

## A trio offering Mexican fare

By Elaine Walker

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CHRIS CUTRO / FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

Erwin Corredor serves lunch guests at the Taco Beach Shack in Hollywood.

It's a little early for Cinco de Mayo, but we're always hungry for good Mexican food, so we decided to check out two new places plus a classic we'd never tried.

### Taco Beach Shack

While not on the sands of Hollywood beach, Taco Beach Shack is a sandy oasis of its own just off A1A — a comfortable, open-air spot that's perfect in this springtime weather.

On weekends there's live music and plenty of room on the sand for dancing or letting the kids run around. For more traditional

dining, grab one of the patio tables.

The menu is simple: salads, nachos, quesadillas, tacos and burritos made with your choice of ground beef, grilled chicken, steak, fish, mushrooms or, in a fusion twist, Korean short ribs with kimchi slaw. The best deals are combo plates that include rice, beans and an ear of grilled corn.

If you like to start with tortilla chips, be aware that they aren't gratis here. We got ours with a side of guacamole that tasted freshly made but could have used more spice. A grilled chicken taco included plenty of breast meat but was also on the mild side.

Our favorite dish was the grilled fish taco combo. The mahi was moist and perfectly seasoned, and the grilled corn with cilantro butter and Parmesan cheese was delicious.

Overly saucy Korean short-rib meat made for a soggy burrito, but other diners raved about the quesadilla pizzas.

Taco Beach Shack, 334 Arizona St., Hollywood; 954-920-6523, [www.tacobeachshack.com](http://www.tacobeachshack.com); tacos \$3.45-\$5.45 each, burritos and quesadillas \$6.50-\$10.99, combo plates \$9.99-\$13.99.

## Fuego Latino

The attention to detail and accommodating service at Fuego Latin is a welcome treat. The restaurant is owned and operated by the same family that had the Don Pepe chain years ago, with the sons waiting tables, mom at the cash register and dad supervising the kitchen.

Want to make a substitution? No problem. Not sure if you like something? They'll bring a sample. Our water glasses were refilled well before they ever hit empty.

With lots of wood paneling and wooden booths, the newly renovated space feels warm. At prime time on a recent Saturday night, it was no more than one third full, but that's bound to change as Fuego Latino builds a following.

Prices are very affordable, with most items under \$12. There's an ample selection of both Mexican and Cuban dishes, from staples to family recipes, including a creamy cilantro sauce served with several entrees that was a little rich for us.

Our empanadas had flaky crusts and generous fillings of chicken and ground beef, but were a little greasy. That wasn't a problem with the tender, lightly pan-fried pork chunks. Shrimp creole had a flavorful sauce but would have benefitted from more spice and a few more shrimp.

House-made flan was perfectly caramelized and just enough for a sweet ending.

Fuego Latin, 1417 E. Commercial Blvd., Oakland Park; 954-351-7754; appetizers \$1.75-\$6.95, sandwiches \$5.95-\$7.95, entrees \$7.95-\$14.95.

## Tipico Café

Tucked in Fort Lauderdale's small Gateway Shopping Center, 10-year-old Tipico Café promises "American Style – Mexican Flavor – Spanish Flair." The small, cozy restaurant with lace curtains, sponge-painted walls and dim lighting almost feels like someone's home.

Most of the Mexican selection are variations of burritos, chimichangas and enchiladas, but you'll also find catch of the day Veracruz style, churrasco steak and a Mexican stir-fry.

A basket of chips arrives nice and warm with flavorful, freshly made salsa. Everything we ordered was solidly executed, including steak burrito, chicken enchilada and fajitas suprema (with chicken, steak and shrimp). Our only complaints were that the skirt steak was a little chewy and the shrimp rather small.

All in all, Tipico is the kind of solid neighborhood restaurant we'd all like to have down the street from home.

Tipico Café, 1910 E. Sunrise Blvd., Fort Lauderdale; 954-463-9945; Appetizers \$2.95-\$9.95; most entrees \$9.95-\$14.95.

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