



# cilantro

## *The Southwest's Most Defining (and Polarizing) Herb*

BY SUSAN LANIER-GRAHAM / PHOTOS BY CONSTANCE HIGLEY

**Y**ou know you're in the Southwest when you see cilantro listed among the ingredients on the menu. This lacy green beauty is more than a defining flavor of Southwestern cuisine – it's also one of the most polarizing herbs on the planet. In fact, recent studies have shown that we may be genetically predisposed to love it or hate it.

If you're a card-carrying cilantrophobe, not to worry – Scottsdale offers plenty of delicious, cilantro-free cuisine. But if you L-O-V-E love this pungent herb, here are a few of my recommendations for savoring cilantro's distinctive flavor.



CRUJIENTE TACOS

Chef and Co-Founder Rich Hinojosa of **CRUjiente Tacos** uses all of the cilantro – stems to leaves in his creations. The flavors are so layered and complex that I dare you to pick a favorite. The Mexican Chop salad has a vibrant cilantro vinaigrette, which is a brilliant offset for little squares of deep-fried cotija cheese. CRUjiente's tacos go beyond everyday tacos. I love the Texas Wagyu with its slightly spicy cilantro mojo – the perfect complement to the sweet soy-pickled shimeji mushrooms. It's a wow dish. I wasn't sure how I would like the pork belly tacos, but the unexpected blend of cilantro with a house kimchi blew my socks off. I was also pleasantly surprised to find a delicious cilantro cocktail at CRUjiente Tacos. Created by co-founder Jason Morris, the Arcadia Margarita is muddled jalapeño, cucumber and cilantro. It wasn't overly spicy, but refreshing, highlighting each component, making it a perfect accompaniment to my cilantro-centric dining experience.

**The Mission**, with locations in downtown and Kierland Commons, serves up table-

side guacamole that showcases the vibrancy of cilantro. The cilantro adds a freshness and lightness to the guac. And no, cilantro is not spicy.

Another way to showcase cilantro is in a fresh green sauce or salsa verde. This traditional sauce usually includes tomatillos, which are similar to tart tomatoes, blended with peppers, onions and cilantro, and served on savory dishes. For a great example of salsa verde, head to **Roaring Fork** and order the Slow-Roasted Pork Shoulder Carnitas. The house-made hot buttered flour tortillas make this dish extra special. Order the frozen margarita with a huckleberry swirl for a cool Southwestern pairing with a twist.

Perhaps best of all, cilantro is high in antioxidants and thought to reduce anxiety, protect against cardiovascular disease, help improve sleep, settle digestive upset, protect against colon cancer, reduce inflammation and fight infection. Whew! These benefits alone might be reason enough to at least try to love cilantro. 🌿



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*The Mission's buzz-worthy guac is made with 12 fresh ingredients – including cilantro!*