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FEATURES

44 ***Omakase:*** *I'll Leave It up to You*

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About the Cover

JUNE/JULY 2023

Omakase is in high demand across Tampa Bay and new spots are popping up at an unprecidented rate. Our cover features a Baked Lobster Roll by Chef Kiichi Okabe. Chef Kiichi will be creating plates like these at Ro, opening in Hyde Park Village this summer. **DESIGN** > JERRY POMALES **PHOTOGRAPHY** > GABRIEL BURGOS

58 *Made In Tampa Bay: Brick Street Farms*

Photography by Gabriel Burgos

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GROUP PUBLISHER'S LETTER

TASTE TAMPA BAY

NO_05 06/07_2023

Much has happened in Tampa Bay's culinary world over the past year.

The Michelin Guide came to Florida and two more Tampa restaurants made their Bib Gourmand debut – Psomi and Gorkhali Kitchen.

Seasoned restaurateur Jeff Gigante of Next Level Brands pulled off the monstrous feat of opening two new acclaimed restaurants this year and one – Boulon Brasserie – was featured in a Time Magazine article naming Tampa one of the world's 50 greatest cities.

We saw our first Tampa Bay Wine & Food Festival at Curtis Hixon Park host sold out crowds. I was honored to judge the inaugural Chef Showdown event alongside accomplished chefs Sean Brasel, Jeannie Pierola and Ferrell Alvarez. Turn to page 36 for an event recap.

One of the most exciting culinary trends taking over Tampa Bay is an exclusive dining experience called omakase. The word "omakase" translates loosely as, "leave it to me" and means you trust the chef to decide what you are going to eat.

This concept combines the uniqueness of Japanese food artistry and the chef's careful selection and preparation of your meal.

Our cover story features what's sure to be the hottest new restaurant in Tampa when it debuts, Ro, a Japanese concept by Three Oaks Hospitality coming to Hyde Park Village. The OG of omakase in Tampa Bay has to be Sushi Sho Rexley in downtown St. Pete. It's where I first tried omakase and fell in love with the way it allows for a heightened intimacy, not only between diner and chef but with the food itself–you feel more connected to it and the enjoyment is doubled.

You'll also learn about Kosen, a new high-end restaurant coming to Tampa Heights this summer, and Koya, an intimate 8-seat dining experience in the Hyde Park neighborhood. Flip to page 44 to learn everything you need to know before you try omakase in Tampa Bay.

And while sushi pairs perfectly with sake, our Crafting Cocktails Guide and Wine(D)own feature highlight some of our favorite places to grab a drink, grain and grape, along with your meal.

I hope this issue inspires you to enter your next dining adventure with an open mind, whether you're trying a new restaurant or revisiting an old one. As for me, I've got a dinner reservation to get to. TM

FOR OUR ADVERTISERS:
Our August Top Doctors edition offers discounts for physicians, health, fitness, seafood and home renovations. Space reservation deadline is June 16. Email me for information.

CORRECTION:
In our April edition's boating story, we incorrectly captioned a photo of Ropewalk, Ocean City Maryland as 'Ropewalk, Newburyport, Mass.' We regret the error.

Shawna Wiggs
Group Publisher
Shawna.Wiggs@tampamagazines.Com

Photography by Gabriel Burgos

Story By Leah Ching

01. More Tampa Restaurants Added To Michelin Guide

Ponte, Lilac and Noble Rice have all been added to the prestigious guide as “recommended” restaurants. Gorkhali Kitchen and Psomi have been granted Bib Gourmands. This addition brings the number of Tampa restaurants on the list up to 24.

01. Ponte Tampa

02.
NEW FOODIE DESTINATIONS OPEN ACROSS TAMPA BAY
Now open in St. Petersburg are Calida Kitchen and Wine serving up international and eclectic selections, Sesh St. Pete, a restaurant and brewery, a raw bar named Barbouni and The Wine House in Gulfport. Tampa recently welcomed Paul’s Fusion Kitchen, upscale dining at Union New American in Westshore, Crisp and Green at Water Street, and the city’s second Sweetgreen, in Hyde Park village. Over in Brandon, Duck Donuts is now open.

02.

03.
CLEAN BEAUTY COMES TO TAMPA
Paradigm Beauty, the city’s first and only clean beauty retailer, is now open in South Tampa. Paradigm offers clean beauty and cosmetic brands with products from across the world. Their selections are free of toxins and harsh chemicals and designed with sustainability and health in mind.

04.
MIDTOWN TAMPA WELCOMES NEW TENANTS
Midtown Tampa is welcoming five new tenants to its lifestyle and wellness-focused center. Now open are Brilliant Earth selling fine jewelry, Tipsy Salonbar offering luxury nail care, facials and hair services and Core Reform Lagree fitness studio. Opening soon are Ballard Designs home furnishing store and Sunda, a Southeast Asian restaurant by Billy Dec.

03.

Photography by Gabriel Burgos (01.) Courtesy of Ballard Designs (02.) & Tipsy Salonbar (03.)

05.
ST. PETERSBURG NAMED ONE OF AMERICA’S TOP TRAVEL DESTINATIONS
Forbes has named St. Petersburg, FL one of the best places to travel in America. One of 20 destinations to make the cut this year, St. Pete is listed alongside Vail, CO, Savannah GA, and Niagara Falls, NY. The sunshine city is recognized for its thriving art scene, cool and lively downtown and beautiful beaches nearby.

06.
CONCERTS AND SHOWS COMING TO TAMPA
Alicia Keys has announced a summer tour, touching down at Amalie Arena on June 30. Other recently announced tour stops at Amalie include John Mayer, Elevation Worship, Sza, and Nate Bargatze.

07.
LIFE TIME COUNTRY CLUB OPENING ON HARBOUR ISLAND
The health concept will be opening a Harbour Island location on the site of the former Harbour Island Athletic Club. Amenities will include pickleball and tennis courts, group fitness and pilates studios and updated pools. The estimation completion date is September of 2024.

08.
MINILUXE OPENS FIRST FLORIDA OUTPOST
MiniLuxe is an industry-leading nail care studio with a commitment to hygenic studios and practices and safe non-toxic products. With 20 locations nationwide, its first Florida location is now open on Water Street offering clean, non-toxic, premium nail care and other services.

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Interview By Leah Ching Photography By Gabriel Burgos

ANDY MCNAMARA

MASTER SOMMELIER & PRESIDENT OF ACE WINE AND SPIRITS, LLC

ABOUT ME

My favorite part of Tampa is the access to nature, the fabulous weather–I even like it in the summer–and Tampa is the unknown party town of the U.S.A, there's always a celebration going on!

My father collected wine and it was something that always fascinated me. I realized that wine is a never-ending journey. It's always changing, there's always something new and different and the stories are fascinating. The people, places, travel, food, geography, I could go on. At the end of the day, wine is about connecting with people and places.

MY LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

For a dinner and wine pairing, At Rocca we order Raviolini del Plin or Agnolotti – either with a great Barolo, Brunello or wine from Sicily. At Osteria Natalina – the Caesar Salad with Verdicchio is a must-have pairing.

Everyone should try the wagyu carpaccio dish at Olivia. Wowzers.

For wine, there's too many great places, but my wife (also a Master Sommelier) and I live right around the corner from Cru Cellars and Bern's Steak House so you're likely to find us there. On top of that Rococo Steak, Rocca, West Palm Wines and Chateau Cellars. Plus, the eclectic wine lists at Willa's and Rooster and the Till and the amazing Spanish wine list at Columbia.

When guests visit, we take them to unique spots that scream Tampa: Hattricks for killer wings and Salt Shack on the Bay are two of our favorites.

For a quick lunch, try chicken frites and a glass of clean, crisp white at Counter Culture or at Oak and Ola, the Octopus is insane.

My hidden gem is Mad Dogs and Englishmen for their awesome fish & chips and a cold beer.

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Bites + Brews

A Sampling of Tampa Bay's Culinary Landscape

_FOOD

_DRINK

_ENTERTAINING

_UTENSILS

_PANTRY

+ LOCAL FLAVORS

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28. CRAFTING COCKTAILS

36. THE INNAGURAL TAMPA BAY WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL

40. BURGER BUCKET LIST
By Leah Ching

WINE(D)OWN

Story By Leah Ching Photography By Gabriel Burgos

No beverage has held such a lasting grip on human appetites as wine. Cultivated and enjoyed since the days of the ancient Egyptians and Greeks, wine's enduring legacy has spread across the globe, filling out cellars, tantalizing taste buds and inspiring millions to clink glasses. Luckily, you don't have to be a sommelier to dive into the world of wine. Whether you like fruity, full-bodied Cabernets or a dry Muscadet, we've rounded up some of Tampa Bay's best spots to enjoy a glass.

Louis Jadot Pouilly-Fuisse French Chardonnay + Shrimp and Scallops

Tyler Staszczak: Bartender

Jackson's Bistro, Bar & Sushi

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601 S. Harbour Island Blvd., Tampa
(813) 277-0112 | jacksonsbistro.com

Voirin Jumel 'Tradition' Brut + Cobia Crudo Appetizer

Maryann Ferenc & Chef Marty Blitz: Co-owners

Mise en Place

With a love of hospitality, Mise en Place has been inspiring the Tampa community since 1986. A Michelin-recommended restaurant, its innovative cuisine and off-the-beaten path wine portfolio provides an unforgettable and irresistible experience for any occasion.

