

Viva La Comida - 82nd Street - Jackson Heights

82nd Street Partnership Hosts Festival At Dunningham Triangle

September 24, 2012 / Jackson Heights / Food in Queens / Queens Buzz. On Friday evening the 82nd Street Partnership hosted Viva La Comida at Dunningham Triangle on



82nd Street at Baxter in Jackson Heights. The event was a fun, quirky preamble to the Hispanic Month activities that officially began on Sunday with the Hispanic Day Parade [click for Hispanic Day Parade report & photos].

I arrived while it was still light out. City Councilman Danny Dromm, Seth Taylor and City Councilmember Julissa Ferreras were standing for photos sandwiched between two men who's names I will try to obtain and post at a later date. A performance by the youngsters from the Mestizo Art Center followed, much to the delight of the warm and enthusiastic crowd.

I made my way over to the food trucks where I tasted some delicacies and met interesting people ... click here to read the rest of our report on Viva La Comida festival hosted by the 82nd Street Partnership in Jackson Heights. The photo to your left was taken from the inside of the Solber Pupusa food truck at the Viva La Comida festival on 82nd Street in Jackson Heights.



September 24, 2012 / Jackson Heights / Food in Queens / Queens Buzz. *Continued.* Viva La Comida was to run from 4 pm to 9 pm. The program included about a half dozen entertainment venues, about the same number of food trucks and a mix of arts and crafts being shown in the lobby and in front of the 82nd Street Cinema movie theater in Jackson Heights. Jeff Orlick of iwantmorefood.com and Celeste Balducci, an arts publicist in

Jackson Heights had organized the food and entertainment venues respectively, in collaboration with Seth Taylor, Executive Director of the 82nd Street Partnership of Jackson Heights.

Chipper Truck - Irish Food Trucks in the Bronx NYC



I stopped by the Chipper Truck which serves good old fashioned fish and chips. They also have a number of Irish dishes, one of which I sampled and both the fries and the corn beef were quite good. The Chipper Truck is normally found in the Bronx at 237th Street & Katonah Avenue in the Woodlawn section of the Bronx.

The Chipper Truck is shown serving customers at the Viva La Comida festival

on 82nd Street in Jackson Heights.

Sunny's - Chinese Barbeque Food Trucks in Manhattan NYC

My next stop was Sunny's Chinese barbeque. Sunny was one of the finalists at the Vendys Awards held last week on Governor's Island. I met someone connected with organizing the Vandy's Awards and will tell you a bit more about them further down in this report. Sunny doesn't speak a whole lot of English, and I must admit my command of the Chinese language isn't what it should be, so bear in mind that things could easily



be misinterpreted or – as they say – lost in translation.

I 'believe' what Sunny told me is that she's both Korean and Chinese. I also believe that her team member is her husband, who works quietly alongside her, stoking the charcoal grill, queuing up the barbeques, turning them over and then passing them onto Sunny who adds the flavor and, in as much as she can, converses with her clientele.

Sunny served me the tofu and lamb barbeques, which run about \$2 apiece. The tofu was good, but it was tofu. The lamb stick, however, was a spicy, succulent mini-feast. I can see why she's a Vandy finalist. You can find Sunny's at the base of the Manhattan Bridge

at Forsyth and Division. A photo of Sunny's food truck Chinese barbeque is shown in the photo to your right.

Arepa Lady - Columbian Food Trucks in Jackson Heights Queens



Our next stop was a visit to the food cart of the Arepa Lady. The Arepa Lady is a small Columbian woman who makes arepas, which are corn flour pancakes. She serves them with all kinds of comfort food including soft melted cheese and skewered sausages. All of which looked very good and which her customers chowed down. The Arepas Lady manages her food truck at the corner of 79th Street and Roosevelt Avenue in Jackson Heights / Elmhurst.

The woman helping the Arepa Lady is shown working the Arepa Lady food truck grill in the photo to your left. The Arepa Lady is shown in the slide show below.

Solber Pupusas - Central American Food Trucks in Brooklyn NYC



Solber Pupusas, operates in an enclosed space, and also briefly allowed me into the back of the truck. The name Solber comes from the last names of the owners [husband & wife - Rafael SOLer and Reina BERmudez, respectively]. The husband and wife team come from the Dominican Republic and El Salvador, and work closely in synchronized fashion to prep, cook and serve pupusas. They are former Queens residents of Astoria and Jamaica and it is from here that they got their start.

