

## Two Shops, One Market

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The La Viga Boulevard area has historically been a place for trade, shops, and street markets, since, in what used to be the La Viga Canal, canoes used to pass on the way to downtown's Merced Market from Xochimilco and Chalco. The water is no longer there, but the streets remember. In the first half of the twentieth century, people would gather on the old La Viga Promenade to board little barges and eat *antojitos*, or Mexican snacks. Covering over that canal brought with it the inauguration of the Jamaica Market in 1957, and I visit there every three months. The market is also famous for its flower stalls. A colleague of mine I worked with at a magazine first invited me to visit it. It was around the time of year of the Day of the Dead; the market extended out into the street with temporary stands full of marigolds, tamales, and tacos. Even though I stopped working with those people, I decided to continue my visits to the market because of Salsa.

Salsa is a black Shiba Inu. On his breast, white fur forms a "T." "T" for taco," somebody once said to me. I was still working at the magazine when he was born in May 2016, and I carried him in the palm of my hand without knowing that we would become each other's companion. He came to live with me two months later. Salsa is not my first dog, but he's the first one I've had as an adult, the first one I could choose how to raise and what to feed. The first dog kibble I bought was expensive; by then I had lost my job and didn't know what my income would be as a freelancer. I remembered that I had seen dog food at the Jamaica Market, and I went there in the hope of saving money.

I went through the market and found Susy, a large stall, near the internal parking lot close to the mural illustrating the area's watery past and commercial present. I did find a cheaper version of Salsa's dog food. Now I was the hungry one.

De la Viga Boulevard is famous not only for its former canal with its barges, but also because it is the birthplace of the *huarache*, oval-shaped fried corn dough filled with beans and big enough to include eggs, chicken, or beef. Its origins seem like legend: Doña Carmelita, a woman whose image has come down to us in a photo where she is pictured with two long braids, sold *tlacoyos* and *gorditas*, both typical corn-based snacks, on the banks of the De la Viga Canal after the Mexican Revolution. A fellow merchant, a butcher, asked her for one, but with a grilled rib steak on top. That was when Doña Carmelita made the *tlacoyo* bigger and called her creation *huarache* because it looked like a sandal. Doña Carmelita's legacy continues at the El Huarache de Jamaica and El Huarache Azteca stalls. But I like Vicky's better.

El Huarache de Vicky is in the Jamaica market's restaurant section, on the corner of Guillermo Prieto Street and Congreso de la Unión. While Doña Carmelita has her legend, this is my creation myth: Hungry, I left Susy's stand where I had bought Salsa's food, but I wasn't strong enough to carry the sack all the way to Huarache de Jamaica. Just like an eagle standing on a nopal cactus, I saw a banner announcing "El Huarache de Vicky," illustrated with a piece of steak with eyes and a happy smile, wearing a chef's hat.

I prefer Vicky's *huarache* over others because of how it's prepared: a little wider and generously accompanied by avocado, onion, and nopal cactus, plus cheese. These ingredients aren't piled on top of each other, but surround the main dish, so you can combine the dough with whatever you want and enjoy a different flavor in each bite. I ask for the classic rib steak, with green and red salsa. This *huarache* always makes me happy.

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I went to Vicky's, if he perceives  
my satisfaction with the ritual.

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I've gone to Susy's and Vicky's every three months for the last nine years. I've graduated from puppy food to food for a medium-sized adult dog. When I got Goshi, my other dog, I included his hydrolyzed food, and I started buying a sack of food for senior dogs over eight years.

The last time I ate at Vicky's, I remembered the day Salsa was born, when I carried him in the palm of my hand. Salsa is happy when I come home with his food. I ask myself if he can sense the aroma of the *huarache*, if he knows I went to Vicky's, if he perceives my satisfaction with the ritual that began because of him, when I went to Susy's to buy his food. My shopping list has also grown to include Goshi's eye drops and the powdered vitamins for Salsa's joints. I see that Salsa is happy, but I do notice his age; he has been hurt by running and has tempered his emotions. Perhaps I'm more than half the way on my road to the end of my visits to Susy's. I also ask myself if I'll stop going to Vicky's, if someday I'll decide not to eat that *huarache* that always makes me happy.