

Elie's Chinchorro Brings Puerto Rican Flavors to Omaha's Food Scene

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- At Elie's Chinchorro, the air hums with the rhythm of Puerto Rico, mingling aromas of garlic, roasted pork, and plantains—a delicious medley that fills the restaurant and lures patrons through its doors. But the food isn't the only thing that tells a story here. Owner Elie Berchal's journey to opening this beloved Omaha restaurant is woven into every bite, every detail and every moment of hospitality.

For Elie, opening her restaurant wasn't a lifelong dream but rather a journey born from resilience. "I came to Omaha after a difficult time," Elie explains. "I just wanted to give my kids a better life." After a series of demanding jobs that ultimately left her physically unable to continue, Elie tapped into the one thing she knew she could offer: her cooking. Inspired by her grandmother's advice—"Whatever you do, do it with passion"—she began selling homemade meals from her kitchen, hoping it might help cover her kids' college costs.

Those early days weren't easy, with her selling just a handful of meals on some days. But her culinary talent shined through, and word of her cooking spread. Soon, she was a regular at local events, setting up tables and wowing crowds with her Puerto Rican flavors. "I remember one event where we sold out everything we brought. That was the moment I thought, 'This could be something bigger,'" Elie recalls.

The Menu: A Culinary Tour of Puerto Rico

Stepping into Elie's Chinchorro is like stepping into a Puerto Rican marketplace. The menu boasts a selection of Puerto Rican classics that highlight Elie's roots and her deep love for traditional cooking. Start with alcapurrias, savory green banana fritters stuffed with beef or corned beef, or indulge in a Codfish Fritter (Bacalaitos) for a taste of the island's oceanic bounty.



Owner, Elie Berchal.

For those craving a mix of everything, the Pal' Batallon is a must-try. This sampler platter overflows with pork chunks, crispy alcapurrias, and turnovers, giving guests a full spectrum of flavors in one hearty dish. And for groups, the Despelote—a Puerto Rican feast that serves up to eight—brings together rice, mofongo, and a bounty of meats, including chicken, steak and pork, making it the perfect centerpiece for any gathering.

Mofongo is the pride of the menu, a signature dish made from mashed plantains fried to perfection, then stuffed with your choice of protein, from succulent shrimp and crispy pork chunks to tender skirt steak or chicken chicharrón. Elie's mofongo is an homage to her Puerto Rican heritage and the cooking lessons passed down from her grandmother.

A Family Affair

The warmth that defines Elie's Chinchorro comes, in large part, from the hands that help run it. Elie's family is deeply involved, with her daughter even singing on occasion, creating an ambiance that feels both festive and intimate. The decor, lovingly designed by Elie's daughter, brings a touch of Puerto Rico's lushness to Omaha, complete with ivy-covered walls and a striking bar setup. "This restaurant is a family affair," Elie shares, beaming with pride. "My daughter handles the decor, and the whole family pitches in whenever they can. It's more than a restaurant—it's a part of us."

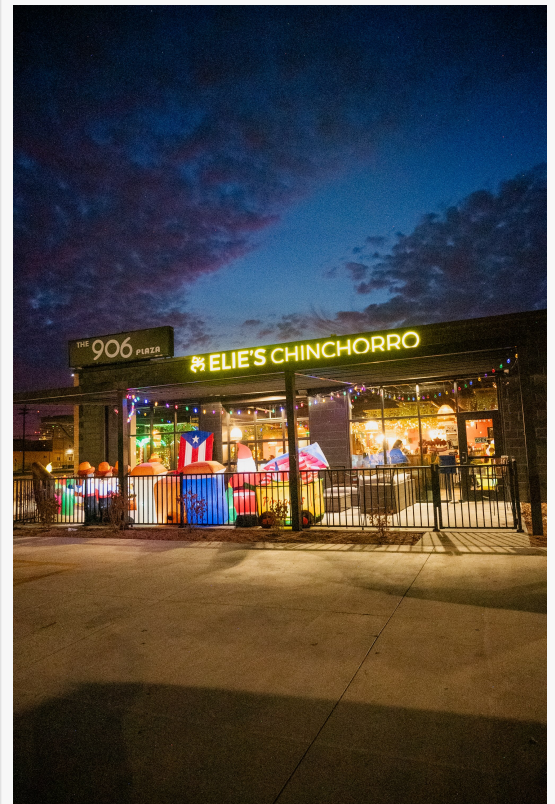
The restaurant's cozy dining area offers patrons a view of downtown Omaha, an unexpected yet perfect backdrop that Elie loves. "I feel like people can finally see me now," she says. "The location, the view, everything—it just feels right."

