⁹. In turn, these customs, beliefs and habits reflect history, identity, social class, and political and economic systems. The shared customs, beliefs and habits related to food can bring people together. Sharing these foodways with others can also unite people. Foodways also serve as powerful connections to memories of home and life experiences and thus become particularly important in immigrant communities. In addition to restaurants, Wheaton's foodway places include bakeries and markets. There are also informal foodways that are less visible and involve preparation in homes and churches. For example, many of the women I spoke with who work in restaurants in Wheaton make homemade tamales, pupusas and tortillas for their families and for church gatherings.

Like foodways, music and other cultural expressions, including various types of entertainment, bring people together and provide an important cultural tie to the broader non-Latino community. Many of the restaurants in the Wheaton area also serve as venues for music and other forms of entertainment which are discussed below.

⁴ (Price and Whitworth 2004) (Singer, Latin American Immigrants in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area 2007) (Singer, Friedmand, et al. 2001).

⁵ Other exceptions include Langley Park and Gaithersburg in Maryland, and Chirilagua in Virginia (Pan 1999).

⁶ Schulte, Brigid. 2011. "Wheaton neighborhood is the face of Montgomery's shift to majority minority." *Washington Post*. February 14, 2011. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/wheaton-neighborhood-is-the-face-of-montgomerys-shift-to-majority-minority/2011/02/14/ABEEAqQ_story.html?utm_term=.ff13f6e20a1f

⁷ Zibart, E. (1998, Sep 11). Freshman orientation: Eating. *The Washington Post* Retrieved from <https://montgomerycollege.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.montgomerycollege.idm.oclc.org/docview/408390228?accountid=39773>

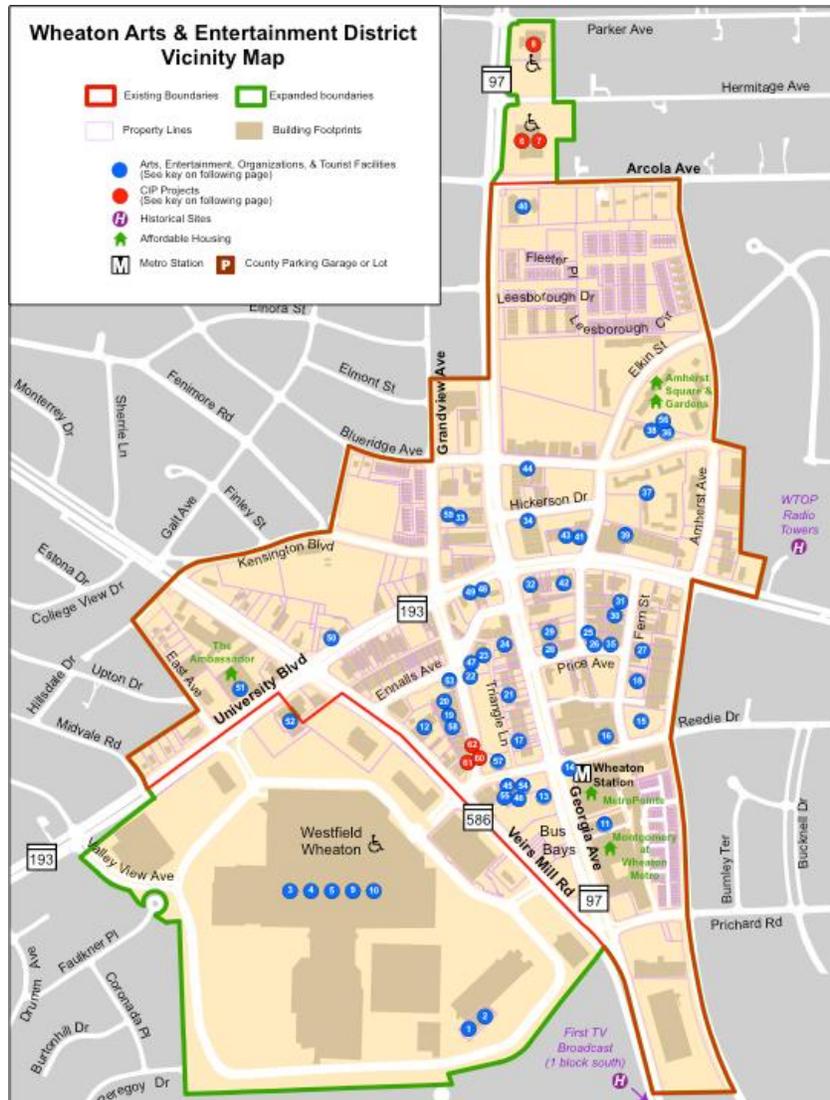
⁸ Long, Lucy. 2009. "Introduction." *Journal of American Folklore* 122(483):30-10.

⁹ Yoder, Don. 1972. Folk Cookery. In *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed. Richard M. Dorson, pp. 325-50. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

While the Latino businesses and their patrons are the most prevalent in the study area, many other ethnic restaurants and businesses contribute to the attraction of Wheaton. Wheaton is unique among the town centers of the County because it has a wide array of independently owned businesses including restaurants. Wheaton also has, among others, Irish, Ethiopian, Caribbean, and Asian restaurants and businesses.

