



Eating

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New Mexico

Meet the places reinventing a cuisine. By **Cate Huguelet**

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Get pumped because we declare 2016 as the year of the Mexican restaurant. The basis for the buzz? A bunch of new eateries with the chops to make us reconsider a cuisine we thought we knew well. These four new Mexican spots are exciting us with moles of marvelous depth, carnitas with a Polish accent and more envelope-pushing dishes.

5 Rabanitos

This cash-only Pilsen BYOB restaurant from XOCO vet Alfonso Sotelo diverges from the standard taqueria, starting with pretty plating. Crusty tortas could hold their own against those of Sotelo's former employer—the piquant, poblano-laced chorizo (\$7.50) is a standout—while pickled-onion-capped pibil mounded on a sope (\$3.50) offers a pleasing citrus pop. The green pozole is the most soul-satisfying item on the menu (\$10), a many-textured dish of shredded chicken, chicharrón, avocado, cabbage and chilis in a fragrant broth, best chased with a cup of thick chocolate champurrado (\$2.50). 1758 W 18th St (312) 285-2710, 5rabanitosdotcom.wordpress.com

Dos Urban Cantina

On a stretch of Armitage Avenue that's become a major hub of Logan Square's dining scene,



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Topolobampo alums Brian Enyart and Jennifer Jones Enyart deliver joyful, inventive Mexican food. See, for instance, the juicy carnitas, crowned with an unorthodox tangle of cabbage (\$17), and the lovely arrangement of grilled mushrooms and sweet chestnut corn bread anchored in earthy red mole (\$14). End with glazed plantains and queso fresco over rich, mildly funky cajeta (\$7), and sip on the Rosita (\$10), a Negroni reimaged with tequila and Amargo-Violet bitters.

2829 W Armitage Ave (773) 661-6452, dosurbancantina.com

Ixcateco Grill

Service and ambiance alike are warm at this easygoing BYOB Albany Park newcomer, helmed by Rick Bayless protégé, Anselmo Ramirez. Start with a salad of octopus, crunchy jicama and green beans in fiery pasilla dressing (\$9) and roasted chicken with avocado cream over tender masa picaditas (\$7). Then move on to Ramirez's



specialty: complex slow-simmered moles paired with a roster of wood-grilled proteins like chicken or pork loin (\$15.50). 3402 W Montrose Ave (773) 539-5887, ixcatecogrill.com

Rojo Gusano

Get your fix of truly creative tacos at Dudley Nieto's Latin American spot in Albany Park. But first by the trio of brightly flavored salsas served with house-made tostadas (\$3.75) and a perfectly steamed chicken tamal (\$3). Then take your pick from taco offerings that play with expectations, like green curry shrimp (\$3.50) and garlicky mushrooms with Oaxacan cheese (\$2.50). Choose from \$8 cocktails like a cherry-puro-sweetened Oaxaca Mule. 3830 W Lawrence Ave (773) 539-4398, rojogusano.com