

Foodie Florida

A new Michelin guide to Florida has highlighted its eclectic cuisine, says Clare Vooght



Ocean Drive, Miami

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Florida may already be famous for its key lime pie, but Michelin's arrival to three of its major cities – Miami, Orlando and Tampa – is putting a whole host of other Floridian flavours on the map.

When it launched this summer, the guide brought the first ever star-rated restaurants to the state, as well as many Bib Gourmand restaurants, an accolade just below the stars that signifies a more accessible and affordable experience. The guide points visitors to gorgeous Greek cuisine in Miami, Michelin-starred dining in full view of the Disneyland fireworks in Orlando, and brothy pork ramen in Tampa.

But it's not all about the Michelin guide. There's a thriving food scene beyond the stars, too – from inventive US takes on Cuban dining in Miami to authentic Vietnamese dishes in Orlando and quirky chocolate bar-making experiences in Tampa. Here's where to find some of the cities' best flavours. And as this feature runs in our

sustainable travel-themed issue, there's also a standout vegan choice for each city.

MIAMI

The food scene: With a large Cuban population in the city, Miami is famous for its take on Cuban food. But there are plenty of other international and American flavours to be explored here too.

Restaurants to try: Marabu represents dishes from the Cuban countryside with its smoky, charcoal-cooking techniques. The gloriously gut-busting plantain with bacon and melted mozzarella – swimming in sticky syrup and with a charred, smoky skin – is a must, while beef short rib comes presented on a still-smoking traditional grill, with apple mojo sauce. Mediterranean flavours abound at Estiatorio Omos, which focuses on fresh fish sourced from the Aegean Sea by the restaurant's fish sommelier. The saganaki (the most dramatic dish of my trip) is essentially ➤

ASK THE expert

“Florida’s food scene is unique, diverse and intriguing. From locally grown produce and fresh seafood to unique fusions from cultures around the world, the Sunshine State has a lot to offer food and wine enthusiasts. Whether you enjoy casual dining with your toes in the sand or fine dining in a trendy restaurant, you can find it in Florida.

“With four out of five travellers saying they would extend their holiday by a night if a Michelin Guide selection existed, and 71% saying they’d increase their spending, our partnership with Michelin will boost our tourism economy.

“Booking a Michelin-starred restaurant is a great recommendation for clients looking to mark a special occasion. But those travelling on a budget shouldn’t shy away from the Michelin Guide, as venues recognised with a Bib Gourmand are judged by the same criteria used for star designation, and offer two courses plus a glass of wine or dessert for less than \$50 a head. Booking before travel is recommended, as many restaurants are booked out months in advance.”

Dana Young, president and chief executive, Visit Florida



CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: Crispy brussels sprouts with guacamole at Miami’s Amalia restaurant; the bar and rooftop restaurant at Moxy Miami South Beach



kefalograviera cheese soaked in metaxa – and it’s set on fire at your table.

Over in South Beach, you’ll find a curated selection of some of Miami’s best restaurants at the Time Out Market, while the nearby Amalia restaurant, in the Lennox Hotel Miami Beach, blends seasonal, local produce with techniques the chef has learned working in restaurants in Italy, Spain, Argentina, Peru, Israel and Morocco. While meat lovers will be able to get their steak frites and lamb chops, the inventive veggie dishes are the standout choices: crispy brussels sprouts teamed with guacamole, flaked almonds and pomegranate seeds is a surprising hit, followed by an earthy, umami-rich mushroom risotto with crunchy hazelnuts.



Best vegan eats: As well as Amalia’s top veggie dishes, those in search of good, sustainable options should head to the fairly wallet-friendly Hoja Taqueria. This cool, grungy venue with glowing neon lights and a late-night vibe, serving tequila and mezcal cocktails, recreates traditional Oaxacan

“Some of Miami’s best restaurants are at the Time Out Market

flavours and specialises in tortillas made from heirloom corn grown on the region’s indigenous farms. Try the mushroom tacos, or sweet-potato tostadas with almond cream. **Where to stay:** Stylish Moxy Miami South Beach has plenty of chillout spaces, including a pool terrace with bookable cabanas. Breakfast burritos from Los Buenos bodega are a good way to start the day. Rooms start at \$159 per night. moxysouthbeach.com

ORLANDO

The food scene: There are flavours from all around the world, with all dietary requirements catered for across the resorts and parks, but visitors would do well to venture downtown and to Orlando’s neighbourhoods, too.

