

Jose Rodriguez
West Coast Burrito – Horn Lake, MS

* * *

Date: June 26, 2017

Location: West Coast Burrito

Interviewer: Simone Delorme

Transcription: Technitype Transcripts

Length: Thirty-three minutes

Project: Latino Memphis & Oxford

Delerme: Okay. So this is Simone Delerme with the Southern Foodways Alliance, and today is Monday, June 26, 2017. And we're at West Coast Burrito, and we're here to learn more about the cuisine and, more importantly, the stories behind the food.

Okay, so to start, will you just say your name for us?

[0:00:18.5]

Rodriguez: Yeah, my name is Jose Rodriguez.

[0:00:21.5]

Delerme: And what is your occupation? What do you do here?

[0:00:25.2]

Rodriguez: I'm the manager, general manager of the restaurant, so I make sure everything runs—making sure the restaurant runs good, you know, every day to give a good satisfaction to our customers.

[0:00:36.2]

Delerme: Okay, okay. How long have you been working here?

[0:00:38.9]

Rodriguez: We've been here just for about—with the new restaurant, about three weeks.

[0:00:45.5]

Delerme: So very new.

[0:00:48.2]

Rodriguez: Very new.

[0:00:49.0]

Delerme: So this is three weeks that you've been on the job?

[0:00:49.9]

Rodriguez: Yes.

[0:00:50.2]

Delerme: Okay, okay. Where were you beforehand? Were you in the food industry or is this your first time?

[0:00:55.7]

Rodriguez: I used to work for so many restaurants.

[0:00:57.9]

Delerme: Okay, so you have experience in the restaurant industry.

[0:01:00.5]

Rodriguez: Yeah. I worked for a lot of restaurants, chain restaurants, you know, local restaurants.

[0:01:09.4]

Delerme: In Horn Lake?

[0:01:10.3]

Rodriguez: No, well, here in Mississippi. I grew up in Los Angeles, California, so I just been in a lot of restaurant businesses.

[0:01:17.8]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:01:19.0]

Rodriguez: Yes.

[0:01:20.2]

Delerme: How long have you actually been in Mississippi, living in Mississippi?

[0:01:23.4]

Rodriguez: We've been here in Mississippi for about six years.

[0:01:26.3]

Delerme: Okay, so from before that—

[0:01:27.8]

Rodriguez: Six, seven years.

[0:01:27.8]

Delerme: —California.

[0:01:28.5]

Rodriguez: Yes, yes.

[0:01:29.2]

Delerme: Okay. And how long were you in California?

[0:01:30.8]

Rodriguez: Okay, so about ten years.

[0:01:35.4]

Delerme: Okay, okay. And what part of Mexico are you from?

[0:01:38.3]

Rodriguez: I was born in Mexico City.

[0:01:40.1]

Delerme: Mexico City, okay, okay. Then California, then big difference. How's the—

[0:01:44.7]

Rodriguez: Very big difference.

[0:01:44.9]

Delerme: —experience been living here?

[0:01:46.9]

Rodriguez: It was very hard at the beginning, you know, but right now, I mean, I think it's good place to growing up my kids.

[0:01:58.1]

Delerme: Oh, so you have kids?

[0:01:59.1]

Rodriguez: Yeah.

[0:01:59.6]

Delerme: Okay. How many kids do you have?

[0:02:01.0]

Rodriguez: I just have one.

[0:02:01.6]

Delerme: Okay, okay.

[0:02:03.2]

Rodriguez: And then I have another one coming up soon.

[0:02:05.0]

Delerme: Congratulations. That's exciting, that's exciting. Okay, so three weeks into the restaurant. For someone who's never been here before, what kind of food do you serve, what type of Mexican food?

[0:02:15.1]

Rodriguez: Well, I'm a tell you a little bit about the story.

[0:02:18.2]

Delerme: Tell us.