442 W. Grand Central Ave., Tampa
(813) 254-5373 | miseonline.com

Pendfold's Grange 59 + Salt & Pepper Charcuterie

Geo's Executive Team

Geo's Fine Wine & Champagne

From the team behind Due Amici, Geo's is a new innovative wine and champagne bar situated in the heart of historic Ybor City. Enjoy the sights and sounds of Ybor and indulge in exquisite wines from across the world paired with artisanal meats and cheeses. Unwind in an intimate atmosphere to the soothing sounds of live jazz and ambiance music nightly.

1730 E. 7th Ave., Tampa | (813) 284-7331
geosfinewineandchampagne.com

Mad Med L'Orange Skin Contact Vermentino + Fried Green Tomatoes

Coral Carrasquillo: Co-owner

La Sétima Club

La Setima's wine list trends towards lighter bodied reds, zippy whites, and an assortment of fizzy, fun pet-nats. While there's always sturdier reds to choose from, the standouts are thirst quenching bottles that complement Tampa's long summer days and warm, lively nights. An impressive kitchen is headed by David Lamb. Choices range from unfussy snacks to elevated entrees.

815 E 7th Ave, Tampa | lasetimaclub.com

Ribera del Duero, for lovers of Bordeaux

Victor Manuel: Managing Partner, Sommelier

La Vid

Iberian wines are the focus at European-style vinoteca, La Vid, where wines are offered with authentic Iberian meats, cheeses and other food products.

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Their winemaking story is unique. The way they like to describe it is that it's "simply complicated." While they may have made it look easy, or "simple," along the way, the backstories of their journey have been "complicated."

Before their official launch, Pradip and Vinanta agreed on what an exceptional wine tasted like, but they didn't have experience in making wine. Together, they learned about the vintners' process - both its precision and creativity - and worked to develop unique Napa Valley Cabernets of excellent quality and value.

The complexities of winemaking don't stop after harvesting and crushing grapes. At PV365, the red wines are aged in French oak barrels for anywhere from 22 to 24 months, then further aged in their bottles prior to release.

Since the inaugural release, a 2017 Napa Valley Cabernet Franc, PV365 has quickly established itself in the fine wine industry.

Appearing at The Invitational - American Fine Wine Competition (AFWC) as their first such wine event was impressive enough - as only wineries invited by a member of the AFWC acquisition team can attend - while there, PV365 earned **DOUBLE GOLD MEDALS** for their 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, which offers aromas of black cherry and cassis, and their 2018 Cabernet Franc, which provides notes of dark mocha, ripe blueberries and a hint of spice. They also took home the **GOLD MEDAL** for the 2019 blend they call "Sajana," a proprietary red that displays layered flavors of blackberry and toasted vanilla.

Additionally, the PV365 wine selection consists of a Sauvignon Blanc with notes of pineapple, melon, lychee and key lime; a sparkling Brut Rosé; "So Be It" Riesling; and a Petit Verdot. Each label honors the PV365 mission of producing elegant wines for every occasion and moment of life.

"We are passionate about a simple philosophy: exceptional wines are made from exceptional fruit with exceptional care," Pradip and Vinanta say. "This is why we celebrate the characteristics of and stories behind each unique vineyard block, allowing the fruit to express itself and encouraging the personality and terroir of the vineyards. The combination of skills and expertise, in both the vineyard and the cellar, allows us to create the harmony of nature, science and art in every bottle of PV365 wine."

Visit pv365winery.com for more information

b.

a. Partners in wine: PV365's Vinanta Mundra and Pradip Patel **b.** The best vines, according to PV365, result in the best wines. Cabernet Sauvignon grapes ready for harvest, Napa Valley.

CRAFTING COCKTAILS

Story By Leah Ching Photography By Gabriel Burgos

When it comes to libations and spirits, much ink has been spilled about the rise of mixology and handcrafted cocktails. Long bygone are the days where cocktails were merely mixed drinks–2 parts spirit, 1 part sweet, 1 part sour (once helmed the golden ratio of drink mixing). But, does a mixologist have what it takes to elevate cocktails from mere spirit into inspired art? Behind the bar at these Tampa Bay bars and restaurants, the answer is—a resounding yes. Our palates have evolved and mixologists have evolved along with us, crafting cocktails that are equal parts chemistry, gastronomy, creativity and art. Enjoy with a meal or for happy hour, these drinks are standout stand alones or complements to your next dinner outing. Whatever your liquor of choice, there's something here for you to clink, cheers, sip and savor.

Visit TampaMagazines.com/Crafting-Cocktails for the recipes.

QUEEN BEE

Derek Sheffer: Bartender

CW's Gin Joint

Where style and grace have attitude. CW's Gin Joint is a throwback to a time when fine spirits were savored in an atmosphere that exuded style and gentility, where elegant spirits are enjoyed in a refined and sophisticated ambiance. Under the direction of designer and proprietor Carolyn Wilson a team of specialists has crafted a delightful and delectable menu, expertly pairing it with carefully curated libations.

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Sean Noddin: Bartender

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Ingi Sigurdsson: Director of Beverage

Allelo

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300 Beach Drive NE., #128, St. Petersburg
(727) 851-9582 | allelostpete.com

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Josie Figueroa: Carrollwood Lead Bartender

Noble Crust

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Locations in Tampa, St. Petersburg & Wesley Chapel | (813) 463-0193 | noble-crust.com

LEILA BLUE

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Bella's has created a play on two classic cocktails, the bramble and smash. Macerated blueberries steeped with Earl Grey tea, fresh ginger and honey add subtle sweetness and spice to your choice of spirit. Just in time for summer, the Leila Blue joins the Strawberry Fields and classic Bella-Rita as the latest addition to Bella's cocktail list.

1413 S. Howard Ave. #100, Tampa
(813) 254-3355 | bellasitaliancafe.com

Visit TampaMagazines.com/Crafting-Cocktails for the recipes.

CHAMPAGNE COCKTAIL

The Dan at Floridan Palace Hotel

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THE INAUGURAL TAMPA BAY WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL

For one magnificent weekend, the inaugural Tampa Bay Wine & Food Festival showcased the city's gastronomic prowess.

Story By Leah Ching

Imagine if you will, a weekend-long celebration of Tampa's flourishing culinary scene, featuring the region's renowned chefs, restaurants and caterers–all showcasing their craft at Tampa's most iconic venues.

This dream became a reality thanks to the inaugural Tampa Bay Wine and Food Festival.

Partnering with Tampa Bay's most highly sought-after restaurants and chefs, the public got to taste and savor the best of Tampa and St. Petersburg, including the region's renowned and award-winning destinations, the season's notable new openings and eagerly-awaited restaurants not yet open to the public.

A four-day smorgasbord of gastronomic pleasure culminated in a weekend takeover of Curtis Hixon Park, and festival-goers were treated to two days of epic, large-scale events.

The pièce de résistance was undoubtedly Friday evening's chef showdown, an evening of competitive television-style culinary cook-offs where local chefs brought the flavor—and the flair. Attendees and a panel of judges watched 14 chefs battle in seven head-to-head showdowns in these categories: burger, seafood, fried chicken, tacos, truffle, sushi and pasta. Guests visited battle pavilions to sample each sumptuous dish and then vote. To say the battles were heated, and the decisions difficult, is a massive understatement.

Luckily, guests got to wash down the meal with wines and cocktails from beverage partners including Milagro, Stoli, 19 Crimes and Rabble Wine Company. With such an impressive lineup, many eaters were wishing for a second stomach.

Tampa Magazine's very own Group Publisher, Shawna Wiggs, was amongst the panel of judges who enjoyed a close-up to all the action.

"I was honored to judge the event with some of the best chefs in Tampa, including Ferrell Alvarez from Rooster & the Till, Jeannie Pierola from Edison: Food + Drink Lab, and Sean Brasel from Meat Market. It was fun to hear their takes on the best dishes," she says. "There were chefs spraying the crowd with champagne, live music and art on stage. It was the most fun event of the festival."

When it came to judging, she had as much trouble as all of the attendees.

"The Nashville Hot Chicken from Joe Dodd of King of The Coop was one of my last bites of the evening, and one of the best. His presentation was not overly complicated, and the dish felt like home. The pickle back shots he added were the perfect touch," she recalls. "Both chefs competing in the taco competition, Chef Chris Fernandez of Red Mesa Cantina and Chef Christopher Yadid Garcia of Tacos Las Californias, brought so much passion to their presentations–you couldn't help but love the dishes even more."

Standouts for the event's honorary chef host, Sean Brasel, Meat Market's Executive Chef and partner, were the intense truffle flavor in the creation by Chef Josh Werksman of The Tampa Edition, and the sushi presentation from Chef David Reyes of Haiku.

Courtesy of Lalani Media (a.) & Photography by Gabriel Burgos (b.)

a.

b.

a. One of the dishes Timpano's guests experienced on Thursday evening for Experience Hyde Park. Timpano's experience was hosted by Sonoma Cutrer. **b.** Tampa Magazine's Group Publisher Shawna Wiggs was one of the judges for Friday evening's chef showdown.

"The biggest highlight was seeing how many people came for our first year. It was mind blowing and inspirational," he reflects. "With the chefs not knowing what to expect, they really brought it. I'm still a competitor at heart, and I also learned a few secrets watching."

At the end of the sold out event, Dodd, Yadid Garcia, Reyes and four other local chefs were declared winners in their respective categories. Next year, they'll take the stage against 2024 challengers.

