

Best Mexican Fare in the Valley

Written by Written by Melissa Larsen and Colleen Ringer

Thursday, 26 March 2009 14:09 - Last Updated Saturday, 28 March 2009 08:47

With Arizona being just north of the Mexican border, it's not hard to find muy bueno Mexican cuisine. Check out our favorites!

Barrio Café



Presided over by chef Silvana Salcido Esparza, Barrio Café is a funky hot spot in Central Phoenix that boasts a menu chock-full of timeless Mexican dishes given creative twists. Appetizing options such as the cochinita pibil (slow-roasted pork) and the enchiladas suizas take diners on a culinary tour of our neighbor to the south. And don't miss the restaurant's Sunday brunch (11 a.m. to 3 p.m.) and its selection of Mexican wines. 602.636.0240, www.barriocafe.com.

Blanco Tacos + Tequila



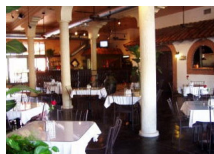
This Sam Fox newbie at The Borgata features some of the tastiest guacamole and sangria in Scottsdale. For dinner, choose among a bill of tacos, enchiladas, cheese crisps, hearty burritos and more. Wash it down with one of Blanco's too-many-to-count tequila offerings. 480.305.6692, www.foxrc.com.

Cantina Laredo



This cantina doesn't only serve up gourmet Mexican eats—it is quite the happening hot spot, as well. Plus, you can watch the servers concoct guacamole right before your eyes tableside. Cantina Laredo, 480.782.6777 (Gilbert), 480.951.3807 (Scottsdale), www.cantinalaredo.com.

El Zocalo Mexican Grill



There aren't many patios prettier than the one at this Downtown Chandler haven. Enjoy the great outdoors with one of El Zocalo's top-notch margaritas in hand. El Zocalo Mexican Grill, 480.722.0303, www.elzocalo.com.

Frank & Lupe's



Oozing a casual, residential vibe, this family-owned eatery in Old Town Scottsdale is perfect for lunch with the ladies, while the restaurant's Santos Lounge cantina atmosphere is ideal for a happy hour fiesta. Though the bill of fare keeps things simple (enchiladas, tamales, etc.), that doesn't mean the cuisine is anything less than delish. 480.990.9844, www.frankandlupes.com.

Jalapeño Inferno

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As the name suggests, spicy cuisine reigns supreme at this Southwest style bistro in North Scottsdale—there's even a special section of the menu devoted to extra fiery fare. Luckily, you can cool off your taste buds with a margarita (try one from the seasonal menu). Can't decide which to imbibe? Pick three different ones to create your own sampler. 480.585.6442, www.jalapenoscottsdale.com.

La Hacienda



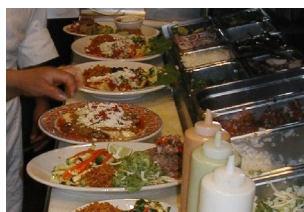
This resort restaurant makes up half of the Four-Diamond Mexican eateries in the country. (That's right, there's only two with this distinct honor.) Start with the chile ancho en nogada (a pepper stuffed with wood-roasted chicken and dried fruits) and don't leave until you've conquered the margarita flight. The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, 480.585.4848, www.fairmont.com/scottsdale.

Los Olivos



Los Olivos is an oldie but a goodie. This Old Town outpost has been dazzling Valley taste buds for decades with its authentic Mexican fare and larger-than-life personality. 480.946.2256, www.losolivosrestaurant.com.

Los Sombreros



The entrees dished out at this brick houselike restaurant keeps the customers coming back again and again. A darling of local and national food critics, Los Sombreros' gourmet fare includes the mouth-watering lamb adobo and the tasty mole poblano. Equally important, the spot offers an extensive selection of tequila. 480.994.1799, www.lossombreros.com.

Old Town Tortilla Factory



Though the inside of this 75-year-old-home-turned-eatery is quaint and cozy, the patio is where you want to be. Grab a seat under the towering, twinkling pecan trees and let the trickle of the fountain loosen you up. If that doesn't do it, the Millionaire's Margarita surely will. The Old Town Scottsdale restaurant also serves up standbys like tacos and enchiladas alongside creative dishes like Sonoran Meatloaf, which is wrapped in bacon. Need we say more? 480.945.4567, www.oldtowntortillafactory.com.

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Rancho de Tia Rosa



For some of the tastiest fish tacos in town, hightail it to this Mesa landmark. Dine in the festive, relic-filled restaurant or get the goods to go in the Taqueria. 480.659.8787, www.ranchodetiarosa.com.