



## THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Sally Schwartz  
Interviewer: Meredith E. Abarca  
Project: El Paso Food Voices / Public Kitchen  
Location: El Paso, Texas  
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Summary: Meredith E. Abarca

Sally Schwartz, during this recording, was the owner and chef (of pastry and savory foods) of El Paso Cookie Inc. Her journey into the food industry as a way of making a living is a life-long interest in food and of being raised by family members passionate about cooking, gardening, preserving, and running a restaurant. Sally was born in Tularosa and grew up in Ruidoso, El Paso, and Albuquerque. She holds a B.A. in Cultural and Culinary Anthropology and an M.A. in Applied Psychology with a Focus on Food. Her master's thesis was on how chocolate affects the brain and thus, impacts our moods. But before getting these degrees, her first professional experience within the food industry was helping an aunt who owned a restaurant in Anthony, New Mexico in the late 1970s and early 1980s. There Sally was exposed to making Green Cheese Chile Burger, Bounty Burger, Burrito Plate. But in particular, she learned of the value of having fresh vegetables, fruits, and herbs to impact the quality and flavor of food. Connected to this family restaurant was a two acre garden. Her own El Paso Cookie Inc. included a small garden where she had potted trees, vegetables and herbs. Serendipity is the word to describe how her cooking career unfolded. Sally's first restaurant work was at The Coyote Café in Santa Fe, New Mexico. While hired to work as a waitress, one day the cook in charge of making sauces did not show up to work and she was given that task, permanently. Later circumstances landed her a job at The Loveless Café, a landmark for over 50 years in Nashville, TN. Here she learned to perfect Chess Pie, bisques, and gravy, which she made with a touch of Southwestern flavor and techniques she had gathered at The Coyote Café. She also created a recipe of her own: chocolate gravy. While

living in the Dallas / Fort Worth Texas area, she worked in the kitchens of Wolfgang Puck, Stephan Pyles, known as the grandfather of Southwestern Cuisine, and Tim Love, particularly in his catering business. With Chef Love, Sally was fully responsible for the pastries served at events like the Super Bowl, Austin Food and Wine, Austin City Lights. Working in the kitchens of these three world renown chefs, she was exposed to running a professional kitchen. Once living back in El Paso, she began making and selling cookies at local farmers markets, catering the pastries for the University of Texas at El Paso's centennial anniversary, and eventually opened El Paso Cookie Inc. While in operation, as a pastry and savory cook, El Paso Cookie Inc. offered chocolate cookies made with Ibarra Mexican chocolate, different kinds of muffins, cakes, breads, a cabbage with bacon as a side for the lunch menu which included gourmet sandwiches, salads, and pizzas. Her passion for cooking and showing people how to cook, especially how to preserve food, eventually led to running a cooking academy from within El Paso Cookie Inc. For Sally, food should be accessible to all and we all should have a garden—even if this is only a small pot of basil.

Length of interview 57:27

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