

LAS VEGAS LIFE Contents

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The bar at Agave

71

BEST NEW RESTAURANTS

Max Jacobson has put Las Vegas chefs—and his waistline—to the test, combing the city for this year's 12 best new restaurants (narrowing down the list to an even dozen was no easy feat!) Plus, where to dine well on less dinero and Kate Silver's guide to our city's SPAM eateries.

PHOTOS BY PETER HARASTY

89

GET OUT OF TOWN!

With wineries, vortices, art festivals and outdoor adventure all within driving distance, why are you still here? We bring you six cool August escapes—from Julian, California to Sedona, Arizona and more.

EDITED BY KATE SILVER

12 NEW DINING HOT SPOTS LAS VEGAS LIFE Best New Restaurants

BEST CHEAP EATS
Dine well without breaking the bank.

SPAM (SERIOUSLY?)
Is spam that unique the world-famous pork product.



FROM VINEYARD TO VORTEX
A local summer escape

REBEL ON THE OFFENSIVE
Guide Mike Sanford

Cover: Strawberry and brown-butter cake with sour cream and poppy-seed ice cream from Alex inside Wynn Las Vegas.
Photography by Peter Harasty

AGAVE BAR: PETER HARASTY

AGAVE

LOCATION: 10820 W. CHARLESTON BLVD. 214-3500

HOURS: 24/7

ENTRÉES: \$10-\$26

RESERVATIONS: RECOMMENDED FOR PARTIES OVER 10

ONE OFTEN HEARS COMPLAINTS ABOUT VEGAS LACKING GOOD

Mexican food, but they turn out to be unwarranted. Isla at the TI and Diego at the MGM Grand are both fine, and now we have a terrific Mexican neighborhood restaurant, Agave, a pale-pink stucco palace paying homage to the architect Luis Barragan, the muralist Diego Rivera, and Mexican art.

The restaurant belongs to Michael Corrigan and it's an impressive effort. It's a huge space with a circular tequila bar smack in the center and a palapa ceiling. Metal lanterns stenciled with Aztec designs and various Mexican crafts, from candelabras to straw baskets, are placed all around the restaurant.

One other way Corrigan has gone the extra mile to make this restaurant work is the tequila program, ministered to by Eduardo Gonzales, a world-renowned *tequilero* (tequila master), who guides his guests toward the more than 70 premium tequilas he keeps in stock. The house margaritas here are the best in Vegas, and Gonzales, formerly with the luxury resort Las Ventanas in San Jose del Cabo, Mexico, is a real charmer.

The kitchen is no less accomplished. Executive Chef Matthew Silverman worked with Wolfgang Puck for nine years, and his able assistant, Mexican

Juan Saldana, came from Mark Miller's Coyote Café. Between the two men, they pretty much have nouvelle Mex covered. Black bean and smoked cheddar soup is a yin-yang, two-colored soup swirled in a bowl, while *birria de chivo*, marinated goat meat in a rich red sauce, is rural Mexico all the way.

Rock shrimp chile relleno replaces the normal filling of gooey cheese with tiny cooked shrimp, kept snapping fresh by the chile's cornmeal crust. Barbecued duck quesadilla is a good example of the fusion fare the kitchen is capable of. The duck is bound with enough melted cheese to add a luxurious texture and not overwhelm the meat.

Instead of the cloying desserts such as *sopaipillas*, though, enjoy a slushy fruit margarita like the Los Altos, fresh lime, grapefruit and pineapple juice, and enough tequila to make a designated driver a really good idea.

BEST DISHES: black bean and smoked cheddar soup; chicken and green chile soup; birria de chivo; barbecued duck quesadilla; rock shrimp chile relleno; specialty margaritas.



