

SOL Cocina at Scottsdale Quarter

Written by Written by Melissa Larsen / Photographed by Cassandra Tomei
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Scottsdale Quarter is heating up with the opening of its first south-of-the-border-inspired eatery, SOL Mexican Cocina.



Since 2009, SOL Mexican Cocina has made waves in Newport Beach with its Baja-inspired fare. With its springtime opening at Scottsdale Quarter, SOL is now bringing its authentic coastal Mexican cuisine to the Valley. Even on a warm Wednesday evening, locals pack SOL's massive, orange awning-covered patio as well as its indoor dining spaces—from the high-top tables and bar seating, to the more intimate tables located at the back of the space. The dining space has multiple personalities (industrial and sleek as well as Old World-y and cozy) that come together in a comfortable yet hip atmosphere.

In order to kick back and take in the relaxed ambience at SOL, one of the restaurant's many margaritas is in order. (Consider yourself a tequila connoisseur? Pace yourself. SOL has nearly 60 labels to choose from.) The house margarita is topped with fresh-squeezed orange juice and is a delicious no-frills version of the classic cocktail. Offering a bit of sweet and a dash of heat, the pineapple-Serrano margarita is jazzed up with muddled pineapple and chilies.

A margarita's partner in crime has to be guacamole, and SOL offers not one, but four varieties, from the basic Naked to the not-for-traditionalists shrimp-and-bacon offering. Guacamole SOL, the restaurant's signature guac, features all the usual suspects (avocado, cilantro, lime) with a sprinkling of mango, goat cheese and pepitas. While the mango adds freshness and sweetness and the pepitas provide crunch, the pungent goat cheese packs a little too much punch in the dish, overwhelming the other flavors. The coconut calamari adds a delectable tropical flavor and heartiness (SOL doesn't skimp on size) to the start of the meal. To warm up the taste buds, SOL also provides diners with a gratis basket of tostada rounds peppered with salt, ground pepitas, ground guajillo chilies and ground ancho chilies, alongside two varieties of freshly made salsa.

In addition to salads, soups, burritos and more, SOL dishes up a wide selection of tacos—from street tacos to something-different specialty tacos. While street tacos are available in more traditional ways, like stuffed with carne asada or grilled white fish, the specialty lineup has such interesting eats as sweet potato-black bean tacos and poblano, mushroom and corn tacos. A must-taste is the Taco Vampiro, which is so stuffed to the brim with deliciousness that it requires two tortillas. Tender carne asada is joined by Serrano chilies, scallions, pico de gallo, guacamole, cotija cheese and a smoky chipotle sauce.

Another have-to-try is the cazuelita of you-could-scoop-with-a-spoon short ribs. The dish is rounded out with guajillos, avocado leaf, nopales and tomato and, on the side, warm corn tortillas ready to blanket the delectable meat.

If seafood is more your style, SOL delivers several from-the-sea offerings, including the lobster tacos. Each taco is topped differently, ranging from a straightforward yet scrumptious pico de gallo to a tangy and sweet mango salsa. The dish, which comes with three lobster-packed tacos, is finished with SOL's smoky and sweet black beans and Spanish garlic rice.

Though you won't find nachos on the dinner menu, SOL's dessert bill of fare fills that void with its Nachos Dulces. The sweet dish consists of warm and crispy cinnamon-dusted chips that have been drizzled with dulce de leche and chocolate and crowned with a heaping portion of whipped cream, toasted almonds and Ibarra chocolate chunks. Though it may be hard to imagine improving on a list of ingredients such as that, the Nachos Dulces would be more divine with a few scoops of ice cream (especially tempting atop the warm chips) or a sprinkling of fresh berries or banana slices. A dessert that needs no assistance is the banana-dark chocolate bread pudding, paired with cinnamon crema and chocolate sauce and topped with vanilla whipped cream. A finishing of Partida Tequila puts a delicious SOL spin on the rich, chocolaty dish.

TO LEARN MORE

SOL Mexican Cocina 15323 N. Scottsdale Rd., Ste. 195, Scottsdale. 480.245.6708, www.solcocina.com. Chef: Deborah Schneider Hours: Sunday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. and bar open until 1 a.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. and bar open until 2 a.m.

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