Description of Surveyed Area

Given the number of Latinos living in Wheaton and the surrounding area, predictably there is a high concentration of Spanish-speaking businesses with thriving music scenes, food traditions and entertainment spaces. Often music, foodways and entertainment occur in the same places. The center of the Wheaton A & E District falls within and along the periphery of the Georgia Avenue, University Boulevard and Viers Mill Road triangle. It also includes the Westfield Wheaton Shopping Mall and street blocks close to the triangle formed by the three main streets. While some businesses are located in strip malls, others occupy individual buildings with more unique facades. The following map shows the boundaries of the District but is not up-to-date for business locations.



Survey

The following descriptions come from frequent visits to the Wheaton A & E District and survey of social media and other online sources about the area's foodways and arts. The Internet data are important because, although there is a concentration of Latino residents in Wheaton who form a community based on physical proximity, the surrounding DC metropolitan area's Latinos are quite dispersed. For the dispersed community, connecting virtually, mostly through social media, provides an important means for creating community and connecting people throughout the region. Also, it is notable that many Latinos from throughout the metropolitan area travel to Wheaton to connect with one another and frequent the Latin American restaurants, bakeries, markets, and businesses. The many Spanish language music events held in Wheaton are advertised through social media, mostly on Facebook.

Restaurants

Food and the manner in which it is prepared, shared and conceptualized brings people together, separates them as distinct, and incites powerful memories linked to family and sense of belonging. The restaurants and markets in downtown Wheaton reflect historical and contemporary patterns of constructing and maintaining community locally and globally. Many of the businesses in the Wheaton area serve food, sell food and host a variety of types of entertainment, including live music, DJs, karaoke and television events and programming.

The District has many Latino restaurants that serve traditional foods and provide venues for a variety of musicians and bands. These restaurants are relatively small and independently owned. The atmosphere in these restaurants is welcoming and reflect the cultures associated with the food and drink they serve. They are all a welcomed contrast to the many chain restaurants found throughout the County and nearby mall.

1. Intipunqueño Restaurant

2504 Ennalls Ave., Wheaton, MD 20902

This is a restaurant and sport bar with pool tables. They serve Tex-Mex and Salvadoran food. Intipunqueño is also a local and international music venue. Intipunqueño refers to a person from the Pacific coastal city of Intipucá, El Salvador, from where many of the Salvadorans in DC emigrated. Recently the Mayor of DC, Muriel Bowser, visited Intipucá to celebrate fifty-years of ties between the two cities.¹⁰

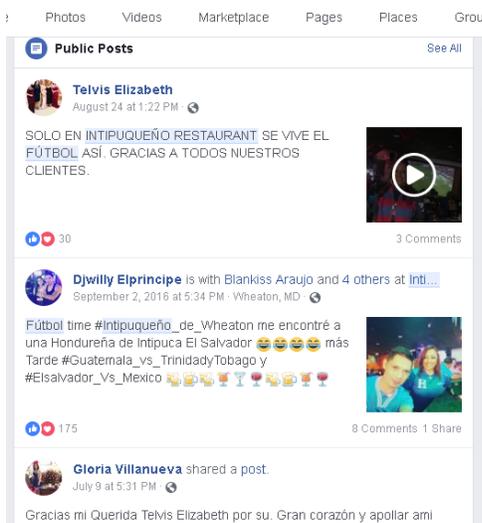
Intipunqueño serves Tex-Mex and Salvadoran food. Their balleadas (Honduran, tortillas folded over a mixture of beans and cheese), tortillas and pupusas are made by hand. The

¹⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-elsalvador-immigration/mayor-of-washington-d-c-joins-el-salvador-town-to-celebrate-migration-milestone-idUSKBN1L00G1>

restaurant hires a lady to come in three times a week to make them fresh. When I visited this restaurant, one of the customers who was Mexican said they have good Central American food. He added that if I wanted Mexican food that I should go to Riverdale, Maryland.

Intipaqueño has a lively music scene with local and international bands and DJs. Some examples of the bands include: Kazzabe from Honduras, Orquesta los Divos and Los Intipaqueños del Norte from El Salvador.

Many patrons go to Intipaqueño to watch soccer games. Here are a couple of Facebook posts that demonstrate the importance of soccer and watching it together for the community.



I
Intipaqueño Restaurant FACEBOOK

SOLO EN INTIPUQUEÑO RESTAURANT SE VIVE EL FUTBOL ASI. GRACIAS A TODOS NUERSTROS CLIENTES

English Translation
Only at Intipaqueño Restaurant can you experience soccer like this. Thanks to all our patrons

Note that the second post highlights soccer time with smiling emojis, various nationalities and celebratory drinks.

In the blue box below a video on YouTube shows the celebration of a Barça game.

