



# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: July 22, 2024

## EL FARO RESTAURANT INC.

*Application No.:* LBR-2023-24-045  
*Business Name:* El Faro Restaurant Inc.  
*Business Address:* 2399 Folsom St.  
*District:* District 9  
*Applicant:* Raymunda Ramirez, Owner  
*Nomination Date:* May 28, 2024  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Hillary Ronen  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

El Faro Restaurant Inc. (DBA El Faro) is a Mexican Restaurant serving authentic Mexican food, founded by Febronio Ontiveros at 2399 Folsom Street in September 1961. Opened at the corner of 20th Street and Folsom in the Mission District, the restaurant remains at its original location today.

El Faro, which means “the Lighthouse” in Spanish, is a local family-owned business and an integral part of San Francisco’s history. It is most famously known as the home and originator of the Mission-style “Super Burrito.” A Mission-style burrito is a type of burrito that first became popular during the 1960s in the Mission District. It starts with a large flour tortilla that is wrapped and folded around a variety of ingredients, served in a piece of aluminum foil. Distinguished from other burritos by its large size and inclusion of rice and other ingredients, it has been referred to as one of three major styles of burritos served in the United States, following the earlier, simple burrito consisting of beans, rice, and meat. The Super Burrito precedes the California Burrito, which was developed in the 1980s in San Diego and contains carne asada, cheese, and French-fried potatoes.

Burrito legend has it that Febronio Ontiveros created the first Mission burrito in 1961 at his grocery store on the corner of 20th and Folsom streets. To feed a group of hungry firemen, the lore goes, he slapped some meat, beans, rice, sour cream, salsa, and guacamole on several layered tortillas before rolling them into cylindrical form. El Faro jealously guards its title as the home of the Super Burrito and the progenitor of the Mission-style burrito (disputing La Cumbre’s claims). This dose of history lifts what would otherwise be a run-of-the-mill taqueria into a legendary burrito lighthouse worthy of its name. Go for a super burrito — get it ‘el gigante’ if you’re hungry or splitting — or try the chorizo breakfast burrito.

In 1999, Febronio Ontiveros became ill and passed away. After his passing, El Faro was briefly under the ownership of the City and County of San Francisco and was subsequently purchased by an unknown buyer. Following Febronio’s death, ties between the different locations of El Faro were lost. In 2007, Raymunda Ramirez and her husband Patrick Kocourek purchased the original El Faro business at 2399 Folsom Street. Their ownership of that location continues today, and it is the only location seeking inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

### CRITERION 1

**Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?**

#### Legacy Business Program

Office of Small Business  
City Hall Room 140  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 554-6680  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org  
[www.legacybusiness.org](http://www.legacybusiness.org)





Yes, El Faro Restaurant Inc. has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

- 2399 Folsom St. from 1961 to Present (63 years)
- 625 Mission St. from 1979 or 1980 to 1989 or 1990 (At least 9 years)
- 82 1st St. from 1980 to 1999 (19 years)
- 1200 Polk St. from 1981 to 1999 (18 years)
- 2813 Mission St. from 1982 or 1983 to 1986 or 1987 (At least 3 years)

## CRITERION 2

**Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?**

Yes, El Faro Restaurant Inc. has contributed to the history and identity of the Mission neighborhood and San Francisco.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- The business is associated with authentic Mexican food and is the originator of the Mission-style Super Burrito.
- El Faro founder, Febronio Ontiveros, is significant as the creator of the Mission-style Super Burrito. "The first retail burrito in San Francisco, it can be stated with some confidence, was made and sold on September 26, 1961, exactly one day after Ontiveros and his wife opened a corner grocery store at 2399 Folsom Street. Ontiveros said that on the first day he was open, a group of firemen from a station down the street came in wanting sandwiches. He didn't have any, but the industrious businessman wouldn't disappoint them twice. The next day he was ready with burritos. Soon he made them a staple of the store's growing takeout trade. There were no big tortillas commercially available in those days, so to make the super burrito he overlapped three six-inchers and charged a dollar.
- Over the years, numerous notable people have dined at El Faro, including Dianne Feinstein, actor Lynda Carter (TV's Wonder Woman), musician Linda Ronstadt, guitarist Carlos Santana, football player Joe Montana, musician and actor Vicente Fernández, boxer Roberto Durán, and comedian/actor Cantinflas.
- The three-story, Classical Revival-style, mixed-used building that houses El Faro has been determined to be eligible for the California Register of Historic Places as an individual property through the Showplace Square/Northeast Mission Historic Resource Survey evaluation in 2011. It is a notable pre-earthquake mixed-use building with an altered ground floor commercial space.
- There have been a number of features and articles on El Faro as the originator of the Mission-style Super Burrito, including KTVU Fox 2, Newsweek, SF Eater, Vox and QuickBites: The Mission Burrito on SFGovTV, among others.
- With regard to racial and social equity, El Faro is an immigrant- and minority-owned business that has donated food over the years to high school youth, first responders, hospitals, St. Charles Church and the un-housed. They never turn anyone away for lack of funds. Before and during the COVID pandemic, they donated food to whomever needed it. The restaurant also hired people who lost their jobs during the pandemic.

## CRITERION 3

**Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?**

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Yes, El Faro Restaurant Inc. is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that El Faro Restaurant Inc. qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Home and originator of the Mission-style “Super Burrito.”
- Diagonal blade sign featuring a lighthouse, installed in 1962.
- Interior tilework illustrating San Francisco’s vibrant social life with scenes including some of San Francisco’s most popular, including beaches, the Painted Ladies, a circus, hot air balloon rides and El Faro itself.
- Interior tilework reading “Welcome to the El Faro original.”
- Photographs of the celebrities who have dined at El Faro, including Mexican singer and actor Vicente Fernández, Costa Rican-Mexican actress and television presenter Maribel Guardia, Mexican singer songwriter Joan Sebastian, singer Pepe Aguilar, and actor Lynda Carter.
- Continuing El Faro’s tradition of community engagement.

## **CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS**

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Restaurant featuring Mexican cuisine.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include El Faro Restaurant Inc. currently located at 2399 Folsom St. in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
Legacy Business Program

### **Legacy Business Program**

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# Small Business Commission

Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_

July 22, 2024

## EL FARO RESTAURANT INC.

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*Business Address:* 2399 Folsom St.  
*District:* District 9  
*Applicant:* Raymunda Ramirez, Owner  
*Nomination Date:* May 28, 2024  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Hillary Ronen  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### **Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for El Faro Restaurant Inc., currently located at 2399 Folsom St.**

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included on the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on July 22, 2024, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes El Faro Restaurant Inc. in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at El Faro Restaurant Inc.

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Home and originator of the Mission-style “Super Burrito.”
- Diagonal blade sign featuring a lighthouse, installed in 1962.
- Interior tilework illustrating San Francisco’s vibrant social life with scenes including some of San Francisco’s most popular, including beaches, the Painted Ladies, a circus, hot air balloon rides and El Faro itself.
- Interior tilework reading “Welcome to the El Faro original.”
- Photographs of the celebrities who have dined at El Faro, including Mexican singer and actor Vicente Fernández, Costa Rican-Mexican actress and television presenter Maribel Guardia, Mexican singer songwriter Joan Sebastian, singer Pepe Aguilar, and actor Lynda Carter.
- Continuing El Faro’s tradition of community engagement.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain El Faro Restaurant Inc. on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Restaurant featuring Mexican cuisine.

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I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on July 22, 2024.

