



chef Anthony Mesa

# DORREGO'S

## Argentine Eats Heat Up the River Walk

Story | ROBIN BARR SUSSMAN

A recent \$10 million renovation of Downtown's Valencia has transformed its former Citrus restaurant into a charming Argentinian restaurant and bar: Dorrego's. Named after the famed Plaza Dorrego in the historic San Telmo neighborhood of Buenos Aires, this chic spot designed by Rottet Studio is much more than a hotel restaurant—it's a destination.

Serene with a playful mix of blue and white Mexican tiles, artistic stenciled floors, and bleached wood booths with handcrafted cushions, the intimate new eatery sports sunny

views of the inviting terrace fashioned with couches and Mexican-tiled tables. Perched over the San Antonio River Walk, it's just the right ambiance for celebrating the romantic fare of

South America.

After spending time in Argentina studying and eating, young executive chef Anthony Mesa, who hails from California, created a menu of fusion cuisine. Everyone knows terrific Tex-Mex flourishes in San Antonio, along with notable steakhouses, Southwestern fare and historic breweries with upcoming chefs. But Dorrego's is the only Argentine-inspired dining in the Alamo City. Luckily, the menu teeters on perfection with concise selections ranging from buttery empanadas to prime beef, vegetables done simply and unique desserts.

Just like Malbec, meat is big in Argentina, but seafood doesn't take a backseat. Consider huge Gulf prawns bathing in tomato jus with garlic crisps. Soak that up with the excellent grilled bread, also great with the grilled octopus, tender to the bite and anointed with a luxurious tarragon aioli. For a devilish starter, the Proveleta flamado (tequila-flamed provolone which arrives flaming) studded with spicy chorizo is a must. And there's an entire menu of Argentine style hand-crimped empanadas stuffed with savory quail, prawns, chicken, duck confit or short rib meat. No dried-out, clunky hot pockets here.

Speaking of short ribs, this bold flavored meat also appears stuffed in the ravioli—generous squares of handmade rosemary pasta drenched with rustic tomato sauce. Pasta in an Argentine restaurant? The country's cuisine is a melting pot with a strong Italian influence (distinctive pizzas are the rage in Argentina). Hints of Spain, Paraguay and Bolivia are evident in Chicken Milanese, a thin cutlet, lightly breaded and fried served over Swiss chard. Throw caution to the wind and get an order of potato puree to go with that rich white gravy crowning the chicken. C'mon, ya'll are in Texas.

Meat lovers can expect a butcher's cut of the day, which might be the flame-grilled 44 Farms porterhouse steak that melts in your mouth. This is

served with house chimichurri—not the typical green chimichurri—but an intense red version spiked with smoked paprika. There's also a dramatic Texas pig Tomahawk which takes over your plate, leaving just enough room for roasted beets, Brussels petals and a swipe of housemade salsa criolla. The a la carte grilled asparagus or the thick, elegant papas fritas served upright in Mexican ceramic bowls are almost too pretty to eat but beg to join meat entrees.

If lunching, you can't beat the generous salads including a delicate seasonal vegetarian tart served with charred eggplant sauce over field greens. Mainstream choices include the De la Casa salad with grilled citrus chicken and "burnt" jalapeno ranch dressing and the "Cesar's" salad with white anchovies, croutons and Parmesan.

For the encore, don't miss the silky housemade dulce de leche ice cream made from dulce de leche, a popular Argentine spread and fabulous on anything, especially the housemade apple empanadas with cinnamon sugar pastry. Lorena's marbled cheesecake with berry coulis also gets a dollop of dulce de leche ice cream—the ideal summer dessert.

If visiting San Antonio, margaritas are mandatory. Specifically, the gorgeous Porteno margarita made with muddled cucumber, habanero-infused tequila, fresh squeezed lime, and a spiced rim with cucumber wedge. Other handcrafted libations include The Dandy with gin and blackberry liquor—yes, Argentine's love their gin. Keep it authentic and snag a table on the second-floor terrace overlooking the colorful River Walk. Salud! Or as they say in Italy, Cin cin! ✦

**DORREGO'S**  
150 E. HOUSTON ST.  
SAN ANTONIO  
HOTELVALENCIARIVERWALK.COM



GRILLED HEAD ON PRAWNS WITH  
SAFFRON TOMATO JUS, GARLIC CRISPS



DULCE DE LECHE LAVA CAKE



CHORIPAN-ARGENTINE  
CHORIZO WITH  
PIQUILLO PEPPERS,  
PORTOBELLO  
MUSHROOMS



DUCK CONFIT  
EMPANADAS



HEAD ON  
PRAWNS  
WITH SAUCE  
ROMESCO



BONE-IN RIB-EYE, IDAHO  
SPEARS, SHORT RIB RAVIOLI-  
RED CHIMICHURRI



SHORT RIB RAVIOLI WITH  
SUNDRIED TOMATO  
ROSEMARY PASTA, BURNT  
BURRATA CHEESE