

Taqueria Guadalajara

Well, we've all heard of the best-laid plans, I'm sure. Tonight was one of those nights. Cary Arnold, her husband John Sanchez, photographer **Ara Arbabzadeh**, Davis Life writer Kaylin Adamski, and I, were planning a nice night of dining on the patio of Taqueria Guadalajara. Instead, due to an unexpected, and quite fierce, spring storm, we dined inside. But luckily Taqueria Guadalajara's food makes it worth dining inside just as pleasantly as out-or even at home with take-out!

I've had the pleasure of working next to Taqueria Guadalajara since the day they opened. And though I now work near downtown Davis, I still love the trek to south Davis for this excellent (and well run) taqueria.

Back when Taqueria Guadalajara opened, I owned the salon right next door. We often joked about putting in our own take-out window (as well as asking them to get a liquor license). At least we half joked! Between the unique style of guacamole, the fabulous Crispy Tacos, and the free pico de gallo and chips, I, and my staff and clients ate there many days.

When we arrived, we were pleased that it wasn't too crowded yet. On a Friday night there can often be quite a line. But I think the weather was keeping the crowds away, lucky us!

We started with an order of Crispy Carnitas Tacos, Shrimp Ceviche Tostada, an order of Veggie Nachos, and Guacamole. First let me say that though I very much like the guacamole at Taqueria Guadalajara, be warned it's not the usual sort. The guac here is really more of a salsa with a very generous amount of avocado included. It's delicious, but not what you might expect. As with the pico de gallo, it's on the spicy side. Not too spicy, but just enough heat to get you in the mood for a cold beer, or soda!

The pico de gallo at Taqueria Guadalajara is made fresh, with nice chunks of tomato, onion, and spicy peppers. Why is it called pico de gallo (beak of the rooster)? I have no idea, neither does anyone I know, but it's yummy and free. The nachos are pretty standard fare, but the Taqueria Guadalajara pico de gallo, and guacamole make it a little different, with generous amounts of refried beans, sour cream, and cheese. Both the nachos and guac make very nice appetizers for the table.

The Ceviche Tostada was very good, very light, and with an extremely generous amount of shrimp. I recommend eating it quickly; it's very "moist". Overall it's a pretty simple and tasty dish. Tortilla and ceviche, not piled high with wasted lettuce. But, by far, our favorite among these dishes was the Carnitas Crispy Tacos. Wow, with a bit of lime the carnitas (deep fried pork roast) are awesome. The crispy tacos are fried to perfection (no low fat diets here, I'm afraid), and the carnitas are among the best I've had, and carnitas are my standard fare at Mexican restaurants.

After a short break came the next round: Chile Verde, Camaron al Mojo de Ajo (shrimp in garlic sauce), Chile Relleno, and a special of the day, Garlic and Shrimp Fried Rice. The Chile Verde was wonderfully flavorful, and nicely tender. The verde sauce was lightly spicy and a little sour, just like it should be. It was accompanied by rice, beans, pico, and tortillas, and made an excellent self-made burrito. The dinners include your choice of corn or flour tortillas, beans (either whole or refried), and rice. Just in case you care, the beans **are** vegetarian. We ordered both corn and flour tortillas, and though I'm not sure if they're home made or not, they were fresh and hot.

The Camaron al Mojo de Ajo is a favorite of my friend Tenaya Freitas, and she insisted we try it. I love anything with garlic, so this was a sure bet for me. The garlic is actually somewhat sweet, and the prawns were a very good size. Be sure to share it with someone you love. I thought the Chile Relleno was a little bit of a disappointment. It arrived a little cold, but that may be because everything had to be photographed before it got to us! Anyway, my companions all liked it. It had a very light batter, fresh chilies, and plenty of cheese. So maybe I was the problem and not the dish.

The special Shrimp and Garlic Fried Rice was not something I've seen in a Mexican restaurant before. It's more what you'd expect from a Chinese restaurant, with plenty of rice, shrimp, garlic, and various veggies and spices. I'm not sure it's something I'd order again, but if you like shrimp and garlic, it's another good way to go.

Taqueria Guadalajara is run café style, so you can help yourself to all the fountain drinks you want with your meal; and they of course have a good selection of salsa and chips (all you can help yourself to). They have an assortment of red and green salsas, as well as jalapenos, pickled carrots, and limes. Several of the salsas were very good, and several were so-so. The restaurant itself is very small, so the patio really is a very welcome addition. Complete with a fountain, beautiful custom made metal tables and chairs, and lovely shade trees, it's a very relaxing place to hang out.

I remember when the patio was built. We were very pleased with the addition of the custom tiles and railing. If you're looking for a place to walk the dog (and kids if you like) and hang for a few hours, you couldn't do much better! Located in the El Macero shopping center, the patio is available even if you don't order food at Taqueria Guadalajara. Good food, good drink, and very pleasant outdoor dining. What more could you want on a warm summer evening?