---

Katy Tang  
Director

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Ayes –  
Nays –  
Abstained –  
Absent –

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# Legacy Business Registry

# Application Review Sheet

*Application No.:* LBR-2023-24-045  
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*District:* District 9  
*Applicant:* Raymunda Ramirez, Owner  
*Nomination Date:* May 28, 2024  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Hillary Ronen

**CRITERION 1:** Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?  
 Yes  No

2399 Folsom St. from 1961 to Present (63 years)  
625 Mission St. from 1979 or 1980 to 1989 or 1990 (At least 9 years)  
82 1st St. from 1980 to 1999 (19 years)  
1200 Polk St. from 1981 to 1999 (18 years)  
2813 Mission St. from 1982 or 1983 to 1986 or 1987 (At least 3 years)

**CRITERION 2:** Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?  
 Yes  No

**CRITERION 3:** Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?  
 Yes  No

**NOTES:** NA

**DELIVERY DATE TO HPC:** June 18, 2024

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 9



City and County of San Francisco

## HILLARY RONEN

May 28, 2024

Richard Kurylo, Legacy Business Program Manger  
Legacy Business Program, San Francisco Office of Small Business

Dear Mr. Kurylo:

I am writing a letter of nomination in support of El Faro Restaurant, located at 2399 Folsom Street, for legacy business recognition. El Faro is historic for creating the Mission-style super burrito that has been replicated throughout the Mission and the U.S.!

El Faro has an incredible legacy, beginning with its first owner Febronio Ontiveros, to current owner Raymunda Ramirez, who began working at the establishment as a line cook. We are so fortunate to have Raymunda and her husband Patrick Kocourek purchase the business and continue the legacy that Febronio began in 1961. El Faro has been lauded for years for creating the iconic Mission-style super burrito that attracts so many tourists and food-lovers to not just El Faro, but the entire Mission District.

Earlier this year, the beautiful and historic mural outside of El Faro, which was first painted in 1987 by Michael Rios, was painted over. This literal erasure of the history and legacy of the site was painful for many of the neighbors and El Faro patrons – it is more critical then ever before that we honor and sustain the legacy of El Faro and include them in the City's Legacy Business Registry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hillary Ronen".

Hillary Ronen  
Supervisor, District 9



# Legacy Business Registry Application



## Business Information

**Business name:** El Faro Restaurant Inc.

**Business owner name(s):** Raymunda Ramirez

*Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business*

**Current business address:** 2399 Folsom St., San Francisco, CA 94110

**Telephone:** ( 415 ) 647 - 3716      **Email:**

**Mailing address (if different than above):**

**Website:**

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/p/El-Faro-100063836010158/>      **Twitter:**

**7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN):** 0 9 5 7 6 6 8

**Do any of these describe your business?** (select all that apply)  
*Requires at least 51% of the business be owned, operated, and controlled by the business designation below.*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Immigrant-Owned Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Owned by Person with a Disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQ+-Owned Business               | <input type="checkbox"/> Veteran-Owned Business            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minority-Owned Business* | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Woman-Owned Business   |

*\*Minority is defined as one or more of the following racial or ethnic groups: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latino; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander*

## Contact Person Information

**Contact person name:** Raymunda Ramirez

**Contact person title:** Owner

**Contact telephone:** (   ) -      **Contact email:**



## Business Location(s)

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business.

If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address.

**Original San Francisco address:** 2399 Folsom St. **Zip Code:** 94110

**Is this location the founding location of the business? (Y/N):** Y

**Dates at this location:** **From:** September 25, 1961 **To:** Present

**Other address (if applicable):** 625 Mission St. **Zip Code:** 94105

**Dates at this location:** **From:** 1979 or 1980 **To:** 1989 or 1990

**Other address (if applicable):** 82 1st St. **Zip Code:** 94105

**Dates at this location:** **From:** Circa September 11, 1980 **To:** 1999 (Ownership change)

**Other address (if applicable):** 1200 Polk St. **Zip Code:** 94109

**Dates at this location:** **From:** Circa 1981 **To:** 1999 (Ownership change)

**Other Address (if applicable):** 2813 Mission St. **Zip Code:** 94110

**Dates at this location:** **From:** 1982 or 1983 **To:** 1986 or 1987

**Other address (if applicable):** **Zip Code:**

**Dates at this location:** **From:** **To:**

Applicant Disclosures

**San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.**

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Name: *Raymunda Ramirez*

Signature: *Raymunda Ramirez*

Date: *10-12-23*

# EL FARO RESTAURANT INC.

## Written Historical Narrative

### INTRODUCTION

#### a. Describe the business. What does it sell or provide?

El Faro is a Mexican restaurant that serves authentic Mexican food and is the originator of the San Francisco Mission-style "Super Burrito." El Faro is proud to be a local family-owned business and an integral part of San Francisco's history. At El Faro, you'll receive superior service and personalized attention.

#### b. Describe whom the business serves.

El Faro serves residents from the Mission neighborhood, locals from throughout San Francisco, first responders, and tourists. Generations of families have eaten here. They are like family!

#### c. In about 2-5 words (15-30 characters), describe what the business is known for.

Founder of the "Super Burrito."

### **CRITERION 1: The business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years**

#### a. Provide a short history of the business, including locations and owners.

El Faro Restaurant Inc. (DBA El Faro) was established on September 25, 1961, by Febronio Ontiveros who was a hard worker, an entrepreneur, and great at making connections with people. "El Faro" means "The Lighthouse" in Spanish. El Faro was founded at 2399 Folsom Street at 20th Street in the Mission, where the business is still located today. It was originally a grocery store and delicatessen. Per old telephone directories, the official name of the business appears to have been "El Faro Grocery"; per a historic photograph, the signage of the business read "El Faro Delicatessen."

Circa 1979 or 1980, Febronio opened a second location at 625 Mission Street in the South of Market neighborhood. It first appeared in the 1980 telephone directory under the name "El Faro Mexican Foods."

In 1980, Raymunda Ramirez started working at El Faro at 2399 Folsom Street as a line cook. Eventually, Raymunda became the manager of the restaurant.

Circa September 11, 1980, Febronio opened a third location at 82 1st Street in the South of Market neighborhood. It first appeared in the telephone directory in 1981.

Per an August 1981 article in El Bohemio Magazine, Febronio had opened five El Faro locations throughout the Bay Area with a sixth location opening soon in an unmentioned location and three additional unmentioned locations outside of San Francisco planned.<sup>1</sup> It is believed that the fourth location was 780 El Camino Real in Millbrae (circa 1980), and the fifth location was 2280 Monument Blvd. in Concord (also circa 1980). The sixth unmentioned location that opened in late 1981 was likely 1200 Polk Street in the Polk Gulch neighborhood, which first appeared in the telephone directory in 1982.

In the 1982 telephone directory, El Faro at 2399 Folsom Street changed from “El Faro Grocery” to “El Faro Mexican Food,” similar to all of the other San Francisco locations.

Circa 1982 or early 1983, a seventh location opened at 2813 Mission Street in the Mission district. It first appeared in the telephone directory in 1983.

Per a C-Span video of Hugo Ontiveros recorded on July 10, 1984, there were eight El Faro locations at the time.<sup>2</sup> Following is an estimated listing of the locations and opening dates:

1. 2399 Folsom Street in the Mission neighborhood (September 25, 1961)
2. 625 Mission Street in the South of Market neighborhood (circa 1979 or 1980)
3. 82 1st Street in the South of Market neighborhood (circa September 11, 1980)
4. 780 El Camino Real in Millbrae (circa 1980)
5. 2280 Monument Blvd. in Concord (circa 1980)
6. 1200 Polk Street in the Polk Gulch neighborhood (circa late 1981)
7. 2813 Mission Street in the Mission (circa 1982 or early 1983)
8. Unknown, but likely not in San Francisco (by July 1984)

In the 1987 telephone directory, the location at 2813 Mission Street was no longer listed, so it possibly closed in 1986 or early 1987.

