



The restaurant "El Mayor" offers a spectacular view of the Templo Mayor, but the food is another story.

MORE INFO

Two different dining experiences, both with a view.

Restaurante El Mayor
República de Argentina 15
(corner of Justo Sierra)
Tel: 5704-7580
Open daily from 1:30 to 7 p.m.

Puro Corazón
Monte de Piedad 11,
between Madero and 5 de mayo, Zócalo.
Tel: 5518-0300 ext. 121.
Open daily for breakfast and lunch.
Take the elevator to the sixth floor, but walk down so you won't miss the excellent crafts shop occupying several floors of the building.



THE NEWS PHOTO/RODRIGO OROPEZA

There's a café in one corner of the terrace where you can order coffee and a sandwich, enjoying the same fabulous view for a fraction of the price.

Next time I'll save my 600 pesos and sit there.

Another top floor restaurant, Puro Corazón, fares much better.

Located on a sixth floor terrace at the west side of the Zócalo, it offers a breathtaking panorama of the entire plaza (the largest in the Americas). The food here is decent, if nothing to write home about.

The unpretentious menu utilizes typical local ingredients such as pulque, tequila, squash blossom flowers and huitlacoche. You'll find such interesting sounding dishes as tortas de huazontle (a green vegetable used by the Aztecs, common in the market but unusual in restaurants), tacos de machaca de camarón (made with dried shrimp) and chile en escabeche relleno de tinga de pollo (vinegared chile stuffed with chicken).

Bring your out-of-town guests, and share a couple of dishes; you won't be disappointed. And on a clear day you can see forever ... well, maybe as far as Popocatepetl.

Nicholas Gilman is author of *Good Food in Mexico City: A Guide to Food Stalls, Fondas and Fine Dining*, available through on-line booksellers. www.mexicocityfood.net

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

Terrace dining in the Centro Histórico can be fabulous, as long as the food is too

BY NICHOLAS GILMAN
Special to The News

Why is the combination of a beautiful view and great food so hard to find? Too often I've encountered lousy food while enjoying some of the world's most spectacular vistas, from the rooftops of Paris to the docks of Singapore. A new venue in called El Mayor is, unfortunately, no exception.

Situated atop a colonial edifice in the heart of Mexico City's Centro Histórico, El Mayor overlooks the northeast side of our capital's Plaza de la Constitución, popularly known as the Zócalo. The view is spectacular, encompassing the ruins of the famed Templo Mayor, the main temple of the

Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán.

You enter through the Librería Porrúa and take the elevator to the second floor. Doors open to a broad terrace, a nicely appointed space with white tablecloths and simple, modern furniture – all very appealing.

The menu looks promising, too. We begin with a classic ceviche, but it's insipid – no aromatic cilantro, no chile, just lemon juice and way too much of it. The tostadas de pato are better, the shredded duck nicely complimented by a mildly sweet mole with a hint of chocolate, set atop crunchy tostadas.

The standard huachinango a la veracruzana is hard to ruin, and they don't, but it has

no spark and nary a caper to be seen. Spaghetti with calamares, however, is barely edible, suspiciously fishy tasting and bland. We leave most of it untouched.

"This is the work of a cook, not a chef," comments my dining partner, chilanga economist Verónica Moctezuma Rivera, while surveying the ruined kingdom of her ancestors.

Even the service is inadequate. Dirty dishes sit forlornly on the table for 20 minutes, almost unheard of in Mexico, and getting the waiter's attention is like hailing a taxi during a rush hour rain storm. So my advice to the view hungry: just keep to your right as you exit the elevator.