



SUNDAY, AUGUST 26, 2007

VIVA MIDTOWN! ANDREA STRONG

## PRE-THEATER MEXICAN;

MEXICO City-born chef Julian Medina has worked at some of the city's best Mexican restaurants - everywhere from Pampano to Maya, and most recently Zocalo. With Toloache, the Theater District restaurant he opened Thursday, Medina's installed all the best trappings of festivity - a ceviche and guacamole bar, a wood-burning oven and an open kitchen. Of course, there's also a stellar cocktail bar with more than 100 tequilas, where resident "Mezcologist" Giovanni Campos makes delicious drinks such as the Toloache Margarita (\$12), a mix of Frida Kahlo Blanco tequila, hibiscus, muddled blueberries and fresh lime juice.

His restaurant, named for a plant famous for its use in love potions (yes, it's true), is set in a two-story space decorated with tiles and lighting imported from Guanajuato and Guerrero. The lively space gets its groovy vibe from an eclectic Mexican soundtrack that ranges from classic folkloric (Mariachi Los Camperos) and electronica (Mexican Institute of Sound) to Mexican rock (Fobia and Los Lobos).

Must-have meal: Guacamole (tradicional; rojo, with tomato and chipotle; or frutas, with mango, quince and Meyer lemon, all \$11 each), pollo toloache (chipotle-marinated farm-raised chicken with corn pico de gallo, crispy Mexican cheese and pinto bean dumplings, \$22), a side of avocado fries (\$8) and tres leches de limon (a sweet-tart Meyer lemon cake soaked with three milks plus hibiscus coulis, \$8).