

ANOTHER ROUND OF RESTAURANTS

A review by the Determined Diner and her helpers.

We started off our latest rounds at the newly remodeled **Artesanos** restaurant on the main highway in Sabana Larga. The spacious and attractive dining room appealed to all of us, even though a large screen TV dominated one wall. It would be a great place to watch a soccer game but, hopefully, the TV remains silent the rest of the time. A diverse menu offered some new (to us) Tico food, like Olla de Yuca, Pollo Juliana, and Brocheta. In addition to these dishes we liked the Chalupa and Carne Asada. We agreed that the food was better than average, if a little more expensive. Ivan, the owner, called me the other day to say that on Wednesday nights you can now dine to live guitar music. Genial!

El Mirador del Pueblo is located in Santa Eulalia. Take a right after the soccer field if you're coming from downtown and continue about a mile. I call this restaurant the "glass restaurant" because of the floor-to-ceiling windows that form 3 sides of the building. Light and airy it is! And what a view. Breaded shrimp is the specialty here and our friend who sampled this said it was very good. Ditto the chicken fajita. The vegetarian casado, ceviche mixto with avocado and "taco" were all pronounced good, but the most popular food at the table was the french fries: the best in Atenas according to our potato aficionados! This fact alone should be enough to bring you to the hinterlands. They're open every day for lunch and dinner.

A restaurant that's been around Atenas a long time is **Don Tadeo**, the Chinese restaurant right on the park. They have a huge menu with most of the dishes you would expect. What you might not expect is that the Costa Rican version of these Chinese dishes varies somewhat from the U.S. version. Our tasters tried the wonton soup, egg rolls and chicken curry, plus something called "wooba" (is this a Chinese word??) which is like a fajita, skillet cooked. All were rated very good, even if they were a little different tasting. Prices are reasonable. Remember Ramon from Alida's? He's now the waiter at Don Tadeo. Dine there daily from 11 to 11.

Churasco is located right on the main highway, just beyond Jalapeno's. Surprisingly, the noise from the highway doesn't bother you in the restaurant. I tried the plato de la casa, the beef churasco. It wasn't very tender, but the taste was excellent. The corvina especial, and consommé de pollo were rated so-so, but one diner really liked the chuleta a la naranja, especially the sauce. The surroundings are simple, but the service was good and they do boast tablecloths!

If there was ever a restaurant that deserved its name, **Cueva del Oso** is it. Located on the main road by the blinking light, you have to look hard to even find this dark, cave-like place. The menu offered the usual selection, but the food wasn't quite up to par. My plato de pescado was dry and tough (after the waiter assured me when I ordered it that it would NOT be dry). My dining companions said the chalupa and steak with grilled onions were OK. There were no other diners the day we were there, although it may be more popular at night. Unlike Churasco, the noise from the road does infiltrate this restaurant. And, a final note, the prices for the food were on the high side. I'm afraid the Bear Cave didn't bear up so well in this review!