

MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA

Coast Weekend's local
restaurant review

Los Tacos Locos: quick and easy, meat-and-cheesy

Review and photos by
THE MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA
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Now, thanks to Los Tacos Locos, whenever I pass the red kiosk just north of Seaside High on Highway 101, I'll be tempted to pull over for a quick mulita.

The cheesy, gooey, meaty little disc is a mood elevator that's cheap enough to buy with loose change (\$2.25). A mulita is like a tiny quesadilla, only better; between grilled, white corn tortillas is creamy, mushy avocado, diced tomato, red onion, cilantro and a juicy, salty meat (say, carne asada), all glued in place by rivers of melted cheese. If you're lucky, some of that cheese will seep out onto grill and burn into crispy shards.

That swoon-inducing medley of meat and cheese pretty well sums up Tacos Locos. That, along with low prices and speed, is the corner of the crowded, mostly homogenized ecosystem of Mexican restaurants on the North Coast they've managed to stake out since opening three months ago.

Readers have heard this rant before, but, as a brief reminder: We're still waiting for more Mexican restaurants that either go all-in on regional traditions or make something fresh and new and imbued with personality. OK. Enough. Until then I'll keep dreaming.

Now then: Back to Tacos Locos, which is content to mostly follow the American-ized Mexican standard playbook.

Most everything there can be eaten with your hands: tacos, burritos, chimichangas, etc. A few segments of the styrofoam containers came filled with lardy refried beans and Spanish rice, but there aren't really any restaurant-style entrées. No



Tacos

steaks, seafood, soup and so on. It's just big, basic stuff. Meat and potatoes (or, as it were, meat and cheese).

However, I found the meats more presently cooked than one often finds at competing Mexican restaurants in the region. They were generally juicy and tender — not cooked to oblivion — and well-seasoned. The carne asada, pastor, carnitas and chorizo were on near-equal footing, with the chicken a step behind. Then there's the outlier,

the rarely found chicharrón, a crispy pork skin — well, crunchy, really, like airy, oily, flaky croutons. (Note to self: Chicharrón in a mulita could be divine.)

While the mulita stands out, and the street-style tacos are ample and affordable (\$1.65), somewhere along the way Tacos Locos' menu melts into a heavy, meaty melange.

The Loco Burrito (\$7.25) was football-sized and cried out for sour cream and avocado. It shared



Mulita with asada and burnt cheese



Sope and gordita

the almost unholy girth of the Breakfast Burrito (\$6.50). Packed with smooth, greasy eggs, bacon, sausage and hash browns, it ought to be called the "Breakfast-for-Two Burrito." Or maybe the "Breakfast-and-Lunch Burrito." Or how about the "Breakfast-and-Go-Back-to-Sleep Burrito."

The Chimichanga with Rice and Beans (\$7.75) was about the size of a regular burrito. The grilled tortilla was jam-packed with cheese and meat (a peppery, juicy carne asada in this case). It was a greasy, gluttonous, one-note temptation.

The Torta de Jamon (\$6.50) was another shameful pleasure. On a hot

LOS TACOS LOCOS

Rating: ★★

2275 N. Roosevelt Drive
Seaside, Ore., 97138

503-738-8226

Hours: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Monday through Saturday;
9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday

Price: \$ – large portions, nothing over \$10

Service: Drive-thru quick

Vegetarian / Vegan Options:
Meager

Drinks: Bottled water, soda

KEY TO STAR RATING SYSTEM

- ★ Poor
- ★★ Below average
- ★★★ Worth returning
- ★★★★ Very good
- ★★★★★ Excellent, best in region

dog bun and served with fries, it was basically a ham-and-cheese-and-avocado sandwich. And, come to think of it, ham and cheese should enjoy avocado more often.

The Sopos (\$3.00) and Gorditas (\$3.50) were pretty similar, with the sope beings served open-faced and the gordita packing the contents — beans, sour cream, a sprinkling of Cotija, pico and meat — within the heavy, grainy corn tortillas. Indeed, while the beds for sopos are often soft and puffy, Taco Locos go the opposite direction: denser, more futon than pillow-top.

As a drive-thru only, with nary a picnic table in site, Tacos Locos is stripped of pretense. And in our crowded, copy-cat market of Mexican restaurants, I actually found it relieving to not be staring at the déjà vu decor, nor plunking chips in the bland waters of complimentary salsa, nor scouring menus with hundred-plus items or overpaying for a syrupy margarita.

Sometimes you just wanna get down to business and be on your way. Quick and easy, meat-and-cheesy.

And just like that, I hear the mulita calling my name. See you soon for another. Or two. 