

## **TRANSLATION of Maria del Carmen Flores AUDIO CLIP**

### **INTERVIEW INFORMATION:**

Subject: Maria del Carmen Flores of Estrellita's Snacks – San Francisco, CA

Date: May 21, 2013

Location: Maria del Carmen Flores's Home – San Francisco, CA

Interviewer: Amy C. Evans

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: 1 hour, 15 minutes

Translation: Dr. Julia E. Bussade, Director of Basic Spanish & Portuguese,  
University of Mississippi

Project: Women at Work: San Francisco

**\*This is a transcript of the audio clip and audio slideshow created from the original oral history interview.**

**AUDIO CLIP LENGTH: 4 minutes, 55 seconds.**

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My name is María del Carmen Flores and my business is called Estrellita's Snacks.

Since I was six years old, I have been selling in the streets. I sell fruits, food—everything that my mom would put for sale, I have been selling them since I was six. And all my life has been like this, working, making food, pupusas, tamales, tostadas de plátanos (banana chips); walking through the fairs in El Salvador (we say fairs there), we walk everywhere, with my sons, always working. Always with the business, because I have always liked the business very much.

[My mother] cooked the food and I sold it in the streets. We used to sell fruits, pelada, pupusas, tamales—everything that my mom cooked, I would go out and sell it in the streets. We walked all over San Salvador. We sold it in many places of San Salvador. We used to be twelve kids, and I was the oldest, so I was the busiest. I worked for my other siblings.

One day my grandson asked me “Grandma do you have a dollar?” So I told him “I only have twenty dollars but, since you are a little boy, we are going to ask God to help us to grow this bill. And tomorrow we are going to use it”. I did not know what to use it for. I went to bed and I asked God to enlighten my mind to find out what to do with twenty dollars. Early next morning my grandson told me “Grandma is morning already; did the bill grow up?” “No,” I told him, “We are going to go to the store and there is where God is going to tell me what I have to do.” When I arrived at the store with the twenty dollars, I remembered that in El Salvador I used to make the banana chips. So I bought ten pounds of bananas, oil and plastic bags—those that make a “click” (when you close them). I started to fry the bananas in a small frying pan and I went out to sell them. That day, just that day, with my twenty dollars, I made 200 dollars. I sold them cheap—that

was a time when I used to sell them cheap, we used to sell them really cheap, two dollars per bag—one dollar for the big bags, and two dollars for the small bags. The next day I bought a (banana) box; the next day I bought two, the next day— Then the stores started to ask me (for bags). I was the first one in San Francisco selling banana chips; nowadays I have a lot of competition. There are people who have come to work and to learn (how to make the banana chips) ...but theirs are not the same. And I tell them, this is such a big country that we do not have enough (people) —meaning that there are not enough banana chips sellers- —even when some people sell their banana chips cheaper—I sell it more expensive because qualities are different, that is why we have a lot of costumers. People love my banana chips.

For me, cooking—well, it is my passion. If I don't know how to cook it, I make it up, I dream about it—and that is how I cook my food. And since I was a girl, I have always liked to be creative with food. My mom used to say that sometimes I was crazy, “Mama, can I do this with this pastry?” and I sell them all, thank God. And everything that I think about in terms of food is something wonderful. I feel that I can't do everything that I want with the food, but everything has turned out very good to me in Mexico, in El Salvador, in Guatemala—as far as my food goes. People really like what all the foods that I prepare. It is my passion.

Yes, it is possible. Because when somebody wants to be somebody in life, you don't need a lot of money to open a business. And I have shown to all people who say there is no work. Yes, there is work. The only thing is that people don't like to go out in the streets.

I started to sell on the street in 2002, and in 2005 I arrived at La Cocina. I had my restaurant in 2003 but because of lack of good information, I failed and I lost about \$15,000 and I was at zero point again. But that was not—Yes, you need money and everything—because there are people who know that you do not know how to start a business in the United States, those people took advantage of my ignorance and flew away with my \$15,000. But I continued to work and with my banana chip bags. Being so close to La Cocina, I did not know what La Cocina was until a friend told me that La Cocina was there. At that point Veronica Salazar, from (the restaurant) “Huarache Loco” was there. I asked how to be part of La Cocina, and she is the one who gave me all the information to get in. And in 2005 when I graduated from ALAS—I graduated from ALAS, because I went to study at ALAS, it helped me to understand the business here in the United States. And that is how I arrived to La Cocina in 2005.

My food speaks all the languages I cannot speak. It helps me. I always say, people should try my food and, if they like it, that's it, we are selling in all the markets. Thanks to God.