



Shrimp taco at La Lagartija Taqueria
BRENNE LEWIS/REDEYE FILE PHOTO

WORTH A TRIP

SHRIMP TACOS

La Lagartija, 132 S. Ashland Ave. 312.733.7772

By Michael Nagrant | FOR REDEYE

Returning from a vacation on either of the coasts or Mexico tends to result in a sad realization: Excellent seafood tacos are hard to come by in Chicago.

Some taquerias might have a fresh tortilla, superior slaw or a bright lime-infused cream sauce, but so many of them fail by offering insubstantial fillings of flavorless tilapia or once-frozen-and-then-fried shrimp bearing limp crusts sogged down by their toppings.

For this reason, I am happy to introduce you to the shrimp taco from La Lagartija (Spanish for “little lizard”) taqueria in the West Loop (\$3.50). Lagartija, owned by husband and wife Luis Perea and Laura Cid-Perea, is a sister restaurant to Bombon Bakery in Pilsen and the Bombon Cafes in Little Village and the West Loop. The Bombon locations were built on stellar fresh-baked special occasion cakes. If you’ve ever

had Cid-Perea’s superb, silky tres leches cake, it will probably come as no surprise that she and her husband also purvey some of the better tacos around.

Lagartija’s plump shrimp are breaded with an airy Negra Modelo beer-splashed tempura batter that provides a satisfying shatter with every bite. The shrimp are topped with a lip-tingling habanero ketchup and a cooling, salty mayo blended with caper, olive and onion, and a nest of crisp lettuce and crunchy radish. The whole thing is swaddled in a hot hand-formed and griddled-to-order corn tortilla. Close your eyes, take a bite and you’re suddenly whisked away to a beach-side beer-commercial ideal, whiling away the afternoon in an Adirondack chair.

MICHAEL NAGRANT IS A REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR.
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