



RESTAURANT REVIEW

## Cantina Laredo/Plantation

Judith Stocks

Sun-Sentinel

Posted:

September 1 2005



Plantation has been hungry for a restaurant to fall madly in love with for a mighty long time. It's a lesson in patience that finally paid off two months ago when Texas-based Cantina Laredo opened.

With stuccoed walls, intimate booths and a color palette lifted straight off a desert sunset, it percolates with the kind of exciting energy that leaves other corporate concepts in the dust, showing off its gourmet Mexican rhythms through theatrics and excellent food. And, lucky for tequila fans, that's the house forté. The impressive array starts at \$6.50-\$46 for a Herradura Selección Suprema Limited Edition Anejo. There's also a small but carefully selected wine list (\$18-\$108).

Now we all know guacamole is nothing new in a Mexican restaurant, but don't overlook this top-shelf version made from scratch tableside (\$6.99). It's a refreshing idea presented with pomp and circumstance. The pretty green flesh is scooped from the shell with flourish, then combined with cilantro, tomatoes, jalapenos, onions, a spritz of lime and secret spices. Did I mention it's absolutely addictive?

### RESTAURANT INFO

---

Cuisine: Mexican

811 S. University Drive, Plantation

954-318-2688

[www.cantinalaredo.com](http://www.cantinalaredo.com)

Cost: inexpensive-moderate

Credit cards: all major

Hours: lunch, dinner daily

Reservations: accepted Monday-Thursday only;

call ahead on weekends for preferred seating

Bar: full service

Sound level: moderate

Smoking: prohibited

Children's facilities: boosters, high chairs

Wheelchair accessible: yes

>> Complete info

>> Write your review

>> Read other reader reviews

---

From start to finish, the dexterous kitchen operates with seamless skill, packing maximum flavors into every dish. The proof is in appetizers like tacos al pastor (\$7.99) – soft corn tortillas filled with delicious slow-roasted cascabel marinated pork; shrimp for cocktails shaken with Cuervo Gold (\$9.99), and chicken or beef fajita quesadillas (\$10.99) that melt in your mouth.

The raspberry spinach salad (\$8.99) with chicken, red onion, mushrooms, roasted almonds and cotija cheese is revved up by a fabulously fiery raspberry chipotle house dressing, and chicken chimichurri salad (\$9.99) is adorned with mushrooms, bacon, avocados, tomatoes and cotija in an excellent, intricately spiced chimichurri dressing.

Order camaron poblano asada (\$18.79) and revel in a grilled poblano pepper crammed with sauteed shrimp, mushrooms, onions and monterey jack cheese – and it doesn't stop there. The bulging pepper is wrapped with grilled skirt steak, topped with a terrific chimichurri sauce. For variety, have the fiesta grill (\$22.99) – a papa bear portion of shrimp, costillas (delectable Danish baby backs slathered in a bracing tequila barbecue sauce), fresh pork roast bathed in wonderful chipotle wine sauce, boneless quail, beef and chicken fajitas. Each item is distinctively flavored, perfectly cooked and absolutely irresistible – a simple culinary transaction that tastes bright and new.

If you like familiar laced with unexpected, give the Mexico City chili rellenos a try. This one is laden with a picadillo filling of ground beef, pork, almonds and raisins, ready to top with a choice of tomato-based ranchera sauce (\$11.79) or cheese (\$10.79). Or, have tacos cascabel (\$12.99) containing sauteed chicken with spicy deep red cascabel sauce, cilantro, marinated onions and – surprise – feta cheese. Then there's an enchilada trio (\$12.99), attractively presented with fillings of chicken mole, fresh sauteed spinach and the unique Veracruz style, with chicken, spinach and monterey jack cheese, filled with tomatilla salsa, crunchy vinaigrette-marinated vegetables and feta.

Great theatrics show up in the form of well-rehearsed pyrotechnics that flare up throughout the menu for that Fourth of July feeling at your very own table. The fiery dramas are a great hit, especially at meal's end when applied to desserts like the house flan (\$4.29). This one soars beyond the usual mundane into new territory with 151 Bacardi ignited until the blue flames do the Mexican hat dance around the silky custard. Rather have a Mexican take on apple pie? This one (\$4.99) has an excellent flaky crust, still-firm apples and homemade cinnamon ice cream surrounded by hot brandy butter sauce poured onto the cold serving platter so the whole thing – like the restaurant itself – sizzles. It's all part of the package that makes this high concept cantina a real find.