[Aracely Cruz](#)

587 views 3 years ago El Gane De El Barcelona #06302015 #Barcelona #Friends #HavingFun #Drinks #Food #Music #PerfectDay #AracelyCruz.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNgFmNfyTX8>

The restaurant has four pool tables. On Mondays and Wednesdays, the local pool leagues come to play on their tables. While I was at the restaurant, the bartender

mentioned that the leagues are mixed “razas,” meaning that these players are various ethnicities including “Americanos” (a term used by some in Spanish conversation when addressing white people in the US) with different skin tones. I mention this because it is an example of where people with various cultural backgrounds come together.

2. **Asi Es Mi Tierra**

2559 Ennalls Ave, Wheaton, MD 20902

This is a Peruvian and Latin American restaurant with an extensive menu in Spanish with English translations. In discussions with the restaurant staff, I learned that they know how to make tortillas by hand and the dishes made at the restaurant are authentic. This restaurant regularly has live music but also karaoke and televised events. Some of the musicians who play here include Grupo la Sabrosura, Tito Polar, and Pochito Sedano.

The restaurant serves Peruvian breakfast, lunch and dinner foods. Washingtonian Magazine reviewed the restaurant in 2013¹¹. The restaurant does provide an example of how food transcends space and incites memory for the local community. The following is from the Facebook page of this Peruvian restaurant:

Asi Es MI Tierra – FACEBOOK

Maria Claret Ayque Choque

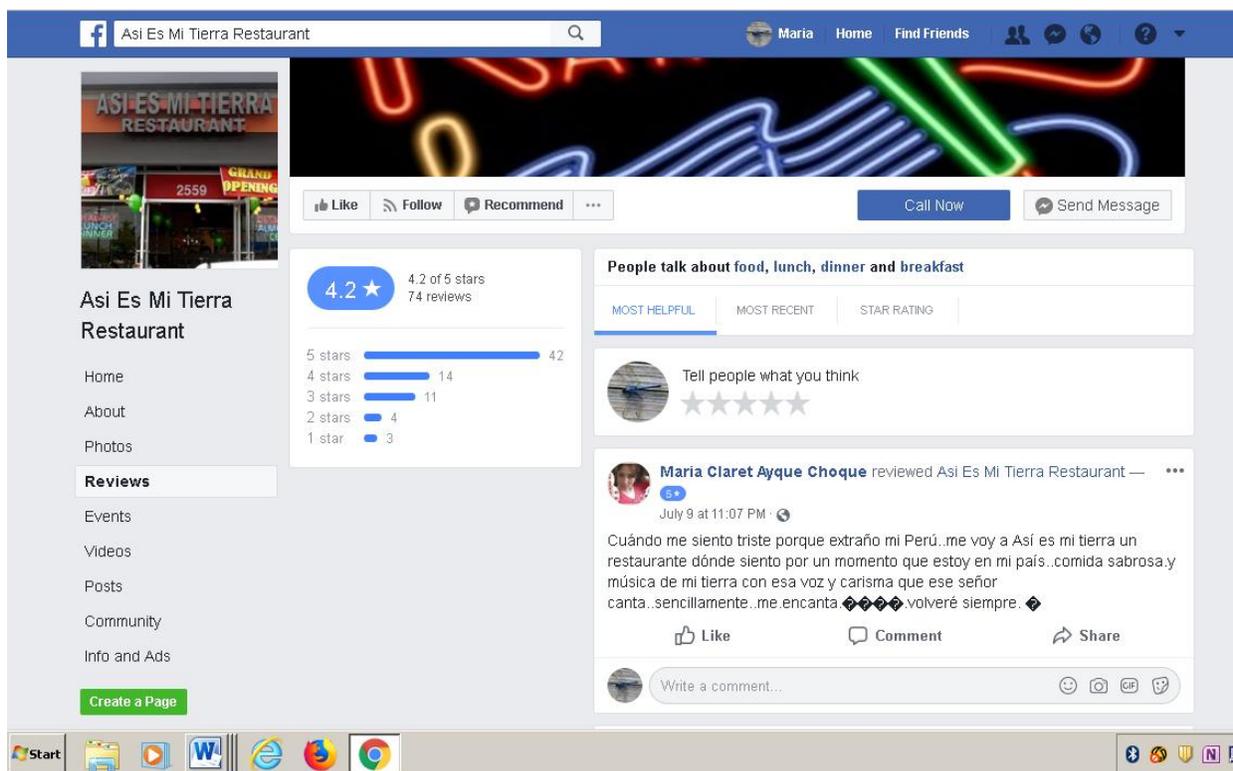
July 9, 2018

Cuándo me siento triste porque extraño mi Perú..me voy a Así es mi tierra un restaurante dónde siento por un momento que estoy en mi país..comida sabrosa.y música de mi tierra con esa voz y carisma que ese señor canta..sencillamente..me.encanta.💎💎💎.volveré siempre

English Translation

When I feel sad because I miss Peru...I go to Asi es mi tierra a restaurant where I feel, for a moment, that I am in my country...delicious food and music from my country, the sound and charisma of the gentlemen's voice...simply...I adore it. I return, always.