[0:02:19.3]

Rodriguez: Well, when I just moved to Mississippi five, six years ago, so we always tried to find something to eat, something like real Mexican food, and we never found any place that offers real Mexican food. And that's what we start thinking from there, that that

would be a great idea to do something, because, you know, we've been doing some investigations, and there's a lot of people on Southaven, Horn Lake, in this Mississippi area that is not from here, so it's a lot of people coming from other parts of the country.

[0:02:58.7]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:02:59.7]

Rodriguez: And I know a lot of friends, they're from California, and they love the food because they used to eat that kind of food there, you know. And that is why we decide to open the restaurant, trying to bring the same food into the South, you know, with a little change, but different like any other restaurants offered, okay, because we offer like real Mexican street tacos. We have a lot of burritos. We have so many burritos, and seafood in burritos. So we trying to mix a little bit of the seafood with the Mexican style.

[0:03:45.1]

Delerme: Okay. So that's different. Is that your unique touch, adding the seafood to the burritos and things?

[0:03:50.1]

Rodriguez: No. Well, when I used to live on Long Beach, California, we had family on Ensenada in Baja California, so, you know, I mean, that kind of food on the Baja area, so

it's like seafood, seafood with Mexican-style seafood, fish tacos, shrimp tacos, shrimp burritos, fish burritos, something that here in the South nobody knows about it.

[0:04:15.0]

Delorme: They don't.

[0:04:16.1]

Rodriguez: And it's real good. So we add a little bit of spice and we add a little bit of this and we make some change, you know. But that was the main idea, to bring that food to the South. Like I says, we cannot bring—let me tell you what I put on my card. “We cannot bring the sun and surf, but we bring the seasons,” you know, and that's why we got this place decorated like this, because, I mean, when the customers walk into it, so we want they feel like they're in another world, you know. I mean, like if they can think a little bit of they're probably in the beach, and that can be, I mean, good for them, for their minds, so the stress is going away for a little bit, drink a beer, eat some fish tacos. And, I mean, after that, you go out and you see all the Mississippi, but, you know, a little trip to the beach. [laughs]

[0:05:05.5]

Delorme: Yes, absolutely. And the interior design is new? You went for a California theme. Is that what—

[0:05:10.0]

Rodriguez: Mm-hmm.

[0:05:10.4]

Delorme: Okay. And then the street tacos, what types of meat do you offer here? You have a lot of variation, right?

[0:05:15.7]

Rodriguez: Yeah, we do have a lot of variation of meat. We have a steak. That's the original meat for the street tacos, is steak.

[0:05:23.9]

Delorme: Oh, okay, steak is original.

[0:05:24.9]

Rodriguez: Yeah. And we have some al pastor. That's marinated pork with grilled onions and grilled pineapple, so that gives a little good flavor, you know. We have carnitas. Basically it's like the pulled pork, but it's different—I mean, we do not add barbecue like in the South do, add barbecue, so we add another spices. But the meat is real, real good, and we do fresh, so every morning. So we open in the morning, cook everything fresh from scratch. And we have barbacoa. The barbacoa, do you know the story about the barbacoa?

[0:06:09.3]

Delerme: No, I don't.

[0:06:10.2]

Rodriguez: No? Okay, so in Mexico, the barbacoa, when they cook the meat, they do a hole in the ground.

[0:06:19.4]

Delerme: Wow.

[0:06:21.3]

Rodriguez: So they prepare it. They have to prepare it. They put some brick around and they put like cactus leaves and everything, and they put the meat in it, inside. They cover it with cactus leaves and plastic and a lot of stuff. They put dirt on it. So the next morning, so they go, take everything up, and the meat is good.

[0:06:47.5]

Delerme: Wow.

[0:06:48.9]

Rodriguez: So we don't do the same way here, but we almost trying to use the same style that they use, but we cook here s different way, but the meat is still real good.

[0:07:01.1]

Delorme: You get the flavor.

[0:07:01.5]

Rodriguez: Yeah, mm-hmm.

