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Focus Sentence: Gentrification in Logan Square has forced the Brazilian restaurant Brasil Legal to adapt to the changes happening in their neighborhood.

Restaurant Brasil Legal Adapts to Logan Square Gentrification

After moving to Chicago from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil three years ago, Madu Silva often gets homesick. Despite calling her family once a week to catch up, she still missed home often.

“I missed the food, the people, the culture,” Silva said. “And then, one of my Brazilian friends told me about Brasil Legal.” Now, Silva is a monthly regular at the Chicago restaurant.

Brasil Legal is located on the East Side of Logan Square. Most of their staff is Brazilian, according to their manager Jiane Beilsuss.

Since opening in 2002, they have served authentic Brazilian dishes, such as their famous *prato feito de filé* and their *brigadeiro de colher*. They also sell a few grocery store items that one cannot find in other typical American supermarkets, such as *Paçoca* and *Nescau*.

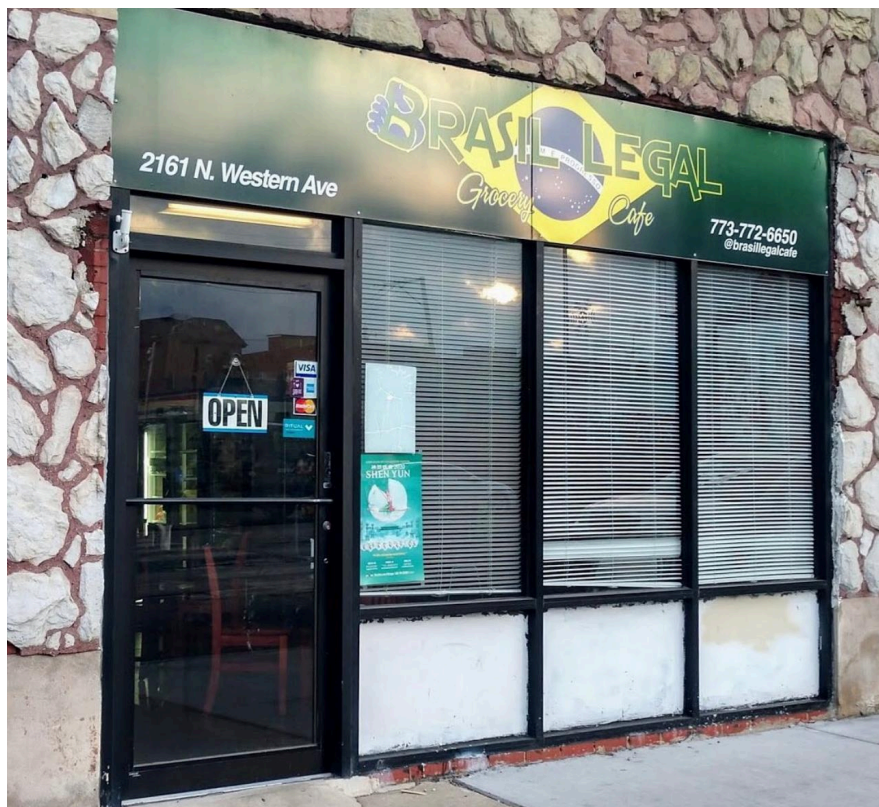


The restaurant serves a unique purpose for Brazilian customers with its traditional cuisine. On Yelp, many Brazilians call it “home away from home,” as it is a place where they can order their *feijoada* in their Portuguese mother tongue and bring home groceries they could not find elsewhere.

Silva said that homesickness is difficult, but eating the food that her mom used to make on Sundays makes it easier.

According to Beilsuss, other non-Brazilian Chicago residents go there to eat Brazilian food that they enjoy, and most Americans order the fried food items, like the *pastel* and the *coxinha*.

“There’s a big difference in the orders that the Brazilian customers place compared to the American ones,” Beilsuss said. “And over the last few years, we’ve had to adapt to these differences because we’ve been getting more Americans coming to our restaurant.”



Over the last couple of decades, there has been a noticeable shift in the demographics of Logan Square, the neighborhood that Brasil Legal is located in.

When the restaurant opened about 22 years ago, almost all of their customers were Brazilian. Now, the restaurant staff reported that about 40% of the people they serve are American – most of which choose to order online for delivery or pick-up.

“The number of Americans that live nearby and are coming here to eat has been increasing exponentially in the last few years because the people that live close to the restaurant have been changing,” said Beilsuss.

The neighborhood used to be mostly Latinx families, but, as white, higher-income families are moving in, many of the Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking residents are being forced out, according to Beilsuss.

This change has been observed by the other staff at Brasil Legal, and they have even had to adjust. Now, they are offering a delivery option for their customers, especially for those that do not feel the need to come in and enjoy the culture or speak to the staff in Portuguese.



Additionally, Brasil Legal has even started serving cheeseburgers and fried chicken sandwiches, neither of which are part of the traditional Brazilian diet.

Such readjustments have been made as a reaction to the effects of the gentrification process that has been happening in the neighborhood, said Beilsuss.

She said that the restaurant plans on being available on more food delivery apps this year and that they are trying to expand production so as to be able to produce more of the fried food items that the American customers like more.

As much as restaurants in Logan Square, especially those of Latinx cuisine, want to cater to the Latinx community that lives or used to live in the neighborhood, it is hard to fight gentrification, especially with rising real estate prices.

“We can only take it one day at a time here at Brasil Legal,” Beilsuss said.

Source List

Madu Silva, JP Morgan Private Equity Analyst, (773) 597-8216.

Jiane Beilsuss, Brasil Legal Manager, (773) 772-6650.

Secondary Sources

[Brasil Legal Menu](#)

[YELP Reviews](#)

[UberEats Reviews](#)

[Brasil Legal Facebook](#)