¹¹ <https://www.washingtonian.com/2013/05/01/asi-es-mi-tierra-pass-the-ceviche/>



When I ate at Asi Es Mi Tierra in July, I met a band choreographer for Los Autenticos de la Cumbia. This is a local Peruvian band that plays throughout the metropolitan area, including Wheaton¹². Other musicians play at Asi Es Mi Tierra including the server's husband. Unfortunately, she did not have more time to discuss his music. Here is a YouTube video shot at "Asi Es Mi Tierra" on a live music and dancing night. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HkJxaU9C5o> ("Pollada")

Asi es mi Tierra hosts soccer (fútbol) events. Here is an announcement on Facebook from June 15, 2018.

Asi Es Mi Tierra FACEBOOK¹³
 ASI ES MI TIERRA RESTAURANTE TE ESTARA ESPERANDO PARA APOYAR A NUESTRO EQUIPO DE FÚTBOL, TODOS JUNTOS A LAS 11 AM MENTE POSITIVA Y AHORA SIIIIIII ARRIBA EL PERU. (301) 942-2842. ASI ES MI TIERRA
 English Translation - Asi es mi Tierra restaurant is waiting for you to support our soccer team, at 11am all of us together, with positive attitudes, yes, hurray Peru!

¹² https://www.facebook.com/autenticos.delacumbia.1?fref=search&_tn_=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARCIMMP9E2I7MyrjB2sed1ofN-wkYEnGJ95M1zNRK4kp4aw6QxLjBoyoyJw-Dgt5Aj32vqJfOgCnVuBW

¹³ <https://www.facebook.com/AsiEsMiTierraRestaurant/videos/vb.246411842052587/2229665177060567/?type=2&theater>

A poster announces another event for watching soccer was posted on the outside window of the restaurant.



3. Los Chorros Restaurant

2420 Blueridge Ave., Wheaton, Maryland 20902

Los Chorros is one of Wheaton's longest-standing restaurants and first Latino-owned one. It was established in 1989 by Pedro and Reina Lazo. Their sons, Omar and Jason, took over the restaurant in 2012¹⁴. It serves Salvadoran and Mexican food.

The restaurant has a mural painted on the outside and many paintings hanging inside. Its patrons have been going there to eat for decades. While I was having lunch there, I met a couple who came with their young daughter for lunch. They told me that they met in high school and had been going to Los Chorros since then, even though now they live in Germantown. Los Chorros offers food delivery.

This Facebook post shows just a couple of comments about how long people have been patrons of the restaurant, an obviously important Latino landmark that contributes to a sense of belonging for the community.

¹⁴ <https://patch.com/maryland/wheaton-md/second-generation-at-los-chorros-expands-business-online>

Photo/video Tag friends Check in

you Fac

Recommendations and Reviews

Recommended by 135 people

 I have been going to Los Chorros over 20 years. They are consistent and actually every time I go they improve something! I love this place. Our most recent visit we had Joshua for our waiter and he was amazing. Go eat enjoy you will love it!
March 31

 Popusas were delicious(3), Santa Fe Burritos (2), and a Chicken Burrito. This was a pick up order a... See More
January 22, 2017

 We've going there since 1989 or 90. I can't get past the pupusas and plantains because they are so good you really shouldn't be having anything else. We kept trying to add other things to our order but gave up around 2004.
December 17, 2016

Have the pupusas revuelta, you'll be hooked forever but tip heavy because your meal ends up really cheap :-)

Do you recommend Los Chorros Restaurant?

4. Kantutas (Bolivian Cuisine)

2462 Ennalls Ave., Wheaton, MD 20902



Api and pastel at Kantutas

A Washington Post Restaurant review refers to Kantutas as “meaty Bolivian outpost.”¹⁵ It is a small restaurant that also hosts musical events, karaoke and sports television programming. During my visit to Kantutas, I enjoyed *api* (a purple, hot drink made from corn) and a *pastel* (a fluffy pastry with soft cheese) as I eavesdropped on a cultural lesson about Bolivian food. At a table close to mine, a young mother carefully explained to her

¹⁵ https://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/the-20-diner-kantutas-restaurant-meaty-bolivian-fare-in-wheaton/2013/03/14/56ec15c0-86ae-11e2-9d71-f0feafdd1394_story.html?utm_term=.9efb79cb9168

children and another mother with her children the typical Bolivian foods and how they are eaten.

A recent five-star Yelp review captures the atmosphere of Kantutas Restaurant. The reviewer says, “Kantutas is a trip to Bolivia.” And a Yelp reviewer who spent time in Bolivia stated that, “I visit this place when I feel nostalgic! The food is just as delicious as the home-cooked food my host mother would make.”



Colby G.
Washington, DC
0 friends
11 reviews
6 photos

★★★★★ 9/23/2018

I visit new restaurants because I like to experience new cultures. Kantutas is a trip to Bolivia. I had the picante mixto which has lengua, chicken, papas, rice gravy and more...the first bite transported me and I knew I made the right choice.

The owners are very friendly and I highly recommend! I will be back!



Alexandra R.
Washington, DC
232 friends
34 reviews
33 photos

★★★★★ 8/12/2017

1 check-in

I spent a semester abroad in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and I visit this place when I feel nostalgic! This food is just as delicious as the home-cooked food my host mother would make.

