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A Night Out: Mercadito Cantina



Written by [Siu Ki](#)
Sunday, 07 September 2008

The men behind the original [Mercadito](#), led by [Chef Patricio Sandoval](#), have done it again, bringing a new and exciting flair to street-style Mexican food. **Mercadito Cantina**, on Avenue B between 10th and 11th street, opened less than a month ago and is already bustling with people, eating, drinking and having a great time.



Looking to experience something new and different in New York City, some friends and I dined there after a magic show at the Bleecker Street Theatre. As planned, at the show's conclusion, we dove into a cab and headed east for some salsa, guacamole, tacos, and margaritas.

Mercadito Cantina's trio of guacamoles and salsas proved to be a delicious starter. The most favored of the assortment was the "Mole Poblano," a savory guacamole made with traditional pica de gallo spiked with plantains, mole poblano, and chilis. We also liked the "Oaxaqueno," a guacamole with a sweet

finish, accented with diced mangos that refreshed the palate with each bite.

After almost filling up on chips and such, our desire for great tacos was fulfilled with the arrival of the "Estilo Baja," lightly-battered shrimp tacos spiced with roasted habañero chilies and accompanied by a soothing avocado cole slaw. The "Pescado," lightly grilled tilapia tacos, had a smoky kiss of poblano tomatillo and garlic mojo that left me craving for more.

After an array of seafood tacos, we decided to venture back onto land for some "Carne Asada" taquiza, also known as "make your own tacos." The grass fed skirt steak was a big hi-five to my inner devotion to eating more organically raised meat and my outer devotion to being carnivorous. I loaded up my taco with salsa,

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onions, and cilantro and devoured it, despite my overly distended belly.

The margaritas and cocktails, created by the Tippling Brothers Beverage Consultants, were not traditional by any means. Since Mercadito Cantina does not have liquor license, Tad Carducci of Tippling Bros. had to improvise a little. To think I was done with the magic show for the night... lo and behold, there was another trick right at our table, aptly named "Tric-quilla™".



Tric-quilla™ is a concoction of sake, agave nectar, orange blossom oil and assorted spices. When tasted blindly by our table of industry professionals, we were all somewhat fooled! The taste of Tric-quilla™ mimics the taste of tequila from the agave nectar and

orange blossom oil with spices that approximate the heat and bite in the throat of a potent añejo.

The Tric-quilla is the base "liquor" for a variety of "mock-tails" with interesting names such as the "Paper Daisy", "Papa Low" and "La Palomita." The "Papa Low" was my favorite with Tric-quilla, passion fruit, jalapeño, papalo (a cilantro like herb), and a salt-and-pepper rim. The passion fruit made the drink go down as smooth as silk while the assorted spices make you thirst for more.

Mercadito Cantina also has an interesting selection of "miches" (beer- based drinks infused with juices and spices) and lip-smacking "ponches" (sangria-like drinks). For the purist who likes to stick with just basic vino, their selection is small but carefully assembled. The garnacha blanca/ macabeo tasted like a perfect viogner to compliment the spices in the food.

Mercadito Cantina was a perfect ending to a magical night, from their "tricky" cocktails to the last bite of the caramel flan. I recommend Mercadito Cantina to anyone who is looking for a great time and great food in a minimalist atmosphere.

-Siu Ki Wan
Contributing Writer

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