

'THE FOOD AT THIS NEW IPSWICH RESTAURANT TASTES AMAZING'

The Ipswich eatery brings a much-needed South American flavour to Suffolk, says Danielle Lett

Last week, temperatures hit the high 20s and low 30s yet again. And after working in my stuffy flat all day, I thought it was too hot to cook (there was just no way I was going to put the oven on in that heat), so I rang my mum to see if she was free to head out for dinner.

She was, so we decided to check out new eatery Venezuelan Traditional Food on Wherstead Road in Ipswich.

I love international fare, but I honestly don't think I've ever had Venezuelan before, so was especially excited to see what was on offer.

As we made our way there, we saw a board out the front which said: "Two San Miguel & Bud for £5.80", and "Two Guinness for £5.80" on the other side. Already I knew I was going to like this place.

Inside we were greeted by Diego, who owns the place with his uncle, Dimas. The two moved from their native Venezuela four years ago, and opened their restaurant earlier this year.

Diego seated us around the back. It has to be said, the decor is quite basic, but I'd heard the food was so good from others that the aesthetics didn't really matter to me.

As I said, I've never had Venezuelan before, but Diego described his native fare as "a fusion of Spanish, Portugal,



ABOVE:
Inside Venezuelan
Traditional Food

RIGHT:
Quesillo - a
Venezuelan
flan made from
condensed milk



Italian and South American tastes with an Arabic and Chinese touch" in an earlier interview with the paper.

All of those tick my foodie boxes, so I was eager to get stuck in.

We ordered two Budweisers (£5.80), and for starters went for the platter (£17.99) to share.

This was comprised of three tequeños, Russian salad, fried plantains, a shredded chicken empanada, and a cheese empanada. It was also served with tataro and guasacaca dips - tataro is made from spring onion, capers, pickles and mayonnaise, while guasacaca is avocado,

garlic, coriander, and mayonnaise.

Perfect for two, this seemed like the ideal introduction to Venezuelan cuisine. And boy, was it amazing.

Firstly, we tucked into the tequeños, which are fried breaded cheese sticks (think mozzarella sticks, but better), and these were fantastic. Stringy and gooey, they put regular mozzarella sticks to shame. And they had great crunch factor as you bit into them. I honestly could've eaten my body weight in these.

As someone who loves street food, you can't go wrong with an empanada - and if you've not had

one before, you're missing out. They're basically baked or fried filled pastries, usually made with chicken, beef or cheese.

Mum and I split these ones, so we sampled both flavours. The shredded chicken one was plentiful, packed with rich, moist meat - but my favourite was the cheese variety. I wish I'd asked what cheese was inside. It was so gooey and incredible. Think a Mexican quesadilla, but with more bang for your buck. The two dips on the side were the perfect accompaniment.

I'd never had Russian salad before, and wasn't expecting to see it on a Venezuelan menu, but it really complimented the other dishes. Made from potatoes, mayonnaise, peas, carrots, and shredded chicken, this was exceptionally creamy and moreish. And you can't go wrong with a side of fried plantain - cooked to utter perfection, I might add.

Paying less than £20 for all of that was definitely good value for money, and I cannot recommend this starter enough. It was a varied selection of some of the best of what Venezuela has to offer. If you fancy something else



though, its starter menu also has a variety of meal deals starting from £10 which come with either an empanada, an arepa, a cachapa, or soup. If you work in the nearby area, this is perfect for a quick bite to eat on your lunch break.

Time for the mains - and even though we were getting pretty full by this point, we knew we needed to try one of the entrée dishes.

I ordered the Pabellón meal (£14.99), while mum had the Salchicha meal (£11.99). The Pabellón meal is a traditional native dish and consisted of shredded beef, black beans, rice, plantain, and an arepa on the side (an arepa is a cornmeal cake that's been baked or fried, can either be filled or eaten plain). The Salchicha meal was sausage, caramelised onion and mozzarella, with the same sides and veg.

When our plates arrived, we couldn't wait to tuck in (even though we were feeling pretty full a few bites in - blame the starters!). The portion sizes were plentiful, and everything tasted so fresh and healthy. I couldn't recommend this enough, and we actually took the rest of it home

as we were fit to burst halfway through. And non-meat eaters fret not, as there are vegan and vegetarian options on the menu.

If you've got a sweet tooth, there are a handful of desserts on offer to round off your dining experience (if you manage to squeeze anymore in) - including lime pie, quesillo, tres leches, and oblea. I went for a slice of quesillo (£3.99), which is a Venezuelan flan made from condensed milk. I actually took mine to go as I couldn't manage it. When I finally mustered up the hunger pangs to try it, I found it thoroughly enjoyable. Creamy but light, it was a good dessert, and something different.

After ordering another round of beers (£5.80), our bill came to £60.56, which felt like great value for money considering how much food was delivered to the table.

If you're looking to try something new and a bit different, make sure you head on down to this traditional eatery - I'll definitely be returning. I cannot wait to sink my teeth into more empanadas and tequeños - and I certainly won't be sharing mine this time.

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MAIN:
The starter platter - which consisted of three tequeños, Russian salad, fried plantains, a shredded chicken empanada, a cheese empanada, and tatar and guasacaca dips

LEFT:
The Pabellón meal at Venezuelan Traditional Food

Pictures:
Danielle Lett

Ella Mills' cauliflower and cashew pilaf tray bake recipe

Try this one-tray wonder from the founder of Deliciously Ella for an easy midweek dinner.

"The ginger, garlic, bay leaves and spices give this cauliflower and cashew pilaf loads of depth, with a nice pop of colour from the green beans," says Ella Mills, of Deliciously Ella fame.

"To vary this, you can swap

the cauliflower for squash or sweet potato - just peel and chop into bite-sized pieces and add it in the same way."

She advises one slight change for kids: "If you're cooking for very young children, omit the cashews from the roasting tin and sprinkle over the adults' portions when serving."



Cauliflower and cashew pilaf tray bake

Picture: PA

CAULIFLOWER AND CASHEW PILAF TRAY BAKE RECIPE (Serves 4)

Ingredients:

- 1 onion, finely sliced
- 1 cauliflower, tough outer leaves discarded, cut into florets
- 1 thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and finely grated
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1½ tbsp coconut oil, melted
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 bay leaves
- 1tsp cumin seeds
- ½tsp turmeric
- 1tsp ground coriander
- 50g cashews, roughly chopped
- 40g sultanas
- 250g white basmati rice, rinsed and drained
- 200g green beans, trimmed and cut into 4-5cm lengths
- 500ml hot vegetable stock
- 1 lemon, halved
- Small handful of coriander, roughly chopped
- Harissa, to serve (optional)

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C fan.
2. Put the onion, cauliflower,

ginger and garlic into a large roasting tin. Add the coconut oil, cinnamon, bay leaves, cumin, turmeric, coriander and cashews. Mix everything until well combined and spread out in a single, even layer.

3. Place the tray in the oven and bake for 10 minutes, until the onion and cauliflower have taken on a little colour.

4. Take the tray out and add the sultanas, rice and green beans. Stir them through the veg, then spread everything out in an even layer. Pour over the hot stock.

5. Cover the tray with foil and bake for 25 to 30 minutes, until the cauliflower and rice are tender. Season and add a squeeze of lemon juice to taste, then serve with a generous sprinkling of coriander, and a drizzle of harissa, if you like.

How To Go Plant-Based: A Definitive Guide For You And Your Family by Ella Mills is published by Yellow Kite, priced £26. Photography by Clare Winfield.