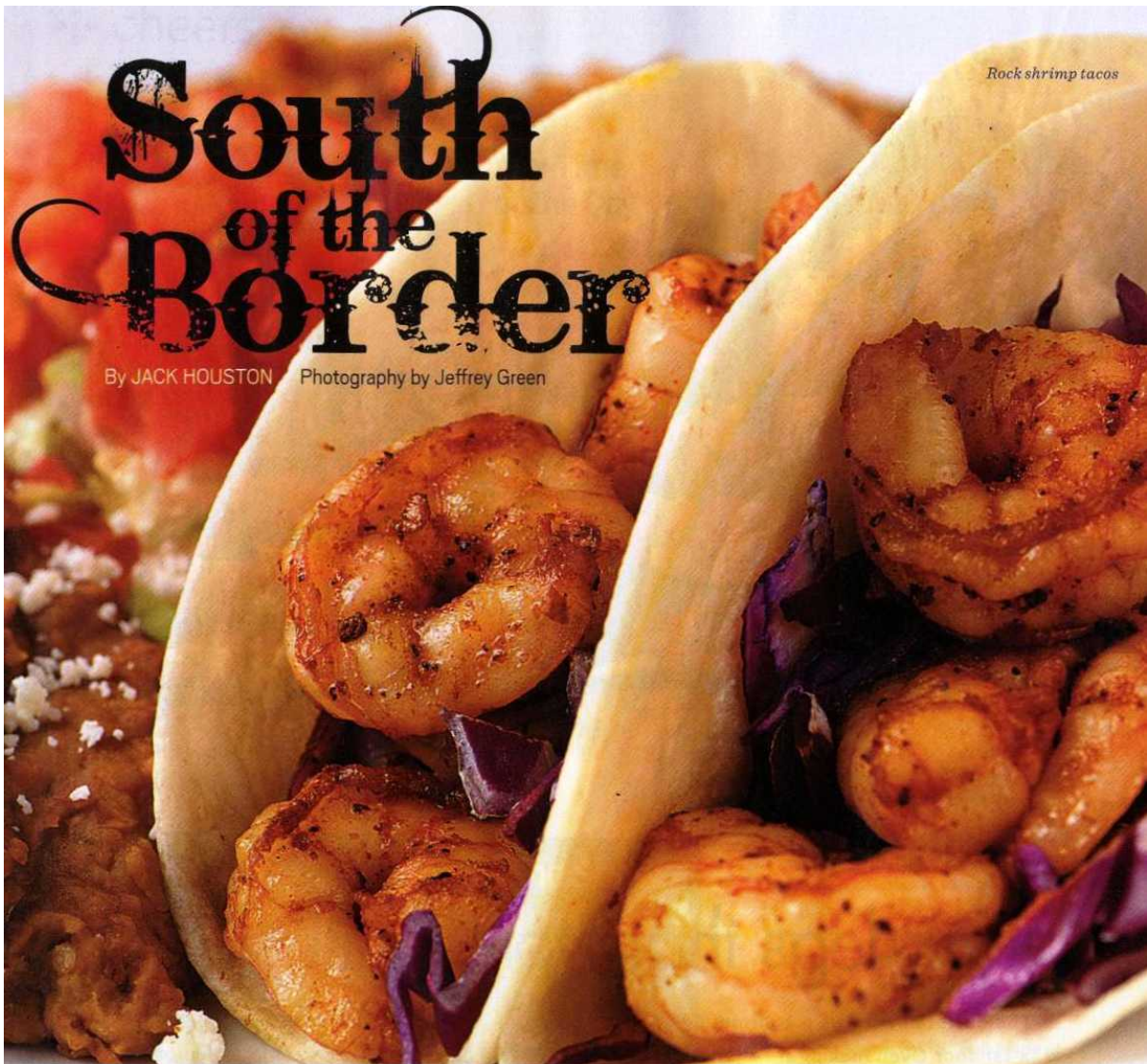


Las Vegas Magazine July 4, 2010



South of the Border

By JACK HOUSTON Photography by Jeffrey Green

Sammy Hagar brings the party to the Las Vegas Strip


As night begins to fall on the Las Vegas Strip, the Fountains of Bellagio sparkle under the twilight sun and the towers of CityCenter rise up to meet the clouds. Across the street on Cabo Wabo's three-tiered outdoor bar, guests gather to share signature cocktails like the Waborita, a mix of Cabo Wabo tequila, Cointreau, fresh lime juice and Grand Marnier, or more tropical fare like the coconut margarita, a mashup of margarita and piña colada that sports a shaved toasted coconut rim.

Sammy Hagar was at the height of his Van Halen fame when he opened the first Cabo Wabo Cantina in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, in 1990. Back then, Cabo bore little resemblance to the party destination it is today, yet

in a few short years, thanks in part to Hagar, the resort town had morphed into Spring Break Central. Las Vegas already had a reputation of its own when Hagar brought his third Cabo Wabo to Miracle Mile Shops at Planet Hollywood Resort in December—and good thing, too. It's one of the few cities in the world that can handle the Red Rocker's brand of debauchery.

For people-watching or al fresco dining, the outdoor patio is a tough act to follow, but the interior of the restaurant has its perks, too: flat-screen TVs, front-row action of the staff dancing on the bar and live entertainment Thursday through Sunday nights beginning at 9 p.m. (Acoustic Soul, the city's only live jukebox band, performs on July 10.)

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In a town where dining out can often be a bank account-stretching experience, none of the restaurant's Tex-Mex and coastal Mexican-inspired dishes tops \$20. A refreshing ceviche, served fruit salad-style with lime-marinated shrimp and white fish tossed among diced onions, tomatoes and in-season mangoes, is a midsummer dream. If nachos are your thing, you can make your own, or head for the fajita nachos, individual chips layered with refried beans, several cheeses, your choice of beef or chicken and (for an extra buck) green poblano slivers.

Freedom of choice is fashionable at Cabo Wabo, and not just because it's Independence Day this week. Combo plates make it easy to try out a few of Sammy's faves, whether it be chicken taquitos, chili rellenos or a simple beef taco. Same, too, for the Famous Cabo Fajitas, which come in beef, chicken, shrimp or portobello mushroom. For something a little more adventurous, add some spice to your meal with a pair of shrimp enchiladas, served with chipotle sauce and Monterey Jack cheese, or the cilantro jalapeño chicken. Rock shrimp tacos aren't a bad way to go, either: two (or three) flour or corn tortillas topped with grilled shrimp, vibrant red cabbage and a punchy Baja sauce.

The waitstaff, however, seems to be particularly fond of the Waboburger, and it's easy to see why. A thick, juicy, half-pound beef patty comes topped with lettuce, tomato, onion and pickle, and extras if you want 'em (we sprung for the grilled mushrooms and cheddar), plus a helping of thick-cut french fries. Desserts include classics like churros or flan, but the apple empanada was definitely a favorite—warm fried pastry shells filled with warm apples and cinnamon, and served with vanilla ice cream.

If that isn't enough, just wait till Sammy's "Mas Tequila" starts playing. Hagar's 1999 album track is the cue for guests to make their way to the bar for free shots—straight from the bottle.



Coconut margarita



Ceviche



Apple empanada

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