In the 1990 telephone directory, the location at 625 Mission Street was no longer listed, so it possibly closed in 1989 or early 1990.

On July 1, 1996, per a business license search, another location opened outside of San Francisco at 435 El Camino Real in South San Francisco.

In 1999, Febronio Ontiveros became ill and passed away. After his passing, El Faro was briefly under the ownership of the City and County of San Francisco, then purchased by someone whose first name was Lance and whose surname is unknown. Following Febronio’s death, ties between the different locations of El Faro were lost.

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<sup>1</sup> “La Cadena de Restaurantes ‘El Faro’ Celebra Su 20 Aniversario,” by Jose Bernardo Pacheco, El Bohemio Magazine, August 1981

<sup>2</sup> “El Faro Restaurant,” by C-Span, July 10, 1984, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?124395-1/el-faro-restaurant>

An El Faro restaurant – unrelated to the 2399 Folsom Street location – opened at 346 Kearny Street in the Financial District in 2005 and closed in 2014 per reviews on Yelp.<sup>3</sup>

In 2007, Raymunda Ramirez and her husband Patrick Kocourek purchased the original El Faro business at 2399 Folsom Street. Their ownership of that location continues today, and it is the only location seeking inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Another El Faro restaurant – also unrelated to the 2399 Folsom Street location – opened at 1654 Haight Street in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood in May 2012. It closed in 2015 or 2016.<sup>4</sup> Today, only three other locations of El Faro aside from the restaurant at 2399 Folsom Street are known to exist, but not under the ownership of Raymunda and Patrick:

1. 82 1st Street in San Francisco
2. 2280 Monument Blvd. in Concord
3. 435 El Camino Real in South San Francisco

**b. Provide the ownership history of the business in a consolidated year-to-year format.**

The ownership history of El Faro at 2399 Folsom Street is as follows:

1961 to 1999:	Febronio Ontiveros
1999 to 1999:	City and County of San Francisco
1999 to 2007:	Lance (Surname Unknown)
2007 to Present:	Raymunda Ramirez; Patrick Kocourek

**c. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for any significant length of time.**

El Faro has not ceased operations since the business was established. During the COVID pandemic, the restaurant served food to go for about two years.

**CRITERION 2: The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community**

**a. Describe the business' contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community, business sector, or San Francisco as a whole.**

El Faro is the home and originator of the famous Mission-style "Super Burrito," as well as excellent Mexican food and beverages.

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<sup>3</sup> Yelp, El Faro at 346 Kearny Street, <https://www.yelp.com/biz/el-faro-san-francisco?start=20>

<sup>4</sup> "Haight Street's El Faro is changing hands," by Camden Avery, Hoodline, October 31, 2015, <https://hoodline.com/2015/10/haight-street-s-el-faro-is-changing-hands/>

A Mission-style burrito is a type of burrito that first became popular during the 1960s in the Mission District. It is typically a large flour tortilla that is wrapped and folded around a variety of ingredients, served in a piece of aluminum foil. It is distinguished from other burritos by its large size and inclusion of rice and other ingredients. It has been referred to as one of three major styles of burritos in the United States, following the earlier, simple burrito consisting of beans, rice, and meat. It precedes the California burrito, which was developed in the 1980s in San Diego and contains carne asada, cheese, and French-fried potatoes.<sup>5</sup>

Both El Faro and nearby restaurant La Cumbre claim to be the creator of the Mission-style burrito, but “all signs point to ... El Faro”<sup>6</sup> as the originator of the Mission-style burrito.

“Burrito legend has it that Febronio Ontiveros created the first Mission burrito in (1961) at his grocery store on the corner of 20th and Folsom. To feed a group of hungry firemen, the lore goes, he slapped some meat, beans, rice, sour cream, salsa, and guacamole on several layered tortillas before rolling them into cylindrical form. El Faro jealously guards its title as the home of the Super Burrito and the progenitor of the Mission-style burrito (disputing La Cumbre’s claims). This dose of history lifts what would otherwise be a run-of-the-mill taqueria into a legendary burrito lighthouse worthy of its name. Go for a super burrito — get it ‘el gigante’ if you’re hungry or splitting — or try the chorizo breakfast burrito.”<sup>7</sup>

#### **b. Is the business associated with significant people or events, either now or in the past?**

El Faro founder Febronio Ontiveros is significant as the creator of the Mission-style super burrito. “The first retail burrito in San Francisco, it can be stated with some confidence, was made and sold on September 26, 1961, exactly one day after Ontiveros and his wife opened a corner grocery store at 2399 Folsom Street.... Ontiveros said that on the first day he was open, a group of firemen from a station down the street came in wanting sandwiches. He didn’t have any, but the industrious businessman wouldn’t disappoint them twice. The next day he was ready with burritos. Soon he made them a staple of the store’s growing takeout trade. There were no big tortillas commercially available in those days, so to make the super burrito he overlapped three six-inchers and charged a dollar.”<sup>8</sup>

Over the years, numerous notable people have dined at El Faro, including the following:

- Then-Mayor Dianne Feinstein
- Actor Lynda Carter (TV's Wonder Woman)
- Musician Linda Ronstadt
- Guitarist Carlos Santana

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<sup>5</sup> *Mission burrito*; Wikipedia; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mission\\_burrito](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mission_burrito)

<sup>6</sup> Charles Hodgkins, founder and writer of burrito eater.com; *QuickBites: The Mission Burrito*; SFGovTV; January 9, 2015; <https://youtu.be/GgaM5RjoddQ>

<sup>7</sup> *Where to Find San Francisco’s Most Super-Sized Burritos*; Eater San Francisco; by Lauren Saria, Paolo Bicchieri, and Eater Staff; August 16, 2023; <https://sf.eater.com/maps/burrito-best-san-francisco-mission-taqueria-sf>

<sup>8</sup> *From the Vaults: The History of the Burrito in San Francisco*; SF Weekly; December 4, 2017; [https://www.sfweekly.com/dining/from-the-vaults-the-history-of-the-burrito-in-san-francisco/article\\_ddc1dfb9-2bf3-5a5c-b32e-611f18c27b74.html](https://www.sfweekly.com/dining/from-the-vaults-the-history-of-the-burrito-in-san-francisco/article_ddc1dfb9-2bf3-5a5c-b32e-611f18c27b74.html)

- Football player Joe Montana
- Musician and actor Vicente Fernández
- Boxer Roberto Durán
- Comedian and actor Cantinflas

**c. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?**

El Faro has donated food over the years to high school youth, first responders, hospitals, St. Charles Church, and the homeless. They never turn anyone away for lack of funds. Before and during the COVID pandemic, they donated food to whomever needed it. The restaurant also hired people who lost their jobs during the pandemic.

