



# Añejo House of Tequila

**A**ñejo House of Tequila brings some Vegas swagger to North Richland Hills. Its thoughtful Tex-Mex fare is enlivened by an imaginative design that ups the style quotient for local eateries. Owners Brian and Danny Paul translate their bar and nightclub pedigree to the restaurant world—one sweep of the place and it's clear that they've done ultra-swank scenes before.

The lounge area anchors the design for the rest of the restaurant—dark woods, leather and velvet—that could confidently out-glitz many high-profile boîtes on the Vegas strip. There's an impressively architectural copper hood over a sleek, glass-enclosed indoor fire pit. The adjacent bar boasts chipped granite counters, back-lit onyx, and a complex wood and glass grid behind an

improbably mounted flat-screen (*which I'm told had to be telescoped away from the wall*).

You'll find bold design choices everywhere your eye wanders—sinuous Vetro vases lit from beneath by LED lights, suggestive of flames frozen in time, a faintly Cubist stained-glass installation behind the hostess stand, hand-carved Columbian wood embracing a corner booth, large mahogany panels tidal waving from the back wall and over a sleek upholstered banquette.

Things get even more interesting outside—more modern furniture, more clean lines, a glass-enclosed fire pit to mirror the one inside and this time the LED lights enhance a water feature and nearly encrust some of the trees that frame the patio. It's ultra-swank with a live music soundtrack.

You lose yourself in the details, even tricking your mind that you've somehow walked into a colorful outpost of some rogue W Hotel. Then you see the tortilla machine and its earnest conveyor rolling out batches of warm, chewy, carby love and you realize you're here for some Tex-Mex, but not for some run-of-the-mill combo plates.

Chef Fernando Martinez updates the standards with pan-Latin flair. Nachos, for instance, are not the usual sloppy pile-up. As plated, they almost resemble rustic canapés and made interactive with a center-spread of fixins like pickled jalapenos and guac that you can add on as you like.

Skipping way ahead to dessert, tiramisu gets a south-of-the-border revision as “Kahlua-misu” with sponge cake standing

in for ladyfingers and Kahlua subbed for espresso.

Taco Caribe al Daniel, served open-faced with mahi mahi, is less like the classic, hand-held street food and more like an up-market seafood entrée. The nicely cooked fish gets a fresh boost from mango and jicama slaw. Pan-Latin flavors really come through in an expert ceviche that generously fills a margarita glass with choice chunks of marinated shrimp, scallop and fish to nearly overflowing.

Speaking of margaritas, a place named Añejo had better deliver the goods—and it does.

The Cabo Waborita is the perfect way to toast the final days of three-digit temperatures and the start of some great autumn patio-sitting weather.