The Future: Expanding the Flavors of the Caribbean

Now that her dream has come to life, it's far from complete. She envisions new locations, each with its own unique Caribbean flair. "I'd love to open a place focused on tapas and cocktails or even a Caribbean-inspired bakery," she says, her excitement palpable. But for now, her heart is firmly



Inside Elie's Chinchorro kitchen.



Elie's Chinchorro restaurant.

rooted at Elie's Chinchorro, bringing Puerto Rican flavor to Omaha, one plate at a time.

For those lucky enough to visit, Elie's Chinchorro offers more than a meal—it's a taste of Puerto Rico served with a side of passion and a story of resilience. So, whether you're looking to savor authentic mofongo, grab a Cuban sandwich, or dive into the Truya sampler, Elie's Chinchorro is ready to welcome you with open arms and unforgettable flavors.

A Q&A with Elie Berchal: From Family Recipe to Thriving Restaurant

Q: What inspired you to start your restaurant?

Elie: I came to Omaha after a very difficult time. I wanted to make money and give my kids a better life, but it didn't start with a dream of owning a restaurant. I worked hard in other jobs, but they took a physical toll on me. After suffering injuries, I lost my job. I remember my grandma saying, "Whatever you do, do it with passion," so I decided to try selling food from home, hoping it could cover my kids' college expenses. It was simple at first, just small meals I made at home and promoted on social media. Some days, I didn't sell much, but I never gave up. Eventually, people started to love my food.

Q: How did you go from selling meals at home to owning a restaurant?

Elie: It was step-by-step. First, I sold plates from my kitchen, sometimes 10 or 15 in a day. One time, I set up a table at a small community event, and it was a hit! We sold out everything, and that made me think this could be something bigger. After years of doing pop-ups and building a following, I finally found a space in Omaha that felt right. It wasn't easy—many places were too expensive or too hidden, but I didn't give up. This spot I'm in now took four years to secure, but it's the best decision I've made.

Q: What kind of challenges did you face in opening your restaurant?

Elie: Many! The first spot I rented was hidden and small, and I had to fight just to keep the doors open. Also, I had to navigate the red tape and permits, especially during COVID, which made everything more challenging. When I finally found this place, it needed so much work. My daughter, who loves design, stepped in and helped me create a space that feels like home. She handled the decor, even designing the bar area and adding beautiful details, like ivy and holiday decorations. Now, we have a place where people can see us and enjoy the food and atmosphere we've created together.

Q: What makes your restaurant unique?

Elie: It's a family affair, and the food has a deep connection to our culture and history. I make dishes from Puerto Rico with authentic flavors and spices, especially garlic, which is central to Caribbean cooking. We serve traditional dishes like mofongo, with influences from my own

family recipes. My family helps out in the kitchen, and we make it a fun, lively experience with music and dancing. My daughter even sings sometimes, making it more than just a meal—it's a celebration.

Q: What would you say has been your biggest success so far?

Elie: Moving to this location has been the biggest success because people can finally see us. We have windows and a view, and people can find parking easily. When we first opened here, we didn't have any decorations, but people kept coming, even just for takeout. Now, with everything set up, we're welcoming people from all backgrounds who want to try our food and experience our culture.

Q: What are your long-term goals for the restaurant?

Elie: I dream of expanding but not necessarily franchising. I'd like to open another spot that focuses on tapas and cocktails, bringing in more flavors from the Caribbean. Maybe even a bakery! I'd love to create spaces with different vibes but keep the authenticity of the food and the family feel. Eventually, I want to open more locations in Omaha and maybe in other cities like Lincoln.

Q: What advice would you give to someone starting out in the restaurant industry?

Elie: Have a strong vision and a lot of patience. The journey won't be easy, but if you have clear goals, you can make it through. Surround yourself with family and people who believe in you. Even when times are tough, don't give up. Remember what my grandma used to say: "Whatever you do, do it with passion." That's what has carried me through the challenges, and that's what I try to pass on to my kids and everyone who comes to eat here.

906 N 16th Street, Omaha, NE 68102 | Menu: <https://elieschinchorro.com/>.

Hours:

Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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