



Dining@Large

Elizabeth Large blogs about memorable meals, dining trends, comings and goings on the restaurant scene and more.

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Top Ten Mexican Restaurants



I decided to go ahead with Mexican (or mostly Mexican, see El Trovador) and save Tex-Mex for another day.

If you got to this blog entry through the promo on the home page, you might have missed the previous [post](#) and the helpful comments under it. There are lots of other suggestions, a few of which I hadn't even heard of: ...

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* **Arcos** in Fells Point (pictured). Excellent courtyard/patio in back makes up for some inconsistencies in the generally good food.

* **Blue Agave** in Federal Hill. A handsome restaurant with regional Mexican food and a tequila bar.

* **El Azteca** in Clarksville. Part of a successful local group, it offers dishes like *burro cortes* and rainbow trout *a la mantequilla*.

* **El Nayar** in Elkridge. Casual and family-owned, with shrimp soup the specialty on the weekend.

* **El Trovador** (318 S. Broadway) in Fells Point. A good mix of Mexican and Salvadoran dishes in a handsome setting.

* **Fiesta Mexicana** (8304 Philadelphia Road) in Rosedale. Excellent Mexican street food.

* **La Paz** in Frederick. The menu won't surprise you, but it's a nice location and good food.

* **Mari Luna** in Pikesville. Fresh Mexican food in enormous portions served in festive surroundings.

* **Serrano** in Annapolis. This is the sibling of the popular **Jalepenos**, but its focus is Mexican instead of a mix of Spanish and Mexican.

* **Tortilleria Sinaloa** (1716 Eastern Ave.) in Upper Fells Point. A tiny restaurant and carryout (it's counter service) with good tacos, quesadillas and tamales.

(*Monica Lopossay/Sun photographer*)

Posted by [Elizabeth Large](#) on March 25, 2008 5:58 AM | [Permalink](#)



COMMENTS

Don't forget El Salto in Brooklyn.

Posted by: [Tuco the Ugly](#) | **March 25, 2008 7:48 AM**

To whomever suggested El Nayar in the first blog entry on Mexican restaurants - thanks! My wife and I tried it this past weekend for breakfast - great stuff. Cactus and eggs - can't beat it!

Posted by: [Zevonista](#) | **March 25, 2008 8:44 AM**

Anyone ever been to Zen West down near the Senator? Thoughts?

Posted by: [wagon](#) | **March 25, 2008 8:56 AM**

This came right on time. I was going to do my own research and make my own mental list, but you and your cohorts have done the heavy lifting for me.

I went to El Salto in Parkville last week and the salsa tasted like tomato sauce from a can. Or ketchup, depending on how salty the chip was I was eating it with. Meh.

Posted by: [mary](#) | **March 25, 2008 8:58 AM**

The salsa at El Salto (at least in Brooklyn Park) is not terribly piquant (which doesn't make it unauthentic...zippy food isn't eaten in all parts of Mexico). To claim it tastes like ketchup seems rather inaccurate, though.

Posted by: [Hal Laurent, VoR](#) | **March 25, 2008 9:02 AM**

El Salto In Brooklyn Park is the BEST

Posted by: [Sandy](#) | **March 25, 2008 9:10 AM**

la sirenita on eastern. you wont be sorry.

Posted by: [mexifood](#) | **March 25, 2008 9:39 AM**

ABOUT THIS BLOG

Elizabeth Large, The Sun's restaurant critic, blogs about memorable meals, dining trends, comings and goings on the restaurant scene and more.

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Wagon - We've been there several times since it's a neighborhood place for us. I particularly like the Smoked Chicken Nachos and their guacamole is really good. Hubby's favorite is the Carnitas Ranchros. The Texas Chili is also really good. On the other hand, the Tijuana Caesar salad was a disappointment. The corn relish really just didn't go with the Parmesan for my tastes, although the roasted flavor of the corn relish was really good on its own. We've had good luck there, since I've seen some others that were not as happy with the food as we've been.

