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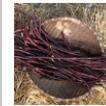## CHOW BELLA

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Five Favorite Mexican Restaurants in Phoenix

By Amy Silverman Mon., Aug. 15 2011 at 8:00 AM   Comments (19)

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Talk about a tough choice. There's no way to offer up the whole enchilada in one post when it comes to Valley Mexican restaurants -- but here's a start. What's your fave? Tell us in the comments. Here are five of ours.

America's Taco Shop -- mmm.

5. America's Taco Shop

We've sampled nearly every item on the small menu at America's Taco Shop, including tacos al pastor made with shredded pork that practically melts on the tongue, and tender, marinated carne asada that's packed with savory spices. But the one thing that's really worth traveling across town for is owner America Corrales' lard-free beans, which are so creamy and addictively delicious that we swear she must've bribed El Diablo for the recipe. Nothing could make for a better meal than a simple bean and cheese burrito here, unless you add a side of the mayo-slathered, cojita-dusted corn on the cob that's sweet and juicy enough to eat as dessert.

Get four more hot Mexican spots after the jump.

4. Mi Patio Mexican Restaurant

Leave any worries about calories at the door when you enter this parrot-themed Mexican joint, as nearly everything we crave on the menu is deep-fried. From nachos and taquitos to shredded beef or chicken tacos served in a crispy corn tortilla that's so fresh the oils are still curling the shell when it arrives on your table, the grub here is Sonoran style comfort food at its best. At first, our local pride was burned by the addition of a Greek ingredient into Mi Patio's spinach and feta cheese chimichanga, but the creamy white sauce and thick

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Mi Patio

bites of perfectly cooked spinach make it easy swallow this non-traditional take on an Arizona tradition.

3. Carolina's Mexican Food

We'll be honest, half the reason we hit up Carolina's is for their giant freshly pressed, hot off the griddle tortillas that put Chipolte's gut busters to shame. But what they put in those tortillas (and serve up other ways) is reason enough for a visit, as well. The machaca beef practically makes us weak in the knees, whether it's stuffed in tamales, deep fried in a taco, enchilada-style, or just solo served with some of those stellar flour tortillas we were talking about.After you're done scarfing a combo platter, and have your dozen tortillas in hand, consider adding a pint of red or green chile to the mix. Then you're set to replicate their delicious flautas at home too.

2. La Tolteca

La Tolteca is about as close to a Mexican mercado as we can get without having to renew our passports. First we snag an amazing meal at the walk-up counter, like the green chile beef burrito, potato tacos, or amazing chilaquiles. Then we head off to the mercado for a spot of menudo to-go and a couple dozen fresh off the grill tortillas. And we always make sure to save room for all the tasty treats from their panaderia: Tres leches cake, cajeta filled churros, and galletas (cookies) galore!

La Tolteca

barriocafe.com

The churros from Barrio Cafe are a religious experience.

1. Barrio Cafe

When we cross the threshold of Barrio Cafe, we know we're in very capable hands. Whether it's a first date or dinner with the mother-in-law, the atmosphere is spot on and the menu from head chef Silvana Salcido Esparza makes us drool with alarming regularity. Regardless of who our company is, we always make sure to order the guacamole prepared table side, which is fresh, spicy, and bursting with juicy pomegranate seeds. The cochinita pibil and chiles en nogada are two of our favorite entrees, but everything is delicious from the tacos to their tasty Sunday brunch. Order a top shelf margarita (treat yourself here) and enjoy the equally top shelf Mexican menu.

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wherewasi   2 days ago

Unfortunately, the table-side guacamole at Barrio is only served at dinner. My boss took us there for lunch once specifically for that treat and we left disappointed. But the food was great.

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Amy Silverman   2 days ago   in reply to wherewasi

good point!

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Davechef1   2 days ago

For one dish I'll take the carne adovada at Dick's Hideaway. For the whole "experience" gimme thirty minutes at Tacos Jalisco!

