

# ROCKY MOUNTAIN TACO

MINTURN | BRICK-AND-MORTAR RESTAURANT | 291 MAIN STREET | 970-393-5187

EAGLE VAIL | FOOD TRUCK | PARKED ADJACENT TO VAIL BREWING COMPANY | 41290 US HIGHWAY 6

AVON | TRAILER | LOCATED NEXT TO AVON STATION | 80 W. BENCHMARK ROAD

GYPSUM | FOOD TRUCK | LOCATED OFF US HIGHWAY 6 AND ACROSS FROM EAGLE VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL | 520 US HIGHWAY 6

by **LAURA LIEFF**

photos by **DOMINIQUE TAYLOR**

What's refreshing about Rocky Mountain Taco — besides their delicious food and eclectic ambiance — is that they're unapologetically themselves. Everything about their restaurant décor, style of cuisine, and overall demeanor screams Southern California — in the best way possible.

Founded in 2015 by three longtime Vail Valley residents — Jose Reza, Chris McGinnis and Dan Purtell — Rocky Mountain Taco serves authentic Mexican cuisine made fresh with quality ingredients. Before starting the business, Reza, McGinnis and Purtell worked together at Pazzo's Pizzeria in Avon for over a decade. After a combined 30 years in the restaurant industry, it was time to start their own venture, so they put all of their money into a taco truck.

"This had to work because we had no safety net," says Purtell. "Our families and friends thought we were crazy, and we worked 15-hour days, but we did it."

Eight years and four locations later, Rocky Mountain Taco has proven that their concept was worth the gamble. Eagle County residents and visitors consistently flock to all four locations and their catering business is thriving. In fact, they are booked out through July 2024 and customers have even

changed their wedding dates to ensure availability. "The response from the community has been amazing," says Purtell. "We're stoked to have great employees, loyal customers and food that people enjoy while still maintaining that authentic, DIY spirit that comes from punk rock and skateboarding."

While the menu has something for everyone, their most popular dishes are the Alambre tacos and burritos (marinated sirloin steak grilled with bacon, cheese, chorizo, onions and bell peppers) and the Danimal Style burger (two quarter pound burgers with American cheese, caramelized onions, shredded lettuce, pickles, tomato and Danimal sauce on a brioche bun). People also love Hippy Crack, which is a vegetarian option that was Purtell's brainchild.

He adds, "Hippy Crack has been on the menu since the beginning because I wanted a legitimate vegetarian option that would stand out." And stand out it does — the combination of red potatoes grilled with onions, poblano, Anaheim and bell peppers, topped with melted cheese and crema makes the dish flavorful and memorable.



When asked what sets Rocky Mountain Taco cuisine apart, Purtell explains that they "don't cut corners and use only high-quality ingredients." For example, their carnitas cook all day — close to six hours — and they use sirloin rather than ground beef. Additionally, everything is made in-house with the exception of their Korean barbecue sauce — sourced directly from friends in Southern California — and their fries.

As far as the overall vibe, customers will feel the inviting, laid-back atmosphere as soon as they walk through the door in Minturn's full-service restaurant. They will also notice all the skateboards lining the walls and ceilings — a clear indication of the owners' passion for the sport. But the skateboards are not just for decoration. Rocky Mountain Taco sponsors local skateboard ambassadors, which means they are given free food in exchange for wearing apparel and affixing stickers to their boards.

"We love skating and wanted to stay involved and give back so we started sponsoring local kids," Purtell explains. "We like their style and that they are positive influences — their character matters as much as their skateboarding abilities."

Going forward, Purtell is excited to maintain their four locations, continue to

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**PRICE**  
\$10-\$12

...

**AMBIANCE**  
*Casual, welcoming, and Southern California-inspired*

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**SIGNATURE DISH**  
*Alambre and Hippy Crack tacos and burritos*

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have a presence at local events and make quality food for the Vail Valley. "We love styling out our friends and families and talking with everyone," adds Purtell. "There is nothing like hearing that people enjoy our food and being known for helping the community." •

**ABOVE** Tacos: Choose your own filling from a variety of meat and veggie options, served on a corn tortilla with avocado spread and pico de gallo.

**LEFT** Danimal-Style burger made with two quarter-pound patties, American cheese, caramelized onions, Danimal sauce, shredded lettuce, pickles and tomato on a brioche bun.