Posted by: [Rosebud](#) | [March 25, 2008 9:40 AM](#)

You completely forgot about Holy Frijoles in Hampden! Even as it's gone from a 10-table hole-in-the-wall restaurant to a full-blown restaurant and bar, the amazing food hasn't changed a bit.

If you go back to the previous post, you'll see there was quite a bit of discussion about it. EL

Posted by: [Micah](#) | [March 25, 2008 9:45 AM](#)

The Tacos de Carne Azada at El Salto are the only way to go. The salsa that comes with the dish is vibrant blend of chili and cilantro. My brother and I go out of our way to get our fix when needed.

I have to say, the user names are getting better and better. Yours makes me yearn for summer. EL

Posted by: [lawchair](#) | [March 25, 2008 9:53 AM](#)

El Salto in Parkville is hit or miss- sometimes good sometimes not so good.

Posted by: [Jessica L.](#) | [March 25, 2008 10:00 AM](#)

How can a taste bud (or, technically, many) be inaccurate?

Posted by: [mary](#) | [March 25, 2008 10:02 AM](#)

Honestly, not a fan of Arcos. The food was bland.

Posted by: [Drew from Greektown](#) | [March 25, 2008 10:11 AM](#)

A glaring omission - HOLY FRIJOLEs in Hampden! Great food, super-nice waitstaff, huge portions, really cheap, kooky ambiance.

Posted by: [DLR](#) | [March 25, 2008 10:43 AM](#)

El Salto is not for everyone, and while the salsa is a pretty basic puree of tomatoes, herbs and spices (not a pico de gallo at all, so if one is expecting something with chunk, this is not it), we always find it tasty and nothing at all like ketchup.

We were just at the Brooklyn site yesterday and once again had great (cheap!) meals. I'd still highly recommend it.

Posted by: [Michelle](#) | [March 25, 2008 10:56 AM](#)

Arcos -- agree with the previous poster, food is at best 5 out of 10. There is better food -- much tastier in fact -- out of the taco truck on Broadway.

Posted by: [Jeannette Belliveau](#) | [March 25, 2008 11:31 AM](#)

Another vote for el salto on Ritchie hwy. The family who opened it all those years ago are still active in the operation. Though its been a while since I've had to ask for a cerveza to get a beer I still think they are as good as any place north of the Rio Grande.

Posted by: [rick](#) | [March 25, 2008 11:34 AM](#)

The Tacos de Carne Azada at El Salto are the only way to go.

The Tacos El Salto are my favorite. The chorizo and the chile d'Arbol salsa make it quite zippy and tasty.

Posted by: [Hal Laurent, VoR](#) | [March 25, 2008 11:35 AM](#)

Don't forget the Pachanga Grill on 170 in Odenton, just before Piney Orchard.

This is true Mexican at it's best.

Posted by: [Piney Orchard](#) | [March 25, 2008 11:41 AM](#)

I'm not surprised that nobody has mentioned the Habanero Grill on Eastern in Greektown/Highlandtown.

I've been to Mexico and all across the Southwestern United States and this place had the best food of all.

I recommend the fried Yuca.

Posted by: [Ben \(nattybohflend\) Smith](#) | [March 25, 2008 11:49 AM](#)

I think part of the issue here is that authentic Mexican (like Tortilleria Sinaloa) is really a very different matter than US-style Mexican. Add that there really isn't a unified Mexican cuisine, and we're really comparing apples, pineapples and Yugos.

Posted by: [Lissa](#) | [March 25, 2008 11:51 AM](#)

The menudo (not the 80's boy band) is quite the hot item in El Nayar on the weekends. I have yet to catch it when we stop by!

Posted by: [Eric \(POG\)](#) | [March 25, 2008 12:05 PM](#)

Chevy's has the best chicken chimichangas with queso sauce!!!

Posted by: [Nicole](#) | [March 25, 2008 12:39 PM](#)

It's all about the white cheese dip. We used to be able to get it at the local grocery store under the brand name Gordos.

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We are looking for a local spot to replace the fajita Mecca that is Lauriol Plaza in DC, so this list will get us on our way - thanks!!