"I can't wait to see what next year brings," Wiggs says. "I think you'll see more chefs amp up the entertainment value of their presentations, so I expect Year 2 to be even more fun."

The final sendoff was a grand tasting day, with 35 Tampa eateries led by the region's top culinary talents presenting their selections of dishes.

Included was Azure at The Tampa Edition, helmed by Michelin starred John Fraser, the highly-anticipated new dining concept from Oxford Commons, Predalina and Allelo, winner of our 2023 Best Restaurants contest in the best new restaurant category.

It was impressive and inspiring to see so many local eateries come together to make the event a success. Local favorites like 4 Rivers Smokehouse served up cult-favorite comfort foods such as bacon-wrapped smoked jalapenos and barbeque.

"Our company is built on the importance of supporting the communities that we are a part of," says John Rivers, CEO. "Our Tampa smokehouses were thrilled to participate and bring some barbecue flair to the festival."

Forbici treated guests to house-made meatballs and a focaccia appetizer with aged prosciutto.

"The festival team was great to work with. From prepping logistics before the festival to day-of setup, they were so supportive and grateful the restaurants were there," reflects Forbici's executive chef, Fernando Sanchez. "Our crew is already planning what we'd like to do next year."

This year's "Best of the Fest" bite-winner was JW Marriott Tampa Water Street's Driftlight Steakhouse, crowned for dishes festival-goers could not stop raving about.

For 2024, the event organizers are already planning ahead.

"It is with much excitement that we announce April 9-13, 2024 as the official dates for next year! In fact, we are looking to start on Tuesday night with 10-20 unique celebrity and brand driven off-the-menu dinners taking place Tuesday through Thursday before the weekend events," says Valerie Roy, festival co-founder and producer. "We couldn't have asked for a better inaugural year."

The inaugural Tampa Bay Wine & Food Festival set out to celebrate the region's culinary scene. It was a feat of greatness and a remarkable success. Sold out events brought locals and visitors from near and far for a showcase of the area's gastronomic prowess, solidifying Tampa Bay's place as a must-visit culinary destination that's only getting bigger and better.

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Courtesy of Lalani Media (c., e.) & (f.) Photography by Gabriel Burgos (d.)

c. Forbici's booth at Saturday's grand tasting. **d.** Chef Joshua Werksman of The Tampa Edition prepares his dish for the judges at the chef showdown. **e.** Winner of Battle Truffle at the showdown was Chef Matthew Zappoli of Seminole Hard Rock Tampa. It was the closest battle of the evening, with Zappoli winning by 15 audience votes. **f.** Haiku's Chef David Reyes won Battle Sushi.

BURGER BUCKET LIST

Story By Leah Ching Photography By Gabriel Burgos

Quick, handheld, warm and juicy, the burger is an iconic, all-American meal with a global reputation. It's believed that in America we eat over 50 billion burgers per year and here in Tampa Bay, we're doing our fair share to contribute to that statistic. There are plenty of burgers to enjoy throughout the city, whether you're looking for a humble handheld or a decadent creation. In our Burger Bucket List you'll find carefully curated selections of beloved, unexpected, off-the-beaten-path and unique burgers to add to your list. And, it's not just beef between these buns. You'll find angus beef, yes. But we've also included selections made of of bison, brisket, bacon and beyond. What ties these bad boys together is that they're all downright delicious—not your average patty between buns. Here are some of Tampa's best spots for biting into a classic with cheese or trying something new.

Gutter Credit

THE RISE AND GRIND BURGER

This mom-and-pop burger joint isn't sticking to a traditional family recipe. They're breaking the burger rules and it's paying off. This made-to-order specialty includes 100% grass-fed beef, American cheese, wasabi mayo, applewood smoked bacon and avocado. It's topped with a cage-free fried egg and served on a pretzel bun. "We take great pride in our high quality burgers, wings and fresh cut fries," boasts owner Lisa Williams. "Stop in either of our two locations and taste the difference."

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BALBOA

The Bier Boutique makes its burgers with a house blend of bison and bacon, handcrafted to be extra juicy and packed with flavor in each bite. The Balboa is named after none other than the famed fictional heavyweight, and a heavyweight it is. It's topped with house-made bruschetta, fontina cheese and Brick Street Farms lettuce. Given a balsamic glaze drizzle, it's served on a brioche bun. "It delivers a little fresh Italian flair," describes Heather Brookey, owner.

The Bier Boutique
465 7th Ave. N., St. Petersburg
(727) 827-2691 | thebierboutiquestpete.com

BUILD YOUR OWN BURGER

Bull Market is a South Tampa sweet spot for American comfort dishes with Asian flare. “Food, clean ingredients and flavor are my love languages,” says co-owner Brittany Eppler. “My husband and I shop locally for almost everything and cook in the kitchen together.” The build it yourself burger is made of a short rib, chuck steak and brisket blend, served on a kaiser roll. Eppler suggests getting fun and creative, topping with jalapeño, miso bacon, pickled red onions, kimchi, fried egg, avocado, spicy mayo and swiss cheese.

Bull Market
4807 S. Himes Ave., Tampa
(813) 898-2049 | bullmarkettampa.com

GDVD MELT

No need to wait until meatless Monday to dig into this masterpiece from Tampa Bay’s cult-favorite vegan eatery. “Golden Dinosaurs is consistently voted as the region’s top vegan hotspot, for all four years that we’ve been open,” says owner Brian Dingeman. It’s not hard to see why when you bite into the GDVD Melt, made with a smashed beyond burger, pepper jack, house made seitan bacon, provolone, caramelized onions and house dino sauce. It’s all lovingly sandwiched between two slices of garlic toasted sourdough.

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OMAKASE: I'LL LEAVE IT UP TO YOU

Story By Leah Ching Photography By Gabriel Burgos

Omakase dining touched down in Tampa Bay as a foreign, entirely uncommon dining concept, boasting a luxury price tag and a niche offering – raw fish. Sure, America had already accepted California rolls and shrimp tempura, but this was sushi refined, rarified. Critics wondered, would it work, or would omakase join the legion of dining fads that didn't quite stick? Peek inside Tampa Bay's growing omakase restaurants scene and the answer is clear. Months in advance, diners add their names to wait lists for a chance to sit with the chef for a few moments of sushi bliss.

Koya's opening in 2020 marked the launch of Tampa's first premier Omakase restaurant. Its eight-seat dining room was revealed at the height of the pandemic, providing an intimate theater for tasting menus curated by owner and chef, Eric Fralick. Face-to-face with the chef, guests came to experience omakase, which roughly translates from the Japanese as, "I'll leave it up to you." In contrast to dining à la carte, there are no choices to be made. One could expect tender rich and decadent cuts of fish, with all else varying to

b.

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a. Shima-aji getting brushed with Koya's house made soy sauce. **b.** Chef Eric Fralick of the Michelin-starred restaurant, Koya, holds a large Katsuo (tuna) flown in from Toyosu Fish Market in Tokyo, Japan **c.** Kuruma Ebi being garnished with Thai krapow sauce, peanut coconut brittle and Thai basil by Chef Fralick.

d.

e.

f.

the chef's discretion. Skeptics had reason to cast doubt. The global pandemic had shuttered restaurants, America had a newfound penchant for Uber Eats and curbside pickup, a seating at Koya came with a high-end price tag, and perhaps most of all – for Tampa, omakase was a new and unfamiliar concept.

But those scoffers have been put to shame. Fralick's Koya has rarely seen an empty seat, with a waitlist for seatings filling up months in advance. Just this month, Koya was granted one Michelin star by the prestigious guide. It is one of three restaurants to receive Tampa's first Michelin stars.

Koya's superstar is some of the world's best fish, flown in weekly from the famed Toyosu Fish Market in Tokyo, Japan. The menu, an ode to Japan, where the chef spent five years cooking and training, highlights the best ingredients, seasonally sourced from across the globe.

The layman may wonder, just how much better is the world's best fish? Fralick explained that Koya's tuna is caught exclusively by known fishermen who can perform 'ikejime', a traditional slaughter technique of running wire down the spinal cord of the fish to cause instantaneous death. Ikejime prevents the release of histamines and chemicals during death, meaning a higher-quality, better tasting fish.

Every course at Koya is equally intriguing. Seasonal delights may include white truffles from Alba, Italy or Osetra Caviar from the Netherlands.

With the demand for omakase on the

d. Shima-aji served with toasted sesame at Koya. **e.** Koya's King Salmon Chawanmushi is elegantly presented. **f.** At Koya, Chef Fralick prepares Kuruma Ebi nigiri. Behind him, the top left shelf displays boxes that once housed some of the world's best uni, served to Koya's guests.

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g. Chef Rexley Kwok of Sushi Sho Rexley, located in St. Petersburg. **h.** Chef Kwok's Uni served with smoked trout caviar and somen.

rise, St. Petersburg brothers Arte and Rexley Kwok can boast of being early to the party. At Sushi Sho Rexley, they've served omakase to a welcoming and curious public for six years. And while omakase dinners often run a high price tag, Sushi Sho Rexley's prices are unrestrictive, with a nigiri omakase experience offered at $118 and a signature experience priced at $188.