**d. Has the business ever been referenced in the media, business trade publication, and/or historical documents?**

Over the years, El Faro has been featured in the media as the originator of the Mission-style super burrito. Following are some key media references:

- *"Where to Find San Francisco's Most Super-Sized Burritos"*  
Eater San Francisco  
August 16, 2023  
<https://sf.eater.com/maps/burrito-best-san-francisco-mission-taqueria-sf>
- *"Tracing the delicious history of San Francisco's Mission-style burrito"*  
KTVU Fox 2  
October 3, 2022  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Msg\\_tjvS9Xs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Msg_tjvS9Xs)
- *"9 Best Taquerias in San Francisco's Mission District"*  
Newsweek  
June 2, 2019  
<https://www.newsweek.com/best-tacos-san-francisco-1441044>
- *"How the burrito conquered America"*  
Vox  
May 1, 2015  
<https://www.vox.com/2015/5/1/8525335/burrito-history-invention-america>
- *"QuickBites: The Mission Burrito"*  
SFGovTV  
January 9, 2015  
<https://youtu.be/GgaM5RjoddQ>

**e. Has the business ever received any awards, recognition, or political commendations?**

El Faro has received several awards and recognition over the years, including the following:

- Proclamation for “exemplary public services” from then-Mayor Dianne Feinstein, May 28, 1986
- Corporate Philanthropy Award from United Way, June 8, 1993
- Award from San Jose Flea Market, Salsa Fest, 1995
- Award for “Best Decorated” from San Jose Flea Market, Salsa Fest, 1996
- Award for “Judges Choice” from San Jose Flea Market, Salsa Fest, 1996
- Certificate of Honor from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, November 7, 1986
- First Award and Award of Merit from California State Fair, 2000
- Award for “Top Rated Burrito” from Bay Area Cityvoter, 2017

**f. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?**

The neighborhood would be very sad if El Faro were to close. The Mission and San Francisco would also lose a historic business where the Mission-style super burrito was conceived.

**CRITERION 3: The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business**

**a. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building, structure, object, signage, mural, architectural detail, neon sign, or any other special physical feature that defines the business?**

El Faro has a diagonal blade sign featuring a lighthouse, which was installed in 1962.

El Faro features notable tilework inside the restaurant that shows the city’s vibrant social life. People can be seen eating, talking, and enjoying some of San Francisco’s most popular attractions. This includes beaches, houses representing the Painted Ladies, a circus, hot air balloon rides, and of course El Faro. There are four separate frames of tilework; one being a sign reading “Welcome to the El Faro original.”

The business also features several pictures of the celebrities who have eaten there, including Mexican singer and actor Vicente Fernández, Costa Rican-Mexican actress and television presenter Maribel Guardia, Mexican singer-songwriter Joan Sebastian, singer Pepe Aguilar, and actor Lynda Carter.

**b. In a few words, describe the main business activity you commit to maintaining.**

El Faro is committed to the community and maintaining their famous "Super Burrito."



**c. What is the plan to keep the business open in the long term beyond the current ownership?**

Owner Raymunda Ramirez plans on leaving the restaurant to her children, as they will keep up the tradition of excellent Mexican Food in the Mission neighborhood.

**d. What challenges is the business facing today?**

The challenges are many:

- 1) Decreased business and the state of the economy have really affected their sales.
- 2) Vandalism has become an issue, especially the tagging of El Faro's murals.
- 3) The PG&E bill has skyrocketed and makes it extremely hard on the business.
- 4) The landlord won't negotiate the lease!

---

**Legacy Business Program staff will add the following details:**

**a. Features or traditions that define the business and should be maintained for the business to remain on the Legacy Business Registry.**

Restaurant featuring Mexican cuisine.

**b. Other special features of the business location, such as if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.**

The Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building at 2391-2399 Folsom Street is "A - Historic Resource Present." It appears to be eligible for the California Register as an individual property through survey evaluation in 2011.

The Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building at 82-84 1st Street is "C - No Historic Resource Present."



