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Mercadito Cantina Will Tempt Your Taste Buds!

New York City (July 29, 2008) - MERCADITO CANTINA WILL TEMPT YOUR TASTE BUDS

NEW TAQUERIA FEATURES

CREATIVE OFFERINGS AND AN INVENTIVE COCKTAIL MENU

NEW YORK (NY) Four years after igniting New York's love affair with the taco, the team behind the popular Mercadito's restaurants have fired the latest shot in the so-called "taco wars" with Mercadito Cantina. Located at 172 Avenue B (between 10th and 11th Streets and adjacent to the original Mercadito that started it all), Mercadito Cantina elevates the humble taqueria into a sleek showplace for new taste experiences.

The taco is front and center at this decidedly modern Mexican taqueria where guests can eat-in or take-out (delivery coming soon). Boasting new taco varieties, the restaurant is sure to adhere to the same dedication to authenticity that has made the Mercadito restaurants famous. However, tasty tacos and sides aren't the only weapons in this restaurant's arsenal. Sensing a need for a new twist on traditional Mexican cocktails, Mercadito Cantina called upon the renowned beverage consultants Tippling Bros., whose concoctions creatively merge complex flavors, drinkability and the unexpected.

The brothers Sandoval, restaurateur/owner Alfredo and chef/owner Patricio, have partnered with two talented newcomers to help bring their vision to life. Joining them on this venture, which they hope to be the first in a chain of taquerias, are chef-de-cuisine Ivan Garcia and general manager Chris Pugliese, both first-time restaurant owners.

Created by Patricio Sandoval, Mercadito Cantina's "taco-centric" menu features selections not found at any other Mercadito location. Served in pairs, homemade corn tortillas envelope fillings such as milanesa (lightly breaded natural leg of beef with roasted poblano avocado salsa), chorizo verde (homemade Mexican green sausage, manchengo cheese and tomatillo salsa), calamar (guajillo battered calamari, plantain salsa and guajillo vinaigrette) and the standout estilo baja (Negra Modelo beer-battered shrimp with roasted habanero and avocado cole slaw). However, if you would rather make your own tacos, a Taquiza is right for you. Barbacoa de pollo (braised organic chicken Barbacoa-style), carne asada (hoja santa marinated grass fed skirt steak), carnitas de Puerco (Michoacan-style braised Berkshire pork carnitas with pork belly and camarones al ajillo (roasted garlic marinated head-on shrimp with chile de arbol and toasted chile auajillo), are served by the 2 kilo accompanied with the choice of two salsas, onions, cilantro, lime and homemade corn tortillas. Vegetarian taco options are also available, for those with special diets and preferences.

Mercadito Cantina's flavorful salsas, guacamole and sides can hold their own as dishes or round out taco selections. Salsas such as chipotle (roasted tomatillo, piloncillo pickled chipotle and roasted garlic), cacahuete (grilled tomato, toasted peanuts, chile de arbol, chile guajillo and chile morita) and coste?a (toasted chilies coste?os, tomatoes and toasted sesame seeds) and warm varieties such as habanero (grilled tomato, tomato, habanero, garlic, lemon and crema fresca) and verde (tomatillo, chile serrano, caramelized red onion and cilantro) are presented alone, or paired with

yellow and blue corn tortilla chips (cool salsas) or addictive crispy cornbread bites (warm salsas). Guacamoles, spanning from the traditional (tradicional - tomatillo pico de gallo, jalapeño, garlic, lime and cilantro) to the whimsical (sandia - tomatillo pico de gallo, watermelon, chile habanero and epazote) are a great way to begin your culinary journey. Tempting sides such as arroz verde al horno (green rice casserole, manchengo and Oaxaca cheese), papas y chorizo (potatoes, homemade Mexican sausage) and elote mexicano (Mexican-style corn on the cob) can also be ordered together for a satisfying main course. Don't forget to end your meal with a creamy flan in rich flavors such as horchata (rice milk), cajeta (caramelized goat's milk) and napolitano (classic vanilla).

People will be talking about Mercadito Cantina's inventive cocktail menu, created by Paul Tanguay and Tad Carducci of Tippling Bros., two of the industry's most sought after beverage consultants. Part mixologists and part historians, the duo researched cocktail categories and sourced the indigenous ingredients that inspired their creations. The result is a selection of wine-based ponches (punch) like the Marilyn Manzana (white wine, vermouth, tamarind and apple soda) and Arose con Blonde (lillet blanc, horchata, lime and oregano syrup), beer-based miches (the duos take on the michelada) including the Bitter ~Mich (grapefruit, agave nectar and pico piquin) and the Ker~Mich (cucumber, hoja santa, agave nectar, cumin and salt) and the surprising mentirosas (margaritas) made with "Tric-quila" - a sake-based blend that imparts a crisper taste and smoother finish than regular tequila.

Mercadito Cantina's design was inspired by co-owner Alfredo Sandoval's memories of classic Mexican taquerias. Blonde wood dominates the 50-seat restaurant, fashioning the walls, front communal tables, stools, two eat-at counters, bar and chef's table. Subway tile, a standard design element of traditional taquerias is interpreted as the clear glass tiles that line the back wall of the bar/exposed kitchen. A blonde wood table for large parties sits under a skylight at the rear of the restaurant, while colorful red, yellow, white and green glass tiles add color and brightness. Decorative bulbs with exposed filaments act as accents while bathing the space in a warm glow.

Mercadito Cantina will expand your concept of what it means to "make a run for the border."

Mercadito Cantina (212-388-1750) is open from Sunday to Tuesday from 5:00 pm to 12:00 am, Wednesday and Thursday from 5:00 pm to 1:00 am, and Friday and Saturday from 5:00 pm to 2:00 am. Brunch and lunch will be announced later this summer. Mercadito Cantina accepts reservations for parties of 6 or more. Visa, Master Card and American Express are accepted.

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