



TORTA



STREET TACOS

Pulido's Tacos

Story by Danny Fairchild
Photos by Pulido's Tacos

As I've said before, I don't like describing cuisine as "authentic." I think "traditional" is the better word to use. Yes, foods have their own history, and that should be honored, but foods have a present and future, too. Foods change even in the geographical region they originate. And that's a good thing. Who wants to cook in the missionary position all their life? Calling an older version "authentic" and not a newer version denies cuisine's ability to change and grow. And that's a bad thing.

That said, it's just semantics. When people say their food is "authentic," I think most people hear "traditional." And as far as I'm concerned, if Pulido's Tacos, a new taco truck prowling around Galena, IL, keeps making food this good, they can describe their food any way they want.

The Pulido family describes their food as "Authentic & Fresh," and I have absolutely no guff with that. Especially since Pulido's Tacos offers both traditional street

tacos AND American-style tacos. What? Are you going to call American-style tacos "inauthentic"? Shut up, you sound like a hipster jerk. It's not even a hot take, you just sound like an ass. You don't get to be the taco gatekeeper here. The Pulido Family claims to have "carefully preserved the traditions of Mexico" with their cuisine. If you think they can't possibly do that while offering a version of a taco with sour cream on it, then that tells me one thing: You haven't tried their food yet.

Do it. This cute little taco truck is a gem. A treasure. A welcome alternative to waiting for a table in a claustrophobic restaurant in downtown Galena (as much as I love them).

I caught up with Pulido's Tacos out by the Galena Walmart. So, I didn't even have to drive clear across town to get to them from Dubuque. They're often stationed there, but their Facebook page is the best place to find out where they're going to be on a given day.

I did a bit of a test with my food. I ordered one of each kind of available street taco and a torta. I also got some chips and queso. I taste tested everything while it was fresh, right from the comfort of my car. Then I made the half-hour drive home and tried them again to see how they would travel. What follows are my results.

First of all, I'm going to sing the praises of the torta. We white people need to

stop sleeping on tortas. Tortas are Mexican sandwiches, and they're wonderful. Sure, we can have the conversation as to whether or not a taco is always a sandwich. That's always fun, and I can argue either side. But nobody can argue that a Mexican torta is NOT a sandwich. It's served on a bolillo roll for one thing, which is about as far from a flatbread like a tortilla as you can get. Bolillo bread is most comparable to a baguette. And who doesn't love a sandwich made from a baguette? Sad people, probably. Bolillo has the structure to hold up to wetter ingredients while adding a yeasty toothiness. And it feels so good and hearty in your hand. While a tortilla wraps the filling, a torta contains the filling. And you can fill it with pretty much anything you would put on a taco. The same meats Pulido's makes for their tacos are also the same meats they make for their tortas. If you don't believe that tacos are sandwiches, then think of a torta as a taco sandwich. I got myself the torta al pastor. Pastor is spit-grilled strips of pork, carved off kind of like gyro meat. Delish. So damn good. Pulido's left a back hinge of the bolillo roll connected so I could pick it up without getting too messy. I still wouldn't drive down the street while trying to eat it, but when people talk about "crushing a sandwich," tortas are among the most crushable. Just get your

face up in there, and take a huge damn bite. It's wonderful. Oh! And by the time I got home, set everything on the counter, got distracted by something shiny, got some work done around the house, and finally made my way back to the torta, it was still solid. Not a mooshy mess like one would justly assume. No surprise there. That's just what tortas do. So wake up, my fellow honkies. We've ignored tortas in favor of tacos for FAR too long.

That's not to say that tacos don't deserve all the attention heaped on them. They deserve it all. I'm not saying you should turn your back on ANY taco. I'm just saying give tortas a chance, you fools.

On my adventure to scope out Pulido's, the chorizo was already all gone. I'm somewhat of a chorizo connoisseur, but I can't speak to Pulido's chorizo because again... all gone. But I think it's sufficient to say that Pulido's chorizo is so good it sells out within a few hours. So, get there earlier than I did. But I DID get to sample the steak, pastor, and chicken street tacos. If you DO miss out on the chorizo, you won't be disappointed with any of the other options.

They came served double-tortilla and open-faced in a styrofoam clamshell, lime wedges ready to be put to use. Plus, it comes with those cute little plastic ramekins of both green and red salsa so you have



QUESADILLA

a choice or can mix and match. Such fun to play dress-up with your food, isn't it?

And it's all so good! The chicken was moist and beautifully shredded to allow for easy bites. The pastor was probably my favorite and am glad I had it on my torta too because I can't get enough of it. The steak taco was right on. Easy, flavorful bites. And they all have such a brightness of flavor even before you mess with limes and salsa. Throw those into the mix and you have three street tacos worthy of the word "authentic" or "traditional" or whatever well-meant adjective you can conjure. So good! And, true to their roots, the tacos also traveled pretty well. The tortillas remained in tact and structural enough to get all that yum to your mouth incident-free even after getting them home.

And don't forget the chips and salsa. Oh! And queso. 'K, so, the queso is exactly what you want from a queso at your favorite Mexican restaurant. But 'cept this is at a taco truck where you have no right to expect such a thing. Expect it, yo.

So yeah. There's a taco truck sweeping the Galena area that deserves to be recognized and sought after throughout the Tri-States. More importantly, there's a taco truck in the area that you likely haven't tried yet. That can't stand. Get yourself to Pulido's. They're good people with great food. ■



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DANNY FAIRCHILD

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