

SANTANA'S MEXICAN WAGON ROLLS INTO TOWN

BY COURTNEY KAUFFMAN
Assistant Features Editor
index.featureseditor@gmail.com

Kirksville has gained a new restaurant whose specialties are quick service, Mexican goodies and open air dining — in fact, outside is the only place you can eat because it isn't a building, it's a food truck.

Santana's Mexican Wagon, the new and only food truck in Kirksville, opened July 13 and is located behind Geno's 70s Club next to A.T. Still University.

Owner Marco Santana said the food truck has been open for two months now and he is very thankful for the experience.

"This was actually offered to me — I didn't have any plans to open any business, but the owner of the trailer and the building offered it to me and basically set it up for me," Santana said. "They said just go in there, cook, and sell some food and that's what I did. Basically I just took advantage of the opportunity."

Geno's owner Randy Treasure also owns the trailer, but he let Santana use it for free for the first two to three months, Santana said.

Santana said he used to work as a server at one of the Mexican restaurants in Kirksville, but his goal was to open his own place.

"That's something that I always wanted to do and that's why when this came along I just couldn't say no, you know," Santana said.

He said he tries to keep a personable relationship with customers and does his best to be on a first name basis with them.

Santana said he has been through a few employees during the summer and currently is training a new hire. Anyone interested in a job should stop by and pick up an application, he said. He and his new hire have been working on getting their system down, he said, in order to improve the speed and quality of the food.

It has been more beneficial to not advertise and instead immediately open up, because people started showing up, Santana said. He

said it gave the business time to adjust and get everything right.

"[Business] has been really good," Santana said. "Better than we expected, to be honest with you."

Santana said his specialties are the fish tacos and the California burritos, because those are his most requested items. He said his personal favorite is the fish taco.

Santana had his doubts about the location of the food truck at first, he said, but because the food truck is within walking distance of many popular locations and businesses, he said it has drawn a consistent flow of customers.

"We'll definitely be back. You have to try everything, right?"

-Kirksville resident Liz Martin

"I'm surprised," Santana said. "I thought it was going to be mainly students, but a lot of local people are coming to try it, too. I would say right now it's probably a 60/40 [split] since the students are probably the most."

Kirksville resident Blake Pflum said he has been to Santana's multiple times since it opened.

Pflum said he found out about Santana's when the owner handed Pflum a flyer through the open window of his car as Pflum was walking down the street, which Pflum said piqued his interest in checking out the truck.

Pflum said though he loves the other Mexican options in Kirksville, Santana's is a convenient place to have lunch because he can just walk up, get his food and continue on with his day.

"I like it, [and] it's convenient and pretty tasty," Pflum said. "I feel like it's kinda cool

that I just walk up and get some fairly good Mexican food at a decent price."

Pflum said having businesses such as Santana's is what Kirksville needs because it brings variation to the town and provides an easy place to socialize.

Kirksville resident Matt Edwards, a new Santana's employee, said he started working at Santana's last week after he heard about it from one of his friends.

Edwards said it worked well because he needed a job after coming back into town and this opportunity was available.

"[The owner's] a cool guy," Edwards said. "He's funny [and] fun to work with."

Edwards said he mostly sees students from A.T. Still and Truman State during his day shifts. Although it still is a new business, he said it can get really busy.

Edwards said he likes everything on the menu, but people tend to order steak burritos the most when he is working.

Kirksville resident Liz Martin said it was her first time trying the food at Santana's.

She said her husband drives an OATS bus in town, and he noticed the truck the other day with many customers around it and decided to come try the food.

Martin said she and her husband eat out often and she thinks it is neat to eat at a food truck because it is the only one near Kirksville.

"[The owner is] friendly, the food was served quickly, it's very good," Martin said. "We'll definitely be back. You have to try everything, right?"

Normal hours for Santana's Mexican Wagon are 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and the business tries to open Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights when crowds come out for the Kirksville nightlife until around 2a.m..

For more information about Santana's Mexican Wagon, its menu options or its late night hours, visit the Santana's Mexican Wagon Facebook page.