Restaurants to try: Dine on prime cuts of beef – and a prime view of

the Magic Kingdom’s shimmering nightly fireworks show from the terrace – at Spanish-influenced Capa. Located on the 17th floor of the Four Seasons in the Walt Disney World Resort, diners can see the wood-burning grill in action, cooking up everything from porterhouse steaks to purebred Japanese Wagyu alongside upscale versions of tapas classics. Elsewhere, at Disney Springs, pan-Asian, Michelin-recommended Morimoto Asia is famous for its ribs and sumptuous sushi rolls – which include soft-shell crab, spicy yellowtail and shrimp tempura. There’s also a dim sum exhibition kitchen, where guests can see the chefs at work, as well as mini ramen bowls for kids. For a true taste of Florida, though, be sure to visit Four Flamingos, which celebrates the Floridian flavours with hints from the Caribbean and Central and South America, made with native fruits, vegetables and seafood from the state. And yes – they do a mean key lime pie.



Best vegan eats: The Mills 50 district near downtown Orlando is home to the biggest Vietnamese ➤

DESTINATIONS

THE US | FLORIDA



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Epicurean Hotel; key lime pie at the Four Flamingos; Ybor City; Four Seasons Orlando

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American population in Florida. Bib Gourmand Z Asian is a great place for authentic Vietnamese food, as well as having a dedicated vegan menu filled with tofu-tastic riffs on the original dishes such as pho, red curry and summer rolls.

Where to stay: The Four Seasons Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort is the only hotel in the resort with an adult-only pool. It's still a family hotel – the characters visit for breakfast twice a week – but it retains a classy, grown-up style, with a wellness centre to unwind in. Rooms start at \$799 per night. fourseasons.com visitorlando.com

TAMPA

The food scene: Tampa's food scene is plateful of fun, with plenty of restaurants trying out new things, from foodie workshops to innovative ways to serve food, and lots of places to find a good Cuban sandwich (the city is home to La Segunda Bakery, the world's largest producer of Cuban bread).

Restaurants to try: Modern, low-rise development Hyde Park Village is filled with quirky options. At Michelin-recommended Timpano, the bucatini al pesto pasta is served tableside from a massive parmesan wheel, and at Cake Drip, you can make your own custom chocolate bar. In Ybor City – which was known for being home to the city's Hispanic population and its cigar-making industry – the historic Columbia Restaurant has been serving Spanish-Cuban cuisine since 1905. The decidedly more modern Ichicoro Ramen brings big-city vibes to the city's Seminole Heights neighbourhood, with authentic ramen dishes and comforting grilled pork belly bowls – and a well-deserved Bib Gourmand. At Haven, cheese and charcuterie are served up with fine wines and 300 varieties of bourbon.



Best vegan eats: Heights Public Market food hall is filled with street-food stands, housed at Armature Works, an open-plan

high-ceilinged old 'trolley barn' (tram shed) with vast windows that open onto views of the new Tampa riverwalk. It's known for quirky, social media star dishes, such as the Lizzo freakshakes that Bake 'n' Babes made when the star performed in Tampa, and Muchachas' 'walkin' tacos', served in a Doritos bag. Vegan visitors can check out the Armature Works website for a full list of the vegan dishes served by the different stalls, from miso curry at Ichicoro Imoto to grilled portobello sandwich from Inside the Box.

Where to stay: Suitably foodie Epicurean Hotel offers guests a glass of wine on arrival, which is fitting, given it's located opposite one of the world's largest wine cellars (underneath legendary restaurant Bern's Steakhouse). The on-site Epicurean restaurant serves modern American food, while the rooms are comfy and – naturally – come with well-stocked minibars. Rooms start at £313 per night. epicureanhotel.com

BOOK IT

MIAMI

Kenwood Travel offers five nights' room-only at Eden Roc hotel from £1,141 per person, flying with Virgin Atlantic on January 14, 2023. kenwoodtravel.co.uk

ORLANDO

Carrier offers seven nights at Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort from £4,335, including BA flights from Gatwick to Orlando, private airport transfers and Fast Track Service at Gatwick. The price is based on a May 14 departure next year. carrier.co.uk

TAMPA

Gold Medal offers seven nights' room-only at the four-star Epicurean Hotel from £2,689. The price includes direct BA flights from Gatwick and is based on a departure on April 27, 2023. goldmedal.co.uk