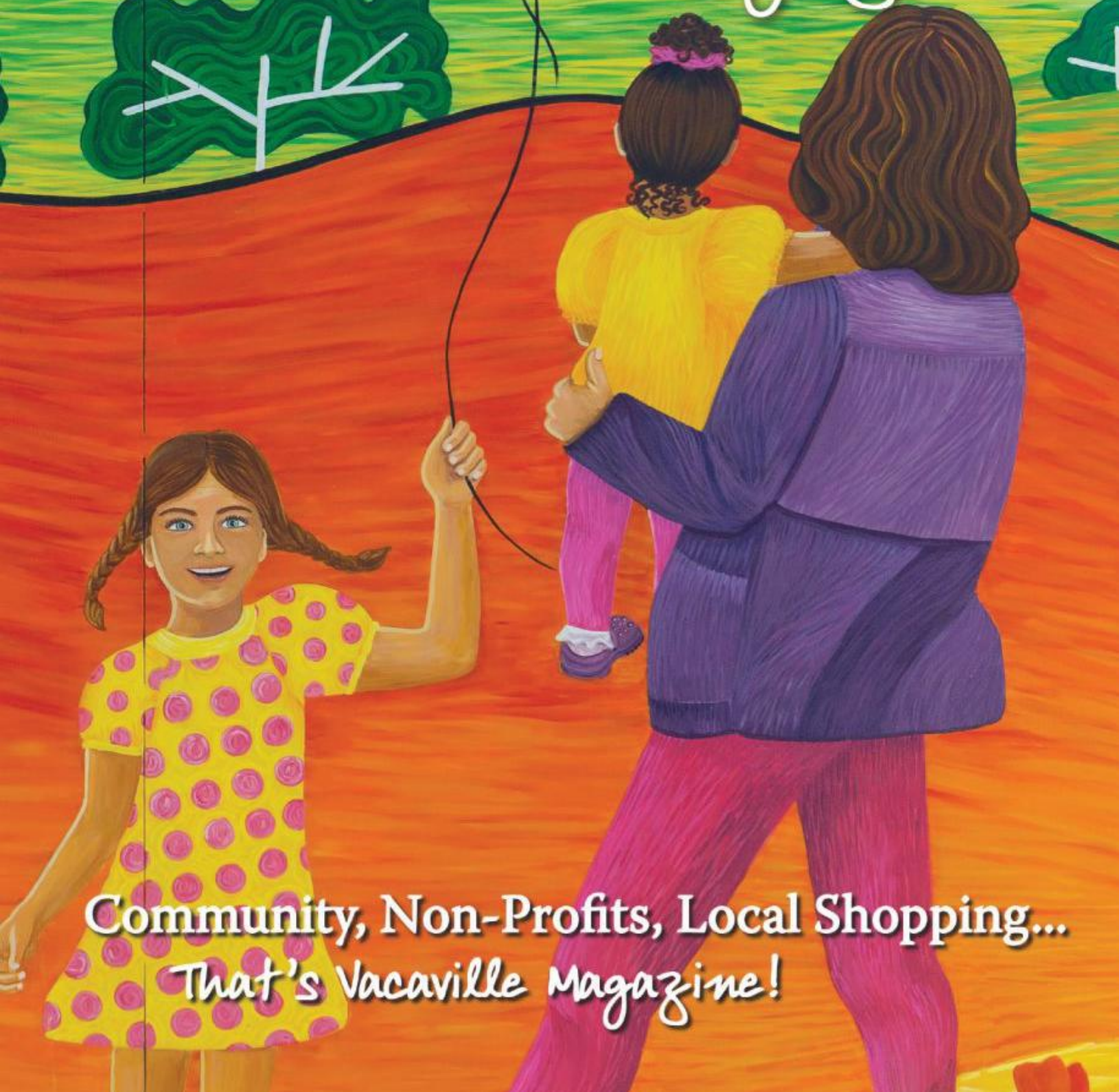


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# Vacaville

magazine

- Martin Luther King Jr.



Community, Non-Profits, Local Shopping...  
That's Vacaville Magazine!



# FAVELA'S MEXICAN GRILL

## VERONICA FAVELA

*Part fashionista, part educator, and every bit the part of a successful entrepreneur.*



Veronica Favela  
Owner, Favela's Mexican Grill

by: Daniel R. Austin

Veronica Favela is a force of nature. Part fashionista, part educator, and every bit the part of a successful entrepreneur, the owner of Favela's Mexican Grill in Vacaville Commons walks into her restaurant after a day of teaching Spanish with the swag of a rock star, carrying an upscale Gucci handbag and briefcase and wearing a crisp pair of designer jeans. After sitting with her for a few minutes, it becomes clear she is driven by a passion for excellence in all aspects of her life—and that she takes this restaurant thing seriously. "We've been here for over 30 years because of pride in the product we produce," Favela said. "It's really the love of the kitchen. To us, it's an art."

