

Gourmet Gringos take Aurora by storm



By Brock Weir

It's not every day someone shows up at your door with a truck bearing tacos, but that is just what happened in a number of Aurora locations last week as the Gourmet Gringos came into town.

The Gourmet Gringos, the brainchild of an Aurora couple, started life as a wildly successful food truck serving authentic Latin cuisine in two Toronto locations. But, as they started to look for new concepts to share their flavours, they turned their attentions closer to home.

"This will be our first concept store, and it is a new concept in restaurants," explains co-founder Krystian Catala. "It is takeout at lunch and then at 5 p.m. it converts to a whole sit-down restaurant. We take our menu, add starters, main courses, and cover a full dinner menu. If you want anything from the dinner menu, you have to sit down and eat it at the restaurant.

Catala, who originally hails from Ecuador, was born to an Argentinian father and an Ecuadorian mother, and has used these influences, as well as experience from his travels throughout South and Central America, to enhance their cuisine.

Empanadas of Argentina are a big hit, and one of the main inspirations behind opening up a food truck in the first place.

"We decided to open up a food truck in June of 2012 to bring good Latin and Mexican food to Toronto," he says. "There are people who do tacos, but we decided to do empanadas and a bunch of other stuff. Soon there was a lot of hype. Catering was busy. We had two mobile locations at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and the International Centre and the demand was there.

"People on Twitter and Facebook asked whether we would be coming up to Aurora, Richmond Hill or Newmarket and it was really overwhelming. I wished we could be there all the time, but the food truck wasn't really feasible outside of Toronto, serving lunch in Aurora or King City. A standalone location where people could come in for lunch or dinner would be a better model for the suburbs and so we brought the brand up here because my wife was born and raised in Aurora for her whole life, we bought our house up here, my son was born here, and I am an Auroran at heart."

Their eye-catching orange and black food truck turned heads as it drove into the heart of Aurora to begin a two day awareness campaign within the community, before setting up shop in their new location in the Home Depot plaza just north of Bayview and Wellington.

Their first stop was the Neighbourhood Network offices on Yonge Street where people, including Mayor Geoffrey Dawe and Councillor John Abel sampled what they had to offer. From there, the food truck stopped at plazas, banks, business offices, and

factories to spread the word and fill some stomachs.

?It is about quality, freshness, and authenticity of what we serve,? says Kristian. ?We use local ingredients and we use sustainable products as well. We have hired two renowned Toronto chefs to head up Aurora and take the reins of the entire cooking and menu development and we will have totally new items we have not offered to anybody, and it is a complete first for the Gringos.?