EL FARO  
DELICATESSEN

EL FARO

PREPARED SANDWICHES  
POUND MEAT  
HONEY BEEF  
TRICORN DE CARNE, BARRICA

SANDWICHES TO GO

EL FARO





50th Anniversary  
SUPER BURRITOS, TACOS

AGRICULTORES  
MEXICAN FOOD  
SINCE 1981

EL FARO  
MEXICAN FAST FOODS

50th Anniversary  
SUPER BURRITOS, TACOS

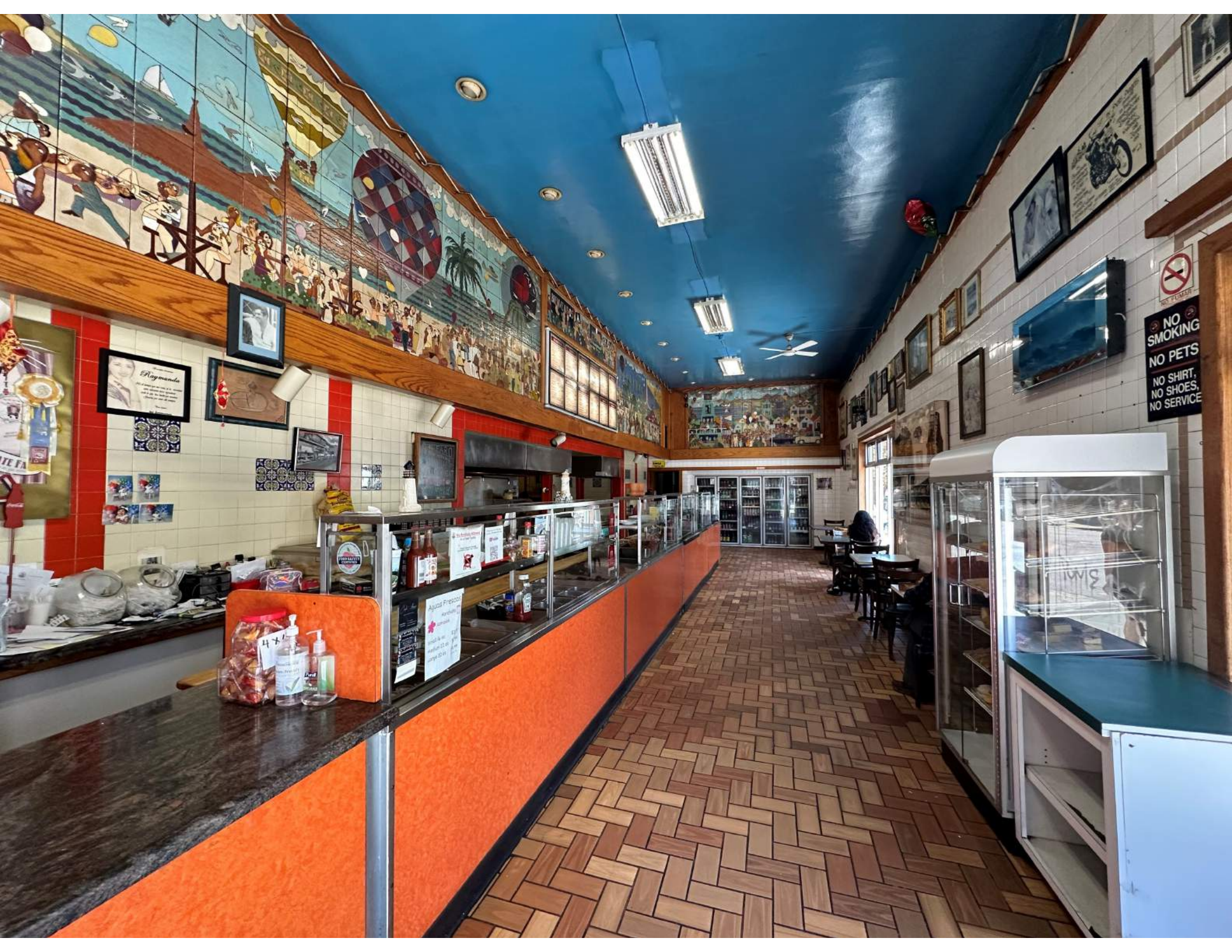
EL FARO



**EL FARO**  
MEXICAN FAST FOODS

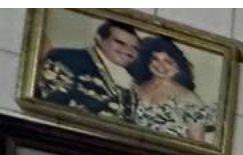
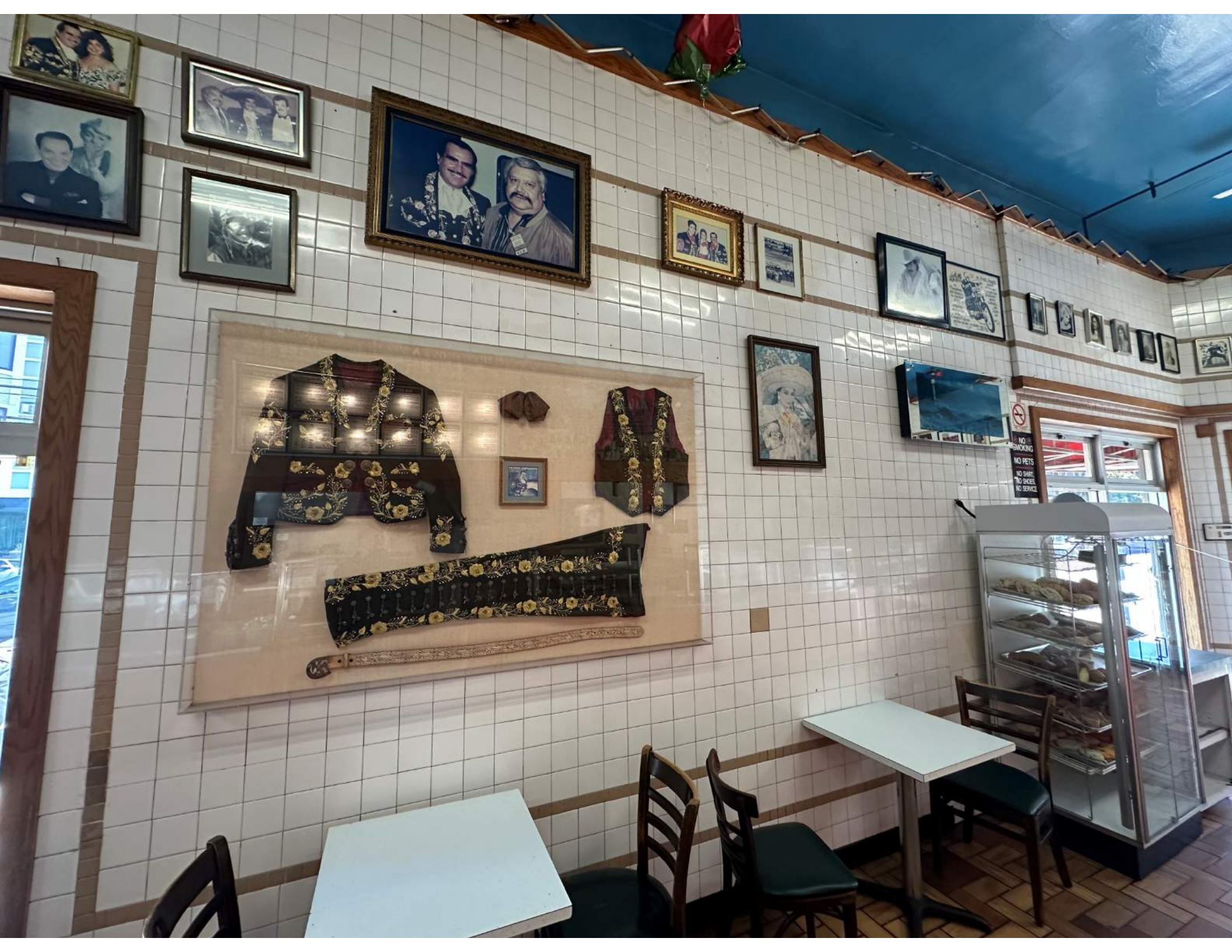
**EL FARO**  
MEXICAN FAST FOODS  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SUPER BURRITOS - TACOS





NO SMOKING  
NO PETS  
NO SHIRT,  
NO SHOES,  
NO SERVICE

Aguas Frescas  
Horchata  
Mojito  
Cajeta  
Limonada  
Tamarindo  
Cajeta  
Limonada  
Tamarindo



NO SMOKING  
NO PETS  
NO SHIRT  
NO SHOES  
NO SERVICE







NO SMOKING





CON LA APERTURA DE SU SEXTO ESTABLECIMIENTO

# LA CADENA DE RESTAURANTES "EL FARO" CELEBRA SU 20 ANIVERSARIO

TEXTO Y FOTOS  
DE JOSE BERNARDO PACHECO

Hace exactamente 20 años nació, con un establecimiento abierto al público en las Calles 20 y Folsom, de San Francisco, lo que hoy conocemos como la Cadena de Restaurantes "El Faro", considerada la más importante de su género, creada y dirigida por una familia de origen hispano que preside Febronio Ontiveros, quien llegó hace 26 años a los Estados Unidos procedente de su tierra natal, San Julian, Estado de Durango, México, reconociéndosele con toda justicia como el pionero de los SUPER BURRITOS.

## UN GRAN EJEMPLO DE TRABAJO Y DEDICACION

La Cadena de Restaurantes "EL FARO" representa un hermoso ejemplo de trabajo incansable, dedicación y originalidad, ya que su crecimiento se debe a la aceptación y predilección de un público conoedor y exigente en cuanto a comida típica y popular se refiere.

"Yo he podido demostrar lo que puede lograrse en este país con una buena idea", nos dice el Señor Ontiveros al respondernos a nuestra pregunta sobre el gran éxito alcanzado con su creación de los SUPERBURRITOS.

Al relatarlos la historia de la Cadena de Restaurantes "El Faro", el señor Ontiveros reconoce que gracias al Departamento de Incendios de San Francisco, su empresa tuvo en sus inicios un rápido crecimiento, que en cierto modo, trazó el camino de éxito que ha logrado en estos 20 años de servir con esmero a sus clientes.

"Un día - nos dice el Señor Ontiveros - llegó un bombero a mi establecimiento a comprar 30 sandwiches para sus compañeros que estaban siendo entrenados al otro lado de la calle, pero en esa época yo no vendía esa clase de alimento, sin embargo le dije que al día siguiente, si podía ofrecerle los sandwiches que sus hombres necesitaran, los bombe-



"EL FARO NUMERO 1". Aquí en las Calles 20 y Folsom de San Francisco, nació hace exactamente 20 años, la Cadena de Restaurantes "EL FARO".

ros me dieron suerte...y así fue como comenzaron a subir rápidamente las ventas".

## EL CREADOR DE LOS SUPERBURRITOS

"En cierta ocasión - recuerda, un empleado mío me sugirió que también ofreciera burritos a nuestros clientes, una comida típica mexicana muy popular, que se prepara con una tortilla de harina de maíz, rellena de carne y frijoles, parecida a la enchilada, pero más grande...pués bien, decidí hacerlos, pero creando mi propia versión: en vez de una tortilla de tamaño corriente, yo utilicé una tortilla de harina de trigo gigante (3 veces mayor que lo normal) a la que le agregué mis propios ingredientes logrando una salsa muy original, creando así los muy apetecibles SUPERBURRITOS, que me han permitido tener muchos éxitos al ofrecerlos en mis establecimientos.

