

JAPAN BUYS THE ASPEN IDEA • LAURETTA: LOCAL HERO

ASPEN

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BEST LITTLE TACO STAND IN THE WEST

By JANET O'GRADY

LAURETTA
IS AN
ASPEN FOLK
HERO
+++
AT HER
NAMESAKE
RESTAURANT
SOCIAL
BARRIERS
STILL BREAK
DOWN

Night after night, the pocket-sized space is packed. Blinking electric chiles outline the windows; ristras and photos from the Mexican Revolution dot the walls. Norteño ballads alternate with syncopated salsa. The crowd stretches the social distance from a young, animated, Patagonia-colorful group to an older trio sipping margaritas poured from a thermos. Speaking impeccable Spanish, as one would expect from owners of an Argentine ranch, they chat with several young Mexicans.

In the midst of this fiesta a sassy blonde darts from the hot, cluttered kitchen. "A relleno? Who's got the relleno?" she calls out. Bustling through the crowd carrying plates of tacos and tamales, she snakes like Carmen Miranda, with a cha-cha-cha in her walk. "Let me be your waitress tonight," she laughs to familiar faces who know she is more than a waitress — she's Lauretta, owner of her

Photograph by David Marlow

