



JULY 21, 2025

BY MICHAEL HIRSCH



**LOCATION: GLORIA'S KITCHEN
IN THE BP ON THE CORNER OF
EDEL FORD FWY AND LIVERNOIS**

DISH: TINGA QUESADILLAS

The first time I ate Gloria's Kitchen I was with a chef friend who needed gas.

I can't figure out what I want to say about this place. It was one of the first places I was craving in Detroit when I got back from 4 months of traveling across Asia and South America where I was eating some of the indisputably best street food in the world and I would safely put Gloria's amongst their ranks. You walk into a gas station and it's behind a Subway... It almost acts as a smoke-screen distracting the olfactory senses with "freshly" baked bread from frozen dough and the gelatinized meat that Subway is famous for. You might almost walk past a row of steam trays emanating with aromas of tinga, barbacoa, carne asada, and al pastor.

It's no frills, no bullshit— the exact place a chef wants to go when they're not working. When Tel-way, Trader Joe's frozen chinese food, or some old Little Caesar's are just not going to cut it. The off duty chef can slink over to the gas station and get a thoughtfully prepared mess of gorditas, quesadillas, and burritos.

I'd like to think that bordering Dearborn gives this gas station's food a bit of cultural overlap. The quesadillas are reminiscent of arabes—a hallmark of the fusion of Arab and Mexican cuisines so prevalent in northern Mexico – they're essentially a taco with Arab ingredients. Tortillas are replaced with griddled pita. Al pastor swapped with shawarma. Except when I go to Gloria's they have no idea what an arabe is and let me know that "this is just the way we make 'em". I guess this is one of those "never meet your heroes" moments.

As it turns out, Gloria is a real person, and she works in the back and lets me practice my broken Spanish when I come in. There's something novel about a gringo trying to learn the language in earnest. There's a genuine excitement when I try to talk my Spanish to the women who work there and I'd like to think the enthusiasm spills over into an extra half scoop of tinga. That was my weapon of choice for my return to Gloria. A slow cooked guisado of chiles, spices, and shredded chicken that completely falls apart as soon as it hits your tongue. A neutrino bomb of flavor collapsing in on itself only to be balanced by queso melted on the grill, a rich and cooling crema, fresh diced tomatoes, shredded lettuce, and an herbal zap from cilantro. Dawg.

Gloria watches on as all those ingredients get folded into a fluffy pita. Her arms crossed, inspecting back and forth between the kitchen and the short line forming at the front. She flashes me a smile, and as I'm writing this I can't remember if she has a gold tooth or not but I think it'd be fitting. She could be La Mafiosa de la Cocina. I utter a quick "la quesadilla es un regalo mejor" and she chuckles.



The pita gets warm and crispy, encapsulating all the hot ingredients before the cold gets added, then I dump on a ramekin of homemade hot salsa. It rivals anything I've had on the streets of Mexico City or Lima. Full on gluttony. This is functional food created to murder hunger.

The first time I went to Mexico City I made it a point to hit up Rossetta, which is currently ranked the 46th best restaurant in the world. It was beautiful, everything about it. The presentations were on point, the service was incredible, the ambiance was straight out of a Yasujiro Ozu film— I cannot stress how much I hated this restaurant. It should not be ranked. The experience absolutely demolished my perception of fine dining. The food was so ass and not even in an extraordinary way. It was bland, like a lawyer on a 3rd date trying to impress you with their “famous lamb ragout”— bland.

After Rossetta-Gate I walked across the street to a woman serving purple masa quesadillas with pollo con mole verde for the equivalent of \$1 USD and it 360-between-the-legs dunked all over the magistrate's ragout.

This was it. The last pretensions in regard to dining were wrung out of my skull and down the drain. Just give me some meat, just give me some cheese, just give me some sauce, just give me some cream, and just make sure you fold that shit right and grill it so everything goes real nice.

That experience succeeded my first Gloria's experience by nearly 4 years. One of the most valuable lessons I've learned in that span is that the chicks serving Mexican food behind a gas station Subway can dunk (metaphorically) and that they're your favorite chef's favorite chef.