## POR ABRIR EL 6to. ESTABLECIMIENTO

La Cadena de Restaurantes EL FARO, la forman en la actualidad, cinco elegantes establecimientos, que prestan excelentes servicios a su clientela y están localizados en las siguientes direcciones: el primero, en el 2399 de la Calle Folsom; el segundo, en el 625 de la Calle Mission; el tercero, en el 82 de la Primera Calle, todos en San Francisco; el cuarto, en el 780 de El Camino Real, en Millbrae y el quinto, en el 2280 de Monument Boulevard, en Concord. Muy pronto se abrirá el sexto establecimiento para celebrar simbólicamente los 20 años de servir con esmero, higiene y honradez a una distinguida clientela; además, se trabaja intensamente para abrir 3 restaurantes más, fuera de San Francisco, en un esfuerzo por ofrecer a un público más numeroso, la especialidad de la casa, como son los SUPERBURRITOS, que le han dado fama y prestigio.

## EMPRESAS MANEJADAS POR LA FAMILIA

La cadena de Restaurantes EL FARO es dirigida y administrada por la familia Ontiveros, que está integrada por Febronio Ontiveros, su esposa Bertha y sus hijos Hugo y Héctor, de 25 y 23 años de edad respectivamente, quienes han crecido y madurado junto a la empresa, como parte de su organización. Es realmente impresionante la capacidad empresarial con la que cuentan Hugo y Héctor, quienes a tan temprana edad son muy reconocidos y apreciados en nuestra comunidad por sus cualidades sobresalientes, ya que además administran la EMPRESA DE LOS GRANDES ESPECTACULOS, una organización dedicada a la promoción de eventos de gran categoría: teatrales, musicales y artísticos, traídos de México, Centro América y otros países de Sur América, los que son presentados en grandes escenarios como el Civic Auditorio, Hotel Hilton, Cow Palace y el Centro Social Obrero.

## FUENTE DE TRABAJO PERMANENTE

EL FARO ha contribuido notablemente a la creación de fuentes permanentes de trabajo en nuestra comunidad, ya que en la actualidad más de 150 personas trabajan en sus establecimientos, oportunidades de empleos que irá incrementándose en la medida que sigan aumentando de número los restaurantes, cual es el propósito de sus propietarios, la familia Ontiveros.

## ESTACIONAMIENTO PARA LOS CLIENTES

Desde sus comienzos, el restaurante EL FARO de las Calles 20 y Folsom, siempre se mantuvo lleno de clientes, especialmente a la hora del almuerzo, al que llegaban de todas partes de San Francisco en busca de sandwiches y de los novedosos y deli-

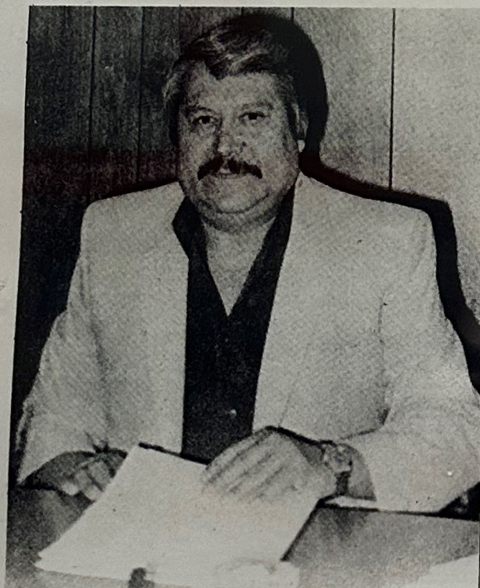
ciosos SUPERBURRITOS, lo que ocasionaba serios congestionamientos en el tránsito de vehículos por esa zona, por lo que fue construido un amplio estacionamiento, en la esquina al frente del establecimiento, exclusivo para nuestros clientes, señala el Señor Ontiveros.

## LA EMPRESA TAMBIEN IMPULSA EL DEPORTE

EL FARO también se ha distinguido por su gran altruismo, al apoyar y promover el deporte en nuestra comunidad. En EL FARO número uno, se exhiben 25 trofeos y muchos diplomas ganados por sus diferentes conjuntos deportivos en las ramas de fútbol juvenil, beisbol y softbol (mayores), que año con año participan en diferentes torneos que se celebran en San Francisco.

## DEDICACION AL TRABAJO

Febronio Ontiveros es un ejecutivo dedicado totalmente a su trabajo, para él, el día comienza a las 6 de la mañana; personalmente supervisa la cocina para garantizar a sus clientes la más alta calidad e higiene de los productos que son utilizados en sus establecimientos. A manera de ejemplo nos informa que sólo en "EL FARO" de las calles 20 y Folsom se emplean semanalmente más de 10 000 libras de carne fresca. Si una persona trabaja en algo con amor, todo tiene que salirle bien, señala Febronio Ontiveros, quien manifiesta no poseer ningún secreto que le haya permitido triunfar en los negocios, sino dedicarse con honestidad y dedicación al trabajo, como lo podemos comprobar conociendo al cadena de restaurantes, por la que en más de una ocasión le han hecho buenas ofertas a la familia para adquirir la parte de una cadena internacional de restaurantes.



"Si una persona trabaja en algo con amor, todo tiene que salirle bien": Febronio Ontiveros.

**The National Restaurant Association  
The Golden Gate Restaurant Association  
and the Chefs Association of the Pacific Coast**

*Extend their sincerest appreciation for your valuable contribution as participant in the 1978 Western National Restaurant Convention Senior Practical Culinary Olympiads Presented to*

**Febronio Ontiveros**

September 1978 San Francisco

*Albert J. Allen* Convention General Chairman  
*Nick S. Gandy* Chairman Culinary Arts  
*Ray Mahony* President Golden Gate Restaurant Assn.

UNO DE LOS MUCHOS DIPLOMAS. Muchos diplomas y trofeos han sido otorgados a la Cadena de Restaurantes "EL FARO" y a su propietario Febronio Ontiveros. Este es uno de ellos.

from "EL BOHEMIO" MAGAZINE AUG. 1981

# EL FARO VIDEOS

JULY 10, 1984

Report Video Issue

## El Faro Restaurant

Hugo Ontiveros talked about his family's restaurant, El Faro, in the Mission District.



## El Faro Restaurant

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?124395-1/el-faro-restaurant>

Recorded on July 10, 1984

Posted by C-Span

Hugo Ontiveros talked about his family's restaurant, El Faro, in the Mission District.



## QuickBites: The Mission Burrito

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgaM5RjoddQ>

Published on January 9, 2015

Posted by [SFGovTV](#)

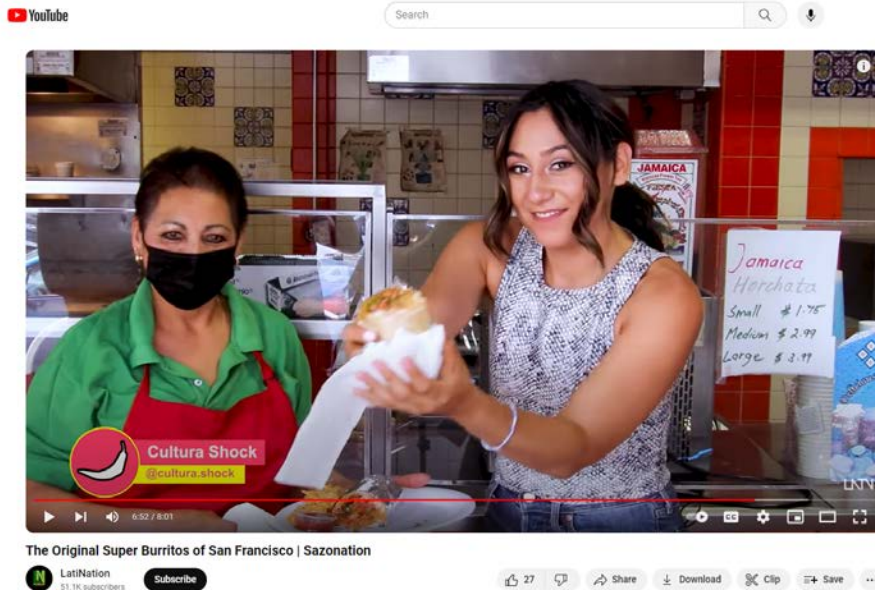
Burritos have become San Francisco's comfort food. Born in the district from which it hails, the Mission-style burrito is as unique as it is filling. Take a look at what makes this foil-wrapped gut-buster so special. Hungry for more? Visit our blog at [t / sfquickbites](#) for tasty recipes, photos from the episode, and scenes from the TakeOut Reel.

