

They call Pratt Morales “Hot Buns.” He makes bread. he makes green chile bread with a half-pound of hot stuff and tomatoes and garlic. he makes bolillos and empanadas. He makes pig-shaped cookies called “marranitos.” And he makes magnificent hard-crust, Italian bread so good that elderly Italians come into his Golden Crown Panaderia for it and leave “gumming a loaf to death.” No pies. No cakes. Just bread. Morales, 47, used to be an accountant for the Air Force and later the controller for the New Mexico Air National Guard. He traveled all over the world, he studied bread. When he was done traveling, he went in search of a place that could be a sort of shrine to the bread of his childhood in San Antonio, Texas, when he would hang out at the neighborhood panaderia, or bakery. At the panaderia, he recalls, he’d walk in and maybe the baker would hand out a cookie. “you can have any kind of bakery,” he says, “but i wanted to give life to my bread.” He put on the brakes when he dove past 1321 Tijeras ave N.W. about 10 years ago. There was a “For Rent” sign in the empty building that Hohnny’s bakery had once filled. Morales didn’t hesitate. He’s been there ever since. He named it Golden Crown Panaderia because his bread, he says, is fit for a king even though it’s peasant bread. Joe famiglietta, 62, doles out the cookies now. He’s Morales’ friend and the manager of Golden Crown, but he likes to kid that Morales is his son. “Don’t you see the resemblance?” he asks, grabbing Morales affectionately by the neck and pointing to his bare head and Morales’. “We’re both good-looking.” Pratt morales is the only guy in town who’ll make his golden, hard -crust bread inot a million different shapes. Just show him a picture. He made a castle for a duke. He has sculpted bread dragons and roadrunners and doves in a nest with baby doves. He created a 100-foot loaf for a cheese festival when Miss wisconsin Cheddar visited Albuquerque’s Civic Plaza in 1978. He hitched hard-crust horses to a hard-crust Connestoga wagon. He made a sleeping dog lie. Morales does a booming business every Christmas in cactus-shaped bread and the anise-flavored biscochitos. He does a booming business year-round mailing his trademark green chile bread to homesick New Mexicans and chile-struck would-be New Mexicans. Morales once produced bread cockroaches and mice and scorpions but only because the pest control outfit asked for it. For visiting French dignitaries, he erected an Eiffel Tower of yest and flour. Morales woun’t divulge the ingredients for his bread but does say that the hard crust is created by steam pumped into his narrow ovens. The tricky part with bread sculpture, he says, is figuring out how it’s going to come out after it rises to two to three times its original size. That means he may have to do it several times to get it right but, hey, Pratt morales is having a good time. “We’re not making any money,” says Morales. “But we got a lotta dough,” chimes in Famiglietta. That isn’t exactly ture the Golden Crown supplies find bread to some of the city’s swankier restaurants and health food stores. but Morales loves bread jokes. when he gets enough, he’s going to put them all in a book. For now, Pratt Morales has created a bakery from another time and place. Morales’ Panaderia has high ceilings, a picnic table by the big window that looks out on Central and Tijeras and a row of fading tins on a shelf above it. There is no chrome in sight, but there is a smell that carries you away. Morales and famiglietta know customers by name. “A little bakery like this is almost a dying art anymore,” Morales says. It is precisely what he planned. “The old-fashioned, neighborhood-type bakery. Nothing fancy. Just a nice place to work.”