



A little Southwest in the Northeast

Amigos Cantina provides excellent food, is well worth the drive

Published: Sunday, September 14, 2008

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Driving past the fields full of ripening corn it's hard to imagine that nestled in the heart of Schuylerville, on 42 Ferry Street, sits a restaurant that has skillfully mastered the art of Mexican cuisine without all the hokey extras.

Rob Chrust, a long time resident of Schuylerville, first opened Amigos Cantina in April 2007. He felt that there was a lack of diversity in the area and wanted to open a restaurant that would offer something interesting and unique. The idea for Amigos Cantina started with Chrust and his friend Jerry Desmond considering buying and renovating a building across the street from the restaurant's current location. After his friend fell ill, Chrust took over the job of creating the restaurant himself.

The end result of lots of hard work and dedication is a quaint homey feeling restaurant with a whole lot of flare. Amigos Cantina may be in any old building, but its colorful exterior truly sets it apart. Many times, Mexican themed restaurants are overdone with a tidal wave of paraphernalia that can be bought in a party goods shop, but here, the theme is dealt with just right. The walls are the color of a Mexican sunset with soothing oranges and reds. The wall lit up with chili pepper lights is the only decoration that could go wrong, but only really serves to add a fun flare. A real interesting aspect of the décor is the hand painted table tops done by David Wegman, a friend of Chrust's. Each one is a different Mexican inspired design and is painted with complementary vivid colors.

First on the menu was the guacamole appetizer. Now my friend and I consider ourselves connoisseurs of guacamole, if only because of our love of the amazing vegetable it hails from: the avocado. We were highly suspect of the very hearty portion of the guacamole as it was set on the table in front of us. But as the first chunky bit of the dip touched my tongue, I knew that the 20 minute drive was worth it. "Don't fill up on the chips," warned Chrust, making his way around the restaurant and although we tried to heed his warning, it was hard to stop. I quickly started regretting the sheer volume of chips I had ingested because in a matter of 15 minutes my entrée appeared on a scalding hot skillet

in front of me. On the accompanying plate sat two small hard tortilla shell shaped bowls. One filled with black beans and cheese and the other with rice made from a perfect combination of spices. Little cups of guacamole, salsa and sour cream also sat alongside the sides. Deliciously flavored and uniquely presented, the dish was more than I could have asked for. Since I'm just a poor college student, I didn't get to sample any of the other entrees on the menu, but Chrust recommended their Arroz con Pollo with a topping of their spicy red sauce, which is cooked into the meal.

"I've had people from Maryland say that our crab cakes are just as good as crab cakes in Maryland and people from Texas who have said that our tamales are just as good as the tamales in Texas," added Chrust.

As my friend and I watched our half eaten plates being taken away, disappointed at the size of our human stomachs, the waitress asked us if we would like dessert. We looked at each other, took a deep breath, adjusting ourselves to make room for our answer and said yes. After all, who can resist a homemade dessert? It was a tough choice between the crema catalana, a chocolate espresso crème brulee, and the Mexican flan, but after the first bite of the creamy decadent caramel custard flan there was no turning back and there was no need to.

Amigos Cantina is one of those restaurants that even though you couldn't finish your meal and didn't get to try everything on the menu, you can't feel bad because you know you'll be back next week.