

Spicing It Up IN KATY

Diversify your palate with savory dishes from these fiery Latin eateries

Written by Cherri Northcutt and Kirsten Cornell | Select photography by Anetrius Wallace

Katyites are experiencing more flavors than ever before with the growing number of dining options in the area. From the seasoned steaks of Brazil to the delicate desserts of Peru, these Latin eateries are spicing things up for local foodies.



Premium fajita plate at El Asador Mexican Restaurant



Fajitas a La Cucos at Los Cucos in Old Katy

Mexican

Basic ingredients are corn, chili peppers, beans, and cheeses. The Spanish introduced beef, pork, chicken, and goat meat.



Churrasco con dos acompañamientos at Mi Pueblito

Colombian

Styles vary by region but feature local produce, river fish, inland cattle, avocado, and tomato.

Alegria Brazilian Grill

24449 Katy Fwy.
281-394-7753

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"My grandmother influenced most of my cooking style," shares Chef Arisoteles Alencar who was born and raised in Brazil. "The seasonings I use in our creations have been used in my family for generations." The centerpiece of Alegria is a custom mesquite rotisserie grill where they slow-cook steak, chicken, sausage, and pineapple. Alencar recommends the picanha. "It's a black bean stew with pork rib meat and smoked sausage served with rice, sautéed collard greens, and farofa - a yucca flour - then garnished with orange slices." For dessert, try an aromatic cup of cafezinho espresso and Pudim de Coco - coconut flan.

Las Alamedas

23501 Cinco Ranch Blvd.
281-347-3030

Las Alamedas features truly elegant dining in LaCenterra, offering regional Mexican cuisine. Owner Jorge Sneider was born and raised in Mexico and brings that culture and cuisine to his restaurant. "We have so many authentic dishes from Mexico, it's hard to choose," Sneider says. "I do recommend the carnitas michoacan and snapper Veracruz." The carnitas start with slow-cooked pork loin with a garnish of cilantro, guacamole, and onions served with tomatillo sauce. Fish lovers will delight in the snapper Veracruz with a sauce of tomatoes, capers, olives, and spices. "It's served with our Mexican rice, a recipe from my grandma," Sneider shares. Don't forget to end your meal with the taste of something sweet. Sopapillas are a traditional Mexican pastry fried and served with honey.

El Asador Mexican Restaurant

3750 S. Mason Rd.
832-321-4954

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An elegant fixture in the Cinco Ranch area, El Asador specializes in authentic dishes from Mexico. Suzanne Neff, a Cinco Ranch mother of two enjoys their stuffed chicken avocado. "I love the flavor and texture, and the chicken ranchero enchiladas are amazing," she says. With 16 different enchilada dishes, everyone is sure to find something they love. In a tribute to their location, their Cinco Ranch special features a quail, beef, or chicken fajita topped with poblano peppers, bacon, and jack cheese.

La Granja El Nido

3815 N. Fry Rd.
281-578-6758

Located on the south side of Katy, La Granja El Nido provides locals with an authentic taste of El Salvador. The pupusa is a tortilla handmade from corn or rice flour and stuffed with cheese, chicharron, beans, or vegetables. Katy native Jon Perryman says, "I love their carne asada fajita tacos, the taste is great." Another popular dish to try is the pollo asado with a marinated chicken breast, peppers, and vegetables served with rice, beans, salad, and handmade tortillas.

Brazilian

Staples of Brazilian cuisine include bananas, yucca, collard greens, carrot, rice, and pineapple.



Brazilian combo at Alegria Brazilian Grill

Cuban

Common spices include cumin, oregano, and bay leaves.



Tipiquito platter at Palma de Cera

Los Cucos

5831 Highway Blvd.
281-391-9466

Among Katyites, the original Los Cucos is still considered one of the best Tex-Mex restaurants. Katy ISD teacher Diane Gonzales says, "I'm an enchilada lover and Los Cucos has me covered. Their spice blends add the perfect touch." Gonzales' family are also fans of their homemade guacamole dip, prepared table-side. Sean Thompson, father of two, likes the atmosphere at Los Cucos. "It's lively and fun but not overwhelming," he says. "The taco plate is a favorite of mine and we all love their queso." Try something a little different with their stuffed avocado plate. Accompanied by rice, beans, and a cup of steaming tortilla soup, the dish can be filled with chicken, beef, or shrimp.