5. Puente de Oro Restaurante

11123 Veirs Mill Rd., Wheaton, MD 20902

This restaurant and sports bar serves Mexican and Salvadoran food. It has television screens, pool tables and live music. The Google review below mentions lively weekend nights...



Kimberly Matthews

7 months ago

Great food, great atmosphere. I have been going there for 5 years and it just keeps getting better. If you are in town you should stop in. And if you go on a friday or saturday night you will get to enjoy a dance party. I hope to see you there. Have fun and buen provecho!!

Puente de Oro hosts live music bands. Furia Band Internacional and Grupo Bohemio, of Salvadoran origin are two examples.

6. Los Cobanos Restaurant

1210 Grandview Ave., Wheaton, Maryland 20902

The Los Cobanos restaurant and bar serves Salvadoran and Mexican food. They have participated in the Taste of Wheaton and the World of Montgomery Festival. Their food and atmosphere like many of the Wheaton restaurants has been described as “authentic.” This review on Yelp underscores the idea of authentic food:



[Laura H.](#)

Derwood, MD

5.0 star rating 4/29/2016

A hidden gem! Delightful decor, Tiki type bar, broad menu, free chips and salsa (delicious!), and excellent, authentic food! My server mostly spoke Spanish, so best to bring a pocket dictionary or brush up before you go--but you won't be sorry.

While the area in front of Los Cobanos is now under construction, it will soon be a new fourteen-story building for the Montgomery County Planning Board, Montgomery Parks and the Montgomery Planning Department. The Los Cobanos Facebook site highlights how, in the past, this area was used like a plaza for various events. A video, shot from the restaurant, shows the 2016 Salvadoran festival¹⁶.

Los Cobanos FACEBOOK¹⁷

The caption reads, Ven a disfrutar el festival Salvadoreño en frente de nuestro local! Refréscanse con una horchata o cervecita heladita aquí en Los Cobanos

English Translation

Come enjoy the Salvadoran festival in front of our restaurant. Enjoy a horchata or cold beer here at Los Cobanos

In conversations with a Los Cobanos server, I learned that the construction site in front of the restaurant had negatively impacted her because she was making much less on tips since fewer people were coming into the restaurant.¹⁸ (A food truck was also parked near the restaurant. Some of the construction workers were getting food there.) The server I

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/loscobanoswheaton/videos/10154423067842171/>

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ It is important to note here that other businesses have experienced an increase in sales. The development of the area appears to have impacted businesses in different ways.

spoke with also mentioned that more “Americanos” (non-Latinos) were frequenting the restaurant—an example of the area’s economic and cultural transition.

7. La Rumba Restaurant

2311 Price Ave., Wheaton, MD 20902

La Rumba Restaurant serves Mexican, Tex Mex and Salvadoran cuisine. The server I spoke with said they do make their own tortillas but it depends on the dish. The restaurant has a bar. One wall has a large mural of a volcano. La Rumba has about nineteen television screens attached to the walls. The television screens, in addition to showing soccer and programming from Central America, display pictures of the menu items. La Rumba also has an electronic jukebox, karaoke, and live music on Friday nights. According to the server, most of the patrons are Latinos from Central America.



8. **Q’Viva, Cocina & Lounge** (Colombian food, live music, karaoke and DJs)
2322 University Blvd W, Silver Spring, MD 20902 Q’Viva’s recent live music scene included the band Zon Zandunga¹⁹, a nine-piece orchestra that plays Salsa Dura and Romantica with Spanish and English lyrics. The band’s original members are friends who grew-up in the DC area and have ties to Nicaragua and Colombia. The band describes their music as “... totally unique in the DC area.”²⁰

\$10 Cover **Zon Zandunga**
LIVE at **Q’Viva**
Fri. August 3rd, 2018

Music by
DJ Mike Ro

Hosted by
Cynthia
De Los Santos

2322 University Blvd, Silver Spring, MD

facebook **10 pm to 3 am** GG Salsa
To **RSVP** for Dining: **202.215.0044**
Facebook.com/**TGAGSM** Info@**She-Vision.com**

¹⁹ See their Facebook site <https://www.facebook.com/Zon-Zandunga-2091389047856349/>

²⁰ Ibid.

9. La Antigua Restaurant (Latin Cuisine)
11260 Georgia Ave, Wheaton, MD 20902

La Antigua has indoor and outdoor seating. Although dated the Tripadvisor review below captures the atmosphere of many of Wheaton’s non-chain restaurants.



Fred71248
Northampton,
Massachusetts
37 12

Reviewed February 10, 2014

not a chain and so authentic

I stumbled on this little brightly painted restaurant when driving my 89 year old mother back from visiting our Dad's cemetery plot. I have spent years in Central and South America and this place had the best ceviche I've tasted since Peru. It is NOT FANCY, but clean, authentic and so inexpensive. Full bar. Only Spanish speakers working and eating there, though they did speak some English. The help couldn't have been nicer to my Mom and seemed generally pleased to see her wheeled in. Ceviche. Chicken Soup. Rice. Pupusas. two beers. salad. and paella for \$42. If you want something adventuresome and different, check this place out.

