

Let's Dine Out

Taco Plus Surprises with Variety and Flavor

By Cara Dolan Berry

A mainstay for over a decade on Bundy in Brentwood, Taco Plus now surprises the eclectic blend of neighbors on National in Palms with an expansive menu that mingles traditional Mexican fare and hybrid Gringo appeal, all with that little something extra that makes this counter-style, quick-stop café worth stopping often.

When clearing the underpass that marks the threshold where Palms Avenue becomes National Boulevard in an instant, a glance to the South surprises with a Von's plaza that has morphed into marketplace of shiny, familiar franchise signs, including a signature Starbucks anchor. Taco Plus is no less than the beacon around its corner. Large and light, it welcomes diners into an ample eatery with sparkling tile floors, spilt-wood tables and chairs and a large flat-screen quietly flickering the Lakers game while a young staff of servers spoon up some worthy Mexican fare.

The diners this night range from two UPS drivers grabbing a bite on their break, to a young working wife and mother tapping a toe in wait for take-out for labor, to a lingering screenwriter who labors over a laptop while chomping on fresh tortilla chips. They are a snapshot of the Palms community itself, an overlap of West Los Angeles, Culver City and Westwood poised to patronize, with unique neighbors ranging from yuppie industry-types, to young families to working folks of all ages. Stacked with dingbat apartment buildings, staggered by some charming 1940s-esque houses, it is dense and diverse and Taco Plus looks forward to its third year of serving them breakfast for here, catered lunch for the office or supper to go with a lot of flavor and a little bit of flare.

While its proprietor is world traveled and academically trained in culinary arts, he boasts achieving the unique tastes that brand Taco Plus the old-fashioned way, experimenting in the kitchen. A longtime resident of Palms himself, the choice to reiterate his successful hybrid taco stand in Brentwood was a simple wish to share it with his neighbors. He is proud to offer a fast, affordable three-meal-a-day alternative to local folks that is won from the work of whipping traditional dishes into variations till arriving at the recipes that set it apart from the rest of the same.

The guacamole is mashed fresh from hand-selected avocados and is rich with extras, such as chopped tomatoes, green onions and spices, that make it worth opting for the large helping. Specialty plates expand on traditional taco, burrito and taquito combinations with choices such as beef short ribs and carne or pollo picado – lean steak or chicken, charbroiled with peppers, onions and tomatoes. All platters come with choice of sides, which could be the typically requisite Spanish rice and refried beans or a healthier bend of black beans and green salad, or even fresh corn.

Whatever shape you take your tortilla – whether nacho, taco, tostada, enchilada or burrito grande – your choice of stuffing is broad, including pork, shrimp, red snapper, All-American ground beef, marinated steak, chicken or a vegetarian blend of fresh cheeses and vegetables.

A stack of crisp tortilla bowls beckon to try the house special taco salad. Other menu items that take this joint above and beyond include Menudo soup and homemade soup of the day – which this day was tortilla soup to die for – and fresh ceviche made with red snapper marinated in lime, herbs and onion.

The enchiladas depart delightfully from the typical mole or red spicy drizzle and opt for a Mediterranean take with a tomato-based sauce with a texture richer and a flavor more commanding.

The menu is topped off with a Latino take on breakfast, offering huevos rancheros, huevos con chorizo, Spanish omelet, breakfast burrito and costillas con huevos (short ribs and eggs). If you're more in the mood for more typical diner fare, opt for three eggs any style or traditional bacon (or sausage) and eggs.

With the Lakers and Clipper vying in an NBA season fully underway, the Kings giving the Ducks a run for their Stanley Cup and the NFL Play-offs promising a possi-



bly historic up and coming Super Bowl, rest assured that Taco Plus caters. So, consider going "Mexican" and Taco Plus will gladly deliver your game party platters to your door ... with 24-hour advance orders, that is.

In a metro-void as expansive as L.A., we live in ensconced communities like Culver City and Palms by design. So, nothing delights us more than discovering new local joints to drop in on or take out from. Taco Plus is one for CC and Palms. Whether it's grabbing breakfast on the way to the office downtown, lunch for your boss's meeting with those producers at Sony, supper on the way home that day when you work through lunch and don't feel like watching the game alone, or a take-out break from the kitchen, Taco Plus is that large, light spot around the corner from Starbucks, just through the underpass where Palms becomes National. It offers that little something extra and it's worth the stop.

TACO PLUS

National (New Location)

9824 National Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90034
Phone: 310.204.1859
Fax: 310.204.2514

Bundy (Original Location)

1525 S. Bundy Drive
West Los Angeles, CA 90025
Phone: 310.207.0793
Fax: 310.207.7494

Hours:

Monday - Saturday
Sunday 9am - 10:30pm
9am - 10:00pm

