



Star-Telegram

dine out!

January 4-10, 2008

Mi Chula's Good Mexican

1431 E. Southlake Blvd.
Southlake
817-756-6920;
www.michulas.com
Hours: 11 a.m.-9 p.m.
daily

Cuisine: Mexican
Essentials: Major credit cards accepted; full bar; smoke-free; wheelchair-accessible; no kids' menu

Entree cost: \$8-\$15
Signature dish: Fish tacos

Alcohol policy: Wine, beer, margaritas

Recommended for: Fans of upscale Mexican and casual dining



The chicken Ricardo plate, with mesquite-grilled chicken, roasted vegetables, mushrooms and melted cheese, is one of our favorite well-seasoned choices on the menu at Mi Chula's Good Mexican in Southlake.

STAR-TELEGRAM/R. JEENA JACOB

occasional whole bean to lend some texture.

Signature dishes include fish tacos (\$8.25) and fajitas (\$11.95-\$12.95), but the menu features options that go beyond the run of the mill, both in conception and execution. That includes tortas (\$7.95), Mexican sandwiches made on what resembled ciabatta bread, available with chicken or shrimp. What made the tortas special was the inclusion of roasted vegetables, avocado and a smear of refried beans — a novel and delicious addition to a sandwich. On the side: a cup of fresh fruit and coleslaw with purple cabbage sliced very thin.

Chicken Ricardo (\$11.95) may have had a bland description — “mesquite-grilled chicken with roasted vegetables and mushrooms” — but it turned out to be the choicest pick. Deft seasoning and cooking produced a surprisingly tender, flavorful chicken breast. Buried under roasted peppers, carrots, onions and some melted cheese, the chicken was irresistibly juicy, too.

For traditionalists, there are combo plates (\$8.25) starring enchiladas, tamales, tacos and quesadillas, including one with spinach and roasted vegetables; also nachos, salads and tortilla soup. Desserts (\$3.95) consisted of sopaipillas and churros.

The restaurant offers a wink-wink nudge-nudge option where you can order dishes done “extra good” with extra this or that. Extra Good queso (\$4.95), for example, contained seasoned ground beef. Chips were of the light-thin-crisp variety, and accompanying salsa was a red-tinged brown with a roasted flavor and a nice dose of zip. Approach the complimentary pickled vegetable salad with care — it was delightfully blazing hot.

Extra-good Mexican food

Mi Chula's in Southlake offers the comfy panache of a Pei Wei

By TERESA GUBBINS

Special to the Star-Telegram

“This is like a Mexican Pei Wei,” said the fellow at my table at Mi Chula's Good Mexican, and he had it right on. Although this sparkling new restaurant in Southlake was created by a team of Uncle Julio's veterans, it looks to Pei Wei for inspiration, sharing its fast-casual format, cheery environment and good-quality food.

Mi Chula has Pei Wei-esque menu displays at the entrance, and the same ordering system, whereupon you place your order at a counter and it's brought to your table. Even the drinks station looks identical.

Dominated by warm wood tones, with splashes of color

such as the yellow boxes at the table holding silverware, Mi Chula's handsome interior feels bright yet sophisticated. A bar with beer, wine and signature margaritas such as the prickly pear (\$6.95) doesn't hurt one bit.

There's a tortilla-maker on the premises and salsa is made on site. Fajitas can be had not just with beef or chicken but also shrimp. Beans are available in three options: refried, charra or black, which are also vegetarian. The diner at my table who usually eschews beans declared the refried to be the best he'd ever had, thanks to perky seasoning and the inclusion of the