Need to spice up your life? We're here to help. Boston doesn't have a rep as a great town for Mexican, but we're getting there. And over the last year we've seen a number of exciting openings — with more on the way. In particular, we're pumped to hear that Villa Mexico, a former famous gas-station-based burrito shop, is slated to open an actual restaurant in the Financial District soon. (The team behind it recently won the latest Burrito Bowl at Poe's Kitchen at the Rattlesnake.) The team behind Jamaica Plain's Tres Gatos and Centre Street Cafe announced last week that it will open a Mexican joint at the 711 Centre Street location currently occupied by Ghazal Indian Cuisine. And of course, chef Michael Scelfo's “irreverent taco” restaurant Naco is one of our Most Anticipated Openings of 2015.

Keep the newbies coming, Boston. In the meanwhile, here are the Mexican hot spots that grabbed our attention over the last year.
Besito Mexican

Why it’s hot: The upscale Mexican brand has only a few locations, and opened its first Boston-area outpost in Burlington last summer, and it was joined by this even closer Chestnut Hill spot in the fall. The romantic interior, aglow with a wall full of flickering candles, is joined by a new patio where servers even offer serapes on chilly nights.

Must-order: We love the panquesito de jaiba ($14.95), a crispy crab cake with roasted habanero cream sauce, corn salad and queso fresco.

199 Boylston St., Chestnut Hill; 617-527-1155
Felipe's Taqueria

Why it's hot: It's not new, but it feels like it. The popular taqueria, previously crammed into a tiny footprint, reopened in December in much larger Harvard Square digs. Also added: more menu items, a full bar and (coming soon) a rooftop deck for open-air dining.

Must-order: You can't go wrong with overstuffed burritos that are totally under-priced. (Not that we're complaining.) A 10-inch burrito is $5, a 12-inch "Super Burrito" is $6 and the coronary-inducing chimichanga (a deep-fried burrito topped with queso) is $8.50.

21 Brattle St., Cambridge; 617-354-9944
Loco Taqueria & Oyster Bar

Why it’s hot: The team behind South Boston’s buzzy Lincoln Tavern opened this inventive eatery across the street, featuring fresh flavors, funky ideas (like oysters topped with flavored ice) and culinary finesse under chef Nick Dixon. It’s been packing in young professionals nightly, thanks to a cool vibe and 41-variety-deep tequila and mezcal menu.

Must-order: The menu takes a Baja-influenced direction emphasizing the light and bright flavors exemplified by this scallops escabeche ($15). The Nantucket scallops swim overnight in a marinade of fresh orange juice, ginger and garlic. Then they’re seared and served with a salad of strawberry, poppy seed, basil and mint tossed in a tequila-lime marinade.

412 W. Broadway, South Boston; 617-917-5626
Tenoch Mexican

Why it’s hot: Last spring Tenoch, a popular Medford taqueria, opened a second location in Boston. Bringing Mexican to the historically Italian North End, Tenoch delivers some superb staples like soft tacos, enchiladas and tortas that had been luring fans to the suburbs for a while now; with this city entry, there’s no reason not to give them a go.

Must-order: Though the tacos are tasty, the tortas remain standout. We’re especially into the torta campechana ($6.95) stuffed with carnitas, chorizo and avocado with chipotle mayo and Oaxaca cheese.

3 Lewis St.; 617-248-9537
**Urban Cantina**

**Why it’s hot:** Over the fall the North End received a second Mexican joint, the literally named Urban Cantina. In a neighborhood that can still use plenty of diversity in cuisine, it’s a welcome addition.

**Must-order:** On the modern-skewing menu, the South of the Border Shrimp ($12) is a signature starter. Large spiced shrimp are grilled and served with avocado and rajas (a creamy pepper dip) alongside habanero-mango ketchup.

*76 Salem St.; 857-753-4615*
Ole Mexican Grill

Why it's hot: Ole has been an Inman Square institution for years now, but earlier this year it revamped its menu to focus more on small plates and Mexican street food. Nothing makes us return to an old favorite like the promise of a massive menu of creative tacos.

Must-order: On the other hand, the famous guacamole ($14), made fresh tableside, never gets tired.

11 Springfield St., Cambridge; 877-816-9996
**Papagayo**

**Why it's hot:** It's hot by association. The local Mexican chain just opened an outpost at Assembly Row, the restaurant- and retail-laden development in Somerville that is home to a handful of hot new spots.

**Must-order:** Bite into the alotes a la parilla ($7.95), grilled corn with Aleppo pepper-lime aioli and queso cotija.

*331 Great River Rd., Somerville; 617-996-6100*