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Dessert at Tres Meridas  
photos by Chris Johnson

## Blended Latin Flavors

By Jarrett Steele

**WE HAVE A GOOD THING GOING IN THIS TOWN**, with more enchilada platter outposts per capita than probably anywhere else. But now there's a different flavor to consider.

Tres Meridas bills itself as a Latin experience, a commingling of Venezuelan, Spanish and Mexican cuisine. Our visit gave us the opportunity to experience a wide range of vibrant dishes in a setting that capably augments the taste fusion it presents. Beyond heavy weathered portal doors awaits an upscale, rustic and yet relaxing dining room with stone, khaki and reddish-toned walls and brownish-maroon cement floors. During our Saturday night visit, the dimmed main dining room bustled, as restaurant guests were seated in comfortable wrought-iron frame chairs at earthy marble-slab square and tiled round tables. The spacious patio was closed off in the chill of winter, but through the piped in samba music, I could picture live performances pulsing among the jungle foliage and water misters – a definite

destination in the heat of the summer. It was then that my eagerness to sample the tastes of terra Latina was overcome by my considerable thirst.

“Meriditas” – the house’s variation on the frozen margarita – blended lime and passion fruit flavors that were sweet with the right touch of tartness. “Rumbas” swirled sangria into the Meriditas and had an equally perfect consistency, without being overly slushy or icy. The Mojito Cubanos were refreshingly minty and peppery. All our libations (\$7.50) were thoughtfully served in appropriate amber-rimmed, mouth-blown glasses. However, pewter flatware that looked just perfect with the rest of the tableware would prove downright difficult (forks, knives and spoons had pencil-thin round handles).

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### Tres Meridas

2809 Preston Rd. Ste. 1200

Sun.-Sat. lunch & dinner

Sat. & Sun. brunch

Major Credit Cards Accepted



Food



Service



Atmosphere



Value

(scale of five forks)

The 17 diverse appetizer selections (\$7-8) offered a marvelous introduction to Tres Meridas cuisine, including the Tortilla Espanola (Spanish omelet with potato, onion and herb aioli sauce), Mejillones de Chipotle (steamed mussels in chipotle sauce) and Empanada turnovers. Our sautéed shrimp in the Gambas al Ajillo were served swimming in garlic-chile sauce with a potent, latent heat. Arepas were also delicious, featuring four lightly fried corn cakes stuffed with ham and soft granules of “fresh” cheese, with a tomato garlic sauce on the side for dipping.

The soups and salads similarly receive exotic treatment, such as the Ensalada de Tres Meridas (\$7) with Spanish Manchego cheese and tamarind vinaigrette dressing over field greens, and a Venezuelan chicken chowder with asparagus and corn (\$4); both received raves from neighboring tables.

Specialties of the house included a Spanish paella (\$23) entrée melding chicken, chorizo and Serrano ham (among other things) in saffron rice, and Pasticho (\$12), which translates into “Venezuelan lasagna” and combines ground beef, Parmesan, ham and the aforementioned “fresh” cheese.

The pulled beef in my Pabellon Criollo (\$13) was marvelous – piled high on a bed of yellow rice in a pool of soft black beans, it was salty sweet and very tender,



accompanying butternut squash and mashed potatoes were the lightest and creamiest this Fork has ever tried.

Dinner selections may be pricier than most Tex-Mex aficionados are accustomed to, but the unique flavors and beautiful presentation merit the expense. Portions are good-sized without being gargantuan.

Tres Meridas also caters to less adventurous kids' tastes; while a young mom and dad enjoyed flavors from the Yucatan and Iberian coasts, their little one happily chomped down on a chicken tender and French fries platter.

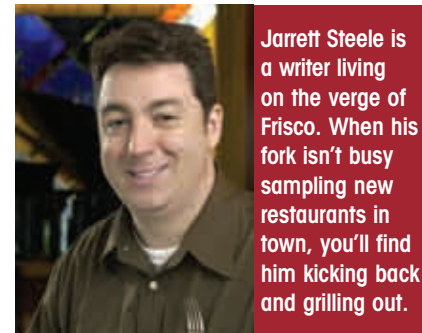
Desserts (\$5-7) were sinfully good; my dining companion was stingy in offering tastes of her decadent dark and white chocolate truffle mousse cake, and the three varieties of milk in my tres leches sponge cake made for a heavenly conclusion.

Our young Columbian server earnestly and capably recommended the appetizer, entrée and dessert

that my dining companion enjoyed immensely. He and the others on the wait staff managed our time at Tres Meridas seamlessly and generally hustled, providing excellent service that was never hurried. Earlier in our visit, another black-clad server who was floating by to deliver a sumptuous dessert spotted us eyeing the platter, and paused at our table to showcase and describe the unusual sweet concoction. It was a nice gesture, to take time to share the one of the many inventive possibilities available at this dining excursion into Latin fusion.

without being overly stringy. Nicely fried plantain wedges complemented the deliciously shredded meat.

The chef's evening special (\$22), a half roasted herbed chicken, exuded juice and was drenched in a fiery cilantro chipotle sauce. Vibrantly colored crisp green snap beans and red pepper complemented the bird, and the



Jarrett Steele is a writer living on the verge of Frisco. When his fork isn't busy sampling new restaurants in town, you'll find him kicking back and grilling out.



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