

Tucson Lifestyle

THE MAGAZINE TUCSON LIVES BY

Sur Real

3001 E. Skyline Drive

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Driving up to Sur Real I could not help but notice the flaming torches atop the building. When I entered the restaurant, "wow!" was the first word out of my mouth. The restaurant space formerly occupied by Soleil has been so incredibly transformed the only thing I recognized was the magnificent view of the city lights.

Sur Real is part of the restaurant group that brought us the Champions at Sam Hughes and Shlomo & Vito's. The dining room is large and includes banquettes as part of the contemporary décor. Splashes of color abound, from the taqueria bar to the purple bar stools. The bar area also offers banquette seating as well as see-and-be-seen high tables. If you are looking for a unique seating arrangement try the Banyan Tree booth near the entrance. The tree house feel provides the perfect lookout for people watching. Plasma screen monitors depicting flames reminiscent of the churrasqueria grill are placed throughout the dining room.

If you are looking for a menu inspired by the flavors of Latin America, Cuba and Spain, look no further. Executive Chef Emiliano Sotelo, who worked in some of the finest restaurants both here and abroad, promises to entertain and thrill your palates.

The menu offers a number of great starters to any meal. I tried the Peruvian empanada filled with grilled chicken, sweet potatoes, ancho chiles, raisins, onions and cilantro. These delicate clouds exploded with flavor, contrasting the slight heat of the pepper with the cooling effect of the fruit and potato.

The next item I tried was "Hot Stones!", which allows diners to cook their own thinly sliced beef tableside in just a few minutes, certainly enlivening the dinner conversation. The beef dishes were served with chimichurri, a mélange of olive oil, parsley, oregano, onion and garlic.

Chimichurri is as common on the Argentinean table as ketchup is in America. I also enjoyed pinchos de pollo, a tender grilled chicken strip on a skewer, accompanied by a dish of slightly sweet apricot glaze on the side. Another good choice for a starter is the Catalan cocas — Spanish flat bread with a large number of toppings from which to select. I opted for the Serrano ham and peppadews. Serrano ham, which is air-dried for a year, is the national treasure of Spain. Peppadews are mild sweet red peppers. You also can choose fried calamari tossed in a sweet and sour mango sauce with sautéed peppers and onions.

Entrées range from fish to beef. I tried the sea bass and it was outstanding. Dusted with pasilla pepper and grilled to perfection, the delectable fish was tender and fragrant, served with roasted potatoes and spinach. ¡Muy Bien! Steaks, pork and chicken choices abound, prepared on

the churrasqueria grill. You can see the grill at the taqueria bar, where you may order small bites and be entertained by the chefs' dexterity as they prepare street tacos and platos. If steak is your thing, the Gaucho steak may fill the bill. Imported from Uruguay, it is a free-range, full-flavored beef.

Desserts are fabulous and include tres leches cake, a Flan of the Day, along with Mexican-style ice cream.