Chef Rexley, trained by master chef Hiro Eda San of Japan, has made sushi since 1999. His cooking style is self-described as Edomae with a twist. Omakase's intricacies, like any other form of fine dining, vary from chef to chef. At Sushi Sho Rexley, guests can expect delicacies such as akami, ankimo, ikura, toro, shirago and tamago. The freshest of the season are flown in from far-off lands including Toyotsu Market in Japan, Hawaii and New Zealand. If this sounds intimidating, no need to worry. The joy of omakase is an audience with the chef. Rexley Kwok prepares and serves each course, providing insight and answering questions guests may have along the way.

"Sushi is different from other cooking styles because of its cooking method. It's called 'the method of minus'," explains Rexley. "Unlike cooking chicken which is flavored by the seasonings on it, with sushi the chef will take away many condiments or sauces. The goal is to make the fish taste as original as possible, to enhance the flavor of the fish, but not overdo it."

For those who may not yet grasp the concept, chef Fralick echoes his sentiment by posing a question—Do you know what tuna tastes like?

"I ask people that all the time and they'll say, 'soy sauce or spicy mayo,' or

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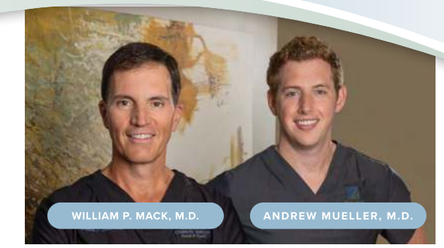

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i.

j.

i. At Sushi Sho Rexley, Chef Kwok prepared this 14-day-aged striped bass with white fish caviar. **j.** Ora King Salmon Nigiri

they describe the texture of the fish. Most people, from their sushi experience, don't know what tuna tastes like because it's covered in other sauces," he says. "In Omakase, we bring out the flavor of the fish, nothing else required."

Omakase chefs have silently carved out a place in Tampa Bay's restaurant scene, creating unostentatious luxury for the exploratory palate. Diners no longer stick to the restaurants their families have frequented for generations past. Our appetites have evolved to crave not mere food, but experience. Tampa Bay's penchant for Omakase– a high-end, culturally immersive dining experience of uncommonly prepared foreign food– is evidence of just that. Now, the region is on the cusp of an omakase boom.

Noble Rice, the other dining concept from husband and wife restaurateur duo Eric and Adriana Fralick, serves a modern Japanese menu. It also offers an omakase option served at the sushi bar, an approachable atmosphere for an omakase greenhorn.

And this year, two of Tampa's culinary hotspots, Hyde Park Village and Tampa Heights, will be home to high-end omakase dining options.

Later this summer, Michelin-starred chef Kiichi Okabe will bring a renowned culinary career to Ro (stylized ro) in Hyde Park Village. From Three Oaks Hospitality, Ro will present Chef Okabe's creative interpretations of traditional

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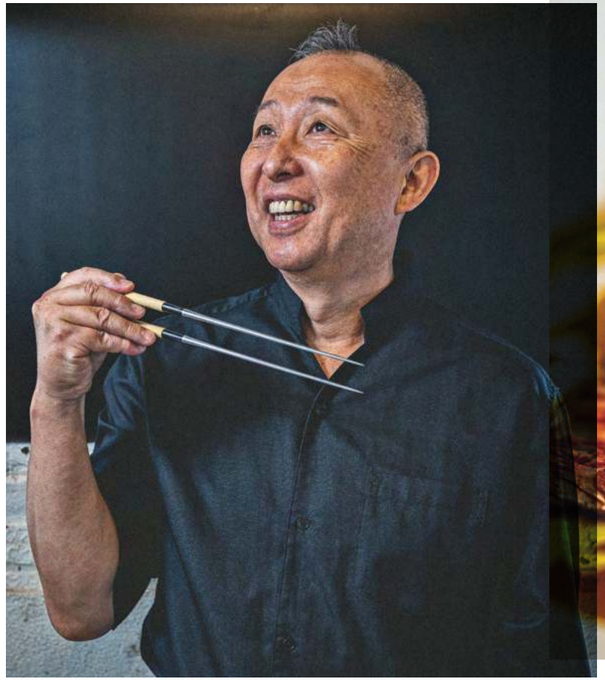

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k, l. At Ro, opening this summer in Hyde Park Village, diners can expect dishes like the one pictured above, prepared by renowned Chef Kiichi Okabe. Chef Kiichi is guided by the Japanese philosophy of 'Omotenashi,' which means to wholeheartedly look after one's guests.

Asian dishes with a modernized twist. Like Noble Rice, an omakase element will be offered alongside an à la carte menu. Ingredients from across the world will be flown in, with fish coming daily from Toyosu. Cuisine will take guests on a culinary journey to 'heighten all the senses,' a goal shared by Chef Okabe, who, in dedication to his craft, fasts every three months to sharpen his senses.

Less than ten minutes away, Kosen also will debut this summer. Brothers and restaurateurs, Johnny and Jimmy Tung have honed the art of opening restaurants. As James Beard semi-finalists in the Outstanding Restaurateur category, they are the originators of the Bento restaurant empire, along with other concepts in Florida such as Doshi, Camille, Norikase, Foreigner, and Norigami, which was recently awarded a Michelin Bib Gourmand.

It was the renowned three-Michelin-starred Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare that introduced Johnny Tung to omakase style dining.

"I was blown away, completely inspired. I started to travel the world to seek out this style of dining," he says. "I love this style of dining. You don't have to worry about what to order and can instead let the chef curate a menu for you."

Now, as a restaurateur, he takes great pleasure and pride in helping chefs open the restaurants of their dreams, and in providing world class culinary experiences throughout the state of Florida. The Tungs have enlisted Wei Chen from Masa, a 3-Michelin

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m. Ro's Chef Kiichi, creator of this Baked Lobster Roll, believes that food made with happiness improves the guest's wellbeing, filling them with good energy.

star restaurant in New York City to helm their omakase concept, a place for Chen to showcase his extensive experience and dedication to his craft. Guests can select from a 10 course tasting menu in the dining room, or an 18 course tasting menu in a special hidden Omakase Room helmed by Chef Chen.

"Omakase is graceful, fun to watch. Where else can you watch the chef prepare, ask questions, hear inspiration from chefs of renown?" asks Johnny Tung. "Throughout my travels in Asia, I've always been inspired and have wanted to bring what I've seen back to Florida, push the envelope, and show people how much there is out there."

Like Tung, many an omakase diner has been transfixed by the experience. From the intimacy of the setting to the pointed focus and precision with which the chef prepares each course–simple yet composed. Tampa Bay's Omakase restaurants on either side of the bay mark a growing demand for a new wave of fine dining: fine dining expertly imagined, deliberately prepared and presented, and intimately experienced. What is given up in selecting a meal is gained in trusting the chef's reputation to awe. TM

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VOTED BEST Best Doctors 2014

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Purely Tampa Bay

Iconic Places, Faces and Spaces Shaping Tampa Bay's Identity

MADE IN TAMPA BAY

THE FUTURE OF FARMING

By Holly Hargett

a.

THE FUTURE OF FARMING

Farm-to-plate greens grown faster than traditional farms with less water, no pesticides, no soil and no sunlight. Welcome to Brick Street Farms.

Story By Holly Hargett **Photography By Gabriel Burgos**

Shannon O'Malley's sustainable urban farm in Downtown St. Pete uses less water and land to produce lettuce, arugula, and other greens for Tampa Bay's booming restaurant scene—and for your kitchen table.

O'Malley is on a mission to make urban farming cool again. As the Co-founder and CEO at Brick Street Farms (BSF), she's converted shipping containers into hydroponic farms.

"I've had this vision and mission to design the earth's most sustainable farming system. So I'm very proud of the fact that I've designed a very competitive machine that produces an extraordinary amount of fresh vegetables, and I'm able to do it in an environmentally sustainable way," said O'Malley. "We can do massive scale farming with very little resources in a very small space, and do it where we have enough volume to really make an impact."

Each 40-foot shipping container produces the equivalent amount of produce a traditional farm can generate on two to three acres.

"Each container uses 15 gallons of water per day (they have a patented four-part water filtration system) which is less than the amount of water used in an average shower," says Briant Wildes, account manager for BSF. Another bonus is that the produce is wash-free and can last over three weeks.

O'Malley wanted to be accessible to the community and opened a retail location on property during the pandemic. Manager Claire Hendrix says, "Our farm store offers items such as our hydroponically grown leafy greens and microgreens, as well as local eggs, meat, drinks, shelf-stable items, and organic produce." Local restaurateurs are fan favorites of Brick Street Farms and their products. David Lazer Benstock, executive chef and owner of IL Ritorno says, "We have worked with Brick Street Farms for almost three years. We get different

b.

c.

a, c. At Brick Street Farms in St. Petersburg, hydroponic systems use 90% less water than traditional soil production for the same yields. Produce is grown in half the time as a traditional field farm and no pesticides, herbicides or insecticides are used. **b.** Co-founder Shannon O'Malley.

d.

e.

f.

g.

h.

i.

j.

d. LEDs create a specific light recipe for each plant, giving them the spectrum and intensity they need in the most energy-efficient way. **e, f.** These microgreens are the farm's Petite Red Vein Sorrel greens, known for their delightful strong lemony tang. **g, h, i, j.** The farm produces a variety of greens including lettuces and kale along with herbs like basil and a wide assortment of microgreens.

microgreens from them to garnish our plates and add explosions of flavor."

