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Phantom Gourmet: Besito In Burlington

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BURLINGTON – If you were to hear there is a new Mexican restaurant inside the local mall, you would probably assume it's nothing special; but you would be wrong. All you have to do is take one look at the food at Besito Mexican in Burlington to understand why.

In Spanish, Besito means "little kiss", and at Besito you'll feel the love from the moment you walk through the door.

"When you walk into a Besito you are [instantly](#) overwhelmed by the spirit of Mexico," said owner John Tunney. "The smell of the chiles; the sound of the music; the vibe of the place; the textures; the materials.; the authenticity."

New to the Burlington Mall, this traditional Mexican eatery is decked out in decor Tunney collected from his many trips to Central America. Along with General [Manager](#) Orlando Versari, he built a dining space that makes customers feel like they've taken a trip south of the border.

"It's all about the great decor that gives you the warmth from the Mexican culture," Versari said. "That allows you to have a great time and have some fun and let yourself go and enjoy."

Back in the kitchen, John hired Chef Carlos Arellano to make sure he was serving real-deal Mexican cuisine.

"You see his passion come up and he just starts going, and I get crazy and I can't wait – and we start tasting," which Tunney says is his favorite part of the day.

The sauce that Carlos has mastered is his **mole**, which is used to sauce many of Besito's dishes.

"This is one of the most difficult sauces to make," Tunney explained. " It's complex, has the most amount of ingredients, and to taste a pot like this after hours and hours on the stove – this is what it's all about."

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Sensational starters line the menu, like Besito's **Ceviche** of the Day, served with plantains and tortilla chips. The crispy **crab cake**, topped with a roasted corn salad and avocado in habanero sauce is almost too pretty to eat.



Crab cake at Besito (Image: Phantom Gourmet)

The **Tortilla Soup** is certainly special. Poured tableside onto a nest of tortillas, this earthy soup is designed to please all of the senses.

"The textures that go into that: you have this [rich](#) warm broth and you have the little tortilla crispy chips and cheese. When you start putting that all together, you just can't miss having tortilla soup," Tunney said.

The most entertaining app has to be the **tableside guacamole**.

"I think every time you have something table side, you're bringing the guest and the person from Besito together in conversation, in an art form, in making something and it's enjoyed by everybody."



Shrimp tacos at Besito (Image: Phantom Gourmet)

Entrees include everything from simple **shrimp tacos** to the over the top **Filet des Res**. It's unlike any filet mignon you'll find in an ordinary steak house – marinated in Negra Modela Beer, topped with cheese and served in a skillet loaded up with chipotle sauce.

"It's actually one of the most amazing dishes, because we present the filet in a different way," said Versari.

"This is a steak house quality filet mignon. It's butterflied. It's in a large round cast iron plate and the sauce on it is so rich and delicious, and it's topped with cheese and pico de gallos and some queso fresco," Tunney described. "If you are a beef eater, this is a dish you really want to have."

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Filet des Res at Besito (Image: Phantom Gourmet)

Beef eaters and cheese lovers alike will love to dive into the **Mixtos**. Tunney said these do-it-yourself tacos come with a skillet overloaded with steak, chorizo, chicken and plenty of melted queso chihuahua.

“It comes out on a skillet. You have chihuahua cheese that’s just dripping and melting. I tell every [customer](#), ‘don’t use a fork. Fold it in half. Jam it. Get messy.’ It tastes the best.”

Seafood lovers will also be satisfied at Besito. There’s the stunning **salmon served over a complex chile sauce** and spiked with plantain chips, or the decadent **budin de mariscos** – a tortilla pie stuffed with shrimp, crab and cheese and then drenched in a creamy poblano sauce.

“The budin alla mariscos is a great little seafood pie,” said Tunney. “It’s layered with cheese and fresh seafood, so if you’re a seafood lover, get the budin.”

Speaking of something different, this restaurant gives every table **complimentary churros** for dessert. If that wasn’t enough, Tunney said they leave you with a little parting gift to take on your way.

“When you’re done with your meal, someone is going to present to you from their hand to yours a Mexican worry doll, and you put that under your pillow at night and you wake up worry free. Needless to say, customers love these.”

You can find Besito inside the Burlington Mall, or online at besitomexican.com.

Watch Phantom Gourmet on Saturdays and Sundays at 10:30 and 11 a.m. on myTV38.

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