[0:07:02.0]

Delorme: Okay, wow. So since you've been here three weeks, what have been some of the challenges you faced? Have there been any challenges or has it been pretty smooth and easy just kind of picking everything up?

[0:07:12.5]

Rodriguez: Well, yeah, there is a lot of challenges here. One of the main things is having to do everything right to keep my employees working, you know. Like I say, I been having so many years on the cuisine experience, on the restaurant experience, but we always learn something new every day, every day. So, well, there is a lot of challenges here for us, because we don't know, maybe next ten years we can be a franchise, you know.

[0:08:03.5]

Delorme: Okay, okay. I was going to ask you are those the goals.

[0:08:05.5]

Rodriguez: That's one of the main ideas, you know.

[0:08:08.8]

Delerme: Oh, wow.

[0:08:09.4]

Rodriguez: But we have the first location. We need to make the stuff work fine and try to—because we got everything documented, all the recipes and—

[0:08:24.4]

Delerme: Do you?

[0:08:26.2]

Rodriguez: —all the menus and everything, so it doesn't matter who make it. If they follow the recipe, it's always going to be the same, you know. So that's one of the main things that I have in mind, to keep that, because that's one of the—we don't want that today is spicy and tomorrow is mild and after tomorrow it's super hot. No, no. So everything needs to be made right every day the same way.

Delerme: So whose recipes are they? Are they a collection that you put together very special, are they family, or just over time you've gathered?

[0:09:01.3]

Rodriguez: Yeah, we got a family recipe, my grandma recipe. And we have been working on the restaurant.

[0:09:13.9]

Delorme: Mm-hmm.

[0:09:14.8]

Rodriguez: So you been learning new stuffs, mixing this with this, and, you know, making everything real good. So we try it, and if we think that it's not the right flavor that we want, so we try something else or we add something, you know.

[0:09:30.5]

Delorme: One of the unique things I noticed when I came here is you have a salsa bar, which a lot of places don't have. Can you tell us a little bit about the different salsa options that you have here for people? What are the salsas that they can choose from?

[0:09:42.4]

Rodriguez: Yeah, actually that's one of the things that I was talking to my employees yesterday, about the salsa bar. The salsa bar, I mean, on the Hispanic community, the salsa bar is like a little spicy, a little hot, but sometimes when it's a little hot and very spicy, so you cannot eat the salsa very well. So we are trying to give the same flavor of the salsas, but on a mild, mild, so everybody can choose different. Yeah, we have like about six different salsas.

[0:10:11.7]

Delerme: Okay, six. Wow.

[0:10:12.9]

Rodriguez: And all the customers, they come, so they're welcome to try all the salsas they want with chips also. So we have chips and salsa bar so they can—we have avocado salsa—I mean guacamole, guacamole salsa. We have green tomatillo, red tomatillo. We have a spicy, we have chipotle. We have like six different kinds of salsas on the salsa bar, and people like it. The people like the salsa bar. The only thing that I'm trying to fix a little bit, because they've been making the salsas a little hot, so we going to make them mild, just a little bit of spice, but not a lot, so that way, everybody can enjoy the salsa, you know.

[0:10:53.4]

Delerme: Okay. Okay, that's fantastic. And how about your family? Does your family get involved here or is this just you that's involved in the business?

[0:11:00.9]

Rodriguez: No. Actually, just my wife and me, so that's the only—

[0:11:10.0]

Delerme: Oh, so she is too?

[0:11:11.0]

Rodriguez: Yeah, she works when I cannot work, you know, but we have people also. We are trying to give the opportunity to bring jobs also to the area, you know, because it's a lot of people need a job, so, I mean, we always hiring. If they qualify for what they have to do and they follow the rules, I mean, they're welcome. We been hiring people, and we still, because when we going to think later maybe, maybe I'm thinking so fast, you know, but we probably going to have another location another day maybe soon of the same thing. So we want to help the community to have a job, you know. Especially we are—I been focused on giving maybe some part-time for students.