Chef Richard Anderson of the Oxford Exchange in Tampa says, "We receive approximately 100 lbs. of mixed greens a week at OE. We use them at all of our current restaurants and plan on bringing them with us to future locations. They are a great company with an incredible product. I think people forget what great lettuces and herbs taste like until they find them through great purveyors like Brick Street."

O'Malley prides herself on the cost-effectiveness of her design, which is around $5 million to build and millions less than competitors. "We have the same production capacity that they do. I designed a system that is more cost-effective and just as productive. And I really think that every city needs a Brick Street Farm." she says. "One of the challenges is that you're still dealing with a living perishable product. Plants like what they like, so you've got to control temperature, lighting, water temperature, nutrients, disease and pest prevention. It's all still relevant, even for indoor farming."

And what's next for O'Malley? Plans call for hubs across Florida to cultivate life lived by her motto, which is "always local, curiously fresh."

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FLORIDA, UNCORKED

By Chris Caswell

FLORIDA, UNCORKED.

Sip, swirl and soak up the best locally-produced Florida wines

Story By Chris Caswell

My brother-in-law, Giovanni, is a famous winemaker in Italy, but I have bad news for him: not all great wines come from Europe. In fact, Florida has a surprising number of not just winemakers, but vineyards.

Think Florida and you'll automatically think of alligators and DisneyWorld. Think good wines and well, you can be forgiven if your first pop-ups are Tuscany, Burgundy, Napa, Sonoma and Bordeaux.

Add Florida to your list. In 1564 (in case you dozed through history, that's six decades before the Pilgrims arrived), Spanish settlers were harvesting wild muscadine grapes (Vitis rotundifolia) to create the first truly American wine. And before you sing the praises of French or Italian grapes, consider that muscadine grapes are fat free, high in fiber, high in antioxidants (nine times higher than found in California red grapes), anti-carcinogenic, lower your cholesterol, reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and even treat arthritis. Recent studies also suggest that these grapes combat Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Before we set off on our winery quest in Florida (and before you come after me with torches and pitchforks), I narrowed our adventure to wineries with their own vineyards and those making wine from grapes (not fruits). But, there are more than 35 "wineries" in the state. There are also a lot of wine bars that call themselves "wineries", but these listed are the real thing: their own grapes, their own wines.

At some, you can even help pick their grapes. You can stroll the vineyard, and all offer views of the winemaking, bottling, corking and labeling process. And, of course, they are delighted to offer tastings and the opportunity to buy the wines you just savored.

Before you set out, go online or call the winery to find out about special events, such as live music and wine pairing dinners. Let's go!

Courtesy of Visit Florida

a.

a. Florida winemakers often favor the Muscadine grape or other native grapes that stand up to heat and humidity over traditional wine grapes like Chardonnay or Merlot.

b.

d.

c.

e.

b. Growing grapes at Lakeridge Winery in Clermont **c.** Wines from Chautauqua Winery in DeFuniak Springs **d.** Lakeridge Winery's Southern Red **e.** Strong Tower Vineyard and Winery in Spring Hill

Lakeridge Winery in Clermont is a large winery, managing more than 180 acres and producing as many as 150,000 cases of wine annually. It hosts complimentary tours and tastings every day, outdoor food court plus live music.

Tampa Insider Tip: Don't miss their Southern Red: smooth, light-bodied, and perfect with cheese and desserts.

Chautauqua Winery in DeFuniak Springs is a 34-year old winery that produces 16,000 cases a year, and winemaker George Cowie says their best seller (his favorite) is the Noble Muscadine (from Noble grapes) which is full-bodied and festive to go with barbecue or grilled foods. It hosts free tastings, tours, and events with live music, art and craft vendors and food trucks.

Strong Tower Vineyard and Winery in Spring Hill has more than 12 acres of grapes, and all their wines are grown, processed and bottled there. It hosts lots of events (check their website) including food trucks (Fridays and Saturdays) and yoga in the vineyard. Co-owner Janis McKnight loves their Southern Blanc, an award-winning dry white wine that pairs with seafood, poultry and veal. She notes the Carlos, a white wine with a delicate bouquet (from their Carlos grapes) is perfect with fruit, quiches and after-dinner desserts.

Tampa Insider Tip: As a drinker of Italian reds, I loved their Ison, which isn't your usual chianti. Light-bodied with hints of vanilla oak, it is perfect for just sipping in the evening or for dinners with pastas, red sauce and cheese.

Courtesy of Lakeridge Winery (b.) & (d), Chautauqua Winery (c.) & Strong Tower Vineyard and Winery (e.)

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f.

g.

f. Muscadine wine from Secret Gardens winery and vineyard in Sebring. **g.** The first wine grapes in the United States were grown in Florida by Spanish missionaries in the 16th century.

Summer Crush in Fort Pierce is unusual for the blend of Gary Roberts' two loves: wine and surfing. Their 10-acre vineyard is soon to expand, and they produce about 15,000 cases a year. The winery is known nationally for its live music events every weekend, with bands including the Little River Band, The Lovin' Spoonful and The Four Preps.

It also holds car shows and has RV overnight spaces plus a 9-hole disc golf course through the vineyard. Popular offering? Their Old Florida White is made with the Carlos strain of muscadine, but Roberts' fave is Rated RRR (say it piratey, arggh) from red Noble grapes blended with merlot.

Tampa Insider Tip: Check out Cap't Polly's Private Plunder, a port dessert wine aged in bourbon barrels.

Secret Gardens in Sebring is family owned and a Certified Florida Farm Winery and Vineyard with 30 acres. Besides the expected tasting room, it has live music events and Sip and Shop events with local vendors.

Tampa Insider Tip: Their Florida Sunrise Raspberry Rosé is a delightful mix of Carlos and Noble red and white muscadines with a subtle raspberry finish.

I would be remiss if I sent you off on a wine tasting tour without a simple warning: Florida State Troopers have a predictable lack of humor when it comes to wine (no matter how fine) on your breath. Always have a designated driver who taste-tests only the soft drinks at wineries. Go forth, pull corks, and smirk knowledgeably at wine experts who rave about European wines. TM

Courtesy of Secret Gardens (f.) & Visit Florida (g.)

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Home+Garden

Inspiration for the Spaces We Call Home

KITCHENS

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STYLE

+ RENOVATIONS

72. TIMELESS MEETS MODERN

82. ELEMENTAL INSPIRATION
By Leah Ching

TIMELESS MEETS MODERN

Story By Leah Ching

INTERIOR DESIGNER: ELIZABETH RIGGS, ELIZABETH ASHLEY INTERIORS
BUILDER: STEVE ROGAI, STEVEN ANTHONY LUXURY HOMES
ARCHITECT: MONROE DESIGN GROUP
PHOTOGRAPHER: CHRIS RESTREPO, PEN LIGHT MEDIA

Greg and Nicole "Nikki" Zolkos are a couple on-the-go. Parents to a blended family of five teenage daughters between ages of 10 and 13, they are active in local business, networking and philanthropy. The duo wanted a serene reprieve from the self described 'beautiful chaos' of their daily lives. As such, they enlisted Elizabeth Riggs at Elizabeth Ashley Interiors to bring the lakefront oasis of their dreams to life.

With a large lot on Lake Carroll's waterfront, the priority for the new build was creating a warm and inviting home for all seven family members, plus their regular guests – extended family, friends, and work colleagues. To do so, Riggs went with a modern transitional style, beginning with a timeless, traditional foundation. Detailed custom millwork features prominently throughout the home.

"We added detailed trim and molding to create texture and depth," she describes. "There's nothing like the timeless elegance of fine craftsmanship."

For colors, Riggs employed earthy, neutrals, with pops of black and moody blues, playing off the home's gorgeous backyard and lake views–visible from the living room, primary bedroom, pool lounge, and gym.

To bring out the couple's personality and style, she incorporated modern elements and statement pieces through eye-catching lighting, custom art, and decor.

"Nicole was my first ever client. We connected on Facebook, and now, years later I got to design a forever home for her new family," Riggs says. "The entire process was so meaningful and special."

b.

a. This modern transitional five bedroom, five bathroom new build is 7,500-square-feet and sits on half an acre of lakefront property. **b.** The living room provides exquisite views of the lake. With five kids in the home, investing in quality performance fabric for the oversized sectional was a must.

a.

Courtesy of Industry Partners (a.)

c.

d.

c. “The stunning Arteriors chandelier in the dining room is one of my favorite elements,” says Riggs. “It immediately catches your eye.” **d.** For entertaining, Riggs was sure to add special pieces to aid in entertaining large groups, such as a dining table that could seat twelve, and a coffee table with four stools to be pulled out for extra seating.

