**Distrito: Special Occasion Dining for College Students**

3945 Chestnut Street Philadelphia, PA 19104

Located amidst the college buzz of University City in Philadelphia, PA, Distrito is a slightly out of place Mexican restaurant fashionably serving fresh tapas, “small plates.” The restaurant, owned by Jose Garces, is part of the well-established Garces Restaurant Group, presenting top notch fine dining restaurants such as Amada and Tinto. Distrito is a more casual approach to the typical Garces elegance. Recently opened about a year ago, the restaurant is situated in a supportive environment with other great eats such as Pod and Marathon Grill. [DU1]

            The food served at Distrito is distinct in size yet commendable in preparation. The small plates are true to their name but are meticulously decorated and presented freshly. With each bite, tiny spurts of Mexican flavor satiate one’s taste palates but do not satisfy one’s stomach. The[DU2]  menu is extensive and offers a range of exquisite foods such as Poblano (duck breast, $8), Amarillo (rabbit, $10), and Verde (pork belly, $8). For the not-so-daring, the menu offers the traditional Nachos (either vegetarian or with steak, $7-8), created with freshly made corn tortilla chips, tomato, black or pinto beans, a delicious secret queso, sour cream, and garnished with flakes of cilantro. These Nachos are like none other with their teasing taste that leaves one’s mouth hungry for more. Other safeties include Tacos, Enchiladas, Quesadillas, Soups, and Salads. [DU3] As all these bite size delights are enticing, Jose Garces has smartly also added a Chef’s Tasting Menu priced reasonably at $45 per person.  Explain the tasting menu.

Complimenting the tapas, the menu offers a plethora of drinks including sparkling, red, and white wines, bottled and draft beers, margaritas of every flavor, and even fresh fruit juices and smoothies in addition to the regular soft drinks. One can never forget dessert, especially at Distrito, where the treats successfully cater to the sweet tooth. The equally diverse dessert menu offers a lush Tres Leches Pastel (3 Milk Cake, Meringue, Tropical Fruit, $7) that is moist and airy with bubbles of creamy sweet fruit taste. The Pastel de Chocolate is a twist on regular chocolate cake with a hint of spice and a citrus sorbet and a sweet avocado cream. Also offered are an authentic variety of Churros ($7) and flavors of fresh Sorbeto and Helado ($6). These grand tastes are accompanied by fun and unique Dessert Drinks: Cha Cha Cha (coffee, Kahlua, cinnamon, $8), La Cabra De Chocolate (Mexican hot chocolate with caramel, $8), and more.

              At Distrito, one does not have to worry about good service. Upon entering, one is pleasantly greeted and taken care of immediately. The waiters are quick, have a thorough understanding of the menu, and are more than willing to help with selecting a dish or adjusting it to personal preferences.

            While Garces has done a great job crafting a proud menu and guaranteeing strong service, the décor of the restaurant remains an earnest attempt to extraordinarily [DU4] appeal to the young crowd. The walls are an overdone melody of greens, blues, and a joyful bubble gum pink with matching pink interior accents. Intending to add glamour, there is an equally pink life-size, Hollywood-style ‘60’s car placed in the window that might even go unnoticed after one enters the restaurant. Even the chairs and tables are misfit as they look like steel pieces of contemporary art patio furniture. All in all, the restaurant’s décor can be appreciated for the amount of thought behind it, but unfortunately it does not quite add extra excitement[DU5]  to the ambiance.

            Students can ignore the flashy make up of the restaurant and divulge[DU6]  into the food until the bill comes. It is easy to mound a lofty bill at Distrito because one continues to order as the dishes are served half size but priced at full scale. For this reason, Distrito might not fare as well amongst college students as it would on Chestnut Street in Center City. Overall, Distrito is a great relaxed joint for upscale dining snacks and drinks. It may be out of place for the frugal lifestyle of college students, but nonetheless makes an excellent trip for a special occasion.