Posted by: Bob DoubleU | **March 25, 2008 12:54 PM**

I could be mistaken but I was sure that Arco's was listed in the Baltimore City health inspector report (that you so kindly brought to our attention was available to read online) for being shut down sometime in November(?) for mice and bug infestation. I have eaten there a few times (not since the health report) and have found it pretty bland. La Tolteca is Bel Air is probably my favorite in the "bang for the buck category". El Salto was a favorite of mine in college, but the last time I was there the food was bland and service was very slow.

Posted by: Melissa | **March 25, 2008 1:33 PM**

Kiko's in Perry Hall is one of the hidden gems for Mexican fare. BYOB.

Unfortunately it will close at the end of the month. That's why it's not on the list. EL

Posted by: shoemama | **March 25, 2008 2:10 PM**

Another good word on Los Portales (mentioned in the other blog posts but not yet here). I ate there this past Saturday with my best friend. She commented on how very attentive the staff is; which is always a good thing. I had their tamales and they were tasty but a tad dry. Still it won't stop me from going again and trying them. Every time I've been there it has been a wonderful experience.

Also of note: they expanded (I'm not sure when) into what was their neighboring restaurant. So now the place is HUGE and nicely decorated throughout.

Posted by: Misha the Meatless Maven | **March 25, 2008 2:16 PM**

Too bad about Kiko's. It seems like the economic downturn hurts the small businesses hardest.

Posted by: OMG | **March 25, 2008 3:29 PM**

what about the Mexican Cafe in Annapolis? It is a little off the beaten path but well worth the trip.

Posted by: Anonymous | **March 25, 2008 4:39 PM**

Misha, thanks for the update about Los Portales. I wasn't aware they'd expanded, and more room is always welcome. Try a few more margaritas with your tamales. That oughta moisten 'em up.

Posted by: Dr. Erlenmeyer Cantaloupe | **March 25, 2008 5:50 PM**

Love El Salto too!!! and I always liked Arcos, but I did hear they were shut down for a bit there, so not too sure I would go back...

Posted by: jo | **March 25, 2008 6:35 PM**

If you haven't been to Los Amigo's in hamilton you must try it. We love it!!!!

Posted by: Tanya | **March 25, 2008 6:59 PM**

The HUGE omission is La Tolteca in "B1-Air." Right on Rt 1--muy sabroso!!! There's at least one more in Salisbury--equally good. Our grandkids go through their hot tortilla chips like termites through wood.

John

Posted by: John Bosley | **March 25, 2008 7:58 PM**

You can get awesome Mexican food at Zapata's in Columbia's Harpers Choice Village Center.

Posted by: KathyG | **March 25, 2008 8:48 PM**

I agree with the person who said the salsa at the El Salto in Parkville tastes like ketchup, actually I think ketchup has more taste. The food there is marginal at best.

Posted by: Hon | **March 26, 2008 9:41 AM**

The El Salto on Ritchie Hwy is very good. Its been a long time since I've been to the parkville one, but I don't remember it being too much different. I like Zen West a lot, but its more like a Chili's and is really "Tex-Mex" so I don't think it belongs on the list- not to say it's not good, just in a different category...

Posted by: Mather | **March 26, 2008 10:41 AM**

I used to like Los Amigos [great margaritas] until a friend of mine told me about her recent experience there. She went there with a very large party and only a few of the things they ordered actually came out. They didn't refill waters or chips and salsa. And at the end the owner refused to recognize that they didn't get all of their food and charged them for the full amount anyhow!

Posted by: Jean | **March 26, 2008 3:19 PM**

So thankful several of you noted La Tolteca in Bel Air. We drive from Baltimore City to eat there -- it's that good. Great service, too.

Posted by: baltoliz | **March 27, 2008 1:16 PM**

We've never been disappointed with Arcos. Ever tried the mole there? It's like being back in Oaxaca! Also, great to see El Azteca included. Great place to eat!

Posted by: JMe | **March 30, 2008 6:37 PM**

Just went to Nayar. Really tasty Mexican food. I'll probably go here instead of Chipotle in the future to satisfy my cravings de Mexico.

Posted by: Nate | **April 5, 2008 7:11 PM**

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