

# NOXT

MAGAZINE



**By Peter Sherwood**

## YERBA BUENA

Yerba Buena translates to “good herb” and quite frankly, I haven’t had a puff of the stuff since I had a panic attack while watching the first season of American Idol. But I digress—all is good at Yerba Buena, cuisine and drink included. Unlike my brief bout of anxiety a few years ago, I quite look forward to revisiting chef Julian Medina’s new Latina cocina in the East Village. Business is booming, filling the seats in the restaurant and packing the bar.

There are no disappointments here; everything we experienced featured a nice heat that didn’t overwhelm the good flavor of the food itself. The Cocktails (all \$11) we sampled were divinely well crafted, including the Sidecar with Pierre Ferrand cognac, Cointreau and lemon juice, and the Pisco Sour with Capel pisco, shaken organic egg whites, lime juice and a few decorative dashes of Angostura bitters. The Yerbabuena “Mojito” with Bacardi 8, mint, Demerara syrup and lime juice was perfect with the Pizza Cubana (\$12). A twist on the Cuban sandwich, this de-groovy delight featured Berkshire ham, pulled suckling pig, Swiss cheese and pickles all slathered with grain mustard. The Guacamole (\$9) was really good; at first limey and sweet, with a touch of salt from queso fresco and red onion for a bite, resulting in a wonderful range of flavors. Arepas (\$12) were another toothsome combo, served like sliders on a corn masa cake with BBQ beef short ribs, cabbage slaw and pickled jalapeño.

We couldn’t stay away from the suckling pig and went for Lechón (\$22) from the Para La Mesa entrées, a wonderful dish with yucca purée, habañero mojo de ajo and chicharrón. From the sides of Vegetales (all \$5), we selected the Palmitos Fries—hearts of palm served with a smoky rocoto dipping sauce that we chose as a perfect accompaniment over other sides, such as tempting Plantanos (sweet plantains with truffle crema).

White & Dark Chocolate Fondue (\$8) with a coconut marshmallow, chipotle brownie, strawberries, bananas, and mini churros only confirmed just how buena Yerba Buena really is! N