

Don Leo's Mexican Restaurant

Contributed by Mark Winston
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Fairly new as of this review, Don Leo's on first glance is your average suburban Mexican joint geared mainly toward middle-class white southerners. I don't always go for these places since they tend to have oversized portions, bland ingredients, and not enough Spanish on the menu. Don Leo's, however, pleasantly surprised me.

Don Leo's has a very expansive menu. Some staples of Mexican munching, such as tortas and (something I simply can't find anywhere in Winston yet) desayunos are missing, but the sheer quantity of choices makes it a great place to frequent.

One thing I think is great about Don Leo's is that you can order a combination plate or add beans and rice to your dish and you won't have so much food that you feel like an exploding cow by the time you leave. It also gives one the ability to gorge on their absolutely wonderful salsa - they even have a very tasty hot salsa. Peppery with a healthy dose of cilantro, their mild salsa is also one of the best I've had in my many forays in to NC Mexican joints.

I tend to eat beef as often as I can because I'm that way, and their asada plate was spicy and carbon-crusted to perfection. They also chop off some great carnitas, and their carnitas torta was massively tasty. Southerners might be surprised by how much they like carnitas if they just give it a try: it looks and tastes like a dryer, hotter version of NC barbecue. I've never been the biggest barbecue fan because I like my pork to taste like pig meat rather than a chewy slaw, but carnitas does have the same marinated, smoky flavor of a well-pulled pork shoulder. Don Leo's throws this onto a grilled Mexican bread roll with onions, lettuce, cilantro and tomato and serves it as a killer torta.

Hopefully their appearance, along with Office Depot, the Pavillions shopping centre off Hanes Mall Blvd will be revived after Food Lion's departure last year. Seeing as it's located in what is perhaps Winston Salem's most active and thriving shopping district, I think they have a fighting chance for a long life.

Don Leo's

564 Hanes Mall Blvd (Pavillions Shopping Center)

Winston-Salem
336.768.6670

Hours:
Mon-Thu 11am-10pm
Fri-Sat 11am-10.30pm
Sun 11am-9pm
Best Bet:
Combination plates, \$4.00-6.00