[0:12:15.8]

Delerme: Really?

[0:12:17.0]

Rodriguez: Yeah.

[0:12:17.4]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:12:18.2]

Rodriguez: Like high school students—

[0:12:19.9]

Delerme: That's good.

[0:12:20.5]

Rodriguez: —doing some part-time. The evening, you know, they can come, work, make their own money.

[0:12:28.8]

Delerme: That's great.

[0:12:29.8]

Rodriguez: Yeah.

[0:12:30.3]

Delerme: That's great.

[0:12:30.7]

Rodriguez: That's one of the things that I want to do because when I was younger, I had to work on—when I was very, very young—so it was very hard for me to find a place to work, you know—

[0:12:41.8]

Delerme: Was it?

[0:12:42.2]

Rodriguez: —because my age, yes.

[0:12:43.9]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:12:44.3]

Rodriguez: So that's what I want to give all the part-time students to come and make a little bit of money for them because everybody—I mean, especially they need it for this, you know, or that or whatever.

[0:13:00.5]

Delerme: Definitely. Since you've been here, have you seen the Latino community grow a lot since you've been living here and working in this area, or is it still very small?

[0:13:08.2]

Rodriguez: No, it's growing up.

[0:13:10.4]

Delerme: It is?

[0:13:11.5]

Rodriguez: It's growing up.

[0:13:12.4]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:13:12.8]

Rodriguez: We have probably now in this area, we have—I'm talking about Mississippi area, because Tennessee is different. It's very, very close, but it's different. Here on the Mississippi area, Southaven, Horn Lake, and Olive Branch, maybe probably 5 percent, maybe 10 percent.

[0:13:34.4]

Delerme: Okay, okay. And do you find that the Latino community has found this restaurant, they're coming to eat the food, something authentic?

[0:13:40.8]

Rodriguez: Yeah, yeah.

[0:13:41.4]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:13:42.1]

Rodriguez: Exactly.

[0:13:42.6]

Delerme: So they're supporting the restaurant?

[0:13:43.8]

Rodriguez: They're supporting the restaurant.

[0:13:45.0]

Delerme: That's important too.

[0:13:46.1]

Rodriguez: Yeah. Basically, we have the restaurant open for everybody, so we have the Latino population that they like it. That's why we decide to open something with real food that people know. They know from the country they was born, you know, so they already know the food. In my experience, so I have to travel forty-five minutes to eat some good tacos, you know.

[0:14:16.2]

Delerme: Wow. Forty-five minutes beforehand?

[0:14:18.0]

Rodriguez: Mm-hmm.

[0:14:18.6]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:14:19.8]

Rodriguez: So we are open here for all the Latino community, for everybody, for everybody, yeah, yeah, because we have a lot of customers. We have a lot of customers from Hispanic community. Everybody is starting to know where we located at, but people like it, people like it, yeah.

[0:14:43.7]

Delerme: Okay. So if you were to think back to your childhood—you mentioned your childhood and wanting real, authentic Mexican food—what is the kind of food you grew up eating? What were the tacos like, for instance, for someone who doesn't know real, authentic Mexican tacos? Here you have a lot of Tex-Mex. What was in it? What was it like for you growing up and the food that you remember that you love? What were some of the favorite dishes?

[0:15:06.8]

Rodriguez: Well, actually, one of my favorite dishes, you know, most of the Hispanic community, they like tacos. I like fish tacos and shrimp tacos. That's one of my favorite things, fish. I like fish, and fish tacos are real good, and the shrimp tacos. Yeah, I can eat that every day—

[0:15:23.9]

Delerme: Wow.

[0:15:24.6]

Rodriguez: —and I'm not tired of it. [laughs]

[0:15:25.4]

Delerme: Wow, wow. Okay, okay, okay. So those are good memories for you?

[0:15:29.0]

Rodriguez: Mm-hmm, yeah.

[0:15:30.0]

Delerme: And in Mexico City, were you able to get those?

