

Los Corrales

Fresh octopus isn't a common menu item in the White Mountains, but at Los Corrales, one of the most popular restaurants in Pinetop-Lakeside, it's just one of many surprises.

LOS CORRALES FAMILY MEXICAN RESTAURANT doesn't look like much on the outside — an online reviewer compared it to a repurposed fast-food joint. But don't let

pinetop-lakeside

appearances fool you: It's one of the most popular

restaurants in Pinetop-Lakeside. Come early or prepare to wait. And whatever you do, take an appetite.

In contrast with the restaurant's drab, forest-green exterior, the interior vibrates with south-of-the-border colors: lime green, lemon yellow and Caribbean blue, with vibrant parrots, smiling suns and colorful landscapes adorning tables, chairs and banquettes.

But regulars come for the food, served in generous portions on heaping platters. Of course, you'll find all the usual suspects: chile verde, chile colorado, pork carnitas, fajitas and an assortment of enchiladas, tacos and chimichangas.

More unexpected is the variety of seafood. Try the grilled snapper, the ceviche

tostadas or the breaded and butterflied fried shrimp. If you're feeling more adventurous, there's the campechana, a bowl of fresh octopus, scallops and shrimp; the mojarra rellena, a whole tilapia stuffed with octopus, shrimp and abalone; or the seafood chimis, packed with shrimp, scallops, octopus, crab and mushrooms.

For die-hard carnivores, there's carne asada, steak ranchero or New York steak, served with your choice of enchilada, taco or relleno. But dining options are anything but black and white. Have it both ways with the carne tampiqueña (New York steak filled with shrimp and wrapped with bacon) or the steak picado and shrimp (chunks of New York steak and vegetables). Both are served with rice, beans and tortillas.

Too much to choose from? Take your time. Prompt, efficient servers keep the chips coming, along with salsa you could eat with a spoon. Once you've decided what to eat, wrangle yourself a margarita.

The menu offers a full page of margarita

options as colorful as the décor. There's the Green Iguana, with Herradura reposado tequila, melon liqueur and Grand Marnier; the Purple Margarita, with Don Julio reposado tequila, Chambord black-raspberry liqueur, and lime and cranberry juices; and the Red and White Margarita, with Jose Cuervo silver tequila, and piña colada and strawberry mix. Feeling blue? Try the Blue Moon: Don Julio blanco tequila, blue curaçao, Grand Marnier and triple sec. For beer lovers, there's the Best Ever Beergarita: Cazadores blanco tequila, Grand Marnier, Herradura agave nectar and fresh lime, served with a 7-ounce bottle of Corona inverted in the center.

Order them *grande*, and you may need to call a cab, but you won't have to pony up a lot for your meal. You'll leave cheering, "Viva Los Corrales!"

— KATHY MONTGOMERY

Los Corrales is located at 845 E. White Mountain Boulevard in Pinetop-Lakeside. For more information, call 928-367-5585.



PAUL MARKOW