



ANCIENT CITY APPETITE

BY JOSHUA BAER

EPAZOTE ON THE HILLSIDE

86 Old Las Vegas Highway, Santa Fe

Open daily, except Wednesdays, from 11:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.

Major credit cards – Reservations suggested

505 988-8992

When you arrive at Epazote on the Hillside, the first thing you want to do is order the Rack of Lamb for Two, medium rare, with all the sauces. Order it before you sit down. If your hostess or waitress asks you if you mean the *cordero*, or lamb loin, say no. Tell her you want the Rack of Lamb for Two, the one Chef Fernando cooks in the *horno* and brings to the table, sliced into chops, surrounded by small dishes containing each of his sauces, including his inspired *moles*. Don't go to Epazote and neglect to order the Rack of Lamb for Two (\$50). And don't let the price discourage you, either. If Fernando Olea is an artist—and he deserves that reputation—then Epazote's Rack of Lamb for Two is his masterpiece.

While you're waiting for your rack of lamb, make sure to order a glass of the Mango Lemonade (\$3.50), and these *botanas*:

Lechón (marinated pork loin) \$8

Pato (Muscovy duck breast) \$10

Salmón (wild Pacific salmon) \$7

Atun (yellowfin tuna) \$6

In Spanish, *botanas* means "snacks." Epazote's *botanas* come to your table as thin, raw slices, accompanied by a large, black stone that has been heated in

Epazote's *horno* to 700°F. (Don't worry about burning your fingers. They bring you a pair of tongs.) Each *botana* also comes with Chef Fernando's sauces, including his *moles*, and with a plate of small tortillas. After grilling each slice on the stone, you peel it off with the tongs, dip it in one, two, or all of the sauces, and eat it either by itself or wrapped in a tortilla.

Twenty minutes after you sit down, Chef Fernando will bring the Rack of Lamb for Two to your table. The chops will be on a platter, surrounded by small portions of his sauces. If you ask, Chef Fernando will list the ingredients he uses in his sauces, and tell you how and why the flavors of his *moles* differ from each other. And it makes sense to ask, because Fernando Olea understands the nature of *mole* as well as anyone alive. When you eat the rack, use your hands. Dip each chop into the sauces. Indulge. Lose control. And remind yourself, from one bite to the next, that the best flavors live in the meat that lies closest to the bone.

Ancient City Appetite recommends places to eat, in and out of Santa Fe. The photograph is by Guy Cross. Send the names of your favorite places to places@ancientcityappetite.com.