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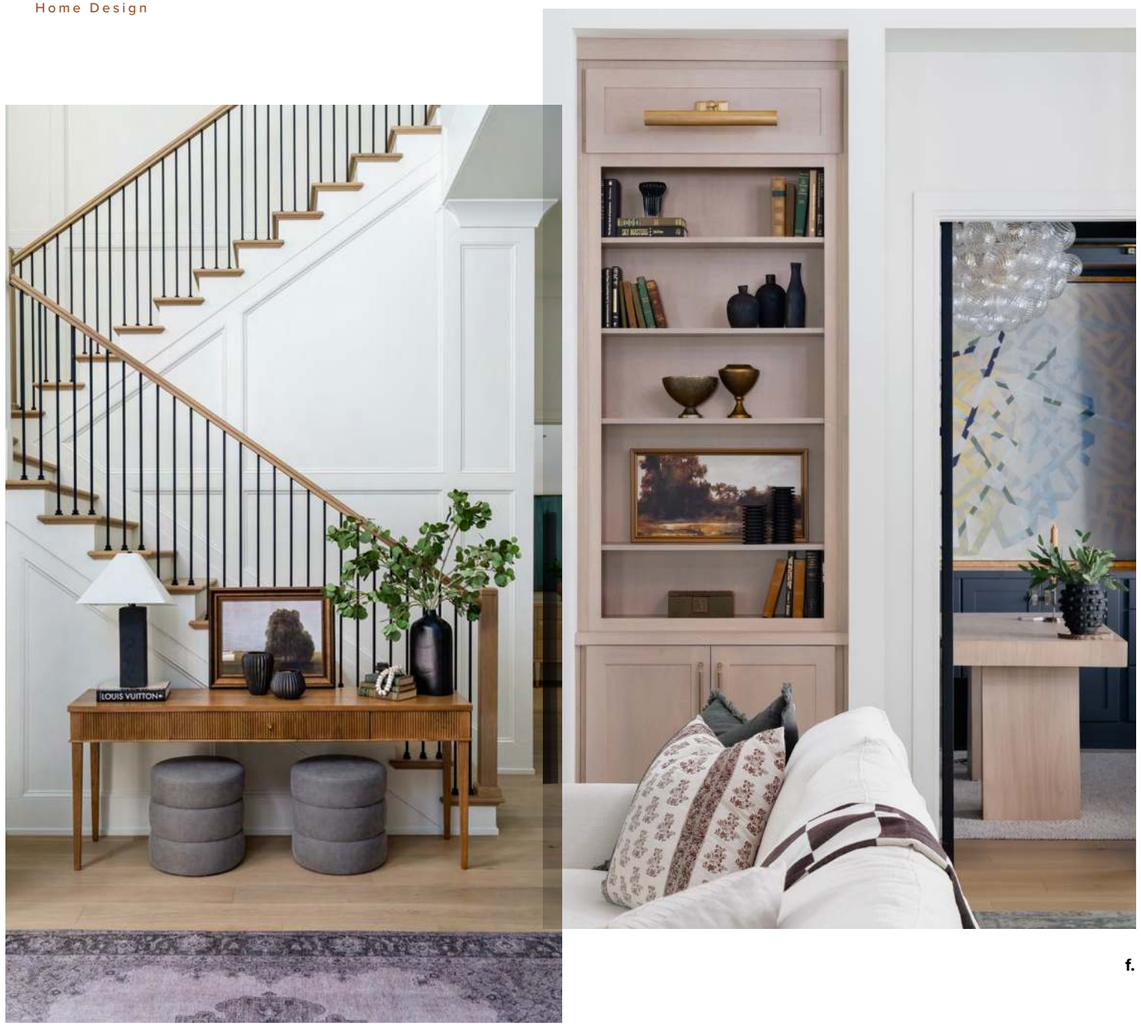

e.

f.

e, f. Throughout the 7,500-square-foot, two-story, five-bedroom home, Riggs employed a color scheme of earthy neutrals with pops of darker hues. Soft white was used for walls, trim and molding. “We used a beautiful trim up the entire staircase that continues into the upstairs hallway,” she says. “The addition of trim and molding give the home so much texture and depth.”

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g.

h.

g, h. Riggs wanted to emphasize visual cohesion and smooth transitions from room to room. “With a background in psychology, I want to understand and get into the ‘design brain’ of my clients,” she says. “I focused on selecting timeless, neutral options for the main pieces of furniture and then going bold for decor, lighting and accessories.”

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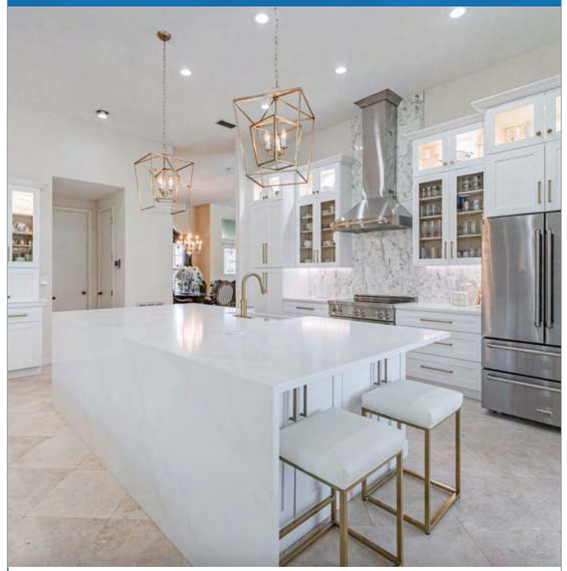

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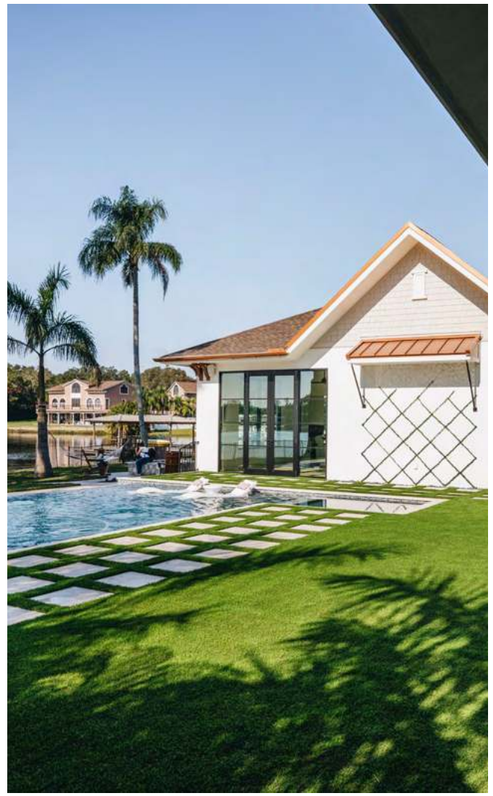

i.

i. Hollywood Pools created the gorgeous backyard pool overlooking Lake Carroll. A modern minimalist backyard creates a bright open airy space for family time and backyard entertaining.

Courtesy of Industry Partners (i.)

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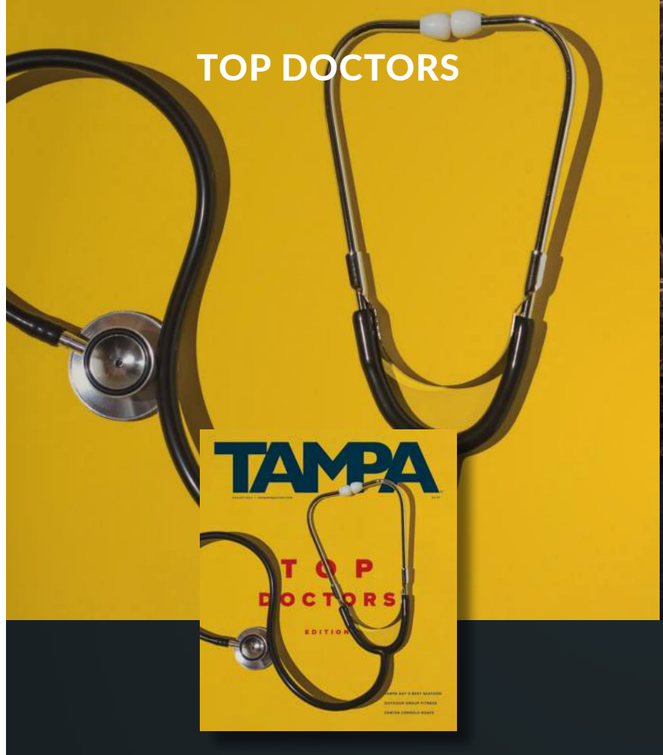

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ELEMENTAL INSPIRATION

Story By Leah Ching

Breathe new life into your spaces and let the light in with selections from Kim Levell of St. Petersburg based Kim Levell Design. These selections evoke inspiration and connection to your surroundings by seamlessly blending elements of indoor and outdoor living with organic and natural elements and sleek craftsman design.

Gilded Meets Modern

Take a Louise Gaskill is known for her exquisite hand-crafted lamps and chandeliers, vintage in feel and modern in design. The **Julia Chandelier** is just one of Gaskill's creations fusing mid century, hand-blown Italian murano glass with hand gilded vintage components. "Lighting isn't just an obsession, I collect it," Levell affirms. "I completely nerd out when I'm in Gaskill's work room. She finds vintage, rare, one-of-a-kind Italian hand blown glass to use in her designs."

Price on request;
louisegaskill.com

Forged in Fire

Hammerton Studio's **Blossom Two-Tier Ring Chandelier** is a whimsical celebration of organic design. "I am truly obsessed with lighting in design. One would argue it's the jewelry of finishing touch for any well designed space," Levell shares. "The hand-crafted blossom fixtures are my personal style favorites, but I truly love every one they make at their factory in Salt Lake City, Utah." One-of-a-kind, each of its two rings of sparkling 'blossoms' are made with hand-blown glass, individually lit with integrated LED.

$19,995;
studio.hammerton.com

Luxe Luminaire

Be the best when it comes to landscape lighting with the **LPL5-SQR Giza** by Auroralight. handcrafted in Carlsbad California, this fixture is part of the Founder's collection, exemplifying the philosophy of modular luminaire design for which the brand has become known. "If done well, being outside at night is like walking on the set of a movie–it's simply surreal," Levell describes. "This light is made from the highest quality copper and brass which is great when it comes to Tampa Bay's salt air environments."

