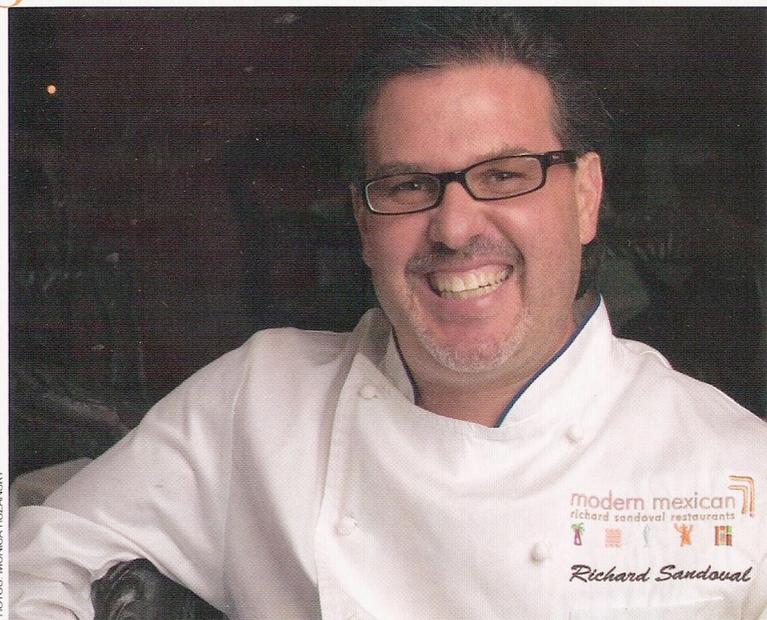


Tamayo



PHOTOS: MONICA ELIZABENSKY

Hola! Welcome to Tamayo, an upscale Mexican restaurant that is setting new standards for authentic south-of-the-border cuisine. The daringly delicious dishes impart flavors and textures that burst onto the palate—not harshly but delicately balanced like a salsa dance in sync.

“This is not Tex-Mex,” says Chef de Cuisine Arnold Rubio, in the understatement of the year. Tamayo goes beyond burritos, tacos and combo plates. Way beyond. So far beyond that Chef and Owner Richard Sandoval named his exclusive style of cuisine Modern Mexican, the name he gave his business, which runs his restaurants in New York City, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Las Vegas, Dubai and Mexico City along with Zengo and Tamayo in Denver and La Sandia, opening at Stapleton this fall. Each restaurant is a little different, but each interprets Sandoval’s pioneering art of cooking—combining authentic Mexican ingredients with innovative techniques from French and Asian influences—that he defines in his cookbook, *Modern Mexican Flavors*.

From tennis pro to toque

Fortunately for foodies around the globe, Sandoval chose to go to culinary school instead of becoming a tennis pro, which he considered after playing the game at the University of New Mexico.

“My palate started to appreciate cooking around age 9 while spending time at my grandmother’s house where the culture revolved around food,” says the Mexico City–born Sandoval. “When I found I couldn’t make a living playing tennis, I thought about what I really enjoyed. It was going to restaurants and trying food from different countries.” He enrolled in the Culinary Institute of America and gained experience by working for four years at his father’s two restaurants in Mexico City. His own unique style emerged 11 years ago, when he moved to New York and opened Maya. He started its sister restaurant in San Francisco soon after, and has since won numerous awards and accolades, including being named one of the Best Chefs of 2003 by *New York Magazine*.

Sandoval’s passion for his heritage clearly shows at Tamayo. The name honors Rufino Tamayo, a contemporary Mexican artist who painted with vibrant colors and rich textures, a theme that parallels the food. A 40-foot mosaic mural depicting Tamayo’s work

blazes above the bar, and other works of art adorn the ochre, terra cotta and blue walls of the space that used to house Cadillac Ranch. “I wanted to show people what my culture is really about and I’ve achieved that,” says Sandoval.

Tamayo’s take on tequila

Indeed, what is Mexican culture without tequila? Tamayo offers an enormous selection of that special spirit made from the blue agave plant, which natives call “plant of the gods.” It comes in three stages of aging: blanco or plata is the purest form; reposado, aged in wood for at least 60 days; and añejo, aged at least a year in oak barrels. You can order individual shots or flights of three different tequilas. Or, have a margarita made with a tequila of your choosing or from the suggestions on the menu. A nice selection of cervezas and wine is also offered, as well as a Tamayopolitan, mojito and sangria. Sip them on the spacious second-story covered patio overlooking our beautiful mountain sunsets.

Modern Mexican menu

With all the main ingredients imported from

IF YOU GO

- 1400 Larimer St.
- 720-946-1433
- www.modernmexican.com/tamayode
- Dress is “downtown casual”