[Show less](#)

Value
Atmosphere

Service
Food

[Ask Fred71248 about La Antigua Restaurant](#)

[Thank Fred71248](#)

10. Los Patrones de Wheaton (DJs and Acoustic Nights²¹)
11272 Georgia Ave., Wheaton, MD 20902



²¹ Desivar, an acoustic band, played at Los Patrones. See their Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/DeSivar/>

11. Pura Vida Bar and Lounge (Food, sports and live music)

2423 Hickerson Dr, Wheaton, MD 20902

The following are a couple of examples from Facebook posts showing how the bars bring together people to watch sports and enjoy music.



Sir Speedy (July 4th) at Pura Vida

12. Sarita's Restaurant (Peruvian Cuisine and Live Music)

2545 Ennalls Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20902

Sarita's Restaurant also hosts live music. The poster below advertises a live musical event held on Saturday, September 29th, 2018, from 8pm to 2am.



13. La Pupuseria La Familiar²²

11324 Fern St, Wheaton, MD 20902

La Pupuseria La Familiar is a Salvadoran restaurant which makes authentic dishes in-house. It has an extensive menu, written in Spanish and English. (The restaurant has another location in College Park, Maryland.) The restaurant offers more than eleven types of pupusas and a long list of fruit and blended drinks including *horchata* (made from rice or other plant-based milk, vanilla and cinnamon) and, seasonally, *etol de elote* (made from sweet corn). La Pupuseria La Familiar's pupusa recipe comes from the owner's mother who had a pupusa stall in the main plaza of Cojutepeque, El Salvador.²³ Maritza Hernandez, the restaurant's owner was quoted by the Washington Post's Going Out Guide that, "We pride ourselves on making that same style and flavor of pupusas [my mother] made in El Salvador... It's our family's recipe and tradition."²⁴ A Yelp review highlights how this restaurant also provides an atmosphere more typical of Central America than mainstream US. The Yelp reviewer stated that the "interior makes you feel as if you were in a small town central american restaurant."²⁵

²² See their website (<http://www.pupuserialafamiliar.com/index.html>) and Washington Post Review https://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/the-20-diner-la-familiar-a-pupuseria-that-even-a-dorm-rat-could-love/2013/06/19/f95348ce-d483-11e2-b05f-3ea3f0e7bb5a_story.html?utm_term=.cd5e51400735

²³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/pupusas-are-more-than-corn-and-cheese-these-six-stops-on-a-maryland-highway-prove-it/2018/06/13/a86d8620-69d6-11e8-9e38-24e693b38637_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.5bf87a00bf5f

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ [https://www.yelp.com/biz/pupuseria-la-familiar-wheaton?hrid=ApGD7BEuNKSQzHQ7waNIng&utm_campaign=www_review_share_popup&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_source=\(direct\)](https://www.yelp.com/biz/pupuseria-la-familiar-wheaton?hrid=ApGD7BEuNKSQzHQ7waNIng&utm_campaign=www_review_share_popup&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_source=(direct))

Markets

Two of the markets I surveyed sell groceries and have dining areas. The other two markets are *botanicas*, stores that sell a wide range of religious paraphernalia such as statues, jewelry, incense, candles, and books, as well as folk medicines, oils, perfumes, containers and more.

International Mercado Latino

2519 Ennalls Ave, Wheaton, MD 20902

The International Mercado Latino is a Latin market with a small restaurant area. The food is made next the seating area in a kitchen separated only by a counter; people can watch the food being prepared. The woman preparing food on the day I visited (July 7th, 2018), who hails from Morazan, El Salvador, told me that the food is made to order. She also said that they hand-make tortillas and pupusas but the tamales come from a restaurant in Rockville where women hand make them.

According to the owner, Ana Castillo, about half the patrons are Hispanic and the other half “American.” (In contrast, a cashier mentioned that the people shopping and eating at the market were mostly Hispanic and the others included some “morenitos”²⁶ and a few “Americanos.” She noted that the change has been recent. Conversations with others working at the market revealed that business had picked up since the construction had started.

By Brazil

11333 Georgia Ave, Wheaton, MD 20902

By Brazil is a market that sells Brazilian imported products and prepared foods and provides services for money transfers and airline ticketing. It has a seating area and television. In a study of the store, Romansini²⁷ noted that the store has a family-like atmosphere and serves as important place for the Brazilian community to connect. The store’s television is important for the community because it shows Brazilian programming, including soap operas, soccer, and F1 races. In an interview conducted by Romansini, the owner of By Brazil said that he established the store “...not only to fulfill the needs of the Brazilian community in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, but also to express his cultural identity.”²⁸ Two Yelp reviews underscore the continued and expanding importance and influence of the market for local Brazilians, their families and friends.

²⁶ Morenitos refers to African Americans in some Hispanic cultures.

²⁷ Romansini, Mirella. (2010). Latinos in American Institutions. Unpublished manuscript. Montgomery College, Rockville, Maryland.

²⁸ Ibid.

By Brazil – YELP

Edison G.