Price on request;
auroralight.com

Photos Courtesy: Louise Gaskill Company, Hammerton Inc., Perennials and Sutherland, McKinnon Harris, Lowcountry Originals, Biome Inc.

Timeless Teak

Sutherland is very specific with how their teak is sourced, dried and fastened and this meticulous detail shows in the **Rectangular Dining Table**, part of the brand's Peninsula collection. Natural teak top set abed a sturdy powder coat aluminum base, this timeless piece invites seamless, comfortable indoor outdoor living. "All teak is not created equal," Levell asserts. "While all teak weathers well, David Sutherland's furniture can be cleaned and sealed year after year to look as good as the day you purchased it."

Price on request; *sutherlandfurniture.com*

Corinthian Couch

Inspired by Roman architecture and constructed with impeccable formidability, the **Pavilion VI Sofa** by Mckinnon Harris is the epitome of luxury outdoor living. "What I love beyond the appearance is that Mckinnon Harris uses the highest quality techniques for powder coating so they can match harsh sea water environments while still being made of metal," Levell says. "Made in Virginia, their exterior furniture stands the test of time and truly could be passed down throughout generations."

$23,390+; *mckinnonharris.com*

Lowcountry Lounging

Inviting serenity, the **Walker Upholstered Swinging Day Bed** by Lowcountry Originals is inspired by the Lowcountry, and made in the south. It's crafted with a frame of hand-crafted pine and inserts that pop out for easy cleaning. "Who doesn't love a good porch swing when you have a beautiful place to put it. I see many a nap happening on this daybed swing" Levell comments. "I was the first to purchase this new style which offers upholstered padded fabric sides. There is no other swing on the market like it."

Price on request; *lowcountryoriginals.com*

The Great Indoors

Take a breath of fresh air. Experience nature indoors with **Taiga**, the versatile hydroponic living wall by Biome. This biophilic design-forward ecosystem purifies the air and brings the beauty of nature indoors for the modern, discerning space. "While many companies are in the market for living wall systems, Biome is my all-time favorite," Levell remarks. "They are soil free, easy to assemble, and have systems in place to water and give grow-light time for your living wall."

$3,600+; *biome.us*

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THE INTERVIEW:
CAMMIE
CHATTERTON
By Leah Ching

CAMMIE CHATTERTON

OWNER, PRESIDENT & CEO, BAY FOOD BROKERAGE

Interview: Leah Ching **Photography:** Gabriel Burgos

Cammie Chatterton is the owner, president and CEO of Bay Food Brokerage. She was one of the first women in the U.S. to own a retail food brokerage business, establishing her company in 1993. In addition to her executive and entrepreneurial leadership, Cammie also oversees meat sales for Publix headquarters.

I grew up in a small town called Ripley, WV. Everyone assumes when you say you are from West Virginia that you are a coal miner's daughter but my parents, who owned three restaurants, taught me how to be an entrepreneur with a strong work ethic. I was blessed to have parents who wanted me to understand the world. We discussed everything from politics to finance from an early age. I still remember discussing the moon landing and the Vietnam War when I was just a child. My dad owned horses and I literally grew up on a horse. I started showing horses when I was 2 years old and loved it.

I got my start in retail food brokerage right out of college as a way to gain sales experience. I wanted to do pharmaceutical sales but needed the outside sales experience. I fell in love with the food industry and never turned back. For those who may not know, a food broker is the middle salesperson between a food manufacturer and supermarket retailers such as Publix.

It may sound cliche but, my parents are my biggest role models. They taught me that I could be anything that I wanted to be, and it did not matter that I was a woman. In the 60s and 70s when I grew up, women were told they couldn't do things based on their sex. I knew from a young age to ignore that and to be a rule breaker. I also have always looked up to President Kennedy and what he stood for in our country. My mom says the day he was shot I cried the entire day. Back then, I was only 3 months old and hardly ever cried.

Everyone should have to wait tables once in their life. My first job was as a waitress and I still use those skills. You learn how to organize, multitask and deal with difficult people, all skills we need to be successful.

When my husband and I got married, we packed up a U-Haul and moved to Tampa without a job. Tampa has grown so much in my 37 years here, but it still has that small town friendliness.

I founded Bay Food Brokerage in 1993 when there were no food brokerage firms known in the country to be owned by a female, and the industry itself had few females in it. For a very long time it was hard to be taken seriously. I had to work twice as hard to gain success and to get my point across. Not giving up on my dream, even when the odds were totally against me, made me a better leader today. It helps me mentor others to not give up when the struggles seem impossible to overcome.

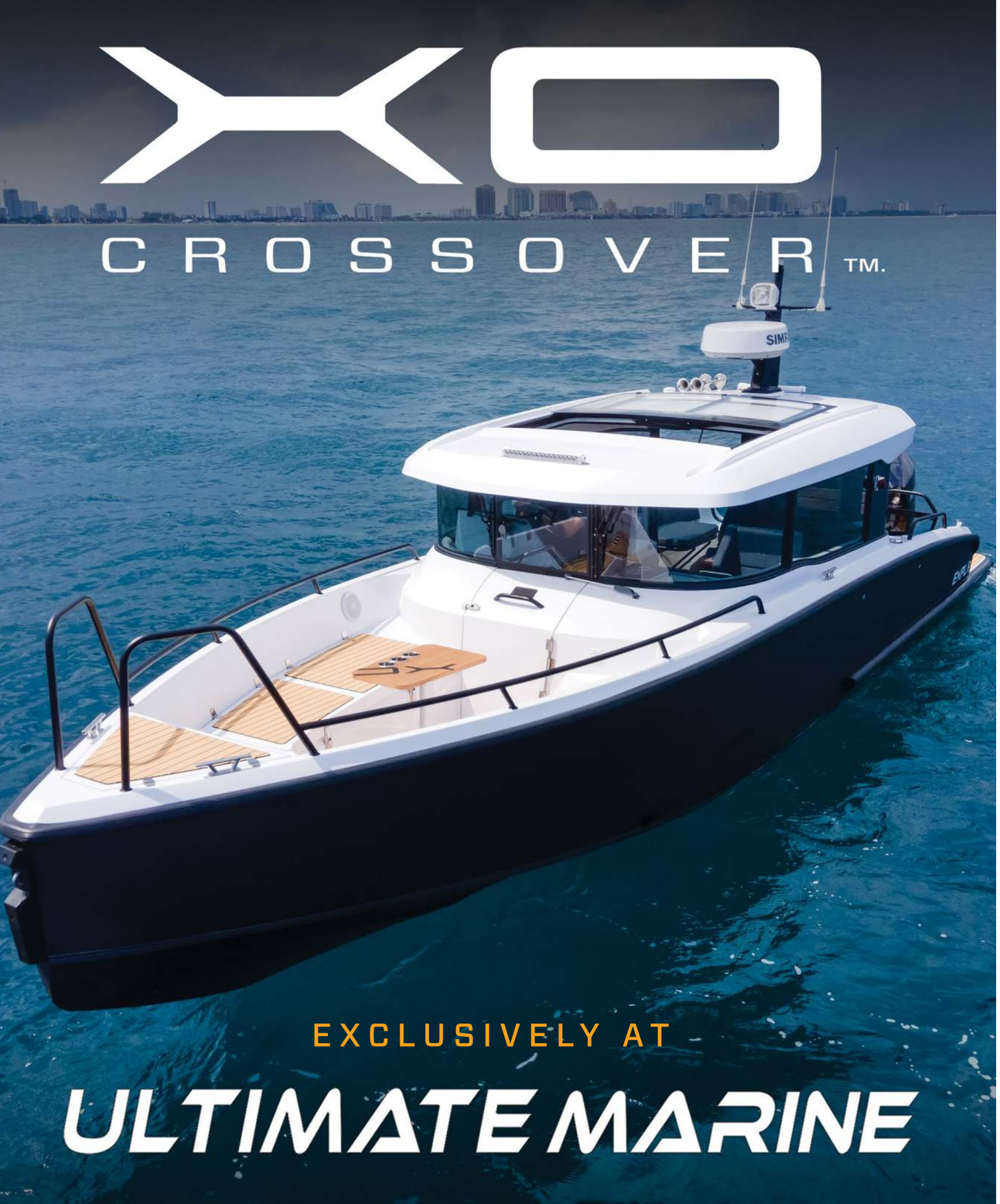
People may not know that a food broker actually exists in the chain of events to get food to supermarket shelves. I am very proud that my company helped get food to grocery store shelves during COVID.

The most amazing place I have ever visited was two African Safaris in Kruger, South African and Botswana. My favorite country outside of the U.S. is Italy. I love the people, culture and the food. When we want to get away for a long weekend going to Atlantis, Bahamas and staying at the Cove is my relaxation place.

I love Desperado by The Eagles. I remember sitting in my bedroom as a teenager and listening to the album over and over. The words in this song have always held a special meaning for me.

It was a great honor to have won the Small Business of the Year Outstanding Leader of the Year Award for 2022 from the Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce. Often females are put in their own awards grouping as "women leaders" but this award had nothing to do with being a woman and everyone was judged equally. I am currently a member of the Chamber's Executive Board of Directors. I am also very honored to be on the Board of Trustees for Jesuit High School and the Board of Directors for Feeding Tampa Bay.

