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News Release

Date:

Title: **Mariposa Mexican Grille**

Mariposa Mexican Grille is a new fast casual restaurant concept opening near Tampa, Florida, and serving Pacific fresh Mexican cuisine.

Inspired by Oaxacan traditions and fresh Pacific ingredients, Mariposa Mexican Grille's unforgettable flavors, warmly colored rich décor, and impeccable service evoke Mexico's "mi casa es su casa" attitude. Chef Rand Packer's unique ingredients - passion fruit, ginger, pasilla chilies, and mole negro sauce, for example – distinguish his singular dishes.

With Oaxaca as the inspiration, api(+) crafted a space that feels authentic to the locale, yet decidedly contemporary, and includes details indicative of the nuances in the chef's carefully prepared cuisine. Stained and distressed knotty pine wood, hand-forged metal, plaster walls, stained concrete floors, and cobalt blue tile accents are foundations of the design. These authentic materials are accented with contemporary touches, such as colored translucent screens, designed to give the environment a "sophisticated rustic" look. api(+) selected punched tin pendant lighting and wall sconces to enhance the textured ambience, especially at night.

A secondary pattern of intersecting lines forming trapezoidal shapes is incorporated throughout the restaurant in queuing dividers, floor pattern, window vinyls, counter facing, and the feature wall behind the cashier counter and salsa bar. Butterfly wings as swinging doors are symbolic of the transformations taking place inside.

Mariposa's owners traveled to Oaxaca with api(+)'s concepts in mind and hand selected the one-of-a-kind décor items dispersed throughout the space, meeting with each of the artists to gain insight into their respective crafts.

api(+)'s challenge for this restaurant's identity was to design a butterfly, "Mariposa" in Spanish, that would appeal to both genders and to create a branded icon that is equal parts sophisticated, Mexican, and rustic. The logo was conceived to include elements that can be effectively interpreted throughout the environment and applied to collateral materials. The stylized "M" of the restaurant's name forms the structure of the butterfly, and contrasting typefaces were used in the logo to suggest the chef's hands-on approach and the sophisticated, contemporary menu offerings.



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Stages of a caterpillar's transformation into a butterfly were employed as a clever way to announce the restaurant's opening while building excitement and intrigue. The sequencing, staged two to three weeks apart, began with the image of a caterpillar on a branch with the tagline "emerging early 2007." In the final stage, the newly emerged butterfly transformed into the logo icon. A similar transformation sequence occurred on the temporary opening page of Mariposa's website.

api(+)’s integrated design services also included the development of a branded collateral system including staff uniforms and menu design. In addition, api(+) developed a fun, interactive website that incorporates materials and colors used in the space and has a playful, jaunty quality. For instance, a feature of the restaurants is a series of Mexican hats hanging from a yoke. api(+) utilized the hats as the menu buttons, with each hat moving as the cursor rolls over it.

Founded in 1990, api(+) is a 50 person Tampa and Miami based international award-winning design firm offering architectural, interior, graphic, and environmental design, and focusing on the development of consumer-driven concepts for the retail and leisure industries. api(+) has developed some of the industry's top food retail environments, including prototypes for award winners Carnival Supermarket, Sweetbay Supermarket, Bloom, Whole Foods Market, Wal-Mart, ThreeSixty, and Morton's Gourmet. api(+)’s other specialties include shops, restaurants, retail centers and amenities concepts for large scale developments. api(+) is ranked 30th in Visual Marketing + Store Design magazine's January 2007 Top 50 Retail Design Firms in the nation and 19th in display & design ideas magazine's March 2006 Design 100 firms in the nation.

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