



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CITY TACOS

City Tacos offers more than 20 varieties of tacos.



Avocado is added to this taco, one of many options at City Tacos, which has a location in Pacific Beach.



From meat to fish and vegetarian options, there is a taco for everyone at City Tacos.

# ON THE menu

## City Tacos brings a wide assortment of taco options to Pacific Beach

BY CATHARINE L. KAUFMAN

Gerald Torres, whose friends call him Gerry, is a legend in the taco scene around town.

His life reads like a choppy novel — part adventure, part horror and part inspirational. The setting starts in Mexico City where he was born, making pit stops in Miami, Hawaii, Tijuana and finally San Diego with a happy ending.

Torres said he is grateful to his parents, both airline pilots who met in flight school, for introducing him to beautiful foods, different cultures and travel to interesting destinations. But it was his near fatal car crash 20 years ago that sent him searching for a purpose in life.

That purpose landed him in La Mesa with the opening of a trattoria called Tiramisu, his first foray in the restaurant business. Then the love of his native food inspired Torres to switch gears and create a concept that incorporated authentic Mexican cuisine with a fun and original twist.

The budding restaurateur's next stop was North Park

in the spring of 2014, when he opened his first City Tacos shop.

"There were only a few options for Mexican food at the time," Torres said. "The same proteins and presentations, burritos or tostado style, and I thought I can do something better. That's where the idea for City Tacos came about."

Torres focused on flavor and premium ingredients rather than traditional preparation. His French-trained chef beautifully paired unusual ingredients, elevated proteins to another level and gave people a different perspective on the taco.

Torres also boasts about the generous portion sizes that were in contrast to the typically skimpy tacos. Salsas are made in-house, along with the masa for the corn tortillas, while the highest quality meats, fresh fish (either wild caught or sustainable) and produce sourced from local, organic farms are used to construct the unique taco combinations.

With his restaurant chain now having seven locations, he has tremendous purchasing power.



City Tacos founder Gerald Torres, holding a tray of tacos, with employees in September 2023 celebrating the company's 3 millionth taco sold.

Torres opened the Pacific Beach spot in 2020, just a stone's throw from Crystal Pier near the corner of Mission Boulevard and Garnet Avenue, offering ocean breezes, salty sea air and a vibrant, rustic space set up for fast-casual service with both indoor and patio seating.

Whether you stroll in from the beach in a bathing suit, or from the boardroom in a business suit, there is a taco to please all palates. The taco-centric menu includes 20 different types, along with the "Taco of the Month."

Let's start with the ever-popular Mexicali Taco piling grilled Angus steak, onions and poblano peppers over fluffy mashed potatoes and melted Asadero cheese, finished with crema fresca and Cotija cheese sprinkles on a homemade flour tortilla. "Our take on meat and potatoes," Torres said.

Love fish? Then you can indulge in the Pescado Taco that combines golden battered mahi mahi, topped with cabbage, pickled strawberries, red onions and tomatoes drizzled with serrano and chipotle aiolis. There is also a handful of microgreens on top.

Or what about the Spanish-influenced Veracruz Taco? It envelopes grilled fish in fresh herbs and other ingredients emblematic of the region, including capers, olives, white wine and a lime aioli.

For January's featured item, check out the vegetarian Artichoke Heart Taco served with a fine dining presentation.

Torres said his favorite menu item happens to be the sassy vegetarian Chile Relleno, a lightly beer-battered blonde chili stuffed with Oaxaca and Cotija cheeses, layered over a bed of arugula and finished with pico de gallo and lime aioli. This dish reflects how the taqueria plays with different flavors, and creates fresh renditions of traditional dishes.

"We have a taco for everyone," Torres said. "That's how we designed the menu to provide something for all tastes — vegetarian, or loaded with fish or meat, fried or grilled, simple yet complex. We start with a protein then build from there with other mouth-watering ingredients."

City Tacos also offers old-school Mexican beans that blend pico de gallo, serrano peppers and Cotija cheese with pinto beans. Called Frijoles de la Olla, the dish cooks for 6 to 8 hours with a slew of onions and herbs. Then wash it all down nicely with a craft beer, or wide selection of authentic Mexican beers.

On Taco Tuesdays patrons receive 10 percent off menu items, along with \$3 beers. But Torres is not big on gimmicks, games or surprises.

"We offer quality food with a smile, consistency in operation throughout the year, and work very hard so that customers enjoy a great experience," he said.

Whether young, old or ages in between, City Tacos attracts diners who enjoy tasty, good quality food with a laid back ambience.

Torres reached the 3 million tacos sold milestone last

September at the North Park location. He is proud to serve San Diego county and beyond, with other City Tacos at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, Encinitas, La Mesa, Sorrento Valley and Petco Park as you enter on 7th Street.

It's no wonder the list of honorable mentions and awards he has received over the years is so long, starting with Ranch & Coast Magazine's "Best Taco," San Diego Magazine's "Best Cheap Eats," The Reader's "Best Tacos" and so on.

Torres' recipe for success is a simple one: "Making a good interpretation of what a taco can and should be. Authentic with a twist that Mexicans can be proud of. And that's what sets us apart," he said.

After trying one of City Tacos' creations, diners will have a new respect for the taco, and it'll give them something to talk about. Olé!

Find City Tacos' recipe for Taco Placero with Cactus Salad at [pbmonthly.net](http://pbmonthly.net).

## Want to visit?

### City Tacos

- Address: 4516 Mission Blvd., Pacific Beach
- Phone: 858-284-4239
- Website: [Citytacosd.com](http://Citytacosd.com)
- Hours: Open daily from 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.
- Good to know: Specials offered all day each Tuesday.

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