

Ceviche and pork shank among new dishes at El Salto in Portage



Pork Shank is a new menu item at El Salto. (Kyle Telechan/Post Tribune) (Kyle Telechan / Post-Tribune)

By **Jessi Virtusio**
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El Salto Mexican Restaurant may be known for margarita specials, but the family-owned Northwest Indiana operation worked with a famous Chicago and New York chef for dishes debuting in February.

"Chef Dudley Nieto was a consultant on some of the featured items," said Rosendo Mendoza, owner of the newest El Salto in Portage.

New dishes include ceviche, pork shank and boneless spare rib.

"We're hoping we have very good success. The sauces that he created and helped us with are fabulous," said Mendoza, who also owns the El Salto in Valparaiso.

Mendoza is a partner with his brother, Robert, in the Chesterton and Munster El Salto restaurants and El Salto Express in Schererville while Robert owns the Merrillville El Salto.

"We understand each other. We help each other. We have a good understanding of the things we've got to do," said Mendoza, of Valparaiso.

"A lot of my family, cousins and uncles, are all in the restaurant industry too."

Mendoza said it took approximately four months to get the former Corner Bistro location in Holladay Properties' AmeriPlex at the Port ready to open as El Salto in August in Portage.

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"That part of town over there I just think is getting bigger and growing so it was a good opportunity for me. They gave me a pretty good deal to open that place," he said.

Items start at \$2.25 for a la carte; \$3.95 for soups; \$4.95 for appetizers; \$5.50 for salads; \$7.25 for quesadillas; \$7.50 for tortas; \$8.50 for seafood; \$8.95 for combinations; \$9.95 for burritos, special dinners, chicken, steak or pork; \$12.25 for fajitas; and \$12.95 for favorites.

Lunch items served from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Mondays-Fridays starting at \$5.95.

"Probably the most popular item is called the alambre," said Mendoza about tender grilled steak strips with bacon, grilled onion, tomatoes, poblano and queso enchilado topped with melted cheese.

"Also, what we have sold a lot of is the carne asada dinner. It's Angus skirt steak that's real thick. One of our biggest dishes is tacos Michoacanos. Those are tacos consisting of steak, chicken and shrimp together with a special sauce."

Featuring modern colors and a contemporary design including steel-framed Day of the Dead ladies, El Salto in Portage seats approximately 120 indoors and another 30 on the patio when weather permits.

"I want to provide some good, authentic food for the people there in Portage and also want to have delivery to the hotels and local businesses within two months. We do a lot of catering also and that's probably one of my favorite things that we have in Portage," said Mendoza.

"I want to provide a good atmosphere to people also."

All El Salto locations offer a 25-cent margarita special on Tuesdays and half-price margaritas on Wednesdays.

Hours: 11 a.m.-10:30 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sundays, closed Mondays, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesdays and 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Wednesdays-Thursdays.

El Salto Mexican Restaurant is at 6295 AmeriPlex Drive, Portage. Contact 219-734-6463 or www.elsaltorestaurant.com.

Jessi Virtusio is a freelance reporter for the Post-Tribune.

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