

El Paso Food Voices: The Guardians of Culture

Eloísa Arenas: Welcome to El Paso Food Voices. I'm Eloísa Arenas, your host for today's episode. El Paso Food Voices focuses on bringing you a taste of the culinary living history that flavors the foodscape of the El Paso del Norte region. In each episode, our guests share their personal connection to a unique aspect of the region's foodscape. For today's episode, our guest is Rosalinda Guadalajara, and she will be talking about *Las Guardianas de la Cultura* (The Guardians of Culture) with a special focus on the indigenous *Ralámuli* community from Juárez-El Paso. She'll be speaking in Spanish, and for our English listeners, we will provide a link to the English transcript.

Eloísa Arenas: *Kuira-bá* Rosalinda, welcome and thank you for accepting this invitation to come and talk with us. Thank you very much for being here.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: [Answers in indigenous language].

Eloísa Arenas: Thank you very much, welcome. How are you?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Very well, very well. Thank you for this invitation. Of course, I feel very comfortable being here and I will gladly share a little about the *Ralámuli* gastronomy that we have within our community, our *Ralámuli* culture from the state of Chihuahua, right?

Eloísa Arenas: Of course. For people who don't know you, Rosalinda, could you share a little bit about yourself? Where are you from? What do you do for a living? What have you worked on?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Of course, of course. My name is Rosalinda Guadalajara, and I normally live in Ciudad Juárez. I have been living here in this Juárez border region for more than 20 years. I'm also originally from the municipality of Carichí. I was born in a small town called Tegariche. I arrived here in Ciudad Juárez when I was about 7 years old. I remember that when I arrived here at the border, for me it was a different way, a different culture, but also the environment, for example, the nature, everything changes as we go along the way, right?. So for me, it was something very impactful and a cultural shock, you could say. Because I arrived without knowing how to speak Spanish and I didn't even understand it. So, for me, my original language, my original tongue, is *Ráramuri*.

Eloísa Arenas: That's right. And now, what do you do? What do you work on? How do you socialize with the people in your community and with other people who also live on the border?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Well, I am currently working at the Municipal Institute for Women. There is an area there for the care of indigenous women. In 2016, I was invited to be part of

that institution to work with different indigenous women who live on the border. There are many indigenous groups on this border. Years ago, no place had an area to serve women for all kinds of discrimination and domestic violence. And when they invited me, the first thing I did was prepare myself, and I trained well to be able to provide that care. Although I normally did a lot of accompaniment before. I started serving as a translator and interpreter when I was about 15 years old, accompanying women in various government agencies, right? When I joined the institute, I began to train more as a translator and interpreter in legal matters, such as criminal situations, family situations, and all of that. I also began to train in matters related to minors because the problems were not only with adults but also with adolescents and children, right?

Eloísa Arenas: Mm. Okay, thank you very much. What an interesting role. Tell us a little about the role of *siríame*, of governor of the *Ralámuli* community. It was for a moment, it's over now, but you continue to create cultural spaces in Ciudad Juárez, right? Is that right?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: That's right. Yes. During the leadership as a traditional authority, which we identify as *siríame*, it's when they name you or give you a position to be like a traditional authority, you could say. A mestizo society doesn't identify what a *siríame* is, so they chose to call us governors or female governors, right? So legally, within our internal regulations, the *siriemis* are the people who are in charge of situations, you could say, to maintain communal order, like a union within the community. Why? Because within the community we have our own assemblies where we resolve community conflicts, whether it's theft, domestic violence, or even agrarian issues. Everything that has to do with violations and other things that the community itself exposes to its representatives, who would be the *siriemis*, the traditional authorities, is resolved within the community. And also the needs they sometimes have. Because in everything that has to do with the community, sometimes a family member doesn't have a job, or a family member suffered an accident, or a family member passed away. So you have to manage up to that point or deal with things like scholarships or personal procedures like documents, right? So, all these functions are what a *siríame* has to do, and the position has no monetary compensation. All of this is like doing community work for the love of the culture and their community.

