



Tio's Restaurant

A strong sense of family permeates Tio's Restaurant, not only because of the multitudes of families that dine there frequently, but also because the business has been family oriented throughout its 50-year history.

Yes, you heard it right. Tio's celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. General Manager Jordyn Hinkle says a "large celebration" is being planned for the end of August. It's a good bet that the food will be delicious.

Named the Chamber's Business Spotlight for August, Tio's began in 1973 as yet another adventure for John Burns, great uncle to current owners Thomas Vaughn and Matt Venable. Tio's, in fact, is Spanish for "Uncle."

Burns returned to his hometown of Pauls Valley after a 30-year career in various positions in the federal government. His first stint was six years with the U.S. Department of State as Vice-Consul in Mexico – perhaps where he first dreamed of serving up great Mexican cuisine. He went on to serve in Brazil, Central Africa and Washington, D.C. He was named to the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1979.

Once back in Pauls Valley, Burns opened a restaurant -- first called Casa Rosa and originally a small farmhouse -- with the help of the Sondon family and the Venzuela family. Due to its popularity, the restaurant moved to its current location at Indian Meridian Road and Highway 19 in 1979. The new name Tio's was incorporated then as well. Mayella Sondon, who serves as kitchen manager today, has worked there for four decades.

Hinkle says the Sondon family continues to help make the restaurant the ongoing success that it is. Burns' niece Marsha Densmore and nephew Burns Densmore led the restaurant for years before handing it down to Thomas and Matt, Marsha's sons.

Fast forward a few years and today Tio's employes 30 crew members who serve between 200 and 300 diners every day. They come for the variety of great dishes that fills Tio's menu and that gets augmented by new specials offered frequently.

Besides feeding families, the restaurant also caters both food and drink. They enjoy accommodating private events and business gatherings. Their food is also delivered through Door Dash.

"We're so glad the Pauls Valley and Oklahoma history includes Tio's history and we look forward to many more years of serving up great food," Hinkle says.

The restaurant is located at 1960 W. Grant.