

## Ask the Chef: Adam Pollard, Taco Temple

All temples have their tenets, and the unshakable doctrine of Adam Pollard's Taco Temple is -- it's got to be fresh. Sure, he admits, it would be easier to make his style of California fusion Mexican seafood using some cans here and there, but that is not the way of the Taco Temple.

"We're all in here from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. doing the prep, dicing, slicing, and chopping," Pollard said, and he and his wife Dawnelle (who makes all the soups and desserts from scratch) wouldn't have it any other way. The couple embarked on the path of restaurant ownership four years ago when they got the chance to buy the existing tiny Taco Temple restaurant in Cayucos.

"We decided to keep the name and change the food," said Pollard. "We included lots more fish and took a chance on making everything spicier and doing different things like having black beans and special seasonal salsas. Now we get away with all sorts of things!"

The risk of recreating the bold menu paid off and the Pollards were able to expand the Taco Temple dogma to a bigger location in Morro Bay about a year and a half ago. The move also put them that much closer to fresh produce since their new restaurant is right across the parking lot from the weekly Thursday afternoon Farmers' Market in Morro Bay.

"We go there every week to get ideas and fresh ingredients for our specials," said Pollard, and added that "the sky's the limit" on what he might come up with for seafood specials. Any given day might bring items such as Baja Shrimp Tacos, Crispy Lemon Garlic Calamari Tacos, or Crab Cake Tacos to the specials board, stuff so good the restaurant garnered a mention in Sunset's Magazine's "The Great Taco Hunt" issue last March.

Considering his penchant for creating all these fresh fish tacos, you might think that Pollard's restaurant experience included some time south of the border. In fact, he's a local boy who started working in restaurants at the age of 14. He worked with Wilhem Hoppe at The Inn at Morro Bay and at Hoppe's 901, and can also include jobs at Sebastian's and the Bayside Café on his resume. As for his current situation, he laughed and said, "I never thought in a million years I'd be making tacos!"

The Taco Temple is located at 2680 Main Street in North Morro Bay, 772-4965 and at 101 D Street in Cayucos. Taco Temple Morro Bay is open daily except Tuesday 11-9, and until 10 in the summertime. The Cayucos location is open for lunch from 11-4 daily except Tuesday.

### Crispy Lemon Garlic Calamari Serves 2

1 pound Monterey Calamari tubes  
1 tablespoon fresh chopped garlic  
juice of 6 lemons  
handful of chopped cilantro

salt and pepper to taste  
2 potatoes, peeled and cut into matchsticks  
3 cups flour  
5-6 cups peanut oil  
salsa  
Dijon mayonnaise (1/4 cup mayonnaise mixed with 4 - 5 Tablespoons Dijon mustard)  
Corn tortillas  
Fresh greens and grated cheese for garnish

Marinate calamari in garlic, lemon juice, cilantro, salt and pepper for 2 - 3 minutes.  
Dredge calamari in flour, being sure to mix well so that each piece is coated and not sticky.

In pan deep enough for frying, heat peanut oil to 350 degrees. Drop calamari carefully into oil and cook about 1 – 1 1 / 2 minutes until pieces float to top and are light brown. Remove to paper towel to drain and sprinkle with salt to taste while still hot.

While calamari is draining, cook potatoes in oil until golden brown. Remove to paper towel to drain and salt to taste while still hot.

Heat corn tortillas, put on plate and brush with salsa and some of the Dijon mayonnaise. (Pollard likes to use a seasonal salsa, such as one made with cantaloupe, honeydew, pineapple, and ginger.) Put on some cheese and fresh greens, pile high with calamari and potatoes on top, drizzle a bit more Dijon mayonnaise on top, and put the rest of the mayonnaise on the side to use as a dipping sauce.