

Taberna Mexicana—Spice and Everything Nice

Written by Written by Melissa Larsen

Think there's no more room in the Valley for another Mexican dining spot? Think again. Scottsdale's Taberna Mexicana puts a modern and mmm-inducing spin on south-of-the-border dishes.



The Valley is no stranger to amazing Modern Mexican fare. Old Town's The Mission and the recently revamped La Hacienda restaurant at Fairmont Scottsdale Princess both excel at dishing out delicious Modern Mexican eats in chic settings. To add to this list, Scottsdale welcomed another Modern Mexican-inspired dining destination in the winter.

Located at Scottsdale's Seville plaza (where Roy's used to reside), Taberna Mexicana offers a mouthwatering bill of fare that includes glorious ceviches, soups and salads as well as traditional-with-a-twist Mexican favorites like tacos, enchiladas, carnitas, chile relleno and more. Before digging in, diners are welcomed by a sprawling patio full of cozy seating—a spot that's sure to be happening during the mild spring evenings. Indoors, welcoming yet bold colors (think reds, oranges and blues) fill the space while iron chandeliers, suede banquettes and comfy living room-esque lounge areas contribute to Taberna's warm atmosphere.

As a refreshing, tongue-tingling starter, the scallop ceviche is not to be missed. The sweet-and-spicy scallops, which are paired with truffle salt and fresh passion fruit, are not only beautifully presented but incredibly delicious. The unique Mexican grilled cheese appetizer is another winner. After being marinated in Anaheim chilies and Mexican herbs, the crumbly, soft queso fresco is dished out with Taberna's out-of-this-world homemade corn tortillas.

For a heartier start to your meal, the sopa de albondigas, or meatball soup, is a sensational and spicy choice. The chicken meatballs are served in a zesty broth along with jalapeños and tomatillos. Even though the Valley's rising temperatures suggest a cold salad rather than soup, this table favorite is certainly worth the warmth.

Many of Taberna's main dishes offer tradition with a twist. The restaurant's chile relleno recipe features plenty of delectable veggies like mushrooms, zucchini and spinach and is sure to please non-meat eaters. The dish is rounded out with Oaxacan cheese and tomato sauce. The Cochinita Pibil, or Yucantán pork stew, is another conventional Mexican plate. Taberna's version is showcased in a cool, compartmentalized way with crema, pickled red onions and delicious fried plantains. (Plantains—this time in chip form—also show up before appetizers along with tortillas chips and two varieties of salsa.)

Though not terribly exciting, the fish tacos, filled with crispy beer-battered fish and coleslaw, are tasty as are the steak tacos consisting of filet mignon and a tangy chipotle mayo. Both are paired with scrumptious smoky black beans and Mexican rice, though the latter side was too al dente.

While it's hard to imagine that there could be a better scallop dish on the menu than the divine ceviche, the pepita-crusted scallops certainly steal the appetizer's limelight. Paired with a sweet and creamy truffle corn puree, the melt-in-your-mouth scallops, in a light coating of ground pumpkin seeds, are a true treat for seafood lovers or those with a craving for something different.

A meal at Taberna shouldn't end without a slice of tres leches cake or a piece of flan; Taberna serves both customary Mexican desserts with a distinctive spin. The wonderfully moist tres leches cake is uniquely topped with a toasted marshmallow spread while somehow managing not to be overly sweet. The table favorite—the smooth-as-silk cream cheese-flavored flan—is served with Kahlua, caramel sauce and a dollop of whipped cream. Another traditional treat, the sopapillas, are more flaky and crispy rather than pillow-y and cloudlike; however, the hibiscus syrup that tops the sopapillas is tart, tangy and delish.

While everything from Taberna's appetizers to après-dinner sweets are delectable, Modern Mexican cuisine isn't solely about the food—cocktails are a big part of the allure. Jalisco Attitude, a concoction of tequila, lime, cilantro and jalapeño tincture, is one of the Valley's most lip-smacking libations. Cool and a bit spicy, the can't-miss margarita is much like Taberna itself.