

The Huntsville Times

New Cantina Laredo is upscale yet casual

Thursday, March 27, 2008

Special Sections

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Bridge Street Town Centre keeps adding feathers into Huntsville's cap. The latest coup for food fanatics is Cantina Laredo, which opened Monday at the open-air shopping center's main entrance.

This is one of two dozen restaurants of its type scattered across the United States. The Dallas-based chain has been expanding for only about three years.

Bridge Street's developer, O&S Holdings, likely has other cities salivating over the restaurants it has attracted here. P.F. Chang's China Bistro is directly across the walkway from Cantina Laredo. Dolce is a celebrity-backed restaurant that adds a special flair to the restaurant choices. Connors Steaks & Seafood, Biscuits & Blues and Red Robin Gourmet Burgers are three other diverse eateries in the shopping complex. And more are coming.

Cantina Laredo is an upscale-casual Mexican restaurant. Ask general manager Dan McClain about specialties, and he will mention "top shelf guacamole" for an appetizer, "camaron poblano asada" as an entree and "casarita" margaritas.

The guacamole is prepared tableside; the entree he named is steak wrapped around a pepper stuffed with shrimp, mushrooms, onions and cheese; and all margaritas use freshly squeezed lemon and lime juice.

Cantina Laredo seats nearly 300, including 11 tables outside along Bridge Street's main drag. A circular bar is the centerpiece of the decor, which is bright and cheerful.

Cantina Laredo is operated by a corporation called Consolidated Restaurant Operations. CRO's other concepts include Cool River, El Chico, Good Eats, Ill Forks, Lucky's Cafe and Silver Fox Steakhouse.

The first Cantina Laredo appeared in Addison, Texas, in 1984 offering gourmet dishes from Mexico City. The company's publicity material claims Cantina Laredo "is to Mexican what P.F. Chang's is to Chinese."

The restaurant is open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. It serves a traditional Mexican brunch Sundays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Other openings

Restaurant fans are buzzing over two more recent openings around town.

Tony's Little Italy is now serving in its new location at Village on Whitesburg near the corner of Whitesburg Drive and Airport Road, and Mezza Luna is operating in Valley Bend at Jones Farm on Carl T. Jones Drive.

Both have Italian-influenced menus and serve pizza from wood-fired ovens.