

# TimeOut

## New York

### Julian Medina, One of the Best Local Chefs

Toloache

Nov 8-14, 2007

With two of the best local Mexican chefs, Sue Torres and Julian Medina, recently opening new restaurants—Toloache, respectively—there's a reason for hope. Toloache fits in the theater district: The bright, richly appointed duplex is adorned with beautiful tiles and murals depicting Mexican peasant scenes, and glowing silver boxes hang from the ceiling. Medina, who jams Toloache's lengthy menu with palate-challenging options. The chef, who's helmed half of the city's haute Mexican kitchens (Maya, Pampano, Zocalo), plays to his upscale strengths, with emphases on ambitious concoctions and updated standards. Take the dozen taco fillings, ranging from sweetbreads to foie gras and the pièce de résistance: the grasshopper taco. The first crunchy taste recalls Cracker Jack peanuts, then devolves into the pungent flavor of prunes. When not experimenting with ingredients, Medina shows flashes of brilliance. His gorgeous and well-conceived shrimp entrée features jumbo garlicky crustaceans atop a mélange of autumnal beans and squash. A dish like the short ribs, however, braised in pomegranate but devoid of a single fruity note. Perhaps the answer to our South of the Border woes sits at the bottom of a glass. These are good drinking spots—Toloache has almost 100 tequilas which it doesn't make the meals taste better, but it may make the seemingly eternal wait for good Mexican food just a bit more pleasant.

By Randall Lane