Try some Mission burritos for yourself:

El Faro Restaurant -- 2399 Folsom St.

Taqueria La Cumbre (<http://www.taqueriacumbre.com>) -- 515 Valencia St.

Papalote Mexican Grill (<http://www.papalote-sf.com>) -- 3409 24th St.



## The Original Super Burritos of San Francisco | Sazonation

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d\\_h9UD36aNm](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_h9UD36aNm)

Published on September 19, 2021

Posted by [LatiNation](#)

El Faro is the Latina-Owned institution in the heart of San Francisco's Mission District that's been serving up for Supersized (or Mission Style) burritos since 1961. Cultura Shock met with owner Raimunda Ramirez to find out what these delicious, bay-area classics are made of.


From the Cultura Shock Summer Eats Special.

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See more at... LATV.com <http://www.latv.com> Instagram  / [latvnetwork](#)

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FOLLOW Anakaren "AK" López  / [ak\\_spice](#)

Cultura Shock  / [cultura.shock](#)

About Cultura Shock:

Cultura Shock is a variety show that showcases the diverse experiences often overlooked or unbeknownst before in our communities. Follow Anakaren "AK" López as she explores the cultural niches of the Latinx experience as told by Latinx people themselves.

About LATV Network:

LATV Network is the original Latino Alternative and the only remaining Latino-owned TV network in the Hispanic television space. A certified minority-owned, bilingual media company dedicated to highlighting the Latino voices redefining culture.

## Proclamation

WHEREAS: San Francisco is fortunate to number among its citizenry those who have care and concern about our City's well-being, and who are prepared to act immediately on its behalf; and

WHEREAS: FEBRONIO ONTIVEROS, the owner of EL FARO Restaurant in San Francisco's Mission District, is an outstanding example of civic commitment and involvement at its finest; and

WHEREAS: FEBRONIO ONTIVEROS and EL FARO provided food and drink well beyond the call of civic duty to those participating in the Saturday, May 24, clean-up in the Mission District, organized by "San Francisco Alive;" and

WHEREAS: FEBRONIO ONTIVEROS and EL FARO are to be commended for this impressive example of civic initiative, and are most deserving of San Francisco's sincere gratitude and admiration; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT I, Dianne Feinstein, Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco, do hereby warmly thank and commend FEBRONIO ONTIVEROS and EL FARO for exemplary public services and do thank him and his staff for their evident commitment to our community.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City and County of San Francisco to be affixed this twenty-eighth day of May, nineteen hundred and eighty-six.

Dianne Feinstein  
Mayor

City and County of San Francisco

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
PRESENTS THIS

Certificate of Honor

IN APPRECIATIVE PUBLIC RECOGNITION  
OF DISTINCTION AND MERIT, TO

Febronio Ontiveros

In recognition of his hard work and dedication to serve nutritious food to the  
community through his chain of restaurants, "EL FARO."

I HEREBY CERTIFY that this  
certificate was duly authorized pursuant  
to motion adopted by the Board of Supervisors  
of the City and County of San Francisco at its  
meeting held on November 7, 1983

State of California



\_\_\_\_\_  
President of the Board  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk of the Board  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor Henry S. Bolt  
Mayor of District

Celebrating A Tradition of Giving

In Recognition of your  
nomination for the  
Corporate Philanthropy Award

El Jaro Restaurants

Presented June 8, 1993

United Way Annual Dinner



Mother Teresa  
of Calcutta





Miller Genuine Draft presents



THE SAN JOSE FLEA MARKET "WORLD'S LARGEST" SALSAS FEST 1996 JUDGES CHOICE

THE SAN JOSE FLEA MARKET "WORLD'S LARGEST" SALSAS FEST 1996 BEST DECORATED FIRST PLACE

THE SAN JOSE FLEA MARKET "WORLD'S LARGEST" SALSAS FEST 1996

# EL FARO

WHERE THE FIRST  
RETAIL BURRITO WAS  
SOLD IN SAN FRANCISCO  
ON SEPTEMBER 26, 1961

SOURCE: HISTORY OF THE BURRITO.COM  
IF YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS,  
HOW WE COULD BETTER SERVE YOU?  
PLEASE LET US KNOW BY CALLING

415-647-3716





# LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**HEARING DATE: JULY 17, 2024**

*Filing Date:* June 18, 2024  
*Case No.:* 2024-005666LBR  
*Business Name:* El Faro Restaurant Inc.  
*Business Address:* 2399 Folsom Street  
*Zoning:* NC-2 (NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL, SMALL SCALE) Zoning District  
 45-X Height and Bulk District  
*Cultural District:* Not Applicable  
*Block/Lot:* 3593/007  
*Applicant:* Raymunda Ramirez  
 2399 Folsom Street  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Hillary Ronen  
*Located In:* District 9  
*Staff Contact:* Michelle Langlie - 628-652-7410  
 Michelle.Langlie@sfgov.org

**Recommendation:** Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

## Business Description

El Faro Restaurant Inc. (DBA El Faro) is a Mexican Restaurant serving authentic Mexican food, founded by Febronio Ontiveros at 2399 Folsom Street in September 1961. Opened at the corner of 20<sup>th</sup> Street and Folsom in the Mission District, the restaurant remains at its original location today. El Faro, which means “the Lighthouse” in Spanish, is a local family-owned business and an integral part of San Francisco’s history. It is most famously known as the home and originator of the Mission-style “Super Burrito.” A Mission-style burrito is a type of burrito that first became popular during the 1960s in the Mission District. It starts with a large flour tortilla that is wrapped and folded around a variety of ingredients, served in a piece of aluminum foil. Distinguished from other burritos by its large size and inclusion of rice and other ingredients, it has been referred to as one of three major styles of burritos served in the United States, following the earlier, simple burrito consisting of beans, rice, and meat. The Super Burrito precedes the California Burrito, which was developed in the 1980s in San Diego and contains carne asada, cheese, and French-fried potatoes.

Burrito legend has it that Febronio Ontiveros created the first Mission burrito in (1961) at his grocery store on the corner of 20th and Folsom. To feed a group of hungry firemen, the lore goes, he slapped some meat, beans, rice, sour cream, salsa, and guacamole on several layered tortillas before rolling them into cylindrical form. El Faro jealously guards its title as the home of the Super Burrito and the progenitor of the Mission-style burrito (disputing La Cumbre's claims). This dose of history lifts what would otherwise be a run-of-the-mill taqueria into a legendary burrito lighthouse worthy of its name. Go for a super burrito — get it 'el gigante' if you're hungry or splitting — or try the chorizo breakfast burrito.<sup>1</sup>

In 1999, Febronio Ontiveros became ill and passed away. After his passing, El Faro was briefly under the ownership of the City and County of San Francisco and was subsequently purchased by an unknown buyer. Following Febronio's death, ties between the different locations of El Faro were lost. In 2007, Raymunda Ramirez and her husband Patrick Kocourek purchased the original El Faro business at 2399 Folsom Street. Their ownership of that location continues today, and it is the only location seeking inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

## Staff Analysis

### Review Criteria

#### 1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1961.

#### 2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. El Faro Restaurant Inc. qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. El Faro Restaurant Inc. has operated continuously in San Francisco for 63 years.
- b. El Faro Restaurant Inc. has contributed to the history and identity of the Mission neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. El Faro Restaurant Inc. is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

#### 3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art / craft / cuisine / tradition?*

Yes. The business is associated with authentic Mexican food and is the originator of the Mission-style Super Burrito.

