

TACO BEACH SHACK ★★★

Shack sells taco shells by the seashore

By Danny Sanchez
STAFF WRITER

Ah, Hollywood Beach, my favorite local beach, I love your everyman vibe, the sounds of musicians at your inexpensive bars, and the crisp ocean breeze as I cruise down your Broadwalk on my bike. But your restaurants? Let's just say I'd like to see more distinctive yet moderately priced places such as Taco Beach Shack.

This modern Mexican spot sitting on the corner of AIA and Arizona Street just north of Hollywood Boulevard is a charming place to relax, knock back a brew and grab some tacos made of high-quality ingredients.

We sauntered into Taco Beach Shack on a cool Sunday afternoon, perfect for

enjoying the restaurant's outdoor setup. All tables sit under canopies and umbrellas with a view toward AIA. The mood is half rugged Keys restaurant, half modern beachside lounge.

It's a good thing Taco Beach Shack is a nice place to lounge, because just about everything arrived at a crawl. While the servers are courteous, they kept us thirsty and hungry too often. The wait was partially forgiven following the arrival of a dynamite pile of steak nachos (\$7.95), crispy tortilla chips topped with melted cheddar cheese, cilantro cream, black beans, pico de gallo, guacamole, sour cream and fresh jalapeno.

The tacos are a delight, mainly because we tasted freshness and nuance

Taco Beach Shack

334 Arizona St., Hollywood
954-920-6523, TacoBeachShack.com

Cuisine: Mexican

Cost: Moderate

Hours: 11:30 a.m.-1 a.m. daily

Reservations: Recommended

Bar: Full service

Sound level: Loud when musicians are playing, average when not

Outside smoking: Yes (all tables are outside)

For kids: Highchairs, kids' meals

Wheelchair accessible: Yes

throughout. The menu is built around several choices: ground beef, grilled chicken, mushrooms, carnitas (\$3.75 per taco); steak (\$4.75 per taco); and mahi mahi (grilled or breaded and fried), Korean short rib and kimchi, and smoked brisket (\$5.50 per taco). Tacos are served on

either corn, flour or wheat tortillas (if you're impartial, go for the soft ones), topped with cheese, cabbage, pico de gallo, chopped cilantro and cilantro cream. We'd give the highest marks to the juicy, tender steak, the grilled mahi mahi and the grilled chicken. The ground

beef is distinctively seasoned, so it may not be for everyone. The brisket, while flavorful, was less tender than the steak.

If you're a do-it-yourself diner, the sort who likes fondue places, you'll enjoy the giant, four-meat "Fiesta Platter" (\$29.99). This large plate is perfect for sharing and features a choice of meats served atop tortillas, plus rice, black beans, guacamole, pico de gallo and a roast corn coated in Parmesan cheese.

While you'll probably come here for tacos, try instead one of Taco Beach Shack's monstrous, delicious burritos (\$8.95-\$10.95 for a single size, \$19.99-\$22.99 for the large "familia" size). This delicious, brick-size concoction, which we ordered wet

with red sauce and cheese for a dollar extra, was the highlight of the meal.

We were surprised to find delicious salads that weren't piled with loads of fried tortilla. A grilled-chicken salad (\$9.95) was pleasantly flavored with a nice mix of organic greens, pico de gallo, romaine lettuce, black beans and guacamole tossed with a honey-cilantro vinaigrette.

The new desserts aren't advertised on the menu yet, and that's mostly a good thing. Dessert is an area for improvement, especially for a place where people will crave something cold on a hot day.

All told, Taco Beach Shack is well worth a visit for a fresh, modern take on casual Mexican favorites that won't empty your wallet.



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