

Entertainment Mexican Cuisine

Padre's
Modern

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Obviously, there is no shortage of Mexican food in the Valley. Good Mexican food is still plentiful. Great Mexican food with a twist is not as easy to find.

A couple of places immediately come to mind: Barrio Cafe and Los Sombreros. Add Padre's to the list of favorites and don't wait as long to get a table.

Padre's is housed in an old, freestanding building once the home to an Italian restaurant (the frosted glass bathroom doors that say "signora" and "signore" tipped me off) that is now a comfortable, colorful spot for excellent Latin fare.

The saltillo tile, purple and teal paint and tropical murals make for a relaxed atmosphere that could easily venture into kitschy beach-meets-Southwest territory, but stops just short.

A couple of intimate dining areas are closed off from the bustling bar area, which has live music on weekends. A shady, dimly lit outdoor patio will be a great spot for dinner once the oppressive heat dies down.

The mojito has become the oh-so-chic drink in many area bars and restaurants, but this is a drink that can go very wrong without the essential ingredients of fresh mint, quality rum and fresh lime juice. Thankfully, Padre's knows how to muddle right and make a great drink packed with refreshing mint leaves and plenty of tart lime juice. The same goes for the margarita. No mixes are used, and for that, our group ordered up quite a few.

We also started with Guacamole and Chips (\$7), which was not made at the table like some other (possibly flashier?) spots in town but was just as fresh. A very respectable portion was served up with crunchy, hot-off-the-fryer chips. The quality of guac is usually a measure of things to come in my opinion, and we were happy with the large chunks of avocado with chopped cilantro, onion and tomato. It was simple and perfect.

The Mazatlan Shrimp Cocktail (\$12) was also a nice starter, with five jumbo shrimp in a martini glass filled with avocado slices and orange juice-based pico de gallo. We

would have loved more of the pico to scoop up with chips. A larger glass-full would have been appreciated for the price.

Sopa Tarasca (\$6) was a big bowl of black bean soup with bacon, tomato and fresh cream on top, but we found the soup could have used some flavor. It was tasty enough, though, with the addition of some salt and a bit of our salsa.

Padre's filled up quickly as the sound of a Latin band started, and we settled in for another round of drinks and enjoyed the music. However, the real fun commenced when the entrees came. Pollo Relleno (\$16) was about the best dish I have had when it comes to chicken. A huge breast was stuffed with poblano peppers, goat cheese, corn and caramelized onions, and a slightly spicy poblano cream sauce was drizzled on top. The chicken was served with outstanding guajillo mashed potatoes and some tasty roasted vegetables. The addition of the pepper lent the spuds an earthy kick, making it a top-notch dish.

Mexico City Fajitas were also excellent, with char-grilled steak, freshly made tortillas, more of the addictive guacamole and rice and beans. Most Mexican spots have fajitas, but this was a step above, with a choice cut of meat, whole beans, fluffy rice and tortillas straight from the griddle. It was a simple dish done right.

Camarones al Tequila (\$18) was no slacker either, with plenty of shrimp sautéed in butter, lime juice, plenty of garlic and chopped cilantro. We all agreed that we would substitute the mashed potatoes for the rice that comes with the dish - not for any lack in flavor on the rice front, but just because those tubers were so darn good.

The menu touted a new dessert chef with new selections, so how could we not try them? Full but with room for a few more bites, the unbelievable Chocolate Mole Cake (\$6) arrived along with a huge Key Lime Tart (\$6). Both were so incredibly good, we couldn't stop at a mere bite or two.

The mole cake was Padre's version of a lava cake, warm and gooey on the inside. The rich, dark chocolate cake was spiced up with chile powder and cinnamon and was topped with fresh cinnamon whipped cream. For those who know mole sauce for savory dishes (chile powder mixed with a bit of chocolate) this was the reverse, and the kick of hot pepper just grazed the tongue every once in a while, making for a delicious and titillating dessert.

The Key Lime Tart, a light lime custard in a house-made graham cracker and nut crust with plenty of citrus bite, was a great complement to the rich chocolate. The dessert

menu changes daily, and I am sure none will disappoint.

Run to Padre's and be thankful. If you do have to wait, there is plenty of room at the bar. Have a mojito, and it won't be long.

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For more information on the Latin Jazz band Cascabel, please visit Gustavo Angeles' web page at:

<http://gustavoangeles.com>

For booking information contact Gustavo directly at: gus_angeles@yahoo.com. (**Mario8751**, August 25, 2006 09:39AM)

Aahhh Padres! What a great place! It is a shame that this review did not mention the Pork Tenderloin dish, it is to die for! Denny, the owner has a secret weapon in the kitchen, Padres has some of the best Mexican Food (with a twist) I have EVER tasted! The dish preparation is beautiful no matter which entree you choose off of the excellent menu. Gustavo Angeles and Miguel Mendoza are the main players in the house band known as Cascabel and those boys know how to get the crowd going after dinner! Check out Padres on Friday and Saturday nights, it is a fun and lively place! (**Mario8751**, August 25, 2006 09:26AM)

Padre's is THE place to go for lunch...and dinner for that matter. Friday nights are perfect, especially after a long workweek. The service is excellent and the prices on the menu do not burn a hole thru your pocket. (**Manny5174**, August 24, 2006 06:00PM)

Padre's is decent. I would not put it up there with Barrio Cafe. And I feel that Los Sombreros is overrated. Sierra Bonita on 7th st and Glendale is better than all of them. You guys also need to try Rito's on 14th St and Fillmore...if you pick up and don't care of the ambience. (**Ron5325**, August 24, 2006 04:49PM)

Padres is by 12th street and Camelback, right next to the Oreganos. I have been to Padres numerous times and the food is fun and excellent. This isn't your standard southwest fare. By the way, the drinks are amazing. (**Scott6071**, August 24, 2006 03:06PM)

Did I miss it??? Where is Padre's located? (**Nancy6443**, August 24, 2006 02:42PM)

Nothing about this review warrants you putting it into the same category as the two restaurants you mentioned. I'll have to investigate myself. (Joel LaTondress (Joel9434), August 24, 2006 10:16AM)

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