

The Viscount's Table

Cantina Laredo – Covent Garden – A Great Find – Let's Hope They Keep It Up.

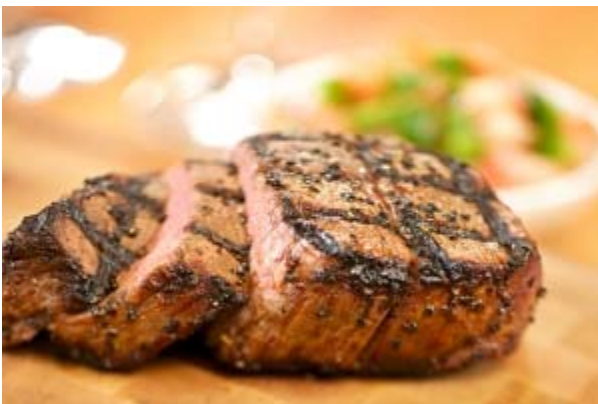
July 19, 2010 by [ypvonhoehen](#)



All fotos by Cantina Laredo

Cantina LAREDO

after taking in a movie at the curzon in soho the other night – greenberg (love noah baumbach) – the viscountess and i decided to look for something new to put on **The Viscount's Table**. chinatown was an obvious choice, as were the many eateries in the local soho area. a few weeks ago, however, when i was wandering down upper st martin's lane toward charing cross, i came across three new restaurants. previously this had been a bit of a no man's land (some time ago, a branch of the zen chain occupied a place across the street. otherwise there is only stringfellows – perhaps not visited for its cuisine). but new life has come to this former backwater between soho and covent garden. first there is jamie's italian, which is now open (and which i will review soon), another, dishoom, a bit further down has just opened, and the third – and northernmost – of the trifecta is the self-proclaimed 'gourmet mexican' restaurant **Cantina LAREDO**. this is a chain that started in dallas and has been slowly making its way across america and apparently, now, around the world. a local englishman who has worked for the american restaurant company, decided to open **Cantina LAREDO** with his family here in the capital.



Specially Aged Beef

one of my favorite restaurants in madrid is [suspiro y suspiro](#) close to the royal opera house which serves alta cocina mexicana. this is food not to be confused with mexican street food or the typical tex-mex food combinations that dot the UK and america. suspiro y suspiro is [alucinante](#) and holds lots of fond food

memories for me. so it was with high hopes of stumbling on to a local london restaurant to placate my gourmet mexican cravings that i headed for **Cantina LAREDO** - and i think i may have found it.

we wanted to sit outside, but due to limited seating we had to wait at the bar for a short while. as we took our stools, we were immediately provided with an appetizer of corn tortilla chips and a choice of two homemade salsas: one a little spicier than the other, but both equally excellent.

it was a warm evening and we ordered two frozen margaritas from the menu – hoping for something sharp and refreshing. unfortunately i mis-ordered and we ended up with something that was closer to a 7-11 slushy that someone had accidentally dumped a kilo of caster sugar into. while i had thought that they might be refreshing i almost went into diabetic shock and the viscountess – who doesn't like sweet things much (other than me) simply couldn't drink it. now, these margaritas might have been to someone else's taste, but they were not at all to ours – nor, to my mind, even reminiscent of a margarita – except the shape of the glass.

many times i point out that the a sign of a good restaurant is how the staff handle the situation if you don't like something or once you have made a complaint. i told them that we were



Margarita - Cantina LAREDO

caught off guard by the sweetness of the margaritas and they immediately apologized, asked us what we were expecting, and then brought alternatives to us with an apology. **dean ginsberg**, the corporate general manager came out and was an exemplary professional. he made sure we were happy with our new margaritas and took the time to tell us how **Cantina LAREDO** came into being. subsequently, without being intrusive, he checked in with us throughout the evening to ensure that everything was going well – and it was.

as we moved to our pavement table, the corn tortillas were replenished – as were the salsas – until we had to beg them not to give us more.

the food offering in **cantina LAREDO** is overseen by executive chef **ruben lozano**. dinner, we decided, was going to be “lighter fare” as i usually prefer to eat around midnight (more like a spaniard) and it was still rather warm and humid at 9:30 on the london streets. the starter that caught our eye was the guacamole which is made at the table from fresh ingredients. our waiter – **trevor** – did a great job and throughout the evening he was delightful and always smiling.



Guacamole

the guacamole is worth the visit alone – really fresh and well made. for my main i had the filet portabella – made from Scottish beef wet aged to **cantina LAREDO**'s specifications – and served with a portabello mushroom and a rich and wonderful mushroom sauce. the sautéed vegetables were delicious and NOT over cooked (a pet peeve of mine). oh, and the potatoes which i am not quite sure how i would describe – the menu settles on potato confit – were superb.

the viscountess had the carnitas made from pork tibia (tips) an excellent cut of meat, similar to a pork shank, which is slowly braised with spices until tender – very tender – and



Pork carnitas

then served with a luscious chipotle wine sauce – a really magnificent dish. the carnitas were served with mexican rice (the husk is removed and the rice is then simmered in tomatoes, onions, garlic, chicken stock and spices), a soft corn tortilla and sautéed vegetables. this plate, too, was nothing short of first-rate.

we didn't have any wine so i can't in fairness comment on the offering, but on the next visit we will almost certainly see to that oversight – the sparkling water was, however, refreshing, delicious and, in fact, sparkling. no problems there.

i was going to skip dessert to keep control of my rather svelt physique, but the viscountess pointed out that there was a sizzling brownie on the dessert menu. i have won an award for my brownie recipe (a small international award not really worth mentioning) so i was ordering the "mexican brownie" before they could say brandy butter. the brownie involves more table-side theater: it is brought out and placed on an extremely hot cast iron plate with a scoop of ice cream on top... but no sizzle? i'm impatient – so i asked immediately about the missing sizzle. trevor told me to "watch this" as he poured mexican brandy butter over the brownie which then sizzled extensively until it was well caramelized and the surrounding tables were ooh-ing and aah-ing at the aroma. in truth i have no idea how this can be classed in any way shape or form as a haute mexican dessert, but i can tell you i have been craving it ever since. two espressos later and we were on our way home.



Chef Ruben Lozano

this is not the standard of my beloved suspiro y suspiro in madrid (i told dean he should make a point of visiting it one day). **Cantina LAREDO**, however, rates very highly. this was a great meal with great service and staff who actually gave sincere smiles. it is still refreshing for me, having grown up in the restaurant service culture of america, to see people who act sincerely instead of putting on a sincere act. sadly the latter is often the case in the capital's restaurants. if they bother to act at all.

In my view Cantina LAREDO is a great find – without doubt. visit it if you are in the neighborhood and tell dean ginsberg that the viscount sent you.

NOTE: it had only been open for two weeks at the time of our visit, so allow them time for growing pains – every restaurant has them – but i can assure you that any problem you have dean will ensure he takes care of it to keep you, most importantly, happy and enjoying your evening.

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Opening Hours

Monday – Thursday
12 noon – 11.30pm

Friday – Saturday
12 noon – 12pm

Sunday
12 noon – 10.30pm

Nearest parking:
20 Newport Place
WC2H 7PU