Eloísa Arenas: Exactly. How interesting. Yes, it would be like an equivalent of an authority, right? A community authority.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Yes, that's right. Because a *siríame* has a lot of roles to play. Sometimes as the judge, sometimes as the psychologist, sometimes as the counselor, and sometimes they also have to be the translator and interpreter themselves. So, in that sense, that is the function that a traditional authority has. The position they assigned me

when I was in my twenties, I lasted about 7 years, 7 years in that position. And for me it was very difficult. Why? Because years ago there was no woman who was a *siríame*. Well, here in Ciudad Juárez, right? And it was very difficult. Why? Because it wasn't something people were used to. But having that communication and having worked as a community health promoter helped me a lot to have that trust with the community itself, with the people. So, that's where they themselves were supporting me. Things that I didn't know, I learned with them, and things that they didn't know, we also learned together, you could say.

Eloísa Arenas: Super good.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: That's right.

Eloísa Arenas: Rosalinda, could you tell us about the foods? Let's talk now about the traditional *Ralámuli* food. What are the traditional foods of your community? What are the ingredients like? How is it prepared? What role does traditional food play within your community?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Well, within our *Ralámuli* culture, as you may know, the main food, you could say, is always based on corn. Based on corn. Why? Because when the *Ralámuli* began to work the land, which was more than 500 years ago, you could say that we have always been people of the land, of the harvests. And most of what we have achieved from our ancestors has been corn and beans. These two things have been very strong. But later on, other foods like potatoes and different kinds of beans have also been prepared or sown. And at the same time, people also learn that *quelites* (wild greens) only grow at certain times. And so, they collect the seeds and begin to collect enough, you could say, acres of land to have it as a reserve for the cold season. Because in the cold season, no herbs grow, so they have it stored for those dates so they don't starve. The mountains have always had times of famine. You could say they are only blessed in the rainy season, but in winter, famine and the lack of food are very noticeable. However, over the years, seeing all this, they have also learned to be gatherers of different foods.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: At one point, when my grandfather told me this story, he would say that we have to work, from the oldest to the youngest. He gave us the example that ants are smaller than us, and the ants manage to store enough to hibernate with that food. He would say, "You, who are bigger than the ants, how are you not going to be able to collect and store fruits or corn, beans, and collect herbs?" So, through that, one learns and it shows that it is true, because the ant works more than one does. Also, relating to what he told us, I think that living in a community or having a neighborhood is almost like teamwork, like ants, right? So it's something very cool that he gives you an example like that so you can understand, and from there, most people who are workers start. That's why when they

arrive in the city and the children want to continue helping mom and dad to collect and get food, it's not the same. Because in the city, if we see children with us, they accuse us of child exploitation and all those things, when we don't even understand what that is or why they say that. We have always worked with children all our lives, and for us, it's a way of teaching our children to work so that if mom and dad die tomorrow or the day after, they don't die of hunger. On the contrary, it's a way of leaving a legacy of knowledge. Many confuse a legacy with money or material possessions, but for us who don't dream or plan to have material things, it's more about the legacy of work, of how to get ahead. So, it's something that is permanent, and our children learn to work and survive, right? So, it's very different when they come and take your kids away for child exploitation. And we are really still in shock, you could say, because back in my town, it's a lesson for them to work, learn, survive, and get ahead.

Eloísa Arenas: It's like making them participants in the community and active people, right? They have an active role within the entire community.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Exactly. That's it.

Eloísa Arenas: And what kind? Could you share with us some elements of the *Ralámuli* legacy in food? The border is very familiar with *pinole*. For example, I remember since I was a child, my grandfather would make me a cup with *pinole*. And we see it, for example, on the streets. Some listeners can visit Juárez or also on this side where we see the little bags with *pinole* or some herbs, right? We see many herbs that the *Ralámuli* community uses, which other communities have also benefited from using. Which ones do you like the most? Which are the most common? How do you consume them?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Yes, as you said, from pure corn you can make several products, several foods, in terms of *pinole*, right? For example, you already mentioned corn, from which you can get *pinole*, which is a very traditional food for us because it is for all seasons. For all seasons.

Eloísa Arenas: Excuse me for interrupting, what is *pinole* for people who don't know?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Oh, okay. Well.

