

Restaurant Review: Cempazuchi Comida Brava

Contributed by Kelly Schumacher

When I first moved to Milwaukee, I was constantly looking for new, inventive restaurants to try. Restaurants, which offered fresh entrees unique to the establishment, had excellent service and welcomed their customers openly with a relaxing atmosphere. I was especially interested in finding a restaurant like this Cempazuchi which featured Mexican-style cuisine. After several failed attempts at finding one that was both unique and refreshing, I stumbled upon Cempazuchi. Cempazuchi is located on the trendy Brady St. strip in Milwaukee. Hard to miss, the brightly painted restaurant offers fresh, traditional Mexican entrees as well as new dishes that set it apart from the usual.

Open for seven years, Cempazuchi is named after the Mexican holiday "Day of the Dead." It sets itself apart from other Mexican restaurants in the city by offering dishes that you'll only find there such as their salsas, made at the restaurant, and other entrees including their made-fresh tortas.

The first time I encountered Cempazuchi, was last December with a few girlfriends. Since then, I have become a regular customer — visiting at least every week to two weeks. After just one visit, you'll be hooked on the pleasant atmosphere, quick service and delicious food. I've nearly exhausted the menu, but each time I go it feels like the first. The friendly service is outstanding and have I even mentioned the margaritas yet?

The cozy, casual restaurant offers both indoor (smoking and non) and outdoor (seasonal) seating. In or out, you'll enjoy the bright décor, original artwork depicting skeletons and vibrant colors (seemingly paying tribute to the Mexican holiday "Day of the Dead") and upbeat Spanish music that blends well with the cuisine.

As soon as you are seated, you're warmly welcomed with chips and two types of salsa, both original to the restaurant. One is a peanut blend with nutmeg and the other has a spicier barbeque taste.

Dressed in all black, the servers do a phenomenal job of making sure your chips, salsa and margaritas are full and ready for your enjoyment. Likewise, once you've ordered, you can expect no longer than a 15 to 20 minute wait before presented with your food. Cempazuchi's staff fit the bill; they're friendly, attentive and always accessible — the perfect mix for a waiter.

Along with your dining experience, comes the food, of course! The menu offers a wide variety of starters, salads, sandwiches and traditional Mexican cuisine — the dinner menu begins at 5 p.m. and dishes range in price from \$5.95 to \$13.95.

If you're in the mood for something light and fresh, try the Queso Fresco Torta (\$5.95). Between two pieces of pan frances you'll find lettuce, tomato, red onion, jalapeno, avocado, fresca and queso fresco (farmer's cheese). My personal favorite, this sandwich is served with a side salad and leaves you wanting more.

For a more traditional Mexican dish, try the Enchilada Oaxquenas (\$8.25). Three tortillas filled with chicken, steak, pork, spicy chicken or spicy pork (your choice) and red chile salsa. The enchiladas are also served with a side salad and have the perfect blend of Mexican spice, yet not so hot you can't enjoy.

If visiting after 5 p.m., scan the dinner menu and consider the Manchamantes (\$13.95), grilled chicken with sweet-sour fruit mole with pear, apple, plaintain, sweet potatoes and pineapple rice. Although pricier than the rest, the experience of all these ingredients mixed together will have your taste buds screaming in delight.

Comparable to other Mexican restaurants in town such as La Perla and Jaliscos, offering chips and salsa, margaritas, classic Mexican dishes such as enchiladas and fajitas - Cempazuchi offers something they don't, innovative and refreshing dishes. Cempazuchi's fresh menu, pleasant service and laid-back setting are the answer for people looking for a new Mexican cuisine experience.

The next time you find yourself browsing the shops of Brady Street, take a minute to relax with Cempazuchi. You'll be overjoyed with how genuinely happy the staff is to have you and the food truly speaks for itself; oh, and tell them I sent you!

Cempazuchi Comida Brava

1205 E. Brady St.

Milwaukee, WI 53202

(414) 291-5233

Hours:

Tues-Thurs 11:30am-10pm

Fri-Sat 11:30am-11pm

Sun 11:30am-9pm

Grade: A