

A Film About the Debated Origin Story of Flamin' Hot Cheetos Will Preview Next Week



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Once upon a time during the late 70s in a Frito-Lay factory at Rancho Cucamonga (California), a janitor-turned-machine operator for the company named Richard Montañez experimented with a batch of unflavored leftover Cheetos after his equipment malfunctioned during the seasoning process. Richard packed up the Cheetos and took them back to his home before coming up with the clever idea of sauteeing the snacks in a manner similar to preparing Mexican elotes (grilled street corn). According to the legendary tale, Richard's delicious approximation resulted in the prototype for what would become known as [Flamin' Hot Cheetos](#). When Richard pitched the idea for Flamin' Hot Cheetos to the former CEO of Frito-Lay, Roger Enrico, he reportedly packaged the snacks in handcrafted bags before detailing a marketing plan geared towards Latino communities. The initial rollout for the 'test phase' of Flamin' Hot Cheetos occurred in Los Angeles County. After the initiative was a success, Frito-Lay went national with the product in 1992, and the rest is history...Or is it?

The origin story of Flamin' Hot Cheetos has been contested for many years. In 2021, an article from the *Los Angeles Times* alleged that the original recipe and name of the popularized chips were curated by Frito-Lay staff members at their Plano (Texas) location back in 1989.

"None of our records show that Richard was involved in any capacity in the Flamin' Hot test market," Frito-Lay wrote in a message to the *L.A. Times*. "We have interviewed multiple personnel who were involved in the test market, and all of them indicate that Richard was not involved in any capacity in the test market...That doesn't mean we don't celebrate Richard...but the facts do not support the urban legend."

The validity of Richard's claim was challenged after he went public with the assertion in the early 2000s. Nevertheless, he is primarily accredited with being the brand's originator. This Summer, a tell-all feature film starring Jesse Garcia (as Richard), Emilio Rivera, Annie Gonzalez, and Brice Gonzalez ([from the father/son duo known commonly known on social media as the Enkyboys](#)) will depict the true story behind the events that led to Richard Montañez creating a cultural phenomenon. Directed by [Eva Longoria](#), the *Flamin' Hot* film will debut at the South by Southwest Festival in Austin (Texas) next week before being made available for streaming exclusively on *Hulu* this Summer.

"It's fantastic, a biopic about Richard Montañez [sic], the man who created the Flamin' Hot Cheeto," Longoria said during an interview with *AP*. "It's a beautiful, inspiring story, and it's not what you expect. It's not what you think."

Richard Montañez, a former teenage janitor, went on to become the CEO of PepsiCo. Today, he is a motivational speaker and published author of books such as *Flamin' Hot: The Incredible True Story of One Man's Rise from Janitor to Top Executive*. His net worth is believed to be around \$14 million.