

ARIZONA DAILY STAR / Wednesday, January 4, 2006

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ZIVAZ
mexican bistro

Food Quick Bites

Zivaz a new eatery that's zestful and inexpensive

By Kristin Cook Arizona Daily Star

Zivaz has the polished look of a chain restaurant and entrees that sound high-ticket.

Enchiladas with pumpkin seed sauce; bacon-wrapped shrimp with oyster-mushroom cream sauce.

But guess what? Not only is the new restaurant a family affair, but the most expensive dinner item is \$12.95 and most entrees ring in at under \$10. You don't have to call us twice for dinner.

Managing partner Felipe Valenzuela and his family – dad does the cooking and his mom and brother practically live at the restaurant – has put together a solid, lengthy menu filled with character and taste. Valenzuela says “Zivaz” is the family’s made-up word for zestful living. Naturally, a part of such a lifestyle is zestful food, too, and that’s exactly what Zivaz serves up.

Now, fajitas are generally pretty basic, but Zivaz’s version bursts with fresh flavor. The beef (\$9.95) managed to still be tender with a great taste and a hint of lime. Charred bits of poblano and bell peppers along with onion snuggled up well with the meat inside a soft, flour tortilla.

Pollo en calabazas (\$9.95) sported tender chunks of chicken breast bathed in a smoky sauce with a slight bite. The veggie – squash and corn – were a great accompaniment.

The casera enchiladas (\$8.95) came filled with mild panela cheese and weren’t overly sauced, as enchiladas often are. It would have been fine if they were, though, because the eatery’s sauce was sweetish and lacked that yucky tinny taste you sometimes encounter from places that use canned sauce. You can also choose either chicken or beef with the enchiladas – a nice bonus.

The chicken flautas (\$6.95) managed to stay crispy on the ride home. The flour tortillas were well-stuffed with chicken, which benefitted from a dip in the accompanying guacamole.

What’s even better is that Zivaz pays as much attention to the side dishes and the main courses. The black beans are flavored with avocado and tomato, and the moist rice is flecked with corn and carrots.

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Sunday -Thursday 11 to 9

Friday - Saturday 11 to 10