

# Corazon

We miss Castle Hill, but this shift to upmarket Mex is pretty and fun—and almost as good

Food: 9.0

Feel: 9.3

Price: \$40 Upmarket restaurant

## Mexican, Southwestern

Mon-Sat 11am- 10pm

**Bar** Beer, wine, liquor

**Credit Cards** Visa, MC, AmEx

**Reservations** Accepted

Date-friendly, good wines,  
veg-friendly

**Clarksville**

1101 W. 5<sup>th</sup> St.

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Castle Hill Café's recent transformation to Corazon was met with rancor by many longtime fans of its excellent Southwestern fare and homey charm. The press conjectured that money, boredom, and the changing downtown clientele were behind the switch to a more straight up-Mexican venture. Just what we need, everyone sighed. More Mexican.

Any cynicism is quickly subdued upon entry, though, by a warm embrace of oranges, yellows, and deep reds. Without-iron curly-cues fence diners in, whimsy, animal print touches surprise; and overhead lanterns evoke an older world. There's a balance of chic and casual: linen napkins and plastic appetizer plates. Mexican craftwork supports the theme without caricaturizing it.

Many successful dishes from CHC remain: shrimp enchiladas, smoked pork tenderloin flautas, and a multi-cast sundried-cherry chutney. The kitchen still does wonders with its fresh, flaky seared fish of the day, with a supporting guajillo sauce that integrates just enough cream to smooth out the smoky, bright chili pepper. Lamb empanadas with raisins and pecans (more New American than Mexican) are deliciously addictive, and from 4-7pm Monday through Thursday, they're half off, making this the best \$2.50 you'll ever spend. You'd also be hard pressed to find a better pozole in town. If anyone you know is sick, a bowl of this slow-roasted-pork-and-hominy stew will put them right, the marrow-rich broth and slight hot pepper a tastier hangover cure than menudo.

If you have a favorite chile, we bet you can pick it out in the smoky homemade salsa, which incorporates 15 different kinds. That these chiles appear in various combinations in main dishes without overwhelming the meat is a testament to Corazon's finesse. Consider everything going on in chicken enchiladas with mole coloradito: brined roasted chicken, cilantro, jack cheese, sauce with ancho and guajillo, blackened tomatoes, oregano puree, guacamole, red onion escabeche. Could you really taste all that at once? You bet.

Margaritas are great, made using Cointreau and lime juice rather than cheap-tasting sour mix. The wine list could support the spicy fare better with more cool-climate wines, but there are a few gems among the Italian producers, and prices are decent. Dessert also seems to stick to the same old—rich and tasty but without the accomplished complexity of the rest of the menu. Despite this, Corazon continues to do what Castle Hill Café did: charm and excite with excellent food at very reasonable prices in a lovely, evocative setting. -EM