[0:15:31.6]

Rodriguez: Mexico City and Baja California also.

[0:15:35.1]

Delerme: Baja's really popular, the seafood.

[0:15:36.7]

Rodriguez: Mm-hmm.

[0:15:37.0]

Delerme: Okay. I can see with the seafood and Baja, it's really the connection.

[0:15:43.5]

Rodriguez: So now I'm trying to give all the people to try—we made some different food for the customer so they can try out, so we give them little samples. About the fish taco I like to tell them what's coming in it, what we put on it.

[0:16:02.9]

Delerme: And how does it come? What do you put on a fish taco, for people who don't know, if it's something new to them?

[0:16:10.7]

Rodriguez: Well, the fish taco we made on a flour or corn. I like with corn.

[0:16:15.5]

Delerme: With the corn tortilla.

[0:16:16.3]

Rodriguez: Yes. But a lot of people choose flour. That also is very good flavor. That will give a good flavor. And the fish taco we can make with a grilled fish or a fried fish. I like grilled fish on the taco.

[0:16:30.7]

Delerme: What kind of fish do you use usually?

[0:16:33.2]

Rodriguez: We use whitefish for the tacos.

[0:16:37.6]

Delerme: A whitefish, okay.

[0:16:38.3]

Rodriguez: Yes, we use whitefish for the tacos.

[0:16:39.6]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:16:41.2]

Rodriguez: I like grill, so I grill the fish with seasonings, because we prepare the own seasonings for the meat. We prepare the seasonings for the fish. So we have our shakers in the kitchen for beef, for seafood, so we put the seasonings on it, and we have cabbage, pico de gallo, lettuce—I mean, no, no, not lettuce. Pico de gallo is tomatoes, onions, and cilantro. A lot of people, they don't know what the cilantro is, you know—

[0:17:12.8]

Delerme: Nope.

[0:17:13.1]

Rodriguez: —but it’s real good and the flavor is very good. It got a very good flavor. So I tell my customers if they do like to try the cilantro, say, “Okay, why not?” And people like it. People like it. That’s one of the things that I’m very happy, because, I mean, this weekend I was here Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 9:00 o’clock till 10:00 o’clock, so I been here for thirteen hours Friday, thirteen hours Saturday, and thirteen hours on Sunday—

[0:17:42.9]

Delerme: Wow.

[0:17:43.7]

Rodriguez: —making sure that the people like the food, making sure that all the customers, they’re satisfied what they order. And most of the things, they know what they want to eat, you know, because I like to tell them, “We have this, we have that, and if you like burritos, we have this kind of burritos. If you like tacos, we have this kind of tacos. If you like fish, we have this kind of fish, cook it this way.” You know, people like when you talk to them and when you tell them all—that probably is just like something that they appreciate, that you take one or two minutes from your time and tell them about the menu, you know, and how \ you prepare the food. Like I tell all my

customers, “You will like it. If for any reason you don’t like the food or something, so, I mean, you need to feel free to let me know or let anybody know that you don’t like it because this or this, and, I mean, we more than happy to give you another plate, you know. I mean, we want you to be happy. That’s why we are here. We want you to be happy, we want you to eat, and the most important thing is that we want you to come back again.” And people like a lot those kind of small details, you know, that you take time, talk to them a little bit, so they like it.

I have good experiences Friday, Saturday, and Sunday with the people that I’ve been working here with my employees and with the customer. So, I mean, the people that they come this weekend, so basically I’m trying to make them feel like they’re at home, you know. It’s not like you go into any restaurant, sit down, and if you’re going by yourself, you sit down and not talk to anybody. But I trying to start a conversation with them and talk to them about the food, about a lot of stuff, you know, and people like that and they come back again. And by the next time that they come back to eat at the restaurant, so they don’t see you like the manager; they see you like your friend or something. So that’s one of the most important things that I like to do for people, let them feel like they’re at home, you know.

