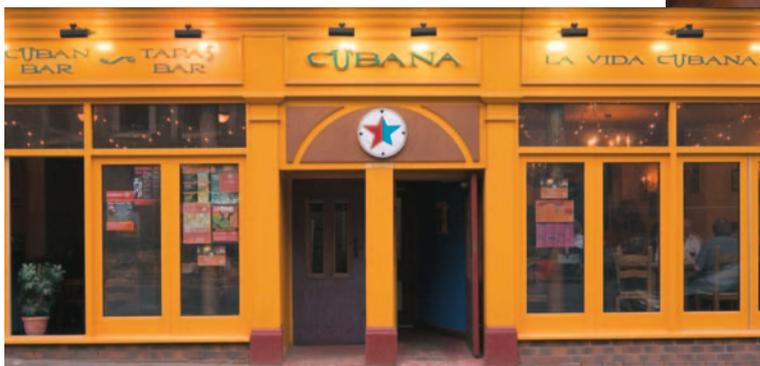


South American FLAVOUR

**SIXER LOOKS FOR LATIN SPIRIT
IN THE CENTRE OF SHEFFIELD.**



Cubana is a familiar face on the Sheffield restaurant circuit. As the name would suggest the venue is filled with Latin spirit, from the music on the sound system to the artwork on the walls, which depicts scenes of life in Cuba in black and white. It was a sunny day when we visited the restaurant and, after being greeted by a some distinctly summery tunes and a lively and full bar we decided to get into the spirit of things with a pre-dinner cocktail. I chose a Havana Cooler, a delicious mix of rum, sours and citrus that was perfect for the balmy summer's evening. My dining companion was also my chauffeur for the evening so he opted for a non-alcoholic Mint Cooler cocktail which came bursting with flavour but the mint, I was told, was a little overpowering, and overwhelming in quantity.

Cubana offers a tapas menu which mixes classic Spanish tapas style dishes with South American flavours and spice. Customers can either choose what they fancy from the wide selection on the main menu or go with one of the two set menus on offer. There is the general set menu and then the 'deluxe' option which features must-have dishes like Patatas bravas (fried potatoes served with a spicy tomato sauce) and Albondigas (meatballs) and more adventurous items like Pato con guisantes (duck breast with bacon, peas and pepper in a red wine sauce) and Pollo Mexicano (Spicy roast chicken in a red pepper sauce).

Feeling peckish and in the mood for experimentation we went for the deluxe option. The waiter warned us to expect a lot of food, and he wasn't kidding. After breaking us in gently with a few nice hunks of bread, oils and some pretty splendid olives the main dishes started to arrive with some frequency and before long we were sitting in front of an aromatic Latino banquet.

As each dish arrived our attentive waiter explained what everything was, and his knowledge and passion on the subject was both good to see and infectious. Determined to try a bit of everything we dived straight in. The Mariscos con vino blanco was a lovely fishy dish of hake, mussels and prawns that came in a rich and creamy sauce and the tasty Langostinos (langoustines) in garlic, white wine and basil were an immediate hit.

Other points of interest included the Pincho de verduras, mixed vegetable skewers dressed with coriander, mint, oil

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and garlic, which came nicely grilled with plenty of flavour sealed in. Garlic bread and rice were supplied and were a great tool for mopping up the lashings of tomato sauce (sometimes sweet, sometimes spicy) that came with many of the dishes.

After a valiant effort we were eventually thwarted by the amount of food, but all in all we were left happy. What Cubana does well is honest, unpretentious food that is tasty and packed with sunshine flavours. The staff are smiley, but not over-the-top-familiar. That helps the evening go with a swing, and with the great music and atmosphere thrown in, makes Cubana a great little package. ■

DETAILS:

Cubana Deluxe set tapas menu: £19.50 per person

Havana Cooler £4.95

Mint Cooler £2.95

Glass of Malbec £3.25

Cubana 34 Trippet Lane, Sheffield.

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