Mi Pueblito Colombian Restaurant

402 W. Grand Pkwy. S.
281-665-8690

See ad on page 130

Oscar Velasquez, owner of Mi Pueblito, is pleased to offer traditional plates from different regions of Colombia. "The Bandeja Paisa tray is from the Antioquia region, and comes with grilled steak, pork belly, pork sausage, a fried egg, corn patty, fried plantain, rice, and beans," Velasquez says. "It appeals to the meat lovers." Other fan favorites are the grilled churrasco, a juicy and flavorful sirloin and the empanadas de carne. Velasquez also recommends the Ajíaco Bogotano, a delicious chicken soup prepared with three kinds of potatoes and guasco leaves. "Our food, the décor, and the Latin music gives you the sensation of going back in time to old Colombia," Velasquez shares.

Original Marini's Empanada House

3522 S. Mason Rd.
832-391-4273

The Marini family brings a wide variety of traditional Argentine empanadas through Original Marini's Empanada House. "We have over 70 varieties," Sergio Marini says. "We cater to a lot of different cultures because you find empanadas in all of South America." He estimates that about 75% of their menu comes from his mother's recipes. Marini recommends the chicken Diablo with diced chicken, bell peppers, tomato sauce, and spices. "Try the beef gaucho; it's amazing. It has hard boiled eggs, ground beef, onions, olives, and other spices," he adds. Don't miss out on feeding your sweet tooth. With dessert empanada flavors like pumpkin with cinnamon, chocolate Ghirardelli, s'mores, and a peanut butter cup, you'll be begging Marini for his secret recipes.

Palma de Cera

2004 S. Mason Rd.
281-392-3800

Palma de Cera fills their menu with hand-picked dishes from Latin America featuring flavors from Colombia, Cuba, Brazil, and Chile. Stephanie Teel, a local teacher and mother of four, enjoys the steak with chimichurri sauce. "It's delicious and cooked perfectly," she says. "I love the fried plantains as well." There are a variety of steak offerings with sauces ranging from creamy mushroom to chipotle. Among them is the ropa vieja, a flank steak drizzled with Cuban sauce and served atop rice, beans, and fried yucca.

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Gaucha and chicken Diabolo empanadas at The Original Marini's Empanada House

Argentinian
Most dishes include red meat. Empanadas and Dulce de leche were developed in Argentina.


 **Pollo Bravo**
890 S. Mason Rd.
281-392-0030

More than just a great place for rotisserie chicken, Pollo Bravo serves a hybrid of Peruvian and Mexican cooking. Recent additions to the menu are tallarines verdes and papa a la huacaina. "These are very traditional Peruvian dishes with fried cassava, avocado salad, and salchipapa," says manager Javier Gil. There are a few secret recipes on the menu as well. "Our famous creamy bravo hot sauce comes from an old family recipe," Gil shares. "Our house dressing will knock your socks off." Their house menu contains several flavorful dishes including the camarones a la brava, which coats shrimp in a creamy chipotle sauce and accompanies it with avocado salad and Mexican salad.



Tamale Amarillo at Sur Latin Peruvian Cuisine

Peruvian
Typical ingredients include shrimp, potatoes, and local fruits like cherimoya, citrus, and pineapple.

 **Sur Latin Peruvian Cuisine**
19901 Kingsland Blvd.
Houston
281-385-9778
See ad on page 56

Stop in at this neighborhood eatery for a unique South American experience. Valeria Lescano, manager of Sur, is proud of their authentic Peruvian cuisine. "Our ceviche is a favorite with customers and it's traditional to our area," Lescano says. Another popular dish is the lomo saltado, a succulent beef tenderloin sautéed with tomatoes and red onions. "We offer Latin amigable service, that's Spanish for friendly and harmonious," Lescano explains. "It's the taste of Peru in a bite." Warm up this fall with a bowl of sopa de mariscos – a spicy seafood soup made with shrimp, scallops, fish, and mussels. **KM**

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Restaurant Type Key

-  = Argentinian
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