I want to retire in three years and be able to spend more time with my grandchildren and give back to the non profits in Tampa Bay. I strive to leave a legacy of treating others well and give back to my community. I plan to work throughout my retirement with nonprofits in Tampa to make an impact that will be generational. Also on my bucket list is a month in Australia and New Zealand.



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Players + Pursuits

90.

SEAFARING SOIREES
By Chris Caswell

SEAFARING SOIREES

The Ultimate Luxury Boats for Entertaining Abroad

Story By Chris Caswell

Ernest Hemingway, a man who knew his way around boats, named his memoir, “A Moveable Feast.” It’s an appropriate label for boats as well, since boats are perfect for entertaining aboard. Friends and family all enjoy gathering aboard a boat, moving or not, in a relaxed atmosphere with an ever-changing view.

Sure, you can enjoy a restaurant, but you wait for a table, don’t always get a great view, and the ambiance is anything but intimate. Boats are the opposite: no waiting, savor your conversations, have celebrations in private and just move if you don’t like the view.

Basic rule: keep it simple. You may be a whiz at beef Wellington in your own kitchen, but not on board. Think one skillet, one pan. Consider finger foods like Italian bruschetta (pre-mix the topping and grill the bread on board for a warm crunch). Make the foods stable on the plate, too. Hot dogs roll, but burgers and steaks stay put. Grilled corn is fun–slice it into 1-inch rounds for easy eating.

Courtesy of Aquila

a. The Aquila 36 catamaran is available for sale or as a charter in the British Virgins through MarineMax Vacations.

b.

c.

b. The SeaRay SLX 400 **c.**The Monterey 385SE

Courtesy of SeaRay (b.) & Monterey (c.)

The boats we've picked for great entertaining all have country kitchens in the cockpit with all the basics: bbq grill, sink, fridge and more than enough counter space. Just as important as the chef's territory is seating: don't crowd your guests. The dining table will determine how many you can seat without jamming people in.

Another important feature is shade: no one wants to char along with the steaks. Many of these boats have either permanent or retractable tops so you won't get Christmas cards from your dermatologist.

The SeaRay SLX 400 is a good example at MarineMax, with a full cockpit galley on one side, while guests enjoy a large dining table opposite. The table folds out for more guests, or it can be intimate for a couple.

The galley on the Monterey 385SE from Ultimate Marine is tucked behind the helm seat so it's out of the way until needed, and guests get the benefit of a SureShade awning that slides out from the hardtop to keep UV rays under control.

Larger boats can (obviously) handle more guests, and the Princess V65, imported from Britain by Galati, makes the most of alfresco entertaining with sliding and hinged doors and windows that open the salon completely to the cockpit. This allows the inside galley to curl into the cockpit, with a seamless counter becoming the perfect buffet for guests lolling at the folding dining table and U-shaped settee in the cockpit. An extending shade from the hardtop keeps nature at bay.

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THE BEST OF TAMPA ALL IN ONE PLACE

d.

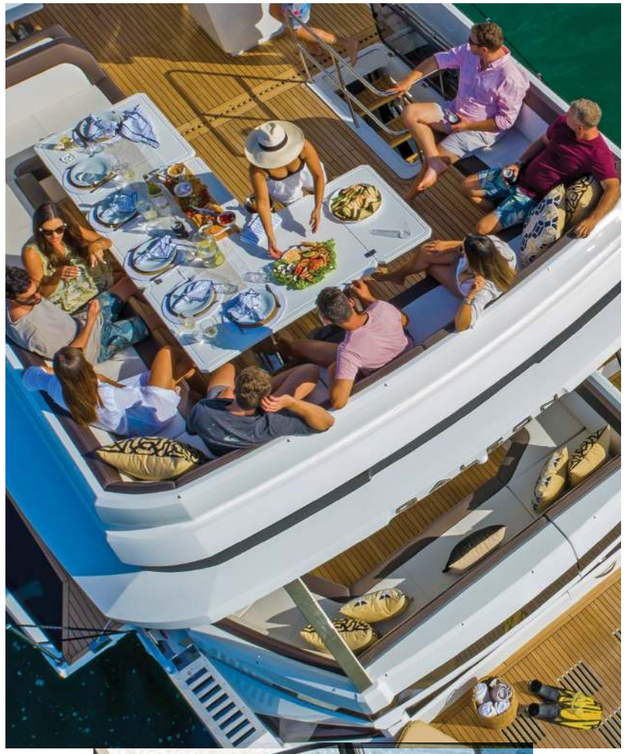
e.

d. The Princess V65 **e.** Kenyon Grills onboard the Aviara 36

The L-shaped cockpit galley on the Cruisers 38 GLS at Galati Yacht Sales keeps the chef out of the cockpit traffic flow. Since the 38 has outboard power and a fold-out side terrace, there is room to accommodate all your guests. Another notable feature is twin bar stools on the forward edge of the galley counter, allowing guests to sip and kibitz as the chef works.

Designers of the Aviara 36 at MarineMax knew that the grill is the heart of great entertaining aboard, and they provided two Kenyon grills side-by-side so you can cook fish, steak and kebabs without sharing any flavors. To back the twin grills are twin fridges underneath, so there is ample stowage for all your cold food.

Courtesy of Princess (d.) & Aviara (e.)



f.

g.

f. The Galeon 640 **g.** The Aquila 36

Courtesy of Galeon (f.) & Aquila (g.)

Players + Pursuits

Seafaring Soirees

The Aquila 36 catamaran, available for sale or as a charter in the British Virgins through MarineMax Vacations, has the added stability of twin hulls, plus extra deck space from outboard power. The chef benefits with an L-shaped galley under the protection of the hardtop. The two grills, sink and fridge are one step from the settee around the folding dining table, making serving easy.

Don't get into a rut of thinking only the cockpit is fit for fine dining. The Galeon 325 GTO at MarineMax has a spacious forward cockpit with a removable table that is perfect for a leisurely meal or sundowner in a quiet anchorage. And the Galeon 640 Fly gives your guests a sweeping view from the seating on the flybridge and a dining table that easily seats ten.

Several tips for making your onboard entertaining a hit. As mentioned before, keep it simple! Make a list of everything needed and get it aboard before your guests arrive. The most forgotten item? A corkscrew. Overlook it and, unless a guest has a Swiss Army knife, well, you're cork-screwed. It doesn't matter how good you are as an angler, don't count on catching the fish for dinner, so bring predictable cuisine. And even in a calm anchorage, stay away from greasy foods to protect any queasy guests.

Hemingway knew it and so do you: your boat is truly a moveable feast!

Chris Caswell is an award-winning writer and the former editor of several yachting magazines. He has appeared on Oprah as a boating lifestyle expert and hosted the Marine Voyager series on the Speed Channel. TM

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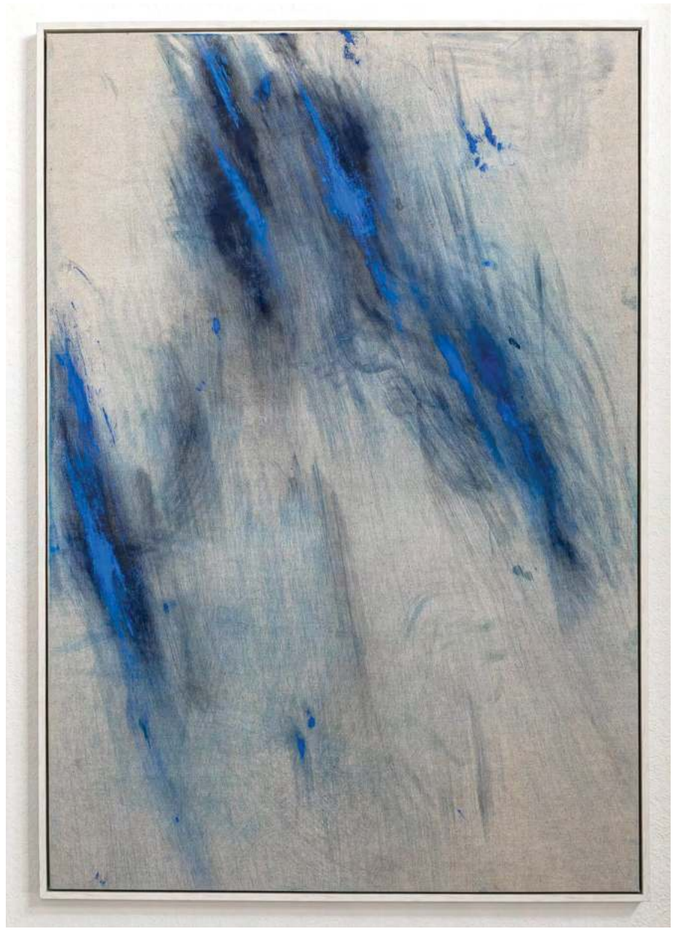

***WIND PAINTING #2* by Jonathan Todryk**

Jonathan Todryk's work invites viewers to explore their relation to art and themselves through positive introspection. Whether through the light swift gestures of color or the textured layers of painted concrete on raw linen, the movements within his minimalist compositions capture the eye while embracing the adage 'less is more.' His new work balances exposed negative surfaces with colorful streaks of raw pigment. Brian and Susan, the Clearwater, FL owners of Wind Painting #2, were attracted to the intense blue in the painting. As they learned more about Todryk, his challenges, and the progression within his artistic career, the collectors grew even more attached.

Photography by Gabriel Burgos

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