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# BESITO, IN ROSLYN

February 3, 2007 by PETER M. GIANOTTI. STAFF WRITER /

BESITO

1516 Old Northern Blvd.

Roslyn

516-484-3001

besitomex.com

(2 STARS)

CUISINE: Mexican.

ASSESSMENT: Part II, No. 1.

OPEN: Dinner every day. Brunch, Saturday and Sunday.

PRICE RANGE: Main courses, \$16 to \$26; appetizers and soup, \$6 to \$13.

Brunch dishes, \$6 to \$11.

CREDIT CARDS: All major cards.

NOTABLE DISHES: Ceviche, guacamole, tortilla soup, pan-seared grouper, mole

poblano.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: One level.

DIRECTIONS: Off the Roslyn viaduct.

Four stars mean outstanding; three, excellent; two, very good; one, good;

none, fair or poor.

The new Besito duplicates the lively Huntington original in all things but one: It's better.

These two upbeat establishments, both offering the same menu, are

redefining Mexican restaurant cooking in Nassau and Suffolk. They're owned by John Tunney III, who also runs American Burger Company and Blue Honu, both in Huntington.

While there are a lot of Mexican eateries on Long Island, including more casual winners, the two Besitos operate at a different level - more ambitious, entertaining, chimichanga-free.

In Roslyn, the stage is similar to Huntington, with the eucalyptus-beamed ceiling and colorful imagery. But this Besito is bigger and even more energetic. And on weekends, it's festive enough to make today seem equal parts Super Bowl Sunday and Cinco de Mayo. Have a margarita and pass the guacamole. Apart from the vivid appointments and the evocative luminaria-style wall of light, the range of tequilas and the spirited house cocktails, the reason to come here is basic. Under chef Matthew Lake, Besito in Roslyn is very good, sometimes even more.

That guacamole made tableside is part show, all flavor and vigorously seasoned, if you like. A sopa de tortillas will attract you both for its taste and texture. Queso fundido, with Chihuahua cheese, chorizo and a poblano push, materializes as more than textbook. And, as in Huntington, the ceviche du jour is terrific.

Several openers trail these. The red snapper taquitos are a bit limp; and the tostaditas turn into a high-end nachos supreme. Chicken flautas remain on the dull side, and the chile rellenos could be snappier. At this address, you're better off with the fresh corn tamale with shrimp.

Lake, however, juices up the enchiladas de mole poblano with soulful flavors that don't disguise the chicken. Shredded chicken in tomatillo-cream sauce, dubbed enchiladas Suizas, also is recommended.

Pork tacos spiked with musky achiote top them, as do almost all the beef dishes. Alambre de res translates into tenderloin and chorizo, sparked by salsas ranchero and verde.

Seafood deserves your attention, especially the pan-seared grouper crusted

with blue corn and crab; and the roasted wild salmon, finished with crisp bananas, pineapple pico de gallo and mole manchamanteles, a savory specialty of Oaxaca.

You can accompany all this with a hearty, nostalgic pitcher of sangria, red or white. Besito offers a commendable list of wines and Mexican beers, too. The choice of tequilas is exceptional, whether you're feeling silver, reposado or a ejo. Margarita devotees surely will be satisfied.

For dessert, a pumpkin-seed flan and the "tres leches" cake are fitting finales. Or refresh yourself with berries with mango cream. The real treats, however, are the gratis, housemade churros, irresistible cinnamon-sugar covered spirals of fried dough.

Party on.

If you like Besito in Roslyn, you also may want to visit ...

Besito, 402 New York Ave., Huntington; 631-549-0100.

Oaxaca, 385 New York Ave., Huntington; 631-547-1232.

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