Eloísa Arenas: Please.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: *Pinole* can be made from toasted corn. In fact, not long ago, I was teaching a class there in Juárez, Mexico, at the Centro Cultural de las Fronteras, where people who were interested in learning the traditional food of the *Ralámuli* attended. I had about 28 to 25 students there, and they learned how to make *pinole*, from how to toast the corn. Many people think that to toast corn, you have to use oil, and I say no. Of course, it's

not with oil. Why would you want the *pinole* to go bad right away and be all greasy? I tell them, to toast the corn, you have to toast it with sand. That's how it's toasted, with sand. You put the sand in so it gets hot enough, and you will see the color change when the sand is hot. Then you add the cup of corn and you stir it and toast it like that. You don't let it burn, I tell them. And yes, you need a strainer to strain the sand so the corn doesn't burn, I tell them. And so, when it's toasted and all, and it looks very toasted, like a brownish color, that's when you take it out, you grind it, you grind it in a *metate*, then in the mill, and then as fine as possible. If it doesn't come out fine, you pass it through about two times. And from there, it's done. They saw that the *pinole* came out and everything. Now we are going to start making things from the *pinole* that we have, the *pinole champurrado*.

Eloísa Arenas: Mmm.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: The *pinole* cookies. And then we are also going to make *atole*, I tell them. And they started making traditional *atole*, which is with pure water and *piloncillo* (raw sugar cane).

Eloísa Arenas: How delicious.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: So we started making it like that. "Why can't you add milk?" they ask me. "Yes, you can add milk if you want to make the *atole*, but since it's traditional in my town, we don't always have a cow producing milk," I tell them. "So, sometimes you just have to make it with pure water, with *piloncillo* to make it sweet, or sometimes you just add a little herb to give it flavor or a scent," I tell them. So that's how we started to make most of it. I also taught them how to make *nixtamal* to make corn tortillas. From there, we also made tortillas, and they started to do it all very well. You can also make a type of dessert with the well-ground and well-beaten *nixtamal*, because it comes out like a gelatinous texture. And you just add something sweet to it, and that's also a dessert that comes out. So, all that comes from *pinole*.

Eloísa Arenas: Wow, how incredible, how beautiful. We also want to ask you about... you already mentioned the *metate* and the mill, right? What other utensils? What utensils do you remember being used the most in the town, and that maybe the community that has migrated to the border brought with them, or how has the use of these utensils evolved? Like the *comal*, or the little wooden paddles we see a lot, right? Some of you make them yourselves, right? How has that evolution been in the kitchen?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Well, we still have the materials here or we bring them from the mountains, but you could say that those who were born here in the city no longer know how to make a *guarre*. We no longer know how a wooden spoon was built. We no longer know how to make a *batea*, which is like a tray that is used for grinding, to put it there so that

everything we grind on the *metate* doesn't fall. Or you put a little tray there, right? So the food falls there and in the mill as well. That's what is used the most, which is the *batea*, the *guare*, and also the wooden spoons, which are used a lot to stir all kinds of products and also for when they are for *tesgüino*. It's a large stick, like a spatula, they make it and they stir it with it. The clay pots too. For example, here we hardly find them anymore. In the mountains, I think they are also being lost. Why? Because our elderly people are the ones who knew how to make them, and little by little, those people are also disappearing, and the young people who are growing up in this generation don't have the same interest. I think it's something that is about to be lost. My son was telling me the other day, "What's going to happen to the food in about 20 or 30 years?" I said, "Why?" He said, "Because many of the elders are already passing away. If my grandfather passes away," thinking about others, right? And then he says to me, "And then when you pass away too, what's going to happen?" "Because right now I see here that many times they struggle to make things for a ceremony, to prepare *tesgüino*. In 30 years, it will be lost, and the children who are born now only speak Spanish," he mentioned to me. So, it's easy to lose a culture, but to recover it is a very long process.

Eloísa Arenas: And what did you say to your son?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Mm, he told me that it was very important for me to write down everything I have learned, all the knowledge I have. And I told him, "Maybe it's a good idea, but maybe it's not so appropriate". Why? Because we are not used to doing that kind of writing, to registering everything we do. I tell him, because I learned all this by seeing it, with practice, and everything. "And I think I have to teach you this," I tell him. And he said to me, "But yes, but what about everyone else?" he says. So, it's something that makes you think.

Eloísa Arenas: Mm.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Yes, it makes you think because many times the information is not so complete. The other day my son told me, "I was searching on Google, I didn't find any information like the stories you tell," he says. Well, no, that information won't be there.

