



Along Highway 61
Fat Mama's Tamales
Natchez, Mississippi



After six fabulous and fun-filled years in the Delta, I have finally made it back home to Natchez, Mississippi; and with the summer months quickly heating up, I thought that a trip to Fat Mama's Tamales was in order to continue on our journey along Highway 61. In the Delta, the world-famous Tamale Trail was always something that helped keep homesickness at bay and allowed me to experience all kinds of this delicacy throughout the state. However, when it comes to hot tamales and icy margaritas, there is nothing quite like Fat Mama's Tamales in downtown Natchez to quench that craving.

When I talked with Fat Mama's David Gammill, I was able to learn a little more about this place that I had frequented over the years. It was not until the local woman who had made and delivered homemade tamales for decades passed away that the Gammill family started to think about opening shop. One Saturday, Gammill explained, talking about his parents, "They bought large quantities of all the ingredients and spent all day making them. When they finished cooking them, they

were not very good. So, my sister and I ended up with a tamale with every meal and school lunch until they were gone. The next Saturday my parents, friends, and family made another batch which weren't very good and the process repeated."

After a year of trial and error with many tamale recipes, the Gammill family opened the doors of the iconic log cabin on Canal Street in June of 1989. Being a simple "to go" order-styled restaurant, Fat Mama's slowly started to make additions to its menu over the years. "While at first we were planning on to-go business only, we had people who loved to sit at the counter and eat tamales. So, in addition to the tamales, we had cold drinks. People wanted something to put on the tamales, and homemade chili was added to the menu. Soon other menu items were added in addition to beer and wine. In the early '90s, my parents decided that a signature

Top—Always something interesting to find at Fat Mama's

Left—Just for a little direction

margarita would be a great compliment to our menu and restaurant. After extensive research, my parents came up with a recipe for margaritas that were spectacular and decided to name them ‘Knock You Naked’ Margaritas,” Gammill recalled.

After its move down Canal Street a block or so toward Main Street, Fat Mama’s has been able to add even more to the menu including poboy, taco salads, nachos, and the fabulous Fire and Ice Pickles. The new location adds to the unique atmosphere that you can’t find at just any restaurant. According to Gammill, “A hot tamale restaurant isn’t your everyday, run-of-the-mill restaurant. Most tamale shops are to-go only, but we have been able to expand on that idea and create a restaurant that provides locals and tourists alike with a fun and different experience.”

A few favorites from the menu would include the obvious order of hot tamales; but if you are looking for something different, the Gringo Pie is another choice that will not steer you wrong. Made of three tamales topped with chili, cheese, onions, and jalapeno peppers, “this is the quintessential Fat Mama’s dish if a customer hasn’t been into Fat Mama’s before or is from out of town,” Gammill added.

Personally, I love the Natchez Nachos, which is a platter of chips covered in spicy cheese; bell peppers; jalapeno peppers; onions; and, my absolute favorite, black olives. During the summer months, there

is nothing I love more than heading down to Fat Mama’s, getting a frosty beer or a frozen margarita, sitting on the porch, and enjoying a Natchez sunset over the river. Sometimes, being back home has its perks, and the view and atmosphere are definitely the ones that brought me back.

As for its name, Fat Mama’s is a little bit of an inside joke for the Gammill family. Gammill explained to me how it was decided before opening back in 1989: “We found our location, the log cabin on Canal Street, and figured out everything that was needed except a name. Well, my sister and I had a joke that if our mother kept messing up the tamale recipe, she was going to be a ‘Fat Mama’ from having to eat all of the tamales that weren’t right. We told my parents the joke; and immediately, ‘Fat Mama’s Tamales’ was born.”

Knock You Naked Pie

- 1 graham cracker crust
- 1 8-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 8-oz. tub Cool Whip (homemade whipped cream, if you are ambitious)
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- ½ cup Fat Mama’s Knock You Naked Margarita Mix

Blend all ingredients with mixer. Pour in pie shell; refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving.



There’s nothing quite like the tamales from Fat Mama’s.



The famous margarita that can knock you naked.



With such festive decor, Fat Mama’s makes a perfect place for a summer hang out.



Located on Canal Street, Fat Mama’s has been a staple in downtown Natchez for over 20 years.