

Casa Del Sol:

Easy, unpretentious and a great value

The menu design at Casa Del Sol is a bit of a goof. “A true taste of Mexico,” the tagline reads. Below is a photo of a decidedly American breakfast: two eggs sunny side up, sausage, bacon, hash-browns and toast. A much smaller image to the side features tacos and a jalapeño.

It may seem equally odd that Casa Del Sol’s next door neighbor is another Mexican restaurant. But, come to think of it, Casa Del Sol’s proximity to Mazatlan isn’t the only such pairing in Seaside — Guadalajara Taco Shop and The Stand are across the street from one another. And right up the road in Gearhart one can see El Trio Loco from El Mariachi Loco. As such, one must assume that each eatery distinguishes itself to remain in business. In the case of Casa Del Sol, the restaurant does it with value and speed — it is, after all, the only Mexican restaurant of the bunch with a drive-thru.

As such, Casa Del Sol is aimed more at the hungry and time-conscious than those looking to linger and be served. Customers order at the counter from a picture-heavy menu. Besides the usual array of burritos, tacos and the like, Casa Del Sol offer a myriad of well-portioned, entrée-style dinner plates like carne asada steaks, chicken fajitas, menudo and so on. Over a few trips I sampled the large menu, and the results were consistent: I was never quite blown away, but never let down. I always came away satisfied and like I’d gotten great bang for my buck.

The best value of all was the breakfast burrito. For \$4.25 it’s a steal. Heavy and well-stuffed with scrambled eggs, thick slices of salty ham, melted cheddar cheese and buttery hash browns, it’s a breakfast plate rolled in a flour tortilla (it’s also served all day).

Though even larger, the combo burritos (\$4.50) were less enticing. With rice, beans, meat and pico de gallo, they ought to satiate even the hungriest surfer coming off the Point, but flavors were rather predictable and bland — all filler, no killer. But if a burrito shall be in your future, opt for the Super (\$6.50), which comes with sour cream, lettuce and guacamole.

The tacos (\$1.50 each) were rather standard, served on soft corn tortillas with onions and cilantro and choice of meat (lengua and tripa are \$1.50 more). I tried the lengua. It was smooth, salty and almost impossibly



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soft. The fish had a thick, crunchy deep fried crust and came with lettuce and sour cream. Though it was nothing to write home about, I appreciated the texture and the base \$1.50 price.

Whenever I asked for a meat recommendation at Casa Del Sol the suggestion was carne asada, and I quickly understood why. The cuts are thick, mostly gristle-free and well-seasoned. I tried the asada on the Torta (\$5) and Sopos (\$3 each). Like the rest, the



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torta was abundant, about the diameter of a smushed football. In a sandwich with re-fried beans, lettuce, a few small slices of tomato and chunks of asada, the bread lacked. Almost tastelessly bland light white bread approaching chewy staleness, it made a mess, drooping under the weight of the innards.

I didn’t much enjoy the sopos either. Like a taco with a thicker corn tortilla — think three-times thicker than the usual), it was

mealy and overly filling. For the same price, two regular tacos — with more protein and less starch — would be preferable.

Finally, I had the Carne Asada con Camaron. At \$12.50, the surf and turf entrée — beef steak and shrimp — is the most expensive on the menu. (I really wanted to try the Mojarrá Frita, a fish prepared whole, head and all, but due to popularity, it was out. Sooner than later I’m going to get one.) Served with green onions, a few slices of green and red bell peppers, onions, fatty refried beans, rice and a roll of corn tortillas, both meats were well cooked. The shrimp were buttery, and the steak, though a bit thin, was ample, tender and juicy, with a hint of spice. The cut seemed to be of higher-quality than usually becomes asada (perhaps flank or skirt as opposed to the traditional top sirloin?).

The dish reminded me of a similar one I’d had a few weeks prior at El Mariachi Loco. (See: Mouth of the Columbia, Aug. 27.) Though El Mariachi Loco’s version included chicken, Casa Del Sol’s was superior, boasting better ingredients, cuts and spicing. It was also about half the price. At El Mariachi Loco I felt as if I was paying for the opportunity to sit in a fancier booth and have my water glass refilled. Casa Del Sol saved me the trouble.

mouth

OF THE COLUMBIA

COAST WEEKEND’S LOCAL RESTAURANT REVIEW

Story and photos by THE MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA • mouth@coastweekend.com

Casa Del Sol

Rating ★★ ★

1313 S. Roosevelt Drive, Seaside

503-738-6744

HOURS: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Sunday.

PRICE: \$ — Most everything less than \$10, easy to fill up for \$5

SERVICE: Friendly counter service, drive-thru

VEGETARIAN / VEGAN OPTIONS: A reasonable amount of options for vegetarians, less so for vegans

DRINKS: Soda fountain, milk, coffee, Mexican sodas, horchata.

KEY TO RATINGS

- ★ poor
- ★★ below average
- ★★★ good & worth returning
- ★★★★ excellent
- ★★★★★ outstanding, the best in the Columbia-Pacific region