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Dining Out: A great fusion experience



A favorite at D'Cache in North Hollywood is the Paella Valenciana, made with saffron rice, Ecuadorian shrimps, calamari, clams, mussels, chicken and Spanish chorizos and a glass of their special recipe sangria made with three kinds of wine, gin, brandy, fruit juices and spices. (Roger Wilson/News-Press)

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It's easy to see the large sign for Burbank's D'Caché while driving down the street, but if you don't use the valet to park, then you might walk right past the establishment that's hidden in back down a long driveway behind a spa. Several years of studying

French in high school and college paid off when I remembered that the word D'Caché translates as "hidden" in English, but that may just be a coincidence.

But don't let the French name fool you; it is a tapas bar that features Latin fusion cuisine. The interior setting was dimmed lights and definitely adult and elegant in tone, with cloth napkins draped around large wine glasses.

After placing our order, Jaime, our server, told us that some bread would be forthcoming. He apologized that it would take a few minutes because it was still in the oven, and it was most definitely worth the wait. A flat bread that was lightly toasted and seasoned with a melange of thyme, garlic, rosemary and olive oil, you could tell it was straight from the oven and served warm at just the ideal temperature. Delicious all by itself, it was accompanied by an equally decadent herbed butter that elevated the yummy quotient.

We started with the Tapas Sampler Trio (\$25 for two people) that contained four baby back ribs with onion straws, four cheese croquettes topped with mascarpone cream, and three pork empanadas drizzled with a mango passion fruit salsa. It was a hearty appetizer and could have precluded us from ordering one fewer entree without leaving hungry.

When initially telling us about the menu items, Jaime extolled the virtues of the ribs, noting they were slow-cooked throughout the day and very tender. He was absolutely right. We've all heard the line about meat "falling off the bone," and I made the mistake of picking my first piece up by the meat and almost dropped it on the table. The sauce was especially appealing because it didn't exude the traditional American barbecue flavor that can have too much tomato taste, but was rich and subtle and complemented the meat very nicely.

The croquettes had a creamy center and crispy outer shell. The empanadas were good but lukewarm compared with the other items on the plate. The texture of the filling was reminiscent of very smooth mashed potatoes. The cream on top, dotted with tiny bits of green onion, gave them a nice flavor. Dipping them in the lightly sweetened salsa made a nice contrast to the savory filling.

The Blackened Churrasco Caesar Salad (\$14) was an entire heart of romaine lettuce with oddly shaped but tasty oblong croutons. The lettuce leaves came uncut in full leaves and required knife and fork to make them manageable for consumption.

The lettuce was crisp, and the Caesar dressing was flavorful without being overpowering. It came with five small pieces of skirt steak on the side that were cooked medium-well. The meat was good on its own and didn't require any sauce.

The Pasta de Pollo (\$24) had a light garlic cream Chardonnay sauce with chicken, asparagus, mushrooms and haricot verts. That French came in handy again when I told my family that last ingredient was simply green beans. The pasta was linguine and came with so much cheese that it clumped together and made it difficult to twirl the pasta around my fork. But that's not a bad thing because it added good flavor to the dish, with the sauce being pungent and not too heavy. And while the outer bowl in which it was served was hot, the pasta could have been slightly warmer. But that didn't detract from its overall satisfaction.