Potomac, MD

12/22/2017

I think it is a great place not only for good genuine brazilian food, but it has a wonderful variety of products from Brazil you can not find anywhere else. The staff is very friendly and I love the little atmosfere they have... Highly recommended...

Gaby F.

Rockville, MD

7/31/2015

So many delicious Brazilian favorites to try. Love this place and the people working there. Being Brazilian, I've been going there since I was little and my mom would take us to get a coxinha and guarana. Now I take all my American friends and they always want to come back for more

La Salvadoreña Grocery Latino Market

11417 Georgia Ave, Wheaton, MD 20902

La Salvadoreña Grocery Latino Market also serves the local and surrounding Latin American community, selling foods that are not available in chain grocery stores. A Facebook post and series of replies about small mangos underscore the demand for hard-to-get foods. A fairly recent series of Facebook posts, mostly in Spanish, show the value of the market for the dispersed Spanish-speaking community. When the market posted on Facebook that it had small mangos, 110 people “liked,” 13 “loved,” and 5 “wow’ed” the image of these small green mangos. The ten comments about the mangos included heart emojis and a discussion about availability at the store and picking-up the mangos for other Facebook “friends.”



Botanica Boricua and Botanica Caridad

Ennalls Ave., Wheaton, MD 20902

Both of these stores are *botanicas* that sell a wide variety of religious products, perfumes, soaps, books and folk medicines as well providing various services. None of the products I observed were locally made but imported from various countries. Botanica Caridad has a website which is mostly in Spanish.²⁹



Botanica Boricua



View of construction cranes from the Mercado Latino on Ennalls Street

²⁹ <http://www.caridad5.com/>

Bakeries

Caramelo Bakery

11301 Georgia Ave, Wheaton, MD 20902

Caramelo's Bakery has a wide variety of baked goods and a seating area. Their Facebook page highlights that these small businesses are where people in the community come together to share food from their Latin American cultures and to connect with their community.

Caramelo Panaderia - FACEBOOK

Caramelo Bakers.

November 27, 2013 · [Silver Spring, MD](#) ·

Comiendo pan caliente con coca cola wue rico no es colombiano pero es de nuestros hermanos bolivianos jijijiji

English Translation

I'm eating delicious warm bread with a coca-cola but its not Colombian but from our Bolivian brothers.

El Sabor Latino Bakery

11413 Grandview Ave, Wheaton, MD 20902

El Sabor Latino Bakery also has a wide variety of baked goods and other foods along with a small seating area. They serve breakfast and lunch. Each time I visited a saw a brisk business with most folks speaking in Spanish.



Some of the baked goods at El Sabor Latino Bakery

Other Arts and Entertainment

Wheaton Arts Parade

11006 Veirs Mill Rd, Wheaton, MD 20902

One of the important and recent arts events bringing community together in Wheaton is the Wheaton Arts Parade (WAP). Although the WAP has taken place only twice, it demonstrates how vibrant the artist community is in Wheaton. People want to create, see and experience art in Wheaton. The WAP makes important contributions toward uniting the community across cultural, age, and artistic skill boundaries. The involvement of the local high schools (Blair, Einstein, Kennedy, Northwood, and Wheaton) and other Latino institutions is notable. This year the event took place on September 23rd.³⁰

This parade and festival exemplifies how the arts and community come together, untethered from a physical address. Although currently there is a physical place where artists can work, the parade and festival occur in the streets of Wheaton. Artistic work in the Art Factory, a space provided by Westfield Mall, is unique in the area and reminiscent of the spaces in Brazil where guild-like associations (samba schools or *blocos*) representing particular neighborhoods spend months constructing extraordinary floats for the Brazilian carnival.

This past summer, the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County awarded a grant to WAP to conduct a series of “Community Art Workshops” for Wheaton’s Hispanic community. According to WAP, the “...bi-lingual workshops will be led by local Latino artists who are affiliated with WAP. The first workshop will take place later this summer and the series will continue through June 2019. WAP will be working in partnership with Wheaton’s community organizations, schools and churches that have a large number of Spanish speaking members and who share WAP’s vision that making art brings the community together.”³¹

When I asked the WAP organizers if they knew how many artists live and work in Wheaton, they said they were not sure. What they did say, however, and which is reflected in the success of the WAP participation, is that there are many artists. They connect by word of mouth and through social media. They suggest that it would be beneficial to have an administrator dedicated to an organization of artists who would continue to make Wheaton a thriving arts location but with much more visibility; and move the perception of Wheaton from a mall and strip-mall area to one that is artsy and an entertainment destination throughout the year.

Conversations with the artists underscored the need for a space to create, practice and showcase art, as well as space for the community of artists to meet, share, and plan. The complicated political and economic history and support of the A & E designation are beyond the scope of this

³⁰ <https://patch.com/maryland/wheaton-md/wheaton-arts-parade-festival-returns-2nd-year>

³¹ <https://www.wheatonartsparade.com/news>

report but would merit some more attention as the community of artists continues to grow and the area moves forward in its transformation.



