

Pambazos Take Over!

By Karla Martinez

As we entered La Torta Loca, I traveled back to my home country and recognized the steamy aroma that floated back and forth inside this miniature Mexico City like bees chasing away a nosy child. The booming sound of the TV attacked my ears right away with all the news being stated from “Univision” channel 14. Photographs of monuments and exotic buildings in Mexico City cluttered the walls of the restaurant. You could have a great look of the Aztec pyramids of Teotihuacán even from a large distance. As you stood closer, there appeared a brief description below each photograph. The photograph of the monument to the Mexican Revolution of 1910 also took its place on one of their pale peach walls. As you turned to a 90-degree angle, the photograph of the immense Olympic Stadium caught your attention in an instant.

As I scanned the menu, I realized that they specialize in *antojitos* from Mexico City. Their *huarache*, which is a long thick Mexican corn tortilla, comes with a choice of meat, green or red salsa, shredded cheese, and onions. Don't worry, vegetarians, they also serve *huaraches* with either eggs or cactus.



Besides the *huaraches*, another savory dish is the *tortas*, which is a Mexican sandwich. You have many options to choose from including beef, breaded steak, baked pork ham, chicken, head cheese, ham, linguica, pastrami, pork sausage, egg, sardines, tuna, polish sausage, or bacon. Can you believe all of the combinations you could include in order to get a succulent taste for each? The toasty and crispy *torta* is stacked with fresh-cut lettuce, tomatoes, avocado, jalapeños, onions, cheese and mayonnaise.

All of the dishes looked very appealing. I could not believe how mouthwatering they all were, but the *pambazos* struck me and I could not resist getting one. As I sat waiting for my *pambazo*, my nostrils filled with the steamy, spicy, and delicate aroma released by the ingredients being cooked. The crispy sound when they cracked open the bread let me know that I was going to enjoy a toasty and crunchy meal.

When it arrived at my table, I was staggered at its golden and fluffy bread that had just been dipped in red salsa. It was as though it were an injured patient smeared with blood because of a tragic car accident. The minced potatoes together with the sliced lettuce were disintegrating onto the plate because it had a vast amount of ingredients that the bread could not keep it united. It was like a belly being stuffed with a lot of food that it even ripped open a person's shirt buttons. Its damp texture made my fingers slippery each time I tried to take a bite of my circular *pambazo*. But when I took my first bite, I knew it needed something to complement it, something “picante,” so I went up and asked for extra chili. As it covered the walls of my *pambazo*, it just felt great to keep on munching it.

Little did I know that the word *pambazo* derived from the phrase “pan bazo,” which means brown bread. Did you know that at one time, Pan bazo was actually considered the crudest, most inferior bread? It’s amazing to acknowledge that *pambazos* have been around for about 50 years. *Pambazos* are made differently throughout different places in Mexico, but they originated from Puebla, a city near Mexico City, and have flourished throughout the eastern states of Mexico.

And like the owner Delida Torres said, “People believe that *tortas* or *pambazos* have the same taste throughout the whole country of Mexico, but what they don’t know is that each state has its own style and uses various ingredients when cooking their specialties.”

We are lucky to have a restaurant where they serve delectable dishes from our home country. This restaurant has been around since 1996 and has been serving people for eight years already. I was surprised by the fact that they had started out in a smaller location on International Boulevard. That location was basically a take-out place because they didn’t have any tables or chairs for people to sit in. That’s why they decided to search out and buy a bigger location that provided more space for their needs, and of course to give people a better food alternative.

I chose to spotlight the *pambazo* because not a lot of people know about it, and I believe that they are missing out on a mouthwatering dish. I would definitely recommend that people go and try out its unforgettable and molten flavor. You will want to get more, just like I did. Though the food is great, the service always seemed to be rushed and the staff is not very communicative. They hardly stopped to ask us about the food or how we were doing at least. But don’t let this intimidate you. Go and get your *pambazo*, so that you can know what I’m talking about. See for yourself. La Torta Loca: the crazy place for adventurers who like to try out new wonders.

La Torta Loca
3016 International Blvd., Oakland
510-533-8472