[0:20:11.9]

Delorme: Okay, okay. So you start to build relationships with your customers—

[0:20:14.2]

Rodriguez: Yeah, yeah.

[0:20:14.8]

Delerme: —and you're seeing people coming back now?

[0:20:15.8]

Rodriguez: Yes.

[0:20:16.3]

Delerme: That's fantastic, that's fantastic. So the other thing I was going to ask you, you're a long way from California. How do you preserve, now that you're here in Mississippi, some of your own culture from Mexico? Are there holidays you still celebrate or traditions for your children?

[0:20:31.9]

Rodriguez: Yes, yes, actually, yes. The church, the one what I'm going to, sometimes they do have some activities.

[0:20:44.0]

Delerme: Do they? Oh, that's fantastic.

[0:20:45.8]

Rodriguez: Activities, yeah. We have festivals also. Well, here in Mississippi they do not celebrate a lot like in other parts of the country, like California, Chicago, Houston, or Atlanta, you know.

[0:21:08.7]

Delerme: So they don't do as much?

[0:21:09.9]

Rodriguez: Yeah, they do not do a lot of more celebration. It's because I think the population of the Hispanic community is not too big, you know. But in California, I mean, when it's Independence Day, there's a big, big, big celebration in Los Angeles, Sacramento, everywhere, you know, everywhere, and it's because the population, I think, you know. It's because the population. So we also celebrate—oh, I like to celebrate everything. Like on Fourth of July, I go with my son and tell him, “You know, this is the history, this, this, and this.” I'm trying to tell him a little bit so they know the both cultures, you know.

[0:21:53.3]

Delerme: Okay.

[0:21:54.2]

Rodriguez: And, yes, we have Cinco de Mayo celebration, but it's not a big celebration, you know. For this when they say, “Celebrate,” okay, let's celebrate. [laughs]

[0:22:11.0]

Delerme: Right, right, right.

[0:22:12.3]

Rodriguez: You know?

[0:22:12.5]

Delerme: Okay. And how about the food at these different events? What types of food is it? Is it the tacos that people eat or is it something different?

[0:22:19.0]

Rodriguez: Yes, actually, when we have the festivals at church or something, it's just real Mexican food. When I'm saying "real," I'm saying just because there's another kind of food, you know, that people cook at home that probably nobody knows that they can cook it the other way.

[0:22:43.6]

Delerme: Like what? Can you give me some examples? Are there things that you know how to make that you bring?

[0:22:48.6]

Rodriguez: Yeah. For example, one of the things that I really like, I remember my grandma, for breakfast she used to cook for me scrambled eggs mixed with corn tortillas.

[0:23:02.9]

Delerme: With corn tortillas? Oh, interesting. But, it's delicious if you mix it together.

[0:23:07.9]

Rodriguez: Yeah, yeah. And they do cook—for example, they can cook pork meat or chicken, like mole. I mean, a lot of people don't know what the mole is, and like traditional. That's very, very traditional on Mexico, the mole. That can be green mole or red mole. And what else? And there's a lot of stuffs, a lot of different stuffs—

[0:23:44.3]

Delerme: There's a lot of things.

[0:23:45.1]

Rodriguez: —and those days, when we do the activities from church, so people cooks different kind of food for everybody.

[0:23:54.6]

Delerme: Okay. And everyone just kind of brings different dishes and you share?

[0:23:56.6]

Rodriguez: Yeah, yeah, everybody brings and shares, yeah. It's very good. But we share, but we sell the food too.

[0:24:06.3]

Delerme: Oh, really?

[0:24:07.5]

Rodriguez: But the food is—I mean, all the money collected is from some donations for church.

[0:24:14.1]

Delerme: Oh, that's fantastic. What's the name of the church?

[0:24:15.9]

Rodriguez: I'm going to Christ of King, not very far from here.

[0:24:21.6]

Delerme: That's not far. Okay, that's fantastic they do that. So how about for your kids? How's it been growing up in the South now as opposed to California? Has it been challenging for them?

