

# SOVO

SOUTHERN VOICE

DINING

## Muy Caliente!

Cinco de Mayo is over, but celebrate all year at these Mexican restaurants

By HOPE S. PHILBRICK

**ONLY THE RULES-BOUND CROWD THAT INSISTS** only the Irish get to drink green beer on St. Patrick's Day could reserve Cinco de Mayo exclusively for Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

The holiday honoring the Mexican defeat of the French on May 5, 1862, was a perfect excuse to skip the French fries in favor of Mexican cuisine, but Atlanta's Mexican restaurants abound as a staple any time. Here are a few favorites and some new additions.

**Los Bravos:** Located in Decatur, Los Bravos routinely draws a gay crowd. The interior is decorated with typical south-of-the-border kitsch, but the expansive outdoor dining space is inviting this time of year.

The menu deals in standard Mexican and Tex-Mex fare at very reasonable prices. House specialties include Steak Mexicano, beef topped with onions, tomatoes and bell peppers; Carnitas, pork tips; and Parrilla, grilled chicken.

Over two dozen combination plates feature tacos, enchiladas, chile rellenos, chalupas and burritos. Steak, chicken or

shrimp fajitas with fixings and tortillas are a popular selection.

All appetizers are priced under \$5; entrées range up to \$11 with vegetarian options hovering around \$6.50.

### Jalapeño Charlie's:

Open just two weeks, this may be Atlanta's newest Mexican dining option.

Located downtown across from Hard Rock Café, Charlie's serves Latin-Mexican fusion. The main dining room décor features bright colors and traditional artwork, but head for the patio when the weather's nice for a second-story view of Peachtree Street.

The menu blends usual finds like tacos, burritos, quesadillas and fajitas alongside more unique plates. Molcajete, the house specialty, features chicken or steak. Carrots and celery line an oven heated lava rock filled with bubbling Ranchero sauce and served with warm tortillas.

Tortas are traditional Mexican sandwiches with a choice of meat. Pork Loin Melanise boasts a mushroom cream sauce, and pimientos add heat to grilled shrimp with mango.

Prices start at \$5 for appetizers; entrées range up to \$18; desserts start at \$6.

### Sala – Sabor de Mexico:

Tucked in Virginia-Highland, Sala offers Atlantans a "taste of Mexico" since 2002. Recent renovations



A contemporary redesign at Sala makes the interior feel even more high-end, but the commitment to creative, delicious food is still the draw.

blend contemporary and rustic décor with stylish, comfortable results. The rich palate of earth tones and burgundy is enhanced by reclaimed wood touches and a display of pre-Columbian artifacts.

It's all very nice to look at, but the authentic cuisine by Executive Chef Jeff Smedstad is the draw. His ingredient-driven approach is evident in dishes like Borrego Adobo, braised lamb shank with sweet and spicy ancho-chile sauce; Camarones con mole verde, wood grilled shrimp with a tomatillo-pumpkin seed sauce; Enchiladas de Jaiba, crab in corn tortillas with green sauce and Chihuahua cheese; and tacos filled with wood-roasted pork, calamari and more.

Prices start at \$6 for appetizers; entrées range up to \$22; desserts from up to \$6. The bar menu includes an impressive array of margaritas starting at \$6.

### Also Noteworthy:

The gay-owned No Mas! Cantina in Castleberry Hill delivers high-quality authentic Mexican cuisine at value prices. Other local favorites include Nuevo Laredo Cantina and Taqueria del Sol.

**Jalapeño Charlie's**  
218 Peachtree St.  
404-525-5255  
www.jalapenocharlies.com

**Los Bravos**  
2895 N. Decatur Road  
404-508-0404

**No Mas! Cantina**  
180 Walker St.  
404-574-5679  
www.NoMasCantina.com

**Nuevo Laredo Cantina**  
1495 Chattahoochee Ave.  
404-352-9009  
www.nuevolaredo-cantina.com

**Sala**  
– Sabor de Mexico  
1186 North Highland Ave.  
404.872-7203  
www.fifthgroup.com

**Taqueria del Sol**  
1200B Howell Mill Road  
404-352-5811

359 West Ponce De Leon Ave.  
404-377-7668

New: 2165 Cheshire Bridge Road  
404-321-1118  
www.taqueriadelcsol.com

## Alternative Wine

