



Anejo House of Tequila

9159 Boulevard 26, No. 300, North Richland Hills
817-485-9900

<http://www.anejohot.com/home.php>

Hours: 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-midnight Friday and Saturday

Signature dish: Anejo platter, big enough for three

Noise level: Pleasant

Good to know: House margarita is \$4; there's a kids menu and a full bar; no reservations needed

Entree cost: \$6.95 to \$15.95 (but it's \$32.95 for the Anejo platter)

Details: Major credit cards accepted but not the Press Pass; smoke-free; wheelchair-accessible

Recommended for: Mid-Cities Tex-Mex fans

The Taco Carribe al Daniel at Anejo House of Tequila
STAR-TELEGRAM/RON JENKINS

Tex-mextraordinary

Anejo impresses its diners with food, drink and beautifully posh surroundings

By **TERESA GUBBINS**
Special to the Star-Telegram

With a name like Anejo House of Tequila, you'd expect this place to have lots of the spirit — and it does, at least 80 varieties. But there's more to this new spot in North Richland Hills than limes, salt and margaritas.

It's a grandly mounted place on Boulevard 26 (formerly Grapevine Highway) at Precinct Line Road, in what used to be a smoothie place and a bagel shop. The menu is mostly Tex-Mex but also includes non-Mex items such as barbecue ribs, generous salads and bacon-wrapped shrimp. Regardless of cuisine, everything we sampled was good. Chef Fernando Martinez worked for Pappasito's for 14 years and has taught at Cordon Bleu Cooking School. He can often

be spotted patrolling the dining room in his chef's whites, and he loves to talk about his food.

Our meal started with warm, ultra-thin chips and smoky-brown roasted-tomato salsa, pureed but with a few appealing chunks of charred tomato for texture. Appetizers include quesadillas, nachos and taquitos, available individually but also in an appetizer sampler called La Botana Anejo (\$13.95). You can get nachos with chopped beef or chicken; taquitos, too.

The best appetizer was the fried plantains (\$3.95). Thick discs of the bananalike fruit were cut on the diagonal, then dipped in a light batter and fried until amber. They were sweet and pleasingly starchy, with a touch of saltiness to the deep-fried shell.

Anejo's entrees run from stan-

dard combo plates to specialties, such as the barbecue ribs. An entree sampler called the Anejo (\$32.95) combined three junior-size entrees — chicken and beef fajitas, bacon-wrapped shrimp and a rack of barbecue ribs — and was big enough for three to share.

You wouldn't expect ribs at a Tex-Mex place, but these were good, a rack of six to eight ribs, still attached, each bearing lots of meat on the bone. They didn't have the smoky flavor that you'd get at a barbecue joint, but they were tender and fell away from the bone with a mere tug. Barbecue purists might snub the thick, glossy sauce that coated them, but it added a sweet-sour contrast that had us smacking our lips.

Bacon-wrapped shrimp, four on the sampler and five as an en-

tree (\$15.95), were juicy and deftly cooked, with the shrimp at a good point between tender and firm, while the bacon was crisp. A sliver of fresh jalapeño was inserted along the spine of the shrimp for an extra little pop of heat. The fajita meat was the least impressive; the chicken and beef were thinly chopped and on the dry side. But extra points are awarded for not loading the ironstone platter with fake chemical sizzle, and for not wastefully pouring on heaps of pepper or onion.

Tamales (\$3.95 for one, \$6.95 for two) are house-made, with a choice of pork or chicken, and were unique in that they'd been wrapped in a banana leaf and not the typical corn husk. This produced an extra-large tamale that was so moist, we scraped it up

with a spoon. Anejo makes its own tortillas, too, on a machine sitting on the edge of the dining room.

Cocktails include a prickly pear margarita (\$11.50) at the high end to the standard house margarita for a reasonable \$4. Service was excellent, from the friendly folks at the front door to our server intuiting when to appear and when to leave us alone. Decor was just as superb. Owner Brian Paul invested much money and care into this space. The backsplash of the bar is lined with rough-hewn chunks of colored glass as big as your hand, suspended on wire. Surrounding the patio are trees strewn with tiny lights, and there are two fire pits, one outside and one inside, topped by a showpiece copper shingled hood. It's definitely no ordinary Tex-Mex.