

Swell City Guide

Mucho Ultima Mexicana in Manhattan Beach

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By Robb Wirt

I used to be the only person in California that didn't really care for Mexican food. Notice I said "used to." I am a changed man, thanks in part to Mucho. Mucho is located in the hip beach town of Manhattan Beach, near the pier, is an unexpected reservoir of tasty delight. Once you walk through the doors, you're taken away to food heaven, assuming you have a reservation. Otherwise, heaven will wait. Luckily, I made the list and was seated immediately. Patience isn't one of my virtues... Mucho was perfectly lit. Dark enough to make me look good, but light enough to read the menu. As standard fare at a Mexican place, chips and salsa were brought to the table, however, the chips were anything but standard. They were warm with a hint of cinnamon. I mixed the hot and mild salsa together with some guacamole to get the party started right! Oh, and I must not forget to tell you about the drinks. Mucho has a vast selection of high-end sipping tequilas (take a flight tasting), speciality margaritas (i.e., chipotle pineapple, lychee, pomegranate, watermelon, mango, etc.), and Argentine,

Chilean, and Napa Valley wines. I opted for something different and went with the chipotle pineapple margarita. It was the best flavored margarita that I'd ever had. Besides the uniquely delicious flavor, it probably had something to do with the fresh lime juice, homemade sweet and sour mix, Hawaiian amber cane syrup, and imported sea salt. Smooth and delicious! When it came time to order food, I really didn't know where to start.

Everything sounded mmmmm so good. I looked to our waitress, Jessica for suggestions. She was so upbeat and friendly and knowledgeable about the food she was serving. She explained that the fresh fish is delivered daily and everything is made in house. Mucho's menu is a fusion of refined versions of classic Mexican dishes such as guacamole, shrimp cocktails, tacos, enchiladas, and carne asada, and more unusual offerings—poblano style mole with lamb. Chilean sea bass served with fresh fruit salsa, and halibut encrusted in pumpkin seeds and served in chile guajillo emulsion. All are sure to please, thanks to executive chef John Butler. I seriously wanted to try a little bit of everything. We started off with two appetizers, ceviche and BBQ shrimp tacos. OMG! The ceviche rocked me out! The smoked salmon was perfectly balanced by cucumber dill sorbet. My taste buds were invigorated to say the least. Our main course consisted of Prima Carnitas (Kurobuta pork slow-cooked, tomatillo salsa, served with guacamole, heirloom pico de gallo, crema fresco), – Get it while you can because it's made FRESH everyday so it's possible that they might run out! – Prime New York Strip (lightly smoked Prime New York Strip with parsnip garlic purée, crispy cippolini, cilantro-crusting sweetbread, cauliflower, white bean artichoke, romaine, a Ceja Cabernet and tamarind jus), and Pescado [stingray]. Just when I didn't think I could eat any more it was time for dessert. The special of the night was Deconstructed Blueberry Cheesecake which is blueberry lime sauce, topped with graham cracker crumbs and a side of crema fresca sorbet. This offered the perfect balance of flavors and sweets to send me over the edge. But wait, Jessica pulled me back with some freshly made churros. Now these churros weren't your typical carnival variety. Oh hell no, these were made to order, tossed in Mexican sugar and served with chocolate and caramel dipping sauce. They really were a meal by themselves. That is Mucho in Manhattan Beach!

Additional Information at www.mucho.com
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