The Rest of the Frozen Concoction Story

Scott Emley, 2022-06-10 – Slightly humorous to me is that journalists transplant into Texas, into Austin, and think good journalism is regurgitating a story that has been retold in its simplest form since it was first realized. Regurgitating a story out of convenience, because Jimmy Buffett happens to be playing for Fins in Austin this weekend at the new and totally awesome Austin Moody Center. No offense to the KXAN writer, and yes, it is true... Jimmy Buffett tasted his first frozen margarita in 1976 on Anderson Lane at the then-brand-new Village Shopping Center in an anchor pioneering Mexican Restaurant called Cocina del Sur. (Correction, Ricky Garcia, the landmark still exists, just changed names a couple times. At least Bobby Moore got it right in his Wide Open Country article!) In several interviews, Jimmy Buffett credits Cocina del Sur as serving his first ever frozen margarita … about how afterwards, he and his flip flop gang wrote the lyrics to arguably his smash hit, “Margaritaville”. I say “arguably” because as a true Fin Fan and aspiring Parrothead, I LOVE “Margaritaville”, but I appreciate other songs even more ... and the story behind each of his songs … like the music video for “Come Monday” (how it was made), or let’s sing a song about a cheeseburger. There is even a backstory of “Volcano”, and at the time dormant — Soufriere Hills volcano in Montserrat, where he recorded during May of 1979. Soufriere, by the way, “volcano blow” in August of 1995. “Son of a Son of a Sailor”? That’s me – or son of a daughter anyways. In any case, I digress. When I learned that somehow … unknowingly … my company High 5 decided to sign a lease at 2700 W. Anderson Lane, and that no one before had connected the dots that our building, which has since been a Fuddruckers, The Goodnight, and only my landlord knows what else, was originally
Cocina del Sur. This is the point in the story where that “good journalism” ends. Hey cool, Jimmy tasted his first Margarita in Austin … and the place still exists (after changing hands a few times). But what is TRULY Austin and GREAT journalism is the story behind **how that frozen margarita got there in the first place**. Believe it or not, the story is just as much about Jimmy as it is about Jimmie … as in, Jimmie Lung, owner of Cocina del Sur.

A descendant of Joe Lung, Jimmie is one of Joe’s grandsons through Joe’s son Jim. Joe Lung’s family is one of the first Asian American immigrants to settle in Austin, which is probably a great story in and of itself. To come to the United States just after the civil war (1876) at the age of 12 as a railroad worker, to have your work terminated because the railroad was not to be finished, to bravely open up a restaurant, and that restaurant “Joe’s Café” becoming one of the staples in Austin… not just for its 25 cent steak and simple veggie dinners, but also for the egg rolls that Joe would make his customers for free – because no one knew what eggrolls were at the time. Egg rolls got me through college at UT Austin … many know that. Can you imagine? Joe and his wife Dora eventually settling in Austin within a Hispanic community, the Lung family has quoted it was like living as a minority inside a minority. An amazing success story, Joe and his wife Dora had a sprawling family of several children – nine, in fact! There was Annie, Lula, Jim, Jesse, Charlie, John, Inez, Arthur, and Sam. Though Joe passed away in 1926, his family and the Lung restaurants grew! There was a time in Austin – starting over 100 years ago and continuing for decades – that Lung restaurants were THE PLACE for Austin to get Chinese food. Not like now, where you can go around your street corner or have a food service pick up your newest Asian Fusion cuisine. Chinese food was new to Austin, and as one of the Lung children put it, they were the ones that taught Austin how to use chopsticks! Still with me? Jimmie Joe Lung, son of Jim Lung and grandson to Joe Lung, was proprietor of one such Lung’s Chinese restaurant on Burnet Road, but true to Austin and its melting pot ability, the Hispanic neighborhood influence sparked a brave career pivot for Jimmie, a descendant of an Asian American immigrant pioneer and one of the heirs to the great Lung name of Chinese cuisine restaurants … to bravely build a Mexican restaurant! So, in 1962, with the help of developers Irving Ravel and Samuel Marks, Jimmie built and opened Cocina del Sur on 5517 Burnet Road.
For 13 years, Cocina del Sur was a hot spot for Austinites to get their Mexican Food fix ... so much that in 1975, a new development on Anderson Lane called The Village, developed by Jones-Lake Co out of Dallas, was about to open and was looking for anchor tenants. Polling many original Austinites today, they all know about The Village. In its day, it was the premier ...
development in the city … and with several restaurants and shops joining the development, it became a common destination for most of the city. The development boasted a 4-screen theater (called Village Cinema IV, now Alamo Drafthouse IV), Lock Stock & Barrel for prime rib, steak, and seafood (quite sure where Cover 3 is now), Ice Box for ice cream and candies, a tennis shop, kids shop, bridal shop, men’s clothes, women’s clothes, coin shop, golf shop … The Village was THE PLACE. Can I get an Amen from anyone who remembers? So, in 1975, Jimmie opened Lung’s Cocina del Sur in The Village, and it, of course, was an instant success. If that wasn’t enough, Jimmie had heard about a relatively new innovation in Dallas.

