



by Joy Rhodes

New Name, Same Tasty Tapas

A little bit goes a long way at Barcelona Connection, a tapas bar and restaurant that offers a blend of fresh ingredients and bold flavors in small, satisfying portions. Located across from the Eisemann Center, this hip, upscale restaurant serves authentic Spanish cuisine like no other in Richardson.

A fusion of Old World Spanish and contemporary décor mixed with acoustic Spanish guitar music sets the backdrop for either a romantic evening for two or a casual evening among friends. In the spring and summer, before 7 p.m., the restaurant's large windows provide ample light from the western setting sun.

Outdoor dining is a comfortable option, depending on the weather. Water dances in the fountain across the street. (Some locals are known to run through it for fun. *Who, us?!*)

Owner Joe Moreno opened the restaurant a year ago under the name Jaleo, but he recently learned of a restaurant in Washington, DC that had the same name, so he is working with an attorney for the rights to Barcelona Connection.

Joe opened his first restaurant in Addison 12 years ago, called De Tapas. Whether it is a coincidence or not that Barcelona Connection is Joe's second restaurant, and Barcelona is the second largest city in Spain, the food is first class. Quality is emphasized over quantity, here.

"We are open for business to anyone who wants to eat home-style tapas, as if you were in Spain," said Joe.

Tapas are small portions of food that are usually shared among friends. It's believed that tapas came about because the Spanish would not drink without having a bite to eat. So, bars began offering a slice of bread on top of their drinks to keep the flies out...and tapa means "lid" in Spanish.

Foodies claim that tapas restaurants promote a healthy lifestyle. Because tapas are served in several small dishes, and usually are not served all at once, the meal extends over time, and you eat slower giving your stomach (or brain) time to feel full. Studies have shown that eating smaller portions is healthier than eating three large meals a day.

Spain's extensive history with many cultural influences reflects its eclectic

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cuisine...from its cold vegetable soups like *gazpacho*, to its rice-based dishes like *paella*, to its protein-rich seafood, such as *pescado frito*.

First-timers who need help easing into the tapas experience should opt for the Spanish potato omelet. (It's safe.) Vegetarians will favor the sautéed spinach, grilled asparagus, eggplant, and mushrooms. Meat-lovers may choose from chorizo, roasted chicken, marinated skirt steak, salmon, tenderloin with a chimichurri salsa, grilled lamb chops, and meatballs—all tender, all delicious.

Equally delicious are the desserts—"homemade desserts," Joe emphasizes. Personal favorites include the crème brûlée (enough for two) and *churros*, fried pastry rolls served with hot, creamy chocolate dipping sauce.

While Barcelona Connection is known for its tantalizing tapas, it serves a hearty brunch on the weekends. Also, many locals are known to grab a drink on the patio before walking over to the Eisemann Center for a show. The Sangria is a refreshing drink on a warm spring day.

¡Buen provecho! ■

Hours

Monday –Thursday: 11am–10pm

Friday–Saturday: 12–11pm

Sunday: 11:30am–10pm



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