Adobo’s Mexican Grill (Revisited)

by Rich Belmont

There have been many changes at Adobos Mexican Grill since I first wrote about this restaurant on August 23, 2011 (click on Adobos at www.365inkonline.com).

Most importantly for us foodies Adobos now offers us the opportunity to grab a delicious super fast lunch. That’s because the Burrito Express Bar is now open. You go through the line picking out the ingredients you want rolled into your flour tortilla. In just a few minutes you have a customized burrito you can eat in or take with you.

The owners of Adobos, Jaime Salazar and his wife Flor recognized there was a need for Dubuque people to be able to get a quick, mobile lunch. And what can be more satisfying than a fabulous burrito made just the way you like it. Jaime knows what people like. He is from San Luis Potosi, Mexico and was a student of culinary arts at Highland Community College in Elizabeth, IL. He now has over 18 years experience cooking for those of us who love Mexican food and reside here in the Tri-States.

You can order tacos, nachos and even a couple of salads from the Express Bar but the star of the show is definitely the Burrito.

We all know the burrito (burr EE-toh) is a big roll of meat and veggies that is a meal in itself. Did you ever wonder how it got its name? Burro is the Spanish word for donkey. When you tack on “tor” or “tort” to any Spanish word it becomes “little” so therefore the word literally means “little donkey”. According to the Burrito History written by Richard Foss, sometime during the late 19th century an unknown person instigated a contest to see who could make the largest burrito, and by the way the winner was the first person to talk to his sponsor! So the first and only Law of Burrito is “be the first to laugh!”

El Diablo means “the devil” and anytime you see it associated with the mild Sweet Tomato Red and Green Tomatillo to the hot Chipotle salsa (sauce). There are six of these to choose from. They range from mild to fiery. There is still a full assortment of Seafood Specialties, Vegetarian Specials, Quesadillas (keh-sah-DEE-yahs), Steak & Chicken dinners, Fajitas (fah-HEE-tuhs) and Enchiladas (en-chuh-LAH-dahs).

Now before your server rolls up your burrito don’t forget to add a salsa (sauce). There are six of these to choose from. They range from the mild Sweet Tomato Red and Green Tomatillo to the hot Chipotle to the fiery El Diablo sauce (sauce). The sauce is a blend of ancho peppers and spices for this sauce.

Pechuga (SEH-chuh-gah) – spicy shredded beef brisket slowly braised in chile ancho tamarindo sauce. Tamarind fruit pods are mixed with ancho peppers and spices for this sauce.

Carnitas (kahr-NEE-tahs) – shredded choice boneless pork shoulder cooked in lime, rosemary and garlic for 3 to 4 hours. Then you add any or all of the following delicious toppings: black beans, pinto beans, fajita vegetables (sauteed onions, red and green bell peppers), roasted jalapenos, corn, grated cheese and pico de gallo (PEE-co-de-OH gal-ah) fresh, uncooked chopped onions, tomatoes and jalapenos.

For starters you pick the meat you want in your burrito. Or choose no meat if you prefer vegetarian. Your meat choices are:

- Steak – grilled Iowa top sirloin marinaded in special seasonings for 24 hours.
- Chicken – cubes of grilled chicken breast marinaded in homemade Adobos sauce for 24 hours.
- Barbacoa (bar-bah-COH-ah) – spicy shredded beef brisket slowly braised in chile ancho tamarindo sauce. Tamarind fruit pods are mixed with ancho peppers and spices for this sauce.
- Carnitas (kahr-NEE-tahs) – shredded choice boneless pork shoulder cooked in lime, rosemary and garlic for 3 to 4 hours.

Once you have chosen your meat you get to choose at Adobos Mexican Grill.

No it’s not all business. The other change is awesome and you have to look up to see it! You see, Adobos is located inside a historic building. It was constructed in 1850 and is known as the Walker Shoe Building. Its owners Jerry Murdoch and his son, Toben, decided to restore this building to its original glory. Tin ceilings were a cost effective way to replicate the intricately designed plaster ceilings of Europe and were popular in prestigious American buildings in the mid-nineteenth century. The tinplating in the Walker Shoe Building only covered part of the ceiling. It had been painted over and was in total disrepair. Garry Prohaska of Landmark Restoration in Platteville and Adam Johnson, Architect of Galena were brought in to oversee the restoration. They contacted Brian Greer’s Tin Ceilings in Petersburg, Ontario (www.TinCeiling.com) who was able to duplicate the ceiling pattern for the rest of the ceiling. Josh Schwendener of JRS Building & Contractors in Lancaster was hired to install the new ceiling. Larry Drosseller & Sons Building Restoration of Platteville powder blasted the old ceiling and repainted the entire ceiling with copper metallic paint. All these companies are experts in their respective professions. The quality of their work is apparent in the beautiful restoration you can’t help but notice when you enter Adobos.

On a recent visit my tasting team sampled several house specialties. These included Acapulco Crab Cakes, breaded and served with homemade chipotle ranch dressing Crabmeat Chimichanga, flour tortilla deep fried with beans and topped with guacamole and Adobos house sauce; my favorite Carne Asada, tender skirt steak grilled with onions and served with rice, beans, tortillas and guacamole salad; and Bryan Park’s favorite, the Carnitas Dinner. This last one is seasoned pork slow cooked 4 to 5 hours. It is sliced into chunks and deep fried until crisp, then served with Tomatillo sauce, rice beans and flour tortillas.

In the Summer months, you won’t want to miss the Breakfast Burrito from Adobos at the Farmers’ Market on Saturday mornings. These are so good! Jaime takes a large flour tortilla and stuffs it with scrambled eggs, your choice of bacon, ham, sausage or homemade choritzo, and peppers, onions, tomatoes and seasoned fried potatoes.

Visit Adobos Mexican Grill for a really fast lunch. In the evening relax with a Margarita, Daiquiri or one of 9 Mexican beers while you savor a delightful Mexican dinner.

The exceptional classic Mexican dinners have not changed either. There is still a full assortment of Seafood Specialties, Vegetarian Specials, Quesadillas (seh-sah EE-yahs), Steak & Chicken dinners, Fajitas (fah-HEE-tuhs) and Enchiladas (en-chuh-LAH-dahs).

www.adobosmexicangrill.com