#### 4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and / or architecture?*

Yes. El Faro founder, Febronio Ontiveros, is significant as the creator of the Mission-style Super Burrito. "The first retail burrito in San Francisco, it can be stated with some confidence, was made and sold on September 26, 1961, exactly one day after Ontiveros and his wife opened a corner grocery store at 2399 Folsom Street...."

Ontiveros said that on the first day he was open, a group of firemen from a station down the street came in wanting sandwiches. He didn't have any, but the industrious businessman wouldn't disappoint them twice. The next day he was ready with burritos. Soon he made them a staple of the store's growing takeout trade. There were no big tortillas commercially available in those days, so to make the super burrito he overlapped three six-inchers and charged a dollar."<sup>2</sup>

Over the years, numerous notable people have dined at El Faro, including Dianne Feinstein, actor Lynda Carter (TV's Wonder Woman), musician Linda Ronstadt, guitarist Carlos Santana, football player Joe Montana, musician and actor Vicente Fernández, boxer Roberto Durán, and comedian/actor Cantinflas.

The three-story, Classical Revival-style, mixed-used building that houses El Faro has been determined to be eligible for the California Register of Historic Places as an individual property through survey evaluation.

**5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?***

Yes. Per the Showplace Square/Northeast Mission Historic Resource Survey evaluation in 2011, the building appears eligible for the California Register of Historic Places as an individual property through survey evaluation as a notable pre-disaster mixed use building with an altered ground floor commercial space.

**6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?***

No, not as of the date of this Executive Summary.

**7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?***

Yes. There have been a number of features and articles on El Faro as the originator of the Mission-style Super Burrito, including KTVU Fox 2, Newsweek, SF Eater, Vox and *QuickBites: The Mission Burrito* on SFGovTV, among others.

**Racial and Social Equity Analysis**

On July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020 the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission adopted [Resolution No. 1127](#) centering Preservation Planning on racial and social equity. Understanding the benefits, burdens, and opportunities to advance racial and social equity that proposed Preservation Planning documents provide is part of the Department's Racial and Social Equity Initiative. This is also consistent with the Mayor's Citywide Strategic Initiatives for equity and accountability and with the Office of Racial Equity, which required all Departments to conduct this analysis.

The Legacy Business Program is deeply intertwined with these goals. One of the primary purposes of the Legacy Business Program is to maintain San Francisco's cultural fabric and to foster civic engagement and pride by assisting long-operating businesses remain in the city. The Legacy Business Registry was established to recognize longstanding, community-serving businesses that are valuable cultural assets of the city. These businesses, ranging from restaurants to art galleries to tire shops to community shelters, are key to sustaining the racial and social diversity in San Francisco and adding to the identity and character of our city and the many communities within it.

El Faro, an immigrant and minority-owned business, has donated food over the years to high school youth, first responders, hospitals, St. Charles Church and the un-housed. They never turn anyone away for lack of funds. Before and during the COVID pandemic, they donated food to whomever needed it. The restaurant also hired people who lost their jobs during the pandemic.

### **Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business**

#### **Location(s) associated with the business:**

Current Locations:

- 2399 Folsom Street (1961 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 625 Mission Street (1979 – 1990)
- 82 1<sup>st</sup> Street (1980 – 1999)
- 1200 Polk Street (1981 – 1999)
- 2813 Mission Street (1982 – 1987)

#### **Recommended by Applicant**

- Home and originator of the Mission-style “Super Burrito.”
- Diagonal blade sign featuring a lighthouse, installed in 1962.
- Interior tilework illustrating San Francisco’s vibrant social life with scenes including some of San Francisco’s most popular, including beaches, the Painted Ladies, a circus, hot air balloon rides and El Faro itself.
- Interior Tilework reading “Welcome to the El Faro original.”
- Photographs of the celebrities who have dined at El Faro, including Mexican singer and actor Vicente Fernández, Costa Rican-Mexican actress and television presenter Maribel Guardia, Mexican singer-songwriter Joan Sebastian, singer Pepe Aguilar, and actor Lynda Carter.
- Continuing El Faro’s tradition of community engagement.

#### **Additional Recommended by Staff**

- None

### **Basis for Recommendation**

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information

- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative
  - Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
  - Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
  - Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation

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<sup>1</sup> *Where to Find San Francisco's Most Super-Sized Burritos*; Eater San Francisco; by Lauren Saria, Paolo Bicchieri, and Eater Staff; August 16, 2023; <https://sf.eater.com/maps/burrito-best-san-francisco-mission-taqueria-sf>

<sup>2</sup> *From the Vaults: The History of the Burrito in San Francisco*; SF Weekly; December 4, 2017; [https://www.sfweekly.com/dining/from-the-vaults-the-history-of-the-burrito-in-san-francisco/article\\_ddc1dfb9-2bf3-5a5c-b32e-611f18c27b74.html](https://www.sfweekly.com/dining/from-the-vaults-the-history-of-the-burrito-in-san-francisco/article_ddc1dfb9-2bf3-5a5c-b32e-611f18c27b74.html)



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION DRAFT RESOLUTION NO. ###

**HEARING DATE: JULY 17, 2024**

*Case No.:* 2024-005666LBR  
*Business Name:* El Faro Restaurant Inc.  
*Business Address:* 2399 Folsom Street  
*Zoning:* NC-2 (NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL, SMALL SCALE) Zoning District  
 45-X Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 3593/007  
*Applicant:* Raymunda Ramirez  
 2399 Folsom Street  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Hillary Ronen  
*Located In:* District 9  
*Staff Contact:* Michelle Langlie - 628-652-7410  
[Michelle.Langlie@sfgov.org](mailto:Michelle.Langlie@sfgov.org)

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR EL FARO CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2399 FOLSOM ST, BLOCK/LOT 3593/007.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on July 17, 2024, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends that El Faro qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for El Faro.

#### *Locations*

Current Locations:

- 2399 Folsom Street (1961 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 625 Mission Street (1979 – 1990)
- 82 1<sup>st</sup> Street (1980 – 1999)
- 1200 Polk Street (1981 – 1999)
- 2813 Mission Street (1982 – 1987)

#### *Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business*

- Home and originator of the Mission-style “Super Burrito.”
- Diagonal blade sign featuring a lighthouse, installed in 1962.
- Interior tilework illustrating San Francisco’s vibrant social life with scenes including some of San Francisco’s most popular, including beaches, the Painted Ladies, a circus, hot air balloon rides and El Faro itself.
- Interior Tilework reading “Welcome to the El Faro original.”
- Photographs of the celebrities who have dined at El Faro, including Mexican singer and actor Vicente Fernández, Costa Rican-Mexican actress and television presenter Maribel Guardia, Mexican singer-songwriter Joan Sebastian, singer Pepe Aguilar, and actor Lynda Carter.
- Continuing El Faro’s tradition of community engagement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission’s findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file No. 2024-005666LBR to the Office of Small Business on July 17, 2024.

Jonas P. Ionin  
Commission Secretary

AYES:



Resolution No. ###  
July 17, 2024

CASE NO. 2024-005666LBR  
El Faro Restaurant Inc. – 2399 Folsom Street

NOES:

ABSENT:

RECUSE:

ADOPTED: July 17, 2024