

The Miami Herald

Roundup | Sampling a trio of eateries at the Village

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CANTINA LAREDO

If you're coming here on a Saturday night, make a reservation. This restaurant is drawing some of the biggest crowds at Gulfstream. Even after 10 p.m., people were waiting for tables.

The sleek, modern setting is much nicer than Laredo's old location in Plantation, with no kitschy Mexican decor. The lighting is dimmed for an intimate atmosphere in the evening, but poor acoustics make it difficult in some spots to talk over the noise.

The chain bills itself as gourmet Mexican. Even standards like enchiladas and tacos are given out-of-the-ordinary sauces and preparations. With the majority of the entrees under \$20 and large portions, there's good value for the money here.

Start with their signature guacamole, made to order at your table. The lime and spices add just the right zest. Two complimentary salsas are more flavorful than most, particularly the spicier version with a nice smoky undertone.

We went for the combo platters to get the most variety. The Cantina platter offered a tamale, chile relleno, enchilada and taco al carbon. A flavorful combination, but not for a light eater. The Monterrey enchilada combo wasn't quite as heavy. We were particularly fond of the Veracruz and the mole, although we needed extra mole sauce.

Cantina Laredo, 501 Silks Run Rd., Hallandale Beach; 954-457-7662, www.cantinalaredo.com; starters \$5.99-\$13.99, most entrees \$10.29-\$19.99 (some seafood and steak items up to \$24.99).

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