

Café España brings exotic, classy eats to Las Cruces

By Loryn Guiffre
For Pulse

Located inside the newly remodeled Hotel Encanto, Café España introduces Las Cruces diners to Latin-inspired cuisine in an elegant and inviting atmosphere.

Serving breakfast, lunch and dinner, Café España is a great place to enjoy fresh and creative dishes that incorporate flavors from Mexico and Spain. Dinner entrées range from about \$12.50 (for tortellini and smoked chicken) to \$24 for the priciest plate (a coffee-roasted beef fillet). Lunch prices are a bit more affordable, ranging between \$6 (for the salad España with mixed greens, artichoke hearts, jicama, tortilla chips and tomatoes) and \$16 (for the Pasta Doña Ana with grilled shrimp).

The first impression I get from entering this beautiful restaurant is that it exudes class. Latin guitar strums gently over the café speakers, linen-covered tables display ceramics from Mexico, and tangerine-hued walls glow warm with the light of dimly lit lanterns. My mother always taught me that lighting is everything and Café España seems to know that well.

Sitting at my table, I gaze through swirling wrought-iron gates that offer a pleasant peek into the stunning hotel lobby, providing a view of an angel adorned fountain. The impressive dining room is large with ample seating.



While the service is friendly, it took quite a while to get my drink. I attribute that to the minimal staff on duty at the time.

As an appetizer, I start with the salsa sampler (\$6.50) which features black bean salsa, pico de gallo, roasted tomato salsa and guacamole. Served with tri-colored tortilla chips, this is a great break from your typical chips and salsa. While the roasted flavor of the tomato is not my favorite, the pico de gallo and guacamole were good and obviously freshly made. The spicy pico de gallo is infused with a hint of lime and cilantro, making it completely addicting. The mild black bean salsa is also tasty and consists mostly of whole black beans tossed with a few onions, tomatoes and a bit of lime juice.

For my lunch entrée, I decide on the chicken las caras salad (\$8.50). This salad is served in a tortilla shell and contains lettuce, spring mix greens, avocado,

tomato, olives and cilantro. It is topped with chicken tenders that are expertly breaded in tri-colored tortilla chip crumbs and served with a smoky chipotle dressing.

Plated with artistry, my salad is visually intriguing. The massive salad spills out of a crisp tortilla shell and sticks of green onion provide a fun vertical garnish. This salad is extremely fresh, and the greens are crisp with every bite. A fan of fresh avocado tops the breaded chicken tenders and the cilantro is an unexpectedly clever ingredient in this salad. Delicious.

While Café España offers a variety of tempting desserts, my meal is so fulfilling I must forgo it today.

Café España is a must-try for Las Cruces because it offers a warm and inviting atmosphere a gorgeous dining room, classy ambience and unique Latin inspired fare that can only be described as delicious.