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FOOD

BY TODD SOUTH



Ciria's Cocina serves dishes like these avocado egg rolls with chipotle sauce and chunky red salsa.
PHOTO/ALLISON YOUNG

Won't bite

Ciria's Cocina is a new little spot located amid a group of eateries in southwest Reno. My family's complimentary serving of tortilla chips included fresh, chunky red and green salsas with a great mix of heat and flavor. The chips were crispy, and we went through two or three baskets during a fairly long wait for entrees.

Although I'm an avowed hot wing aficionado, this was the first time I've ordered them at a Mexican restaurant. A dozen chicken wings (\$11.99) were doused in a mix of lime juice, butter and Tapatio hot sauce and served with ranch dressing. The wings were perfectly crispy and moist, and the kick of lime provided a pleasant contrast to the heat—completely enjoyable. We really should have ordered more.

Unless they're ordered *à la carte*, all plates include cilantro rice, refried beans, lettuce, tomato and sour cream. The rice was fluffy, though I didn't detect a whole lot of cilantro or other seasoning. The beans were on the soupy side, also lacking in flavor. I left most of both on the plate.

My chile relleno and chicken enchilada (\$12.99) were pretty good. The chicken was plentiful, and the sauce had a ton of flavor that definitely didn't come from a can. Likewise, the sizeable pepper was quite tasty—loaded with melted cheese—accented by a very good sauce. My daughter-in-law's pair of potato enchiladas (\$8.99) were essentially mashed spuds in tortilla tubes, topped with a green sauce. The dish was long on lime, short on spice.

Camarones a la diablo (\$14.99) is usually a favorite, but not so much this time. The *adobo* sauce was lacking garlic and heat, tasted a little burnt and was very oily. It was much improved with a dose of green salsa, but watch out for the

tail-on shrimp if you're not down with extra crunch. The pan-crisped zucchini taco my son added was much better (\$2.99), loaded with jack cheese, lettuce, tomato and deliciously sautéed, diced squash. This item packed more flavor than I would have expected.

My daughter's steak fajitas with bell pepper and onion (\$14.99) were served with the usual accoutrements, plus rice and beans. Similar to other items, I felt this generally lacked seasoning. The meat was tender but could have used more char. Her older sister's chicken tinga tostadas (\$11.99) were seriously stacked with shredded chicken and onion in a spicy, tomato-chipotle sauce, plus lettuce, tomato, sour cream and guacamole. Other than the wings, this was the best meat dish we sampled and pretty impressive in presentation.

For some reason, every time we order tacos for my grandson they're the last thing to arrive. Still, he enjoyed his crispy carnitas bites (\$6.98) and grudgingly allowed grandpa to sample a bit of tender, shredded pork. And, on this occasion, his tacos actually took penultimate place. A half-forgotten appetizer order of avocado eggrolls (\$8.99) showed up as we were nearly done with the entrees. Four halved eggrolls of sliced avocado and roasted red bell pepper—with chipotle dipping sauce—were oily, unseasoned and easily my least favorite "hot avocado" dish to date. The place is really new and will likely find its footing, but, next time I go, it's all about the wings. □

Ciria's Cocina

6135 Lakeside Drive, 440-1098

Ciria's Cocina is open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.