

The newly opened Hogar Steakhouse in Westmount is a lively and inviting restaurant

MtlRestoRap

MIKE COHEN

Hogar is a new steakhouse in Westmount with Mexican influence which is quickly attracting a following for lunch and dinner. The place opened last summer. It can seat 60 people in the dining room and 15 more at the bar.

For those who might not be big fans of Mexican cuisine, do not let the sign on the marquee “Hogar Mexican Steakhouse” deter you. Hogar is a lively and inviting restaurant effortlessly blending the rich heritage of Mexico with the hearty indulgence of a traditional steakhouse.

Brothers Sebastian and Santiago Torres are behind the operation, conveniently located on Ste. Catherine Street across from Westmount Square. Sebastian is at the front of the house as de facto General Manager; Santiago is Head Chef. They have been joined in the venture by their parents Tomas and Maria Teresa, who help in the kitchen, and their sister Laura as one of the hostesses.



Close friend Apu is also a key member of the team, as a host and server.

The family is from Colombia and moved to Canada in 2004. Sebastian and Santiago have worked at a number of international restaurants in Europe. This included *Mirazur* in Menton, *France* rated with three stars by the Michelin Guide.

The menu items here are familiar ones that you’d see at any high-end dining establishment. “Hogar means ‘Home’ in Spanish and for my family and I this restaurant is our home,” says Sebastian. “It is where we spend most time together, where we feel more comfortable to be and where we want to share our passion with others. Hogar was also the name of the first business of my grandmother. It was a flower shop inside her home. So there is a small tribute to my Abuelita since she’s the one who planted the seed for the hospitality industry.”

Our publisher Peter Kerr served as my dining companion, and we were very impressed with this new discovery. There is an extensive cocktail menu, but I decided to have a Virgin de Guadalupe, containing hibiscus, passion fruit and grapefruit.

At Hogar, each table gets a tray of tortilla chips with three delicious sauces to start things off.

For starters, you can order items such as guacamole, shrimp cocktail, tuna, scallop and mushroom tostada, salmon tiradito, ceviche Sinaloa and oysters. I opted for six oysters, which came with two mignonette sauces, Hogar and Mexican.

Peter really enjoyed the Mexican summer salad, which came nicely chopped up and contained pinto beans, frisée lettuce, avocado, rainbow tomatoes and corn. There are also tacos. For lunch, a \$15 Table D’Hôte comes with coffee, dessert of the day and ei-



A sampling of the Hogar cuisine

ther a garden salad, a tortilla soup or for an additional \$9 grilled octopus.

There are fish items on the menu, but I was intent on trying their steak. They offer a ribeye, skirt, New York or cowboy. The 16-ounce ribeye, with Mexican fresh herbs, came medium rare and cut like butter. The ever so juicy sauce comes directly from other cuts of beef. On the side, I had some papas toreadas. These are crispy baby potatoes. Peter went for the burger, chopped steak with guacamole, homemade pickles, smoked gouda, chipotle mayo and lettuce.

The Torres brothers have big plans for their project. There is now \$5 Taco Tuesdays, from 5 pm onwards. A new Sunday brunch features a burrito breakfast, grilled cheese, avocado millefeuille, smoked salmon, huevos rancheros, chilaquiles, pancakes and a sweet tower.

Hogar Mexican Steakhouse is located at 4124 Saint-Catherine Ouest in Westmount. For more information call 504-4124 or log on to www.hogarsteakhouse.com

Mike’s Resto Notes: Pizzéria NO.900 a big winner; a return to Duc de Lorraine; Milestones opens

NO. 900 BIG WINNERS: On the eve of its 10th Anniversary, things are looking very bright for Pizzéria NO.900. With 30 successful franchises, including one that opened in Lyon, France last winter, the brand’s leadership just returned from Atlantic City where it secured first and second place finishes at the International Pizza Challenge.

Executive Chef Mirko D’Agata and Research and Development Chef Fiodar Huminski were the winners in the STG (Traditional Specialty Guaranteed) Neapolitan category. Huminski was crowned champion, clinching first place with his delicious Margherita pizza, while D’Agata secured second place with his delectable Marinara pizza.

I was invited to meet Huminski to try slices from both pizzas at the impressive Rockland Centre location, owned by Patrice Tremblay and managed by Lucas Golzio. I did not have long to wait as the pizzas are cooked in their special ovens in a remarkable 90 seconds. The oven is at 900 degrees Fahrenheit, hence the name of the chain. The pizzas measure 10 inches in

diameter, and they recommend one pizza per person. The Margherita and Marinara are lighter options, suitable for those with smaller appetites. These pizzas are thin crust and crispy, so very light to digest. Of course, there are a wide variety of other pizzas on the menu, but I wanted to try the title winners and I have no regrets. For menus and locations, go to <https://no900.com>.

DELI PLANET TAKES OFF: I recently discovered the Deli Planet at Central Station. Nick Menegakis operates the 350-seat dining room. His dad Steve started the business 29 years ago. There is a fun menu here. I started off with some piping hot and delicious cream of broccoli soup. Looking at the choices, I opted for surf & turf, a perfectly grilled ribeye steak medium rare with butterfly shrimp, rice, fries and a side salad. Everything was outstanding. I sipped a Pepsi and concluded the meal with a decadent piece of black forest cake. I will be back for sure, as there are so many other selections such as snacks like chicken fingers, mozzarella cheese sticks and poutine. There are several mighty mega burgers, salads, spaghetti, pizza, sandwiches, ribs, filet of sole, a kids menu and cocktails. The Deli Planet is located at Central Station (895 de la Gauchetière Ouest). This is also home to the Mtl Comedy Club’s (MtlComedyClub.com) Thursday to Saturday evening shows in the back of the restaurant. Owner Sid Khullar is the brother of comedy superstar Sugar Sammy who occasionally drops in for surprise performances. For more information call 514-861-2221 or log on to www.deliplanet.ca. It is open seven days a week from 7am to 8pm.

MILESTONES ARRIVES: As first reported in this column two years ago, Milestones Restaurants has



Huminski and D’Agata

finally expanded to Quebec thanks to its Montreal-owner Foodtastic. Fairview Pointe-Claire represents the inaugural locale with a Laval spot targeted for early 2024. At Fairview, there are 220 seats inside and seasonal patio for another 80. This state-of-the-art restaurant was built at a cost of \$2.7 million. Milestones Restaurants offers a tantalizing menu that caters to diverse tastes and occasions. Indulge and savour their mouthwatering mains, such as succulent steaks, fresh seafood, and artisanal pasta dishes. “The opening of our first Milestones restaurant in Montreal is a momentous occasion for us,” said Peter Mammas, CEO of Foodtastic. “We are excited to bring our unique blend of delicious food, exceptional service, and inviting atmosphere to La Belle Province. We look forward to becoming an integral part of the local community.” For more information about Milestones Restaurants and its new Montreal location, please visit their website at www.milestonesrestaurants.com.



(left) There is always a crowd at Deli Planet
(right) Chef Derek Collie at Milestones