Eloísa Arenas: That's right. That's why it's so good that there are spaces where that knowledge can be shared, but above all with children, with boys and girls. That's right. So that all that knowledge can be recovered. Who taught you how to cook? How did you learn to cook or the stories and the ingredients, the recipes?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Most of it is learned through practice. For example, I learned by watching my mom how she did it, how she toasted the corn, how she prepared the *tesgüino*, by getting involved. I think that's how I learned. And then later, I started asking her questions I had. "Okay, in a bucket or in a pot, about how much of the ingredients do you

have to add?" I would say. And she would start telling me, "It depends on how many liters, and that's how you're going to add it," she would say. So, that's something that I keep seeing. My son, I also told him the other day, "Put the corn to ferment so you can make some *tesgüino*," I tell him. And he did try to do it, but it didn't turn out right.

Eloísa Arenas: It's all about practice, as you say, right? Practice makes perfect.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Exactly. Exactly.

Eloísa Arenas: Very good. Speaking of... how do we celebrate, right, in the community? How do we have our ceremonies, our celebrations? As a *Ralámuli* community, whether it's religious or not, what is the food that is shared? What specific dishes are prepared, since, for example, we are very close to Holy Week? Right now, at the moment we are recording, it is almost Holy Week. For holidays, baptisms, and even funerals, for example. Could you share with us, Rosalinda, please, your experiences or memories of the importance of food in these ceremonies, in these gatherings?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Of course. For example, in the Holy Week events, which are three very consecutive days until the ceremony we do is finalized. These events are already a bit mixed with the Catholic Church, but without leaving aside our culture, the way we celebrated years ago, before the Spanish arrived, right? They are still very much on the same level, you could say. They mixed, they combined with those two cultures, you could say. Because in the end, we still have our traditional ceremony, as we celebrated, which is through dances, through our own purification, by carrying incense, right? And there, at each of these stations, each station that is made is like a reminder. Although now it is done through prayers with the Catholic Church, right? But the strongest meaning we have of the dance, you could say, is that both men and children participate, and now, for not much time, women have also started to get involved. And that is what makes our culture, our ceremony, more attractive, that they are very inclusive. Very inclusive in the sense that they don't just have... well, they have gender equity, right? But years ago, it was more patriarchal, you could say, and it was only for men, what was done, right? And now, it's also like in the gender of everyone, right? And I think what also makes it attractive is when at noon, food is shared. Not just by one person, but the whole community has this kind of commitment. You can't say they are obligated because they are not obligated, but it is a commitment that they already know they have to support because they are a community. So, it's also something that everyone brings in their different dishes, you could say. Some already bring food that is like lentils, eggs, and pumpkin seeds ground very finely on the *metate*, so it comes out with a different flavor. And some bring nopales, and some also bring fish broth, how they prepared it in the mountains, right? And all that kind of food, already mixed with what they make here in this city, varies a lot. The food they make varies

a lot. So, it is something very beautiful. Why? Because in community, it is shared, and one day ends, and then another day follows, and it is the turn of other women to do that.

Eloísa Arenas: So that we can understand a little, do the dances start early? Do they last all day or how does it work?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Yes, all day. For example, the first dance will start on Sunday, Palm Sunday. That will only be until about 2 in the afternoon or until the evening. But on that day, other women are already selected to make food. And on Holy Thursday, they start very early, and it's all day, and food is given twice, at noon and at night. And then on Friday as well. In the morning and at night, another meal. And then on Saturday morning, it ends with a fight, a hand-to-hand fight with the participants of the dance. From there, you have to see why they do that fight. Because that fight also consists a lot of representing good and evil. The people within the community, the '*variseos*', as they call them, are the painted ones, and the soldiers, who are supposedly the ones who represent good. From there, you know through the fight that when the *variseos* beat the soldiers, who represent good, it's supposedly a very difficult year. In terms of the economy, health, and you could say, rain. That's what they have identified or even the harvest itself. So they give to understand, "This time they lost". "A difficult year awaits us," they say, and they realize it through that as well.

Eloísa Arenas: From the dance.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Yes, that was very sacred, very important. Years ago, in the present, here in the city, we don't give it that importance or that validity. Why? Because as I say, we are losing the sense of its importance.