Other Performances

One of the notable Latino performing groups in the area are the Titanes Salseros.³² The Titanes Salseros are a competitive dance team of Einstein High School in nearby Kensington. The team has performed in Wheaton festival and events. Since 2001, they have won dozens of awards.



Other Latino artists include musicians who perform in various events in the public spaces of the District. For example, Sin Miedo³³, a salsa orchestra, played at the TGIF Summer Concert Series in August, 2018.

³² <http://archanapyati.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Latin-Dancers.pdf>

³³ <http://www.sinmiedomusic.com/>

Westfield Mall

The Westfield Mall, located in the District, offers a stark contrast to the independently owned and non-chain businesses in the rest of the area. About 150 businesses make up the Mall; most of the businesses are national chain stores. (An exception is the space the Mall provides for the Wheaton Arts Parade, discussed above, located in a building separate from the main Mall.) Because the Mall is included in the District, I visited in search of local foodways and handmade arts. After failing to find any significant Latino foodways, I visited Jo-Ann Fabrics thinking that there may be a sewing group or seamstresses working and patronizing the store.

Jo-Ann Fabrics

Jo-Ann Fabrics in Westfield Mall is located on the first floor next to Dick's Sporting Goods and Kids Bounce, and across from DSW Shoes. In July, I spoke with two women working there, one from El Salvador and the other from Nicaragua. They estimated that about forty-percent of the costumers are Latina and lamented that while many of them ask to take sewing classes in Spanish, Jo-Ann Fabrics only offers classes in English. In our conversation, I learned that there used to be two Latina women who taught sewing classes but they had not been seen for some time. One of the instructors was from Colombia and described as older. They could not remember where the other instructor was from.

Murals

Although there are public and indoor murals throughout the District, notable works are found on the apartments buildings on Elkin and Blueridge Avenues. These murals on the Amherst Square and Pembridge Square Apartments were completed in 2001 and 2002 respectively. One is forty-five feet and the other is fifty-six feet long. They were designed and painted by young residents of the apartments, under the guidance of muralist Jorge Luis Somarriba, to cover an area often painted with graffiti.³⁴



³⁴ <http://www.graffitifree.org/projects.html>

Conclusion

The Wheaton A&E District is a vibrant and distinctive neighborhood where the cultures and ideas of people from the local neighborhood, metropolitan DC and many countries from around the globe, but mostly Latin America, intersect. It is also unique in that it is a physical place—a neighborhood with restaurants, markets, bakeries, and bars—for Latinos, who are mostly dispersed throughout the Washington metropolitan area, to foster a sense of belonging and connection. The cultural expressions, mostly foodways, appreciated by many in the Latino community that are found here should also be shared even more broadly with the non-Latino community.

This report provides only a snapshot of Wheaton’s Spanish-speaking community but hopefully it contributes to a better understanding of the area as a culturally rich and valuable part of Montgomery County and the metropolitan area. While the arts and entertainment described in this report do not neatly fit within the definitions³⁵ of arts and entertainment put forth by the Maryland State Arts Council, they should be valued and appreciated as important cultural expressions that define a distinct and significant place in Montgomery County.

Recently, Councilmember Nancy Navarro addressed the revitalization of the District and how it is impacting businesses and residents. She recognized the value of the small-businesses in maintaining the unique character of Wheaton and pledged to support them as the revitalization process moves forward. She stated the following:

As we continue our work revitalizing Wheaton, it is essential that the local character of the area be maintained, and this includes our community-based small businesses...³⁶ (Nancy Navarro, Oct. 30, 2018)

Not only maintaining but celebrating the character of the Wheaton District, that is generated by its small businesses, should continue in an inclusive and iterative manner. Possible ways to do this should be explored with the involvement of people from the various social groups, including Latinos living and working in Wheaton. Foodways and locally produced art, broadly defined, appear to be popular and robust avenues to begin highlighting and supporting Wheaton’s distinctness. Digital storytelling and culinary tourism are two possible ways to maintain and support various foodways taking place in the District. Lucy Long, a folklorist and founder of the Center for Food and Culture states,

Culinary tourism is about food as a subject and medium, destination and vehicle, for tourism. It is about individuals exploring foods new to them as well as using

³⁵ (i) a book or other writing;(ii) a play or performance of a play (iii) a musical composition or the performance of a musical composition; (iv) a painting or other picture; (v) a sculpture; (vi) traditional or fine crafts; (vii) the creation of a film or the acting within a film;(viii) the creation of a dance or the performance of a dance; (ix) the creation of original jewelry, clothing, or design. See <https://www.msac.org/node/62709>

³⁶ <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MDMONTGOMERY/bulletins/218169f?reqfrom=share>

food to explore new cultures and ways of being. It is about groups using food to "sell" their histories and to construct marketable and publicly attractive identities, and it is about individuals satisfying curiosity. Finally, it is about the experiencing of food in a mode that is out of the ordinary, that steps outside the normal routine to notice difference and the power of food to represent and negotiate that difference.³⁷

³⁷ Long, Lucy. 2015. *The Folklore Reader*, "Culinary Tourism: A Folklorist Perspective on Eating and Otherness," Chapter 39.