



Sr., the family patriarch, was in a hospital with pneumonia, and he died of a diabetic coma. The vision continued when Aurelio Marin Mendez, Jr. took over his responsibility.

Aurelio Marin Mendez, Jr. made sure to ground Taco Loco in the community, and vice versa. "He was our leader, and he led by example," said his brother, Josue. "When my dad passed, he lead us." When anyone reached out to the restaurant for school fundraisers, sponsorship, or donations, Aurelio Marin Mendez, Jr. never turned anyone away.

Along with his partner, Maria Isabel Garcia, Aurelio was the loving father of Brianna, Isaac, Audrey, Ayana, Jessica, and Aurelio Mendez III. Aurelio enjoyed being surrounded by his family, and he loved working at his family restaurant alongside his mother, brothers, and children.

Taco Loco moved to the east side of Shakopee, and ran the restaurant near Dangerfield's. Love, respect, and hard work was the motto.

In 2019, Aurelio, known as Junior, was diagnosed with adrenal cancer. Adrenal cancer is a rare cancer that begins in one or both of the small, triangular glands (adrenal glands) located on top of your kidneys. Adrenal glands produce hormones that give instructions to virtually every



organ and tissue in your body. Adrenal cancer, can occur at any age.

Aurelio Marin Mendez, Jr. died on March 19, 2020 at the age of 41. He was buried at the Catholic Cemetery in Shakopee.

Meanwhile, Josue, his brother, took over at Taco Loco. "I got thrown in to this situation when my brother got sick. I wasn't 100% ready to take over. I did what I could with what I had."

The loss of Aurelio, combined with the hit the restaurant took during the pandemic, was hard for the family, and on August 28, 2021, Taco Loco was closed. But Josue said Taco Loco isn't done for good; it's just done for now in that particular building!



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Aurelio Marin Mendez Jr.

1978-2020



Taco Loco was opened for 18 years in Shakopee (2003-2021). Josue Mendez, Constantino Mendez, and Irma Mendez ran the restaurant after Aurelio Marin Mendez, Jr. died on March 19, 2020.



Love, respect and hard work was his motto!

Aurelio Marin Mendez, Jr. was born on December 31, 1978 to Aurelio Mendez-Marín Sr. (1950-2007) and Irma Andrade, who was born in Mexico on September 13, 1948. Grandparents included Amadeo Mendez Tejeda (1914-1997) and Gabina Marin Mendoza (1932-2011), from Mexico, and her great grandparents were. José Clotilde Cleto Mendez, Rita Margarita Tejeda, Maxiimino Marin Alarcon and Teodula Mewndoza Carmona, also from Mexico.

Aurelio Mendez-Marín Sr. and Irma Andrade de Mendez were immigrants from opposite ends of Mexico, and as teenagers they came to the United States for work. Federal Naturalization Records show that Aurelio and Irma applied for nationalization on September 20, 1991 in Chicago, and were granted citizenship on November 19, 1991, and they took an oath of allegiance to the United States.

Aurelio Mendez-Marín Sr. and Irma Andrade de Mendez had six children. They worked at a Mexican restaurant in Chicago when a friend from Minnesota tried their food and encouraged them to move to Minnesota, according to an interview in the *Shakopee Valley News* on April 29, 2021 by Maddie DeBilzan.

The family scouted out the Twin Cities area, packed their bags in Chicago, and the parents and three of their six children, including Aurelio Marin Mendez, Jr., moved to Minnesota. They opened two Mexican restaurants in Glencoe and Hutchinson. The restaurant worked for a while, but as Aurelio Jr.'s brother, Josue said that it was out in the country and they did not know a lot about authentic food, so the demographics didn't really fit what they family had to offer.

The Mendez family decided to give their Mexican restaurant one last shot. They found the vacant Dairy Queen off County Road 101, across from Rahr Malting Company in Shakopee. They spent what little money they had to purchase it. Aurelio Marin Mendez, Jr. quit his job at Lion's Tap and the Paulie's American Grill, and Josue put his two week's notice in his construction job, and they worked on the old Dairy Queen, turning it into Taco Loco.

A few of the lumbermen and electricians were willing to work with an agreement to get paid

once they opened and also hook their employees up with catering food. The day the restaurant were scheduled for inspection, rain poured in and the roof started leaking. They failed inspection the day before opening, according to the article, After 18 years, Shakopee's Taco Loco says 'goodbye for now,' in the *Shakopee Valley News*, April 29, 2021. They agreed to come back the next day.

The brothers patched up the hold and flooded the roof for hours that evening until the leak was fixed, and the next day, they passed inspection. And Taco Loco opened, and the family-owned fast-good eatery developed a cult following, even beyond Shakopee's borders.

Taco Loco was opened 24 hours at first with the four Mendez brothers—Noe, Josue, Tino, and Aurelio Jr,—took 12-hour shifts. The restaurant took off by word of mouth.

But on March 4, 2007, Aurelio Mendez, Sr., the family patriarch, was in a hospital with pneumonia, and he died of a diabetic coma. The vision continued when Aurelio Marin

