



HANS GUTKNECHT/LA.COM

D'Cache co-owners Jairo and Patty Gamba and executive chef Luis Ochoa display their North Hollywood restaurant's fare.

## D'Cache's Latin flair

BY LARRY LIPSON > RESTAURANT CRITIC

In a charming space provided by a onetime Spanish-style house on a relatively quiet part of Riverside Drive in North Hollywood, D'Cache has emerged, billing itself as the home of new Latin fusion cuisine.

Replete with dramatic arched and stained-glass windows, the cozy but not cramped D'Cache actually offers three adjoining dining areas, one featuring an intimate wine bar and a view kitchen.

The main area has special lighting and a place for musical performers. On a recent evening, a skillful guitarist strummed familiar romantic Latin songs without intruding on diners' conversation.

Chef Luis Ochoa, who previously cooked superior tapas dishes at Eight-1-8 in Toluca Lake, sends out basic comfort food, much of it prepared with touches of Latin flair.

His "pinchos" (\$12) appetizer, for example, utilizes skirt steak boosted with Argentine-style chimichurri sauce. The latter, vinegary and addictive, is needed to counteract the slight toughness of the meat and the stringy tendencies of the accompanying thin spears of white asparagus. But don't hesitate to ask for some extra chimichurri, if you like it as much as I do.

However, a generous serving of sautéed mushrooms (\$10) comes

### review >

D'CACHE ★★★

> **Details:** 10719 Riverside Drive, North Hollywood. Open for dinner only from 5 to 10 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. (818) 506-9600. www.dcachestaurant.com. Cost: Starters from \$10 to \$18, entrees from \$22 to \$35, desserts \$9 each. Corkage: \$20.

> **Noteworthy:** Don't look for any Mexican influences in this kitchen. The Latin part of this so-called Latin fusion utilizes the cooking of Spain, Brazil and Argentina primarily. And there are also obvious Modern American and European influences here.

forth as a savory starter with more of a continental accent, crunchy caps arriving sizzling hot in a fresh garlic and white wine sauce.

Ribs and chicken may not immediately sound exotic. But either can be delicious in the hands of a good chef, whether the cooking is Latin influenced or not.

Chef Ochoa's braised, bone-in short ribs (\$28) might be even more gratifying with a dollop or two of buttery mashed potatoes but can be decidedly satisfying as is.

Rich in flavor, they're served with onions, carrots and mushrooms, another example of a dish that could grace a table just as well

in South America as in the south of France or Southern California.

And his pan-seared breast of chicken (\$22) is really outstanding.

Who'd expect golden beets plated with Ochoa's perfectly cooked moist chicken?

And not only pale-toned beets but additional colors and flavors. There's the red of grilled tomato and the green of sautéed peas along with the crunch of toasted almonds.

Very nicely done.

So how about dessert? The maître d' mentions an apple tart and chocolate soufflé.

But it turns out to be the ubiquitous warm chocolate cake (\$9), not a real soufflé.

And not a particularly auspicious ending.

To be fair, at first bites D'Cache seems to be a pretty good place to eat. And it's one of those rare restaurants where the entrees work out to be more appealing, more interesting and more satisfying than its starters or finales.

Which definitely makes it worth a visit.

**At its best:** Unquestionable charm and an obvious commitment to achieving culinary significance.

**Could be better:** Some food innovation would help — and service appears a bit sketchy. Call it a team method without the smoothest of teamwork.