Eloísa Arenas: Okay. A little later, we are going to talk about the activities that are done to recover these traditions, right? As you already mentioned with your son, with other activities that are carried out. Precisely, right? So, tell us a little more about the concept of "Guardianas de la Cultura," please. How do we learn about traditional cooking? Because we know that culture is everything, right? And that an important part, as you have been telling us, is food, how it is shared with the community, right? So, what is the relationship with being "Guardianas de la Cultura"? Are women the ones who transmit this knowledge? Or what roles do men also play in the community for the harvest, the gathering, the cooking, the whole process of producing those foods?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Okay. Well, in an interview I was asked about why women today have become more strict or more focused on continuing to rescue our culture. And it not only has to do with language, with clothing, with food, but also with healing, right? There are many people, for example, who realize that the loss they have is greater and greater. In matters with women, I think I am privileged and blessed to have been raised in the

mountains, not to have or not want to forget the root that I have, the culture, or the knowledge that they instilled in me since I was a child. Because I arrived at 7 years old, but I didn't stay for long here on this border. I would leave and they would bring me back, and I would leave and they would bring me back until I turned 10. That's when I stayed here in the city, because my goal was to learn Spanish, but also from the age of 10, 11, I realized that the discrimination or rejection from the people in the city was very strong. So I felt something, like, "Why are they treating us like this?" I had thousands of questions. But starting with my mom, I said, "I don't want my mom to be treated like that or for them not to want to serve her". Or, "Why do they treat her like that if they are people? Why? Or what?" "Is it because of the lack of Spanish?" I said. And so I set out to learn Spanish, to learn to read, and I said, "I have to do something". That's exactly how it was, it was like feeding myself everything bad that happened to me, right? Turning it into something good. And that's what I've looked for. When I learned all that, to see, to know the two cultures and to be in the middle of those two cultures has not been easy for me. It has been very difficult. Why? Because you have the other culture and the other culture here. So, I think that has helped me a lot to interact with more women. To ask them the numbers in their mother tongue or for me to mention them in my mother tongue. And they would say, "And what number is that?" or "Which one is that?" they would say to me. And I would think, "But why don't they know? Why?" Because it's our counting, our number. Because, for example, to say 50 is very different in *Ralámuli*. "50 *marisa macoy*," no, it's not the same at all. So there, I would ask "*Kipo Wiinomí*, how much is it in money?" I would mention and say "*marisa macoy*," and they would say, "And what number is that?" And I would say, "Really? You don't know what number it is?" Because we sometimes always say the prices in our mother tongue, right?

Eloísa Arenas: Yes.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Why? Because sometimes, because she's our compatriot, we discount 10 pesos or 20 pesos, and then so the *chaboche* doesn't hear me.

Eloísa Arenas: Yes.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: So, "I can't help you," I say. So, these are things that sometimes I feel like some women are interested because they told me the other day, "I don't even know the meaning of the dance, I don't even know the numbers of how we count". So they said to me, "And are you interested in recovering and knowing?" I said, "Yes," they said to me, "then we have to do something". I tried to submit a project, they never gave me one. I'm very bad at applying for a project. Sometimes these issues hold me back. Sometimes I say, "What do I need to be able to do a workshop and recover or make my people aware?" I said, "but sometimes you do need resources". Why? "Because you have to offer water, you have to

offer some food there so they can stay". And sometimes that holds me back. Why? Because the children themselves say, "What are you going to give us to eat or what are we going to eat?" They are always with that, and I say, "Nothing, just cookies or water". And then, "But why don't you buy this and this and this?" "Because there's no money". So that's a limitation for me. Although sometimes I say, "I don't need money," but I always do, because you have to offer something to the children so they stay. Because with us, our way of learning, of training ourselves, is always... even our meeting, first when we have cultural events, it is always to feed ourselves, to share a meal. And then we are more attentive, because many times we don't know if that person has eaten or what they have been doing, so that helps us a lot. The best activity or best events, you could say, are with food. You break the ice, and even the sadness or the stress that the person brings. Why? Because by having offered something, the person feels like, "Oh, look, I was hungry or I was thinking about this or I was feeling this, and now that I ate an apple or some fruit, I'm okay". That's what it's about with us. That's why we have carried it for a long time historically, but also those are the limitations I have sometimes when I want to do an activity with children.

