

SAN DIEGO HOME/GARDEN

LIFESTYLES

Skull-Duggery at Death by Tequila in Downtown Encinitas

Our gossiping gourmet hits the new Death by Tequila, plus more food news and reviews

November 30, 2018 by *David Nelson*, Photography by *Martin Mann*

Death By Tequila in Encinitas



The Tres Amigos Guac Flight is a must-try at Death by Tequila in Encinitas

OKAY, IF THE LOGO OF A SKULL in a sort-of sombrero with “D x T” standing in for eyes and nose doesn’t grab your attention, maybe sizzling spurts of chili oil in the *ahi crudo* will. In the Coast Highway premises that once housed Paolo Pedrazzani’s relatively sedate Via Italia, the new **Death by Tequila** evidently is jammed from late afternoon until midnight daily. Given the party-hearty drink menu, unusual offerings like bacon-wrapped “TJ dogs” available from 10 p.m. on weekends, and Chef Angelo Sosa’s delirious (and delicious) menu of Baja-inspired creations, there’s usually a wait. The place doesn’t take reservations, but of course there’s an app that wait-lists guests when they’re within a certain distance.



Death by Tequila chef Angelo Sosa adds cilantro to the spicy mole tacos



Death by Tequila's prime flat iron steak in a Baja-style chimichurri

Angelo, young-looking but a veteran of 16 years as restaurateur and chef at several NYC establishments, composes zesty guacamole variations.

The “Tres Amigos Guac Flight” offers good portions of a convincing traditional guacamole, another version with pumpkin seeds and oil, and a quite delicious one with pineapple and smoked chili.

Dishes arrive as the kitchen readies them, so dining may not be a course-by-course experience, which troubles no one at this busy, busy, busy place.

At the bar, surfer videos play on a

screen mounted west of shelves of tequilas that power such craft cocktails as the Frothing In Puerto, a foamy shake of mezcal, lemon, vanilla, pineapple and egg white poured into a low-slung coupe.

Before or after this, try the raw ahi in wonderful coconut-kaffir lime broth—garnished with hibiscus leaves, no less—tacos stuffed with purple potatoes in spicy mole sauce and perhaps a prime flat iron steak in Baja-style chimichurri. The eggy and suave tequila flan arrives sprinkled with freshly grated Manchego, which, avows Angelo, provides “a beautiful balance of sweet and savory.”



Frothing in Puerto cocktail at Death by Tequila