

Feature Article – Meper Donaz November 2020

Meper Donaz If I Have Another Donut

Most teenagers who want a new computer would ask a parent to buy it for them or just sit around wishing it would fall into their lap. Some might try to find a job to earn money to buy it. But Zesar Santiago is no typical teen. Just after his 15th birthday, Zesar decided to launch his own business – not only to raise funds to buy himself a computer, but also to help cover expenses related to his education and other needs in his family’s household.

Initially, Zesar considered working at a fruit stand or selling cookies, but eventually he decided to start a donut enterprise. Why donuts? Well, for starters, it was work that wouldn’t interfere with his school schedule. But more importantly, donuts are something of a family tradition. Zesar’s grandfather Rubén taught Zesar the art of making donuts. And Rubén learned the technique from his father. Of learning how to make a good donut, Zesar says, “At first it was difficult, but with help and effort, I learned to do them well.” He says while he messed up a few times in the beginning, he had a lot of fun along the way.

Zesar chose to call the business Meper Donaz as it contains the word *dona*, the Spanish word for *donut*, and it’s a play on the phrase *me perdona*, which means *forgive me*. Zesar says there wasn’t a special reason for choosing the name, but he jokes, “I figure people could give the donuts to apologize to others.” He added the “z” at the end instead of an “s” to represent his own name.

To get the word out, in early October, Zesar set up a Facebook page for his budding business and began sharing the page with family, friends and other area Facebook pages. It wasn’t long before people began placing orders.

As business started picking up, Zesar’s 17-year-old brother Benji pitched in to help. Both boys saw the potential to grow the operation, so they agreed to stick together as partners. Currently, the brothers are filling an average of four delivery orders per day. In addition, they recently established a regular spot on Thursdays from 5 to 10 p.m. at Puerto Magico, a market near the marina featuring organic, artisanal and regional foods, products, art and entertainment.

Zesar and Benji have already achieved one of their major goals: moving their donut-making operation from their grandparents’ home to a rented spot in Colonia Las Juntas. And they’re well on their way to being able to buy that laptop for their studies, too.

The boys’ mother Mayeli Santiago is inspired by her sons’ initiative. “Watching my sons work hard to reach their goals makes me so proud,” says Mayeli. “I am very grateful to everyone who has encouraged them in their efforts.”

One of the boys' most devoted supporters has been their stepfather Monico Meda Rivera. Zesar and Benji are very grateful for his help in providing funds to cover start-up expenses for the business. He also provides a big assist driving the brothers around town to make donut deliveries to customers' homes and businesses.

Zesar and Benji have a little brother named Rafael who's not yet part of the enterprise. "He's only 2 years old, so he can't help much now, but if things go well, maybe he can join the business when he's older," says Zesar.

That seems like a completely realistic vision given how things have taken off after just over a month in business. The young entrepreneurs are savvy when it comes to marketing. Already the Meper Donaz Facebook page has nearly 300 friends. Plus, they just unveiled a brand-new logo and have printed up a batch of business cards. At this rate, it won't be long until the brothers achieve their long-term goal of opening their own storefront coffee shop.

If you suddenly find yourself craving a donut, go ahead and place an order. They're available in a variety of flavors including chocolate, sugar-coated, coffee, and vanilla custard-filled. Prices start at 20 pesos each with discounts for quantities of 12 or more. The minimum order for home delivery is six donuts. For more information, visit the Meper Donaz Facebook page (@meperdonaz). To place an order, send a message via Facebook Messenger or via WhatsApp to either 322 134 19 28 or 322 351 84 64.