[0:24:30.2]

Rodriguez: No, actually no, because my son is just about two years old, so he's very little, so—

[0:24:34.4]

Delerme: Oh, okay, so he doesn't know.

[0:24:37.0]

Rodriguez: —he doesn't know. He doesn't know.

[0:24:38.5]

Delerme: [laughs] Okay. So it's hard for the parents, harder to get adjusted and adapt than—okay. So he'll grow up here from childhood. Southern, no? [laughs]

[0:24:47.3]

Rodriguez: Southern.

[0:24:47.9]

Delerme: Okay, okay.

[0:24:50.0]

Rodriguez: Try to stay away from big cities and—

[0:24:52.7]

Delerme: Are you?

[0:24:54.5]

Rodriguez: —all violence and all that stuff.

[0:24:56.4]

Delerme: Yes, yes.

[0:24:57.1]

Rodriguez: Especially in the school.

[0:24:58.5]

Delerme: Do you find challenges in the schools around here with violence or more in Memphis?

[0:25:03.4]

Rodriguez: More in Memphis.

[0:25:04.5]

Delerme: Memphis it's more of the problem? Okay, okay. So here it's a little calmer and whatnot. Okay, okay. Do you find any similarities culturally between California, what you lived there, or Mexico City and then here?

[0:25:19.7]

Rodriguez: Yeah, yeah, total different.

[0:25:22.0]

Delerme: It is totally different for you? Okay.

[0:25:23.4]

Rodriguez: Here, yes, but California and Mexico, it's almost about the same.

[0:25:28.1]

Delerme: Really?

[0:25:28.8]

Rodriguez: Mm-hmm.

[0:25:29.8]

Delerme: Okay. How so? Just the culture?

[0:25:32.4]

Rodriguez: It's because the population, I guess, yeah. It's because the population in California is—I am not sure exactly what's the population. Most in the south, on Southern California there is a lot of Hispanic community, and that's why you feel like you're in Mexico, because you got your family, you got your aunt, other aunt, you got

family, friends. Even if you go into someone's house, they always cook at home, you know, and they invite you to eat, and it's the same kind of food that our family in Mexico cook over there. So basically it's about the same, it's about the same, and the culture is about the same also, because they trying to conserve all those values and show it to the kids, you know. But from California and Mexico to Mississippi is big difference.

[0:26:37.7]

Delerme: It's a big difference for you. Okay.

[0:26:38.9]

Rodriguez: It's a big difference, yes.

[0:26:39.7]

Delerme: And why, what made you choose, of all the places, what made you choose to come here to Mississippi?

[0:26:45.2]

Rodriguez: Actually, it was just a vacation trip.

[0:26:49.2]

Delerme: Really?

[0:26:50.1]

Rodriguez: Yeah.

[0:26:51.6]

Delerme: Okay. And it turned into something different.

[0:26:53.2]

Rodriguez: It was just a vacation trip that I went to Memphis. I have some family in Memphis, and I was staying for Christmas, and I stay here for about a month, and I went to Florida because I got some friends and family living in Florida also. So I took about two months' vacation, and when I got here, my family, you know, it was very hard to go back, but I didn't like it to stay here too much, but I said, "Well, I want to try something different, you know. A change in life, that always good." And I say, "Well, if I don't like at any point, so I'm just go back and go home." But, you know, with all this stuff, the violence in the cities, I decide to move to Mississippi, and I like it better. It's a small place, town, kind of quiet, and the people is real, real cool.

[0:28:02.3]

Delerme: Okay, okay. So it's been a positive experience overall?

[0:28:05.0]

Rodriguez: Yes.

[0:28:06.1]

Delerme: And at home you're able to cook with your wife and preserve some of the food there, and the kids get to try it eventually as they get older?

[0:28:12.7]

Rodriguez: And we enjoy more to go to California for vacation. We going maybe now one week or two weeks.

[0:28:21.4]

Delerme: Oh, okay.

