

Member Spotlight

Company: Juan & Maria's Empanada Stop, Inc.

Owner: Juan & Maria Contreras

Business Category: Restaurants International Spanish

Contact: Juan Contreras

Number of Employees: Average 5 full time employees

Years in Business: 10 Years

Address: Rochester Public Market, 280 North Union Street, Rochester, NY 14609

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POINTER FROM A PRO

“When starting a business, love what you do. Offer a product that is different from the competition and be well connected with other businesses and the media. Have enough capital to survive on for 1-2 years without a profit!” – Juan Contreras, Owner of Juan & Maria's Empanada Stop, Inc.

Juan & Maria's Empanada Stop, Inc.

This couple is sharing their Chilean Spanish culture with thousands of people in Upstate New York with a new and unique concept in fast food. Juan & Maria's Empanada Stop brings homemade authentic Spanish signature dishes to the world of “fast food.” If you are looking for something delicious and out of the ordinary treat yourself to an Empanada or one of the other specialty foods, with a Spanish origin, offered at Juan and Maria's Empanada Stop. You can find Juan, Maria and their exceptional staff, every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, at the Rochester Public Market, located at 280 North Union Street, in the city of Rochester.

Juan and Maria Contreras opened Empanada Stop in the year 2000. In the beginning they sold 10-20 Empanadas throughout the course of the day; today they sell as many as 1000 or more in a day. “At first people did not know what Empanadas were,” says Juan. If you are not familiar with Spanish food an Empanada is a stuffed bread or pastry with meat, vegetables or sweet fillings. Juan and Maria offer several varieties of this very popular dish, all homemade, and all seasoned with a unique blend of spices from several of the 20 Spanish speaking countries. Customers of Juan and Maria can enjoy a variety of Empanadas that include: beef or chicken & onions, breakfast, vegetable, cheese, pizza, seafood, and sweet. “All of our homemade products are unique to our business,” says Juan Contreras. “We have a gourmet blend of coffee, regular and decaf, made for us exclusively by a local roaster, a special pork sausage made by Zweigles, solely for Empanada Stop, a line of spice mixes, as well as our homemade hot sauces which include: Red Gold, a more traditional Spanish hot sauce, Green Gold, made with green peppers and heavy on the garlic, Spanish Ketchup, which is a tomato base and heavy on the garlic, and Spanish Mayo, mayonnaise with our own seasoning added.” Full homemade dinners of Rice and Beans, Pork Loin, and Chicken are also available. Customers can purchase a “Fool Proof Rice Kit” that includes everything you need for cooking rice to perfection, including the water. You can even add a Spanish flair to your next party or event; the company also offers catering services.

Entrepreneurship is not new to Juan Contreras. He had a partnership in a Spanish newspaper and was a sole proprietor of a Spanish International Marketing company. "I also worked for Xerox as a union employee but I always had my heart on business," comments Juan. "Maria and I were always lovers of Toronto and found ourselves very intrigued by the Public Market. Maria wanted to sell Empanadas. We were fortunate enough at the time to have a spot open up at the Rochester Public Market and it was successful from the first day."

Juan Contreras was named "Hispanic Business Person of the Year" in 2007, has received recognition awards from all levels of local government including NYS Senator, Joseph Robach, Monroe County Executive, Maggie Brooks, Mayor Duffy, and a previous NYS Governor. He has organized three International Spanish Festivals at the Rochester Public Market and two at Six Flags, Darien Lake. "We actually did two Spanish International shows at Frontier Field for the Rochester Rhinos," comments Juan. During a period of time when the Contreras's daughter and son-in-law were stationed in Iraq, for a tour of duty with the U.S. Air Force, the company was able to ship Empanadas to the troops in Iraq. Juan & Maria have appeared on "Sabado Gigante", hosted by Don Francisco, a worldwide TV show with millions of viewers. The show taped Juan & Maria's Empanada Stop in action as well their lifestyle at home.

Empanada Stop was chosen for an in-depth study from different perspectives that included: financial, marketing and production by 21 MBA's from the Simon School of Business at the University of Rochester. "We had a Perdue University Senior MBA student last year who received a Fulbright Scholarship. He could have easily gone to Brazil and worked for one of the largest companies in the world but instead he chose to work with us," remarks Juan. "We have created an easy to duplicate business model that could easily be franchised. Our little business has an unbelievable potential."

"We are the only restaurant in upstate N.Y., and possibly in the country, to offer homemade authentic Empanadas served in a fast food environment. We have reached a new record with 1,260 empanadas sold in a seven hour period," says Juan. "We are open year round at the Rochester Public Market. We simply want to thank all of our customers for their constant support and we hope that you will visit us on Facebook at *Fans of Juan and Marias's Empanada Stop*. The high level of education in our area allows for easy acceptance of our products." Be sure to tell Juan & Maria's Empanada Stop, Inc. that you saw their spotlight in *The Informer*. – *Terry Hogan, Office & Communications Director*