

CERVEZA CHILEBESO
ALE WITH FRESH JALAPEÑOS

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FOOD

BY TODD SOUTH



Quarter-pound or half-pound servings of meat come with a choice of two sides and garlic bread.
PHOTO/ALLISON YOUNG

Good turn

On a rare visit to downtown Sparks, the glowing sign of newly opened Golden Rotisserie beckoned with the promise of marinated, spit-roasted meat. It's a counter service place with simple furnishings but plenty of room for a family meal.

Despite having never visited the original Truckee location, I was immediately struck with *déjà vu*. The menu is eerily similar to that of much-lauded T's Mesquite Rotisserie in Incline Village. When asked about that, the guy at the counter shrugged his shoulders and said, "I don't know." Fair enough.

A large rotisserie dominates the small, open kitchen space, although it appears it's only loaded up with beef tri-tip, chicken and pork shoulder in the morning, then "held hot" to be served as burritos, tacos, tostadas, quesadillas and sandwiches. Or, you can order a quarter-pound or half-pound serving of meat with a choice of two sides, including cucumber salad, black beans, spanish rice, potato salad and coleslaw. Like I said, *déjà vu* all over again.

The "daily special" trio of tacos al pastor (\$7.50) was served in the traditional manner, a pair of small corn tortillas supporting a decent amount of meat, topped with plenty of fresh onion and cilantro. They were served with rice and beans, lime wedges and a two-ounce cup of salsa (choice of mild, medium or hot).

The beans were a little soupy, but the slightly salty flavor was pretty good. The rice had plenty of lime and cilantro. Unfortunately, the telltale pineapple flavor of al pastor was completely absent, replaced by crunchy, charred bitterness that even a healthy dose of medium salsa couldn't improve. I chose not to finish them.

My friend's chile relleno burrito (\$8.50) was full of black beans, rice, guacamole, lettuce and sour cream, with the stuffed mild pepper in the center. It was really tasty even before the addition of hot salsa, though strangely lacking in cheese. Further inspection showed a thin layer inside the pepper, so perhaps "stuffed" isn't the word.

Meat plates come with a choice of corn tortillas or a slab of bread grilled with plenty of butter and garlic. The bread was a nice addition to a half-pound order of tri-tip (\$11.50) with potato salad and beans. The sweet salad could do with more seasoning and less dressing, but the beef? Oh, man—marinated in a mixture of honey, soy and lime, the large slices were tender, delicious and surprisingly moist. It would definitely make a great steak sandwich and was easily the high point of our visit.

Although a half-pound plate of soy lime chicken (\$9.50) may have been dynamite when it came off the spit, by dinner time it was a mushy, dry disappointment. The skin was still acceptably crispy, and the marinade flavor was pretty decent. Sure, the meat came easily off the bone, but the breast quarter was drier than a cheap, frozen turkey left too long in the oven. The attached wing was essentially inedible jerky. The dark meat quarter fared better, but only just. The sides of nicely seasoned coleslaw and marinated salad of cucumber, carrot and onion were pretty enjoyable. I'm tempted to see if the chicken is better at lunch, but I'd probably just give in to that drool-worthy tri-tip. □

Golden Rotisserie

1240 C. St., Sparks, 470-5454

Golden Rotisserie is open Monday to Saturday from 10:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., and Sunday from 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Learn more at golden-rotisserie.com.