

Durham food truck makes Boricua Soul

The Fredericks family crafts a unique, culinary combination of African-American and Puerto Rican flavors.

Serena and Toriano Fredericks started the Boricua Soul food truck in 2015. They cook and serve the community with the desire to celebrate their cultures. (Photo by Caroline Bowyer)

By Caroline Bowyer
Durham VOICE

Husband-and-wife team Toriano and Serena Fredericks travel around the Durham area serving a unique combination. Their food truck, Boricua Soul, offers Puerto Rican inspired soul food.

Toriano's inspiration to start a food truck came from being out at sea.

"I spent years on ships. I worked as a merchant mariner going to sea and traveling the world," he said. "In that time, I started a food blog and it was just writing about food and the places I went. It turned into writing about people here in Durham and different people here in the food business. We had this passion about food and decided to open up a food truck."

Toriano and Serena bounced ideas back and forth about the food truck on their way to the North Carolina Zoo with their son Devin.

"We were, like, there are no Puerto Rican restaurants in the area at the time and definitely no Puerto Rican trucks," said Serena. "So we came up with this concept of literally how we had been cooking over the last seven years in our house."

Serena's mother's family is Puerto Rican, and Toriano's family is African American. The two were constantly trying to find ways to combine these types of foods to make meals they could both enjoy.

"It became this kind of melding of both foods," said Serena. "That's how the truck concept was born."

The name comes from a combination of Toriano's and Serena's backgrounds.

"Boricua is a Taino Indian word for a native person of Puerto Rico," said Toriano.



no. "Soul is just the soul food. So it's the mixing of the two things."

Toriano said the food that Boricua Soul offers ties together the common histories between soul food and Puerto Rican food.

"For soul food it's West African slaves, Europeans and American Indians, and for Puerto Ricans it's Taíno Indians, Europeans, Spanish and Africans," he said. "It has that common thread. You have things like plantains, collard greens, peas and beans. So the concept is kind of looking back at the history of the two things, and our history."

Boricua Soul's logo also ties into the idea of looking back.

"The logo started as a Sankofa, which basically means a look back into the past," Toriano said. "The Sankofa is a bird with an egg on its back. I liked that idea because that's kind of what we were doing with our food, looking back and celebrating. So it started with that, and it became a heart. On it you have the Puerto Rican flag and the American flag just to symbolize us."

The truck started off as a tool truck that was transformed into a food truck.

"When I got it, someone had been using it for catering, but it was just basically these weird carpeted walls on the inside and no food equipment," said Toriano. "We took it to Jack of all Trades by George in Garner, and we met with him and talked about what we would need in the food truck. We felt very comfortable putting our dream in his hands."

The process of transforming the truck took about five months because Toriano and Serena wanted its completion to coincide with Toriano's return from sea. They

also wanted the kick-starter they launched to be completed.

"Tori had done a bunch of other local Kickstarters," said Serena. "At a certain point, he started doing videos for local people that needed Kickstarter videos. When we went to launch our Kickstarter, it was similar to what he had been doing for others, but it was pretty much just an introduction to us and our story."

Boricua Soul opened in October 2015. Since then, Toriano and Serena have received a lot of support from the community.

Rebecca Morrison lives in Durham and believes Boricua Soul is a good addition to the community.

"I think it's important to have a food truck like Boricua Soul because they offer a perfect blend of Boricua and soul, and they do it so well," said Morrison. "They are always one of the most popular food trucks at any event I've been to."

Not only is the food delicious, but the customer service is great.

Currently, Boricua Soul is only open for events. Toriano and Serena hope to change that soon.

Toriano and Serena agree that being together as a family makes all the hard work worth it.

"The food truck is our vehicle and our dream, and we think we can be successful at the end of the day," said Toriano.

Want some Boricua Soul?

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