Eloísa Arenas: Mm.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: And I did start to say that because there were, well, there are women who are interested in being like the "guardianas" (guardians). And I have seen that they are like "guardianas". Why? Because from their home, from their family, they are doing everything possible to teach other young women who want to learn to make their traditional clothes, and even to speak in their mother tongue. To participate, and even to make a proposal, right? So, and that they have not lost their clothing, they continue to be those guardians and to preserve the mother tongue, even if we lose a few words.

Eloísa Arenas: Yes, that's right. So, if I understand what you are sharing with me, are women the ones who have the greatest authority or responsibility to transmit the knowledge?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: That's right. Unlike men, because men no longer use their traditional clothing, men now dress like *chabochis*, like civilians, right? So, the woman is the one who continues to preserve it. And for that reason, she also continues with the herbs, giving little teas to her children when we get sick, and also among older people. So, I think that's it.

Eloísa Arenas: Another question, Rosalinda. Do women and men eat differently in ceremonies or in general?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: It is in general. It's all the same, except at the time of the ceremony, when there is a dance, it is always separate. Women and men cannot mix. Men

on one side, women on the other side. So, it's something that they have always taught us, that an event is always like that, and they have continued to do it that way until now. It's only in the dances when they are mixed, but when they are sitting down or tasting the food or the *tesgüino* or talking or resting, it is always separate.

Eloísa Arenas: Mm. A group of men and a group of women.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Yes, that's right.

Eloísa Arenas: How interesting, Rosalinda. How is it preserved? Well, we have already talked a little about this cultural issue, but how would you say are the challenges to preserving this culture, these foods? What ideas are there, despite the limitations you share with us? How is this legacy kept alive, as you told us? You arrived as a child, you migrated, but you would return a little to your place of origin and you keep the memory of your mother, your grandmother, and the man who you told us told you the story of the little ants, very much alive. Do you see that it is similar with other women or men in your community?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: As I said, I think I am blessed, privileged to be having this conversation, sharing, and debating. Many tell me that no, that they did not have the same upbringing, the same teaching. Why? Because they mentioned that not everyone was involved. That's why the importance of getting involved within a community is that, from the youngest to the oldest, to be able to learn. Because many times in my town it wasn't done like that, they would tell us, "So, share with us what it's like in your town, how it was shared or how the ceremonies or events are done," we would say. And they would say, "They don't do it there," they say in some places, but I don't know if they really don't do it or because most of the women who are there were never involved or because they also arrived when they were very young. And not all of us have that privilege of having our grandparents tell us stories on a late night surrounded by bonfires where they would mention the bad, the good, and what we could expect in the future when we grew up. That's how our town was and how they would put us, they would select tasks for us from a young age. Why? Because they would always tell us why. And sometimes I didn't want to do it and he would say, "Ah, you don't eat because what are you going to eat if you don't do the task?" he would say. And sometimes when I wanted to be rebellious, I wouldn't eat. And then my grandfather would say to me, or I would reflect and say, "I've come and..." "And did you put the goats away and everything?" He would say, "Yes". And then, "Did you eat?" "No," I said, "No, because you told me not to eat". And he said to me, "Go eat, don't be crazy," he would say, "Don't be silly," something like that, he would say. And then I would start to eat, but it was always like a reflection for us to react when we were like that, out of laziness, for wanting to play, we wouldn't do what we were supposed to do. But yes, it was always that, our grandfather

never left us without eating for a long time, right? And I think that helps you a lot to value things and to support, right? Because that serves you for the future or for other communities.