Pupusas are corn patties that are stuffed with all kinds of delicious foods, like lettuce, onions, cheese, chicken, pork, pepperoni, jalapeno, zucchini and beans. They are a product of El Salvador and share some commonalities with gyros. The pupusas run from about \$7 - \$10 per platter. The Solber Pupusas truck works out of the Red Hook Ball Fields. In the photo to your left, you can see one of many lines that formed in front of the food trucks in Queens, participating in the Viva La Comida Festival near Dunningham Triangle in Jackson Heights.

Tortas Neza - Mexican Food Trucks in Woodside & Corona Queens



The Tortas Neza Pumas Campeon food truck is named after a league of soccer playing bulls started in the 1990's in Mexico. In bull soccer, teams play soccer with bulls on the field. I reckon one could call it fusion futbol or new age bullfighting.

The Tortas Neza serves 19 different sandwiches ranging in price from \$8 to \$14 [the sandwiches big enough for two]. They offer a wide selection of sandwiches that are made of bread made fresh daily in Corona and

topped with chicken, pork, beef and vegetables [they have a vegetarian sandwich] and topped with Mexican favorites such as cilantro, salsa. They operate two food trucks, one serving Woodside at Roosevelt and 54th Street and the other serving Corona at 111th and Roosevelt Avenue in Queens. Tortas Neza was also a finalist in the 2012 Vendys Awards.

In the photo above right, you can see a generous torta from Tortas Neza in the making.

Morocho - Peruvian Food Trucks in Manhattan NYC



Morocho Peruvian Fusion was our last stop in the food truck court. Morocho serves full meals for between \$5 and \$7. The selection of meal varies, including tacos and tortillas, to pork, chicken and beef dishes. The Morocho head chef uses a variety of spices, including some from Asia which I reckon gives Morocho its moniker of fusion. The Morocho food truck may be found on the west side of Union Square between 14th and 15th streets.

In the photo to your left is a sampling of the grill of Morocho at the Viva La Comida Festival on 82nd Street in Jackson Heights.

Jeff Orlick of iwantmorefood.com & Woodside



Jeff Orlick, is as interesting as his chosen field of interest. He's become the defacto officionado of the food truck industry in Queens. And he sometimes ventures out of the borough on targeted food truck explorations.

Jeff started doing food truck tours a few years back and since then has developed a large following on his website iwantmorefood.com. On his last open / public tour he had some 200 people along, at which point he decided to transition from open tours to tour by appointment. He told me that when you do such large tours you don't get to really talk with anyone.

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Street Vendor Project of NYC - The Food Truck Vendys Awards



I happened to meet Sean Basinski, Director of the Street Vendor Project of the Urban Justice Center. He's pretty heavily involved with what goes with respect to street vendors and food trucks in NYC.

He informed me that there are about 20,000 registered street vendors in NYC and at my request he estimated that probably about 3,000 to 4,000 of them work in Queens. Seth helped organize and attended the 8th Annual Vendy's Awards on Governor's Island, which are kind of like the Emmys or Grammys of the NYC food truck world.

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In the group of food trucks at Viva La Comida there were two 2012 Vendys Finalists, and quite possibly a couple of future finalists as well.

Entertainment at Viva La Comida In Jackson Heights



I spent some time enjoying the selection of entertainment provided in the program. As I mentioned earlier, when I arrived the Mestizo Dance company was performing. I shuttled back and forth between the food trucks and the performances, and enjoyed the singing of Maria Del Rosario who sang a couple of Spanish tunes. Nelson Hidalgo followed her, and he was both an entertainer who charmed the crowd with conversation and a classical

cantador. Unfortunately I missed the performances of the New York Jazz Academy and International String Duo. My regrets. The events were organized by the 82nd Street Org with the help of longtime Jackson Heights resident, as well as arts publicist and enthusiast, Celeste Balducci.

82nd Street Partnership & Dunningham Triangle



I also didn't have time to peruse the craft show, but did snap a couple of photos on my way out. Local businesses participating included Limoncello Restaurant, the Sewing Outlet, Louie's Pizzeria and Taqueria Coatzingo – all of which are located along the perimeter of Dunningham Triangle. It's also worth a mention that only a couple of decades ago, Dunningham Triangle was a gathering spot for people with some pretty serious problems, while today it's

a small but vibrant meeting locale for neighborhood locals all day long. Salud.

In the photo to your left are several of the crafts tables that participated in the Viva La Comida festival sponsored by the 82nd Street Partnership in Jackson Heights.