

# Rocky Mountain News

## Domingo puts stamp on eatery

Tenor is partner in restaurant that will open today

By Marc Shulgold  
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His name may mean Peaceful Sunday, but there was nothing peaceful about Placido Domingo's Wednesday evening, as the superstar tenor greeted a crush of fans and camera-toting well-wishers at a pre-opening party at La Sandia Mexican Kitchen and Tequila Bar in Park Meadows.

Revered as one of the world's leading opera singers, Domingo was not in Denver for anything remotely related to music. Opening today, La Sandia represents the latest in a string of restaurants he has partnered in with chef Richard Sandoval, who is acknowledged as the "father of modern Mexican cuisine."

Ushered away from the crush of margarita-sipping guests, Domingo spared no words in explaining his foray into the restaurant business.

"I like to eat," he said. "And Mexican food is my favorite."

Actually, it goes deeper than that, he then admitted.

"My father's mother — my grandmother — was a very modern woman. Back in the 1920s, she was driving a car around Zaragosa, Spain. That's how modern she was. Well, she had a restaurant in Zaragosa, and my father worked there for a time. When I was a boy, I was thrilled to go there, and I knew that one day, I wanted to own a restaurant. It has long been a dream of mine."



JAVIER MANZANO/ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

**Placido Domingo** gets a mango margarita Wednesday at La Sandia Mexican Kitchen and Tequila Bar in Park Meadows. He is a partner with chef Richard Sandoval.

The Park Meadows establishment, a spacious, two-story space located in The Vistas, is the latest in a series of eateries owned by Domingo and Sandoval.

"There are now three Pampinos," the singer noted, "and another Sandia at Stapleton, and Zango in Washington and Denver. And more projects on the way."

The two met years ago through Domingo's son, resulting in a failed Spanish restaurant in New York.

But the successes have come

consistently since Sandoval developed his modern-Mexican concept, which blends authentic Mexican ingredients with up-to-date culinary techniques.

"Most important," Domingo pointed out, "is that it's affordable."

While he leaves the creative aspect of cooking to Sandoval, the tenor said he contributes more than financial assistance and the power of his celebrity.

"I give my opinions on the food," he said. "And now and then, I might have an idea. You know, I would love to work in the

kitchen and cook myself — but there is no time."

That's an understatement. Though in his late 60s, he continues to maintain a packed schedule of singing and conducting, along with managing the artistic affairs of two American opera companies on the two coasts.

"My contracts with Washington (D.C.) Opera and Los Angeles Opera both expire in 2011," he said. "I'm going to be 70 in that year, so I will be making a lot of big decisions."

In the meantime, his performing schedule continues to take him around the world, singing and conducting works by Wagner, Donizetti, Thomas and others in nonstop fashion.

"Through December of next year, I'll be singing in eight different operas," he explained. "Plus a lot of conducting — both in opera and in (orchestral) concerts."

He expressed no interest in expanding into opera-directing, pointing to his wife, Marta, who sat quietly out of earshot.

"She is the director in the family," he said.

The former soprano made her Met debut in 2002, in a production starring her husband.

No, Domingo said, his time will be spent singing, conducting and running two opera companies. If his vocal powers diminish, he will simply give up the stage.

"But not conducting," he added. "Conducting is the only thing I am sure I want to continue as long as I can."

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