Eloísa Arenas: I understand. Tell us a little about the festivals that are now held. There is a particular festival called the *Umukis* Festival, and *Umuki* is a woman in *Ralámuli*, and it's plural. Tell us about that, which I also see is an initiative to rescue and share with other indigenous communities that are not *Ralámulis*, that are on the border, but with society in general, right? How is it done? What can people find when they go there? What do they see?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Well, the *Umuki* festival has been around for some years now, for many years. Years ago it was done, but it was an organization that was done in conjunction with the indigenous communities that were there at that time. We only worked with three indigenous groups, which would be the *Ralámuli*, the *Mixtec*, and the *Huicholes*, only those three groups. But later, when the institute had the area for the care of indigenous women opened, that was the first thing the indigenous communities said. They said, "Why not continue doing the festival now that you are here in the government?" "You can do it, it will even be faster, easier to manage the spaces, the places". And so, it was implemented that the festival would be held twice a year. This would be a strong thing for the economy of the women who are here on this border, and it is not just for the *Ralámuli* community. But those 10 groups that have worked, who have approached the Municipal Institute for Women, and those 10 groups have been attending the institute for almost 8-9 years, because they know that there they can manage other needs they require, such as personal documents, education, scholarships, all that, right? To inform them, and we channel them to the corresponding place for each one, but always providing accompaniment. And the *Umuki* festival is still within the institute. It is held more or less in March or May for the first one, and then a second one is held in November. In November, they themselves chose those dates because those are the dates when they can sell. It's almost always close to el "buen fin" (the good weekend). So they themselves set those dates.

Eloísa Arenas: And can we see specific activities, or art, clothing, what can people find, food, what kind of food?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Yes, in fact, they have everything there. Part of this festival is to make people aware of how many indigenous groups there are here on the border, what their clothing is, the gastronomy they have, and also the dances they perform. It is part of making people aware that we are here, that we are an indigenous people, and that we are working with the indigenous group of the state of Chihuahua, who are the *Ralámuli* and the

Ndé. They are known as Apache, but they really want to be called *Ndé*. *Ndé* is the correct name, just like the *Ralámuli* and *Ralámuli*, where the correct word would be *Ralámuli*.

Eloísa Arenas: And who are the *chabochis*?

Rosalinda Guadalajara: The *chabochis* are those who speak Spanish. The Spanish, to us, are the bearded men.

Eloísa Arenas: Yes, bearded men. Very good, Rosalinda. Rosalinda, being so active, so committed, as you said, to your community, to the causes, to the rights of indigenous peoples, what can you tell us about, for example, a place that is nearby in the downtown area that also recently opened? I didn't see it until very recently, it's called *Las Marías*, *Las Tres Marías* (The Three Marys).

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Oh, yes.

Eloísa Arenas: Tell us a little about that.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Okay, well, that space was built some years ago, it has been some years now, that it was built exclusively for the artisans, for the female artisans belonging to the *Ralámuli* community. There were easily about 10 artisans at that time. Within that space, they also sell traditional food, which, well, you can't say it's so traditional because the stews are already more typically Mexican, right? But nevertheless, the tortillas are handmade. The *gorditas* they sell, you could practically say that they are made by *Ralámuli* people. But it's also something like we have to make a different stew that the customers or the public will like, right? Because you can't normally make all the traditional *Ralámuli* food, which are *quelites* or nopales. We have to find a way for them to be able to sell and be able to have the same economic well-being for the women, right?

Eloísa Arenas: So, I understand that in the *Ralámuli* diet, there isn't as much of a presence of meat, for example, red meat.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Yes, there isn't much.

Eloísa Arenas: Very good, Rosalinda. Is there anything you would like to share with us before we close this conversation? It has been so rich, so powerful. I always love listening to you and sharing and learning a lot from you. Share with us any message you would like to give to the community in general about the *Raramurí* gastronomy or something that we have not shared here, that I have not asked you about and that you think is important to mention.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Just to mention that if they go to Ciudad Juárez, they should get to know the women who are there offering their crafts. And if they have doubts or questions to

ask, that they always approach them with respect to ask any questions they have, right? Because many times, sometimes out of fear of discrimination, the colleagues don't always give out information. And it would be good for them to get to know the important food, the *pinole*, right? And the medicinal herbs. That would be it, and also that it is their income, and not to haggle over their products when they are at a festival event, right? That would be it. That it is a product that is entirely handmade and that it takes them a long time to make a product.

Eloísa Arenas: Of course, that's very important.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: That's right.

Eloísa Arenas: Well.

Rosalinda Guadalajara: Thank you very much, *matétera-bá*.

Eloísa Arenas: *Matétera-bá*, thank you very much. Thank you so much for listening. Once again, we want to thank our guest, thank you very much, Rosalinda Guadalajara, for sharing her knowledge about her indigenous *Ralámuli* community in the Juárez-El Paso region. And thank you for listening to another episode of El Paso Food Voices.