



This fine Mexican & Peruvian restaurant is named "El Tule" after the truly magnificent tree considered one of the largest and oldest living things on Earth. My wife and LDC (Lovely Dining Companion) happen to have had the good fortune to visit it up close and personal on our trip last year to Oaxaca Mexico. Its trunk measures 164 feet in circumference, the largest in girth of any tree on the planet.

With such a name, this little restaurant, just across the bridge from New Hope in Lambertville, NJ, has a lot to live up to, and in most ways it does. Of the ten various dishes the four of us ordered, not one was less than excellent. It was upscale cuisine from Central and South America. There was classic Mexican guacamole, tortilla soup, quesadillas, enchiladas, and flan at their best. And we had a few traditional Peruvian dishes like parihuela, palta a la Reina, and bunuelos. You will go here for the good quality delicious cooking, not for the plain ambiance.

The dining room is a perfect square with seating for 36. Outside seating accommodates 30 more. We were rewarded last Wednesday evening with a beautiful warm early summer night, and made the most of it by dining outside under a protective umbrella and among the sparkling lights that came to life as the sky darkened. When we first were seated, I was disturbed by some off-putting smells in the air, but fortunately they soon disappeared.

El Tule is owned and operated by the Egoavil Family, led by husband & wife, Falso and Carmen, who came from Peru to the United States in 1992. They realized a dream when they opened their restaurant one year ago. They felt that they could make it work by offering Americans their unusual Mexican-Latin fusion cooking.

Several standout dishes still have my mouth watering thinking about them. The Guacamole de Casa and tortilla chips (\$8.50) was outstanding, a superb version, smooth yet chunky with bits of onion and tomato, and perfectly spiced. The Quesadilla El Tule (\$9.50) is a grilled tortilla filled with a scrumptious mix of chicken or beef, roasted red & green pepper, sauteed onion, and cheese, perhaps the best I have tasted yet. For dessert, El Tule's delicious Bunuelos, cinnamon laced tortillas with ice cream and maple syrup, were a real treat.

Entrees came with refried black beans and Spanish rice. My choice of the Pescado Ranchero (\$15) presented a large filet of tilapia served over sauteed spinach, and enlivened with a spicy tomato chipotle sauce. A tablemate went with a large serving of Chicken & Shrimp Enchiladas (\$16), enough, I thought, for two.

My sister-in-law was the most adventurous trying a Peruvian seafood stew called "Parihuela," described as a "repairing and aphrodisiacal soup that will unleash you with its addictive flavor, and made with shrimp, mussels, scallops, octopus, corvina fish cooked with roccotto peppers and Peruvian beer." She was soon "unleashed," but I don't know if it was the Parihuela or the champagne and vodka cocktail she was drinking.

Her boyfriend took in the Fajitas, asking for a combination of steak and chicken (\$15). On a separate plate it came with the full complement of onions, pepper, rice, refried beans, guacamole, sour cream, pico de gallo, and sour flour tortillas.

I also must mention that the Tortilla soup (\$5) was a burst of Mexican flavors and colors, not to be missed.

Don't forget to tell the Egoavil Family that yophillyfoodies sent you.

**RATING SCALE: 5 m's (Excellent) 4 m's (Very Good)
3 m's (Good) 2 m's (Fair) 1 m (Poor)**

Overall Rating: mmm 3/4 (out of 5 m's) above average South-of-the Border cuisines

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El Tule

Address: 49 N. Main St., Lambertville, NJ

Phone: 609.773.0007

Website:

www.eltulerestaurant.com
(lovely music – turn up your sound)

Cuisine: Mexican & Peruvian

Hours: Monday-closed
Tuesday-Thursday 11 am-9 pm, Friday-Saturday 11 am-10 pm, Sunday 11 am-9 pm

Prices: Apps., Sm. Plates, Soups, Salads \$5-\$13

Entrées, \$11-\$19

Ambiance: Plain, unadorned, undistinguished

Reservations: Are accepted

Credit Cards: Visa, Mastercard accepted

Alcoholic Bevs: BYOB

Special Features: the Peruvian menu includes four ceviches