

# Recession-busting dining, cheap but fine

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Bazo's, which recently moved to new quarters off Dupont Circle, serves the city's best fish tacos. Photo by Robin Garr

## LEO's Eats with LouisvilleHotBytes.com

OK, everybody listen up. I've told you this before, and chances are you're going to hear it again: There's a recession on.

Yes, a recession, and a lot of us are hurting. We're cutting back on luxuries and hoping we won't have to cut back on necessities.

For those of us who love food and drink and dining out, we're whipsawed: It's harder to justify dropping a pile of bucks on a big evening out, so fine dining may be one of the first indulgences to drop off the budget. But this decision puts a hurtin' on Louisville's local, independent restaurant community, the Louisville Originals and Keep Louisville Weirds that make our city an exceptional place to dine for its size.

If recession forces the loss of a lot of the indie eateries that give our town much of its personality, it may be years, if ever, before we get things back the way we like them, once things get better.

My plan's a simple one, and I hope you'll join me: I'm not going to declare dining out a luxury. It might take a little digging down on those special occasions when I decide to visit a fancier establishment. But I'll make up for it by keeping my tummy filled and my spirits happy at the city's many emporia of great cheap eats. And, having dined well, I won't forget to tip well.

Let's take a quick look at a couple of affordable favorites that have made some changes recently and that, by casual observation at least, appear to be feeding crowds in spite of the economy.

Bazo's fish taco still fine

**Bazo's**, the city's original source for San Diego-style fish tacos and still arguably its best, moved a few months ago from Old St. Matthews to spiffier quarters in Dupont Circle.

Bazo's new digs, a bit larger than the old, are somewhat hidden within the large building that houses the Village 8 theaters and a number of small shops. You can't really see Bazo's from outside, but park on either side of the building near the northern end, come in a side door, and you can't miss it in the middle of the short corridor.

The room is bright and welcoming, its walls painted in food-appropriate colors of red chile, corn tortilla and habañoero pepper.

The short menu is priced to serve recessionary times, with a library of burritos, tacos, salads and combos. Prices top out at an easy \$6.99 (for a trio of tacos or a burrito combo; tacos run as low as \$2.29 for a single loaded with beans).

We almost always indulge in the original fish taco (as noted, \$6.99 for three). At the new location, they're just as good as ever and maybe a little bit bigger. Each taco consists of a two-stack of light, tender corn tortillas made on the premises. They're topped open-face with a good portion of crisply fried, breaded white fish garnished with mild pico de gallo and finely shredded raw cabbage. Add your choice of salsas, peppers and lime juice from the salsa bar, and you're good to go.

Combos come with black beans (or pintos, if you prefer) and mild Mexican rice on the side. Three tacos make a pretty filling lunch, but we added cups of chicken tortilla soup (\$2.59), a warming potion on a chilly day. A thick, red soup was loaded with corn niblets and topped with a good ration of crisp-fried tortilla strips.

Chile lime chips are fresh, crunchy and addictive; dip them in your choice of tasty homemade salsas from the condiment bar: salsa roja, orange and hot; salsa picante, stashed in a squeeze jar and very hot; medium salsa verde; and reddish, mild salsa morena, which achieves Zen-like balance for me.

With soup and lots of tacos and sides, a hearty lunch for two came to just \$20.83. I poked \$4 in the tip jar for competent and smiling service.

## Bazo's Fresh Mexican Grill

4014 Dutchmans Lane  
899-9600