

Boulder Weekly Review

100% tasty and cheap

By Clay Fong



100% Mexicano, which has been open a little more than a month, is the latest local eatery to deliver an authentic “south of the border” street food experience.

Hidden in the Diagonal Plaza mall, 100% is not an easy place to find. But if you can make your way to the DMV, you’ll discover it across the hall. This is a trip worth taking to experience this venue’s value and comforting-yet-simple fare.

It’s an unapologetically casual spot, with at-the-counter ordering and a selfservice condiment bar featuring fresh pico de gallo, red and green salsas, and slices of radish and lime. The menu encompasses such street food staples as tacos with freshly made corn tortillas, quesadillas, tamales with a multitude of stuffings, and torta sandwiches. There’s also a selection of platos, such as tequila-sautéed shrimp and a decent \$9.75 carne asada platter that I sampled on an earlier visit. This particular choice was generously portioned with flavorful beef set off by pungent roasted chile. Weekends feature both menudo and the spicy stew known as birria estilo jerez.

Journalist pal Cynthia and I stuck to more basic items for lunch. Unfortunately, we struck out on our attempts to sample the \$5.50 chicken soup and \$1.99 pork tamales, since they weren’t available. Nor were the pineapple or cantaloupe agua frescas (“Not much of a cheese shop, is it?”), which I had enjoyed previously. Consequently, I contented myself with a large \$2 horchata, the sweet rice milk drink with a hint of spice. This was one of the better versions I’ve tasted, with satisfyingly creamy flavor, not too much sugar and a light cinnamon bouquet.

Indulging a street food craving, Cynthia started with a \$1.99 meatless tamale, stuffed with cheese, carrot, potato, corn and peas. Rather than the peppery tones associated with red chile pork, this tamale carried a mild flavor reminiscent of white sauce — in fact it reminded both of us of a comforting serving of pot pie.

Most importantly, the veggies and cheese were properly balanced with the masa cornmeal. All too often, what passes for a tamale these days consists of way too much cornmeal versus the rest of the filling.

“Unctuous,” was Cynthia’s one-word verdict describing the inherently fatty qualities of the \$3 chicharron gordita drizzled with green salsa. Indeed, these bits of pork skin had a superlative melt-in-your-mouth quality that should be limited to one serving a year due to health concerns. The spice of the green salsa balanced out the protein’s deep richness.

A cross between a sandwich and a taco, the gorditas consist of fillings between thick homespun corn tortillas with a wonderfully handmade appearance. Cynthia’s steak, cactus leaves and onion gordita was another winner, with strips of tender meat interlaced with surprisingly delicate cactus, which could easily be mistaken for slow-cooked bell pepper.

I ended with a duo of \$1.75 lengua (tongue) tacos. For the less adventurous, beef carne asada and both al pastor with fruit marinade and carnitas pork are also available. On an earlier visit, the tongue was dead-solid perfect. This time, while the texture was appropriately velvety, the meat suffered from a surplus of salt. Nevertheless, this onetime quibble won’t prevent me from future visits to this bargain-priced spot