

LOS DOS : LOCAL RESTAURANT REVIEWS

LATIN & INTERNATIONAL / BEYOND CENTRO

NOTE: Our star qualification system is not intended to be referred to across categories. In other words, a three-star *cocina economica* is in no way meant to compare to a three-star formal dining establishment. The stars should be considered only for the sake of comparison to other entries within the same category.

- **Buenos Aires City**** *Argentinian grill*. **Open every day 1pm – 1am.** *Circuito Colonias at the corner of Calle 12, Colonia Mexico. 926.8080.* A new offspring of Mérida's almost ridiculous trend of opening Argentinian steakhouses, Buenos Aires City is at least worth trying for the modern ambience – and some of the food. By all means try their *Surtido de Empanadas*, a rich assortment of crispy, flaky crusts stuffed with exquisite fillings. We all agreed we would go back just for the *empanadas*: Pampa features beef, spring onion and green olives; Azteca includes *poblano* strips and kernels of corn; Recoleta is a scrumptious blend of spinach, cream and Manchego cheese; Napolitana contains ham, mozzarella and chopped nuts; and the Gran Buenos Aires features chorizo, cheese and mushrooms. The *Filete de Lomo* was perfectly seasoned and cooked as ordered, and the bacon-wrapped *Tornado de Lomo de Res* was delectable and proves my motto: "Everything Goes Better With Bacon". A specialty of the house is spit-roasted lamb or goat – very flavorful but enough meat for an army. Direct more light on the tables, please.
- **Acqua***** *International "Cocina Creativa"*. **Open Tuesday – Saturday, 1:30pm – 2am; Sundays 1pm – 6pm; Mondays 6pm – 2am.** *Avenida 21 No. 73B between Calle 12 and 14, Colonia Mexico. Information: 926.8211.* College cafeteria ambience, appropriate for tasty comfort foods like *Fondue al Chipotle* and *Ensalada Capri*. Meet the owners, Maricela Chaia and Ernesto Casares, who will charm and welcome you.
- **Néctar****** *International/Yucatecan fusion*. **Open Tuesday – Sunday, 7pm – 2am.** *Avenida 21 No. 412 between Calle 6A and 8, Colonia Díaz Ordaz. Information: 938.0838.* Chef Roberto Solis is Mérida's only "artist chef." By that I mean he is utterly creative, a master devoted to his craft. What other chef in Mérida takes annual trips to international cities, to work in famous restaurants in order to further hone his skills? (One recent summer it was New York's too-hot-to-touch Per Se.) If you appreciate intelligence and playfulness when it comes to food, you must try Néctar. Experiencing how he interprets local ingredients and regional dishes is always exhilarating. But there may be a cost to this creativity: often I fall in love with one of Solis's dishes, only to discover that he has totally reworked it the next time I order it. While I would never want to interfere with his creativity, maybe some things should stay the same.
- **La Recova***** *Argentinian grill*. **Open Monday - Saturday from 1pm-2am; Sundays from 1pm to 12am.** *Calle 34 No. 382 at Prolongación Paseo de Montejo. Information: 944.0215.* Beautiful, chic modern setting designed by architect Javier Muñoz Menéndez. Excellent cuts of beef with an Argentinian flair (think lots of *chimichurri*). A particular favorite: the Kobe beef (probably "Kobe-style" but they're not talking) burger with stacks of French fries. Meat-phobics rejoice: new chef Jesús Salgado Cruz has included several tuna dishes, including tartar and sashimi.
- **Trotter's****** *"Steak/Tapas/Vino"*. **Open Monday through Saturday 1pm – 2am; Sunday 1pm – 6pm.** *Circuito Colonias between Calle 60 and Prolongación Paseo de Montejo. Information: 927.2320.* Any time I have out-of-town guests and want to be assured of an impressive dinner, I take them to Trotter's. Everyone is always pleased with the food, and the atmosphere is electric (especially on 2x1 nights at the bar!) I've had pleasant bites of my companions' meals on many occasions, but I always order the same thing: *Steak Frites*. But then, how can you go wrong with a perfectly grilled steak and a pile of crisp fries drizzled with truffle oil?