

## BRENDA RODRIGUEZ BIO

Originally from Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico, Brenda Rodriguez is a mother, small business owner and activist. She experienced family violence from a very young age by her adoptive parents and family. As a result of the violence, she began to work from the age of 12. For the next three years, all of the money she made was kept by her adoptive mother as another way to discriminate against her. For this reason, at the age of 15-years-old, Brenda decided to live on her own and started a long journey of hard work and perseverance with a deep faith in God. While working in a restaurant to pay for her university studies, Brenda became the general manager at age 17, making her a pioneer in the food industry business.



She graduated as a CPA Accountant in 1988 from the PITMAN Commercial Academy in Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico. Soon after her graduation, Brenda fell in love and decided to start a family. Due to drastic and constant domestic abuse from the father of her two daughters, she was forced to flee and escape her beloved Mazatlan. In 1994, Brenda immigrated to Long Beach, California with her two young daughters, enduring a long strenuous trip seeking safety.

In 1997, Brenda moved to Marshalltown, attracted by a newspaper ad and the demand for labor in various industries. In 2003, Brenda moved to New Hampton to open the community's first Latino-owned business, Mi Pueblo, a Mexican restaurant and supermarket. The business was well-received by the community due to her involvement in the local Catholic Church; volunteer work as an interpreter in the local police department, hospital and courts; and of course, her distinctive, flavorful dishes. Brenda founded New Hampton's Multi-cultural Community Picnic, a yearly gathering of people from all Christian denominations to share food and culture and initiated the Celebration of Posadas & Dia de la Virgin. In 2008, Brenda had to close her business due to betrayal and domestic abuse from the father of her only son. In an attempt to find a new, peaceful place for her children, Brenda moved to Waterloo. There, she went from owning a restaurant to starting over as a server and quickly moved up through the ranks to become general manager of Chilito's Mexican Restaurant at age 44, a position she had already conquered at age 17 back in her hometown. Brenda has been a dishwasher, hostess, waitress, assistant manager, assistant chef, chef, and general manager, mastering her trade in the hospitality and restaurant business.

In 2017, Brenda moved to Des Moines to assist her older daughter and son-in-law in their businesses and events with a catering business and searching for a better education for her youngest daughter. She has also organized the Celebration of The Day of the Death in Des Moines' Capitol Park Neighborhood. In 2019, Brenda received the ServSafe Certification of the American National Standards Institute for Food Protection. This year, she began a new business venture with the remodeling and construction of Señor Tequila – Mexican Cuisine & Tequila Bar, in association with Jeff Brunning and Alejandro Castro, two of the largest restaurateurs in the Midwest who recognize her talents and expertise and to make her a business partner. It is set to open its doors next month in Des Moines.

Finally, one of her proudest moments was assisting her two oldest daughters in their studies at the University of Northern Iowa.