

BlackBook

RESTAURANTS

New York Opening: SouthWest NY

By *James Ramsay*, January 15, 2013



“Ninety-five percent of them are great,” the waiter at **SouthWest NY** says of the one-percenters who frequent this new Tex-Mex restaurant in Battery Park City. “And some of them come in and don’t understand that it’s a restaurant, that the food can’t just come out in ten minutes.” If that’s your expectation, I guess Chipotle works?

That said, lunch at SouthWest NY, by far their busiest meal of the day, is as efficient as it is pleasant. For anyone working in a nearby office, the two giant skylights in the dining room offer a nice break from fluorescent

bulbs. The mojitos, if it’s one of those lunches, aren’t so heavy as to knock you out for the afternoon. And it’s not a chain, but the feel is corporate enough to keep the workaday mindset on a loose leash (“Merchants Hospitality,” the parent company’s name, is printed at the bottom of the kid’s menu cum coloring book). A boss and his underlings were seated at the table next to me. He was extolling the virtues of *Homeland*. They hadn’t heard of it.

Battery Park City has seen an influx of trendy restaurants since Goldman Sachs opened their 200 West Street headquarters in 2009. Danny Meyer’s **North End Grill** and **Blue Smoke** are joined by craft cocktailer **Black Hound**. A Mexican restaurant may seem like a token addition to what’s becoming an Epcot for business travelers. The actual Tex-Mex theme is pleasantly subtle, though. The queso fundido, which in any Times Square hellhole would’ve come as a vat of molten Cheez Whiz, was a reasonably sized ramekin of sharp Mexican asadero, cheddar, and chorizo. The Baja crab cake came drizzled with a “jalapeño-passion fruit vinaigrette” (I’d have called it “honey”) and a refreshing chopped jicama salad. And while the whole menu’s dotted with little heart logos to indicate low calorie options, it seems like you’d have to really hunt for something to destroy your innards. Or just order six mojitos.

Executive chef Antelmo Ambrosio (he’s also at Black Hound) really knows what he’s doing when it comes to glazing the maduros, which is important, because mushy food’s no fun. If you have adult teeth, you ought to be able to use them. Fish abounds on the menu, in mahi-mahi tacos, ceviche, and a Lobster Club sandwich. The aforementioned tacos come drizzled with a citrus-cilantro “crema” (I’d have called it “green mayonnaise”). Maybe I’m just bad with condiments. It tasted fine, and the fish was perfect. We seemed to be the only ones not in a hurry, because the *Homeland* viewer and his Padawans, along with sixty other people, had totally cleared out by two o’clock. My friend and I, meanwhile, ordered some churros and finished coloring in our menus.