Favela had the luck to start her first restaurant while still in college—largely on her own. Her parents helped with capital and her dad had family recipes, but while other college students were looking for frat parties, Veronica was looking at restaurant sites. "I was a business major and knew I didn't want to work for anyone else. This was the easiest thing that I knew would thrive. I knew that I had the recipes and that we could cook," she said. On March 14, 1990, Veronica opened the first Favela's in a 560 square foot store with used equipment in Downtown Fairfield. The restaurant did indeed thrive, and Favela is certain her success came from the approach she took to the food. No lard and big, fat burritos for her. "I knew real Mexico, and real Mexico has really good food. I wanted to make good, homecooked meals that were clean," she said.

Three years later, Veronica opened Favela's Mexican Grill at Vacaville Commons and is one of the original tenants of the shopping center about to celebrate its 30th birthday. "I remember walking these grounds when there were no buildings, just a lot of orchards and dirt. I was excited to be in a place that was going to be new and vibrant." At the Vacaville Commons' location, Favela began to refine her menu. She says that most of her family

recipes come from Northern Mexico, which features a lot of stews. She brags about the authenticity of Favela's Chile Colorado, which she says is hard to find because of the hours demanded for preparation, and the Chile Verde. "A true shredded beef comes from a stew, not beef that is just pulled apart. We take the time to prepare the stew right here," she said. Many of her staff have been with her for 30 years and share her dedication to culinary detail. "I can't just hire a teenager. It takes years just to learn how to make a perfect rice, and then it takes all morning to make it."

In 1998, Favela opened a third iteration of the Mexican Grill on North Texas Street in Fairfield, but she saved her masterwork for a fine dining restaurant called Favela's Fusion that she opened in May of 2008. (Yes. Just before the recession.) The 2,700 square foot restaurant featured a 16-seat bar, furniture that Veronica designed herself (remember her eye for aesthetics), and an entirely new menu that spotlighted cuisine from multiple regions of Mexico. She traveled south of the border with her newly hired chef, visiting with local cooks from all over the country to gather menu ideas that were representative of what was being served in modern Mexico. She even developed a boutique Margarita recipe, organically made, that featured the collection of fine tequilas in her bar. Favela says the restaurant was a smashing success in a city that she terms fast-food central, and for nearly a decade a table at Favela's Fusion was hard to come by. "It was the hottest thing in Fairfield," she said. "And it got us through the recession."

But after nearly ten years, the grind was wearing on Favela. She says it was just hard to balance several restaurants and a growing family. She wanted to spend time with her kids who were about to enter high school, and she wanted the holidays to be about her husband and children.

So, Veronica sold Favela's Fusion in June 2019. (Yes. Eight months before the pandemic hit.) She says people surrounding her could not believe her timing. "I was literally in shock. I told my husband 'Can you imagine what we would have done?'" And while Favela's Fusion got her through the recession in 2008, it was her smaller stores that got her through the pandemic. They were ready built for a take-out model, and Veronica was quick to perfect packaging and presentation for the COVID culture. "I knew we could do it. This is our thing, to-go food. But I wanted to do it better. I wanted the taste and the color and the texture and the plating to look just like it does in the restaurant. We modified everything to make it faster, and we took off." Which isn't surprising. Considering that Veronica Favela is a force of nature. ■

Favelas is located at 2040 Harbison Drive, Suite F in Vacaville. They can be reached by calling 707-447-1120 or visit [www.FavelasMexican.com](http://www.FavelasMexican.com)

### Mountains or beach?

Beach. The sound takes me away from the craziness of the restaurant.

### What's your favorite appliance?

The refrigerator.

### What is one of your important accomplishments?

The National Hispanic Chamber of Commerce named me Top Female Latina Entrepreneur.

### What's your best dish that you cook at home?

I love Italian. I make good meatballs with a mix of three meats. And I make good lasagna.

### Flip flops or heels?

Heels. I love fashion. Fashion and interior design are two of my things. That's what I loved about my fusion restaurant. Everyone would come in and just stare at the design. Some even asked if I could do this for their homes.

### What would I find in your fridge?

Lots of fruit and vegetables.

### Who is your favorite superhero?

Superwoman. She has lots of power and strength.

### What advice do you have for a new entrepreneur?

Make sure it's something that you love to do. That you really have pride in it. In order to be successful, you really have to dive into it. It's not enough to open a restaurant because you love to cook. It takes passion.



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