[0:28:22.2]

Rodriguez: We stay there for a week or two weeks—no, maybe most of the time, two weeks, two weeks or three weeks, and just go see friends, go to the places I used to go, you know, and come back.

[0:28:34.6]

Delerme: Okay, okay, okay. That's fantastic.

[0:28:37.3]

Rodriguez: It's good because here there is not a lot of stuff, I mean a lot of stuff to do, and at any point so you can save a little bit more money.

[0:28:51.1]

Delerme: Sure. That is true.

[0:28:54.0]

Rodriguez: And if you save the money little bit more and take a two- or three-week vacations, come back, I mean, you enjoy your vacation and you come back home, so you start doing the same thing and thinking about you're going to take another vacation trip, and you're still working, and it's better. I like that, because when I used to live in California, I remember that every day, even from Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, weekdays or weekends, so there is always a lot of stuff to do, a lot of places to go, and the money just go away so fast.

[0:29:30.6]

Delerme: [laughs] Yes, yes, absolutely.

[0:29:32.6]

Rodriguez: Yeah.

[0:29:33.1]

Delerme: Absolutely. That's a positive here. That's definitely a positive, definitely a positive. Are there any other things you'd like to add to the interview, questions I maybe didn't ask you in terms of why this location, things about the business, goals? I know the goal maybe is to have more in the future of the same restaurant, like a franchise. Is there

anything else that people who have never been here before should know about the food or about you?

[0:30:00.4]

Rodriguez: Well, yeah. The food here is—many people this weekend that I was talking to them, they say that, “Oh, you know, I’ve been on a lot of Mexican restaurants around the area, and I know all of them, but I like here because, I don’t know,” they say, “what I like here because, I mean, the food is good. It’s a little different, but it’s good. The food is good.” You know?

[0:30:31.9]

Delerme: Mm-hmm.

[0:30:32.6]

Rodriguez: Well, here in Mississippi, I am not sure, but I don’t see any other places around the area to sell the food that we sell. I mean, you go to maybe another place, California, I mean, there is a lot of restaurants of this kind on every corner, you know, but here it’s not as many, and people say that they like it, and they say, “Oh, this going to come to be my favorite restaurant.” So that’s what I like to hear, you know.

[0:31:02.6]

Delerme: Yes, of course, of course.

[0:31:03.8]

Rodriguez: Because we offer Mexican food with seafood also, with Baja recipes, and it's a little bit—it's good, you know, because we have a little bit of everything. Thinking about the Hispanic community also, we have some real tacos, and they love it. We have a torta. Torta is like a po' boy, a Mexican style of po' boy. It's big, it's big, and people like it.

[0:31:42.0]

Delerme: And what comes inside of it?

[0:31:42.8]

Rodriguez: Cheese, breaded chicken, ham. You got chorizo.

[0:31:51.8]

Delerme: Okay. A lot of choices.

[0:31:52.5]

Rodriguez: A lot of chorizo. And a lot of people want to add egg, you know, like a fried egg or a scrambled egg or steak. Sometimes I've been in other restaurants, and I like to eat something, and I want to substitute this for this, and they say, "Oh, well, we cannot substitute this for this or it's going to be an upcharge for do that," you know. And that's why we have here that you can create your own burrito. So we have a lot of meats, cheese, vegetables, rice, beans, so they can build the burrito the way they like it. So if

they want rice and beans with meat or whatever, so, I mean, whatever they tell us to put in the burrito, we do it.

[0:32:47.9]

Delerme: You do it. Okay.

[0:32:48.8]

Rodriguez: And people like that, you know, because some people, they don't like the way it comes, so they want—

[0:32:53.4]

Delerme: Their own way.

[0:32:55.0]

Rodriguez: —a different way, and people like it. People like that.

[0:32:58.3]

Delerme: Okay, okay. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

[0:33:01.5]

Rodriguez: No.

[0:33:02.1]

Delerme: Good. Well, thank you so much for you time.

[End of interview]