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Cantina Laredo

The second phase of the St. Johns Town Center offers diners an eclectic new mix of restaurants and watering holes. If you're in the mood for a little South of the Border, Cantina Laredo may be your passage to Ole Mexico.

Cantina Laredo offers an upscale atmosphere complimented by a gourmet menu. Based out of Dallas, Cantina Laredo provides diners an exceptional setting to relax. Before ordering your main dish, enjoy one of Cantina Laredo's signature margaritas and their guacamole prepared fresh at your table. According to General Manager, Rithea Som, Cantina Laredo's St. Johns Town Center location is the only upscale Mexican restaurant in town.

Upon entering the restaurant, guests are impressed with the beautiful backlit bar replete with glass shelves generously displaying dozens of varieties of tequilas. Moving through the bar and lounge, notice the centerpiece of the restaurant...a beautiful fireplace that only adds to the ambiance of the dining experience. Cantina Laredo exudes the feel of a beautiful hacienda. With its leather booths lining the parameters and white clothed tables, General Manager Rithea Som describes the atmosphere as, "very sophisticated and very hip."

Cantina Laredo is committed to providing customers with true and authentic Mexican cuisine. All dishes are prepared daily using the freshest available ingredients on site in their kitchen. "Everything is fresh," says Som. "Our Top Shelf Guacamole is prepared fresh at the table, our fish is shipped in daily, even our margaritas are made fresh daily."

Cantina Laredo's margaritas are rated muy bueno by their customers. Their house margaritas are served using only fresh squeezed lemon and lime juice and infused with good-quality premium tequila. According to Som, there is a staff person whose sole job is to squeeze lemons and limes. Tequila, like wine, has subtle differences in its complexity and flavors. Changing elements in the preparation results in understated nuances in its essence and taste.

"Our clientele is largely professionals [that] have good taste," says Som. "We even do tequila tastings for customers where makers present their tequilas and we make food to compliment it, like a wine tasting, only with tequila."

Cantina Laredo's vast tequila selection ranges anywhere from \$10 to \$100. Patron Burdeos is probably the most expensive. Aged in hand-picked barrels from the Bordeaux region of France, Patron's top of the line tequila exhibits the distinct fruity flavors of the finest Bordeaux wines.

"The atmosphere here on Thursdays is electrifying!" Som exclaims. Thursday night is Ladies Night. In the bar, Senoras and Senoritas are treated with half-off house margaritas, half-off house wine and beerspecials.

Cantina Laredo opened its doors in 2008. "Most new restaurants do well the first few months, and then they level off, but we have yet to see that, so we hope to have continuing success here in Jacksonville." According to Som, business is still going strong.