Like | Reply

vicelord   2 days ago

To call America's Taco Mexican food is an insult to Mexican restaurants.

9 people liked this.   Like | Reply

vicelord   2 days ago

come to think of it, all of those places are fast food gut-fill except for Barrio.

2 people liked this.   Like | Reply

Delnickell   2 days ago

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my vote goes to La Tolteca. Been going there for years. you hit it on the head: just like taking a field trip to Mexico. My favorites are the ceviche tostada, tacos de tripas and lengua. I could spoon a small bucket of the green salsa aguajete!

5 people liked this.   Like   Reply

gomer79   2 days ago

While I DO NOT feel America's Taco Shop should be anywhere close to this list, ALL IS REDEEMED because La Tolteca is #2!!!!!!!! HOORAY!

4 people liked this.   Like   Reply

gomer79   2 days ago   in reply to gomer79

and of course, Carolina's and Mi Patio are wonderful too <3 (Haven't made it to Barrio Cafe)

1 person liked this.   Like   Reply

Jay   2 days ago

Have you been to America's Taco Shop lately? I went to the original location a couple of weeks ago and they are really phoning it in these days--terrible service and our food tasted like it came from an assembly line. Replace America's with La Condesa.

6 people liked this.   Like   Reply

Schadenfriend   2 days ago

America's Tacos in 2009, sure. My last few visits to the original and 7th Ave location? Pretty disappointing. Dry meat, tiny portions. Gotta be consistent, can't live on reputation alone.

4 people liked this.   Like   Reply

vicelord   1 day ago   in reply to Schadenfriend

not to mention the girls who take your order at the counter have no interpersonal or customer service skills whatsoever. The last couple of times I walked in, they simply stared at me, as if they were waiting for me to give them direction, then when I ordered, they seemed completely indifferent, mumbled my total and basically just pissed me off.

I could see in my head that place was going to be a loser the first time I went, yet because of it's convenience factor, I've always ocassionally gone back. It was bad at first, but somehow it just keeps getting worse.

Like   Reply

Tjmackay   2 days ago

La Tolteca and Carolina's have to be on every list, but I don't think I would share the other three. Los Dos Molinos, Po Po's, and Pedro's would take their place on mine. "Business person's special with red chile enchilada style with a side of warm San Marcos sauce. I challenge you to find a better combination than my standing order with Pedro's for the last 20+ years.

1 person liked this.   Like   Reply

vicelord   1 day ago   in reply to Tjmackay

who said the westside could post on this topic? PoPo's? are you kidding me? I'd rather eat Pedigree.

How bout La Condesa, The Mission, Barrio, La Frontera, La Tolteca, Via Delosantos, Frank & Lupe's, La Hacienda, Restaurant Mexico, or any of the other fantastic Mexican restaurants that don't serve questionably canned meat, smother it in red sauce, cheese and canned beans and charge $11.95 for it.

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no gallo blanco?

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Desireeruiz87 1 day ago

RITOS FROM NO ONE? MINE ARE RITOS JUANS LA FRONTERA LA TOLTECA CAROLINAS LA PINATA AND. IF ALL ELSE FAILS ROSITAS

Like | Reply

Desireeruiz87 1 day ago   in reply to Desireeruiz87

But I've never been to some of the ones posted gonna try em! Thx

Like | Reply

Froggermario 1 day ago

La Condesa? Hello? Best tacos in town, hands down!
Los Reyes de la Torta could be on the list too. Understand it's hard to pick 5, but America's? Come on.

Like | Reply

lelh48 19 hours ago

tinyurl.com/2a7usxg

Like | Reply

Gfeguz 17 hours ago

Hi Amy I think you need to updated your list the best mexican original food and number 1 is
 LA CONDESA GOURMET TACO SHOP !!!!!!!!!!! you really need to go to this place.....

1 person liked this. Like | Reply