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Mi Ranchito: The Little Ranch in La Verne is Big on Taste

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Patricia Macias-Pena

As much as I love great deals like free parking at Sunset Beach (between Huntington and Seal Beach) and All You Can Eat Spaghetti Wednesdays at the Pizza Barn, I've got another secret you won't be able to stop talking about. Mi Ranchito, a La Verne favorite for 15 years and in business for 35 at two other locations, offers great Huevos Rancheros on Saturdays for \$3.50.

For the uninitiated, that's two eggs topped with tasty Chile Verde sauce, served with beans, rice and tortillas. *Muy delicioso!*

So after a hard week of work, you can stay out late on Friday, sleep through the alarm clock on Saturday morning and still catch the special any time between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Mi Ranchito's happy hours are generous, as well. Monday through Saturday, from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Mi Ranchito serves dollar-off draft beers, \$2 well drinks and \$2.50 margaritas, which owner Patricia Macias-Pena says are the best in Southern California. Many appetizers, like nachos and buffalo wings, are also half-off. The happy hour specials pertain only to the bar or patio area, but with warmer days on the horizon, where else would you want to be.

Lest we forget, Mi Ranchito is first and foremost a family place. In fact, on Monday through Thursday, at the La Verne location only, your child gets to order a free meal from the kids' menu (Para Ninos), with the purchase of one regular priced adult combo meal. The combo plates range from \$8.99 to \$10.99, so the kids-eat-free offer is a recession buster. See the downloadable dine-in only coupons on LaVerneOnline for more details.

Now everybody knows that certain authentic and flavorful Mexican dishes, like refried beans, are made with lard. (Grandma back in the day in ol' Mexico didn't know or much care about California cuisine and lighter fare, only that her dishes – platos – had to taste good.) But Patricia and her head chef Arturo, who has been with her 18 years, have designed several lighter, calorie-conscious Mexican entrees as well.

Their ardent interest in healthy eating is good for me and for you.

"We offer many lighter options here," said Patricia, who bears a slight resemblance to Tina Fey, a spell that may last only until all the trailers promoting Fey's new movie, "Date Night" with Steve Carell, settle down.

"If you don't want refried beans, you can order ranch-style beans," Patricia added. "We have fish tacos that are grilled, not fried." Mi Ranchito's grilled chicken tacos and fajita specials also should satisfy the public's growing appetite for lighter fare that is both nutritious and delicious.

Patricia boasts that Mi Ranchito uses only the freshest ingredients. "Nothing is canned, nothing is store bought," Patricia said. "Everything we make is authentic, based on recipes that have been passed down through generations, when there were no supermarkets around the corner."

Of all the good things you can say about Mi Ranchito, the best is that Patricia and her long-time staff "get it." They offer all the classic and authentic Mexican dishes, including tacos, burritos, enchiladas, tostadas and fajitas, all at family-friendly prices, but they also serve up outstanding and creative specials, including a new one every Friday night, that pushes the envelope just a little, but not so far that you feel like you're diving off the cliffs of Acapulco.

Mi Ranchito is truly a family affair. Patricia's parents and sister run the Upland-based Mi Ranchito and her brother manages the Chino Hills' Mi Ranchito.

Never one to be satisfied with the status quo, Patricia has been experimenting with a new line of margaritas that she plans to debut when her new glassware arrives and her new menus are printed. "People are really getting into tequila," said Patricia whose personal favorite is Don Julio.

Her patrons don't need much encouragement to enjoy the fiesta atmosphere, especially on Friday nights, where a sign at the bar says, "Don't Drink the Water, Drink the Margaritas."

With \$2.50 margaritas during happy hour, except on Margarita Madness Mondays (2 p.m. to 9 p.m.) when the price drops to \$1.99., who's going to argue?

For other Mi Ranchito super-savers, including kids and seniors specials, click on the COUPON button on the LaVerneOnline.com home page and then again on Mi Ranchito.

Salud!

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