Slight backup: on May 11, 1971, an unrelated restaurant owner named Mariano Martinez pulled the lever on the first ever frozen margarita. He had the idea, according to his interview with the Smithsonian (where you can find the original machine!), because he had offered frozen margaritas via a blender – an old family recipe – during his opening nights of his restaurant Mariano’s Mexican Cuisine near SMU in Dallas. His bartender could not keep up with the orders, and thus quality suffered. Mariano stopped into a 7-Eleven and saw a slurpy machine and thought “hey, I could use a soft serve machine to concoct our signature drink”. As such, Mariano’s is credited for building the first ever margarita machine, cranking out frozen margaritas for decades with that first machine until
it petered out, and has ultimately credited heritage and technology for such an important discovery: “The golden ratio was two parts of the past and one of the present.”

Fast forward to 1975: news of the frozen margarita machine had made its way to Austin, but no one had made the investment (much less knew how to get a unit). Enter back Jimmie Lung! Jimmie had heard about the popularity of the drink, and thus, acquired the first ever frozen margarita machine into Austin! Just like Mariano’s in Dallas, Cocina del Sur quickly became known as “the place you get a Frozen Margarita!”.

Then, the story goes back to the headlines – that Jimmy Buffett wrote “Margaritaville” in Austin in 1976 after tasting his first frozen margarita at Lung’s Cocina del Sur restaurant, where High 5 is today in the Village Center strip mall on Anderson Lane. After drinking that first concoction at Cocina del Sur, Jimmy sat on the deck of the house at which he and the Coral Reefer band were staying and began singing some lyrics about flip-flops, pop-tops and a lost shaker of salt.

As Austin population and its restaurant scene continued to grow, and as Jimmy got older, he decided to shut down the restaurant in the 1990s. During their almost 30 years in business, Cocina del Sur was a tremendous success. In addition, the employees at Cocina del Sur were active together outside of the restaurant … competing regularly and sometimes winning the Austin Men’s Bowling Championships at the Brunswick-Capitol Bowl (Dart). So it goes that bowling already had a concentric circle with what later became The Goodnight, and which is now High 5. While telling the story verbally over the last few years, I have found that SO MANY of my friends have connections to either Jimmy Buffett – like my teammate Major Applewhite. His father, Larry, was Jimmy’s roommate in college! (Let THAT be a tough Texas Football trivia question/answer!) Or Russ Caccamisi, who is a renowned Austin musician and former bass guitarist for The Box Tops, owns that PostNet in Bee Cave, is close with some of the band members. Or my financial advisor, Erik Antenner, who grew up with Lung as one of his greatest friends. Upon visiting the Austin Historical Society, there was SO MUCH AMAZING history of how the Lung family got here, against great odds, and successfully built a

Scores soar in keg meet

By WILBUR CALLAWAY

Scores soared in the debates on the National Football League’s new rule pertaining to the use of chopsticks in games. The top team in the Western Division, the Los Angeles Rams, scored a 30-10 victory over the New York Giants. The Rams outscored the Giants by 12 points in the first half, then held them scoreless in the second half.

The Rams’ scoring was led by quarterback John Elway, who completed 14 of 22 passes for 216 yards and two touchdowns. Fullback Charlie Joiner added 74 yards and a touchdown on 14 carries. Wide receiver Tom Fears caught five passes for 84 yards and a touchdown.

The Giants’ best player was tight end Mark Ingram, who caught seven passes for 100 yards and a touchdown. Running back Jim Brown rushed for two touchdowns and 67 yards on 16 carries. Quarterback Y.A. Tittle passed for 226 yards and one touchdown.

The Rams improved to 10-4-1, while the Giants fell to 7-7.

The National Football League’s new rule on the use of chopsticks in games was introduced to increase the safety of players. The rule states that players are not allowed to use chopsticks during a game, and if they do, they will be penalized.

The Rams’ victory was their first in three games. They are now 10-4-1 on the season, while the Giants are 7-7.

The Rams’ next game is against the San Francisco 49ers, while the Giants’ next game is against the Dallas Cowboys.

The Rams won the game 30-10.
multi-faceted and multi-city restaurant empire, and give so much back to the Austin community… then to take a risk on a new contraption called a frozen margarita machine, just in time for Jimmy Buffett to stop by and taste it and be inspired to write his greatest hit. Arguably, the story of “Margaritaville” started 100 years before, when Joe Lung first immigrated to the USA. Ironically, no one ever put the pieces together until now to realize that the walls still stand – albeit now as a scratch kitchen American Cuisine entertainment center. And, of course, frozen margaritas.

And that, as they say, is The Rest of The Story. High 5!

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- Thank you to the Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, and especially to the Asian American historians on site to help with so much information on The Lung Family! I’m sorry it took over 2 years to finally write the Rest of the Story, but hope I honor their history and place in Austin history!
- Lung v. Lung et al. 259 S.W.2d 253 (1953) | Texas Supreme Court | May 19, 1953
- Joe Lung | AustinTexas.gov
- Come Monday - Jimmy Buffett - YouTube
- How an Austin margarita inspired Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville (kxan.com)
- The Texas Origins of Jimmy Buffett's 'Margaritaville' (wideopencountry.com)
- The Uniquely Texan Origins of the Frozen Margarita | At the Smithsonian| Smithsonian Magazine