

Local Businesses Redefine Bar Food

Written by Geoffrey Anderson Jr. and Dianne Rubin, BT Contributors
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Food news we know you can use

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What comes to mind when you hear the term “bar food”? Most likely, the words conjure up thoughts of nachos, wings, and burgers. No surprise there -- just about every sports bar has some version of these that’s great for sharing with friends and watching a big game.

But some watering holes in Miami are turning the definition of bar food on its head. At these places, the food gets as much attention as the cocktails. Guests no longer have to settle for fried fare and other selections that would make a cardiologist wince. A quality meal is well within reach.

One place that’s upping the bar food game: **Jaguar Sun** (230 NE 4th St., 786-860-2422), which we also mentioned in last month’s column. This establishment inside the lobby of downtown’s X

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Miami Apartments features a long list of “patio pounders” and craft cocktails, many of which contain spirits not normally found on menus around these parts. Also not typically found on South Florida bar menus are dishes like country ham, ’nduja toast, and blue crab campanelle. Pasta paired with a stiff drink? Count us in.

Foodies feeling fancier can make their way to **Kaido** (151 NE 41 St., Unit 217, 786-409-5591), the new Design District lounge from Alter’s Brad Kilgore. The James Beard-nominated chef has put together an Asian-inspired menu that’s ideal for getting a group together over top-notch libations. Items like the Nikkei octopus, Nurungi rice cake, lemongrass duck sausage, and Thai bass are substantial and approachable; the menu descriptions here might be overwhelming for some guests, but being curious pays off.

Over at **The Anderson** (709 NE 79th St., 305-757-3368), bar staples like fries and wings have gotten an upgrade. The former comes in an elote-esque style, topped with corn crema and cotija cheese. Meanwhile, Haitian-style wings come with pikliz aioli, giving the dish some extra kick. Our favorite dish, though, is the choripan; the chorizo sandwich is available with Proper Sausages chorizo or a vegan chorizo from Atlas Meat-Free Eatery. You can’t go wrong with either, as the latter tastes just as good as the former.

Among this elevated fare, there’s still room for traditional bar food done right. **Frankey’s Sports Bar** (900 Silks Run, Unit 1740, 954-464-2333) at Gulfstream Park is the perfect example. Tried-and-true bites like crispy calamari, mozzarella bites, and beef sliders offer both comfort and quality when all you want is a taste of the familiar. The plentiful big-screen TVs are a plus.

OPENINGS

If you’d rather enjoy a leisurely meal at a dinner table than cozy up to a bar, then the latest additions to the local food scene have you covered. **Bakan** (2801 NW 2nd Ave., 305-396-7080) -- a new Mexican eatery -- has set up shop in Wynwood, where they’re developing flavorful dishes like short rib mole and Alaskan King Crab tacos. Backing up the extensive food menu is a gigantic assortment of mezcal and tequila. With over 500 selections available, you can expect

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to be here a while.

Pickier palates are sure to find something at **Bld Bae's** (7244 Biscayne Blvd., 786-615-9661) in MiMo. The new neighborhood joint cooks up a little bit of everything, from chicken parm and meatloaf to a quinoa and kale bowl and pan-seared branzino. Since the team behind Morgan's is also behind this spot, the menu features familiar faces, like the melty turkey burger and the beet and goat cheese tacos. Bld Bae's is also open early, so you can stop in for waffles and other quick breakfast fare.

On the fast-casual side of things, **Crazy Poke** (161 SE 1st. St., 305-496-0117) has expanded with a new store in downtown Miami. The poke shop, which took over the old Jon Smith Subs location, is known for its fresh bowls that can be filled with spicy tuna, hamachi, and other tasty seafood. If you feel like leaving the customization to the experts, order one of the signature bowls that are jam-packed with protein; even the medium size is a monster.

CLOSINGS

Fortunately for diners, closures were kept to a minimum last month. The biggest announcement was the impending closure of **Perricone's Marketplace & Café**, which will cease operations this month. The good news: In just a few months, the venerable Brickell restaurant will reopen in a new location just a half-mile away.

Geoffrey Anderson Jr. and Dianne Rubin are co-founders of Miami Food Pug, an award-winning South Florida food blog that fuses the couple's love of dogs and food.

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