

ONLY IN FLORIDA: STRANGE BUT TRUE STORIES FROM ACROSS THE SUNSHINE STATE

# JACKSONVILLE

Alhambra Theatre & Dining

FLORIDA THEATRE Friends of James Weldon Johnson Park  
Jacksonville Symphony

PONTE VEDRA CONCERT HALL

FSCJ ARTIST SERIES

LIGHTNER MUSEUM

FIRST COAST OPERA

Benches Fine Arts Series

Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens  
Emily Cargill + Dancers

ST. AUGUSTINE Amphitheatre

Episcopal School of Jacksonville

Thrasher-Horne Center

Community Nutcracker

ST. AUGUSTINE ART ASSOCIATION

Jacksonville Children's Chorus

# CULTURAL ARTS

## ISSUE

250+ CONCERTS, EXHIBITIONS, THEATRE PERFORMANCES AND MORE!

Includes: Faces of Jax Health Profiles



# Brand New Day

BY JEFFREY SPEAR

It seems that every time we turn around, there's a new restaurant opening somewhere around Northeast Florida, especially amidst the booming development taking place in St Johns County. While there's bound to be plenty more in the months ahead, here are a few recent arrivals we felt deserved some attention.



Lobster ramen



With six restaurants under his belt, and 40 years in the business, Chef Jean Marie Josselin came out of retirement to create **Rustica**, a recently debuted restaurant in the still emerging SilverLeaf community. Taking reference from his many international experiences, the eclectic menu, full bar, stylish dining room and illuminated airborne fish that swim overhead, makes for an engaging and enjoyable experience. A few dishes not-to-be-missed include poached scallops ravioli (\$16) with truffle butter, roasted lobster tail ramen (\$37) in a tom yum broth, and Rustica nigiri (\$23) with tuna, salmon, hamachi and crispy oysters.

For fans of Southeast Asian cuisine, **Little Miss Ha** brings an exciting selection of Vietnamese flavors to downtown St. Augustine. Located in the newly renovated Granada building, its spacious dining room, adorned with contemporary flourishes, sets the stage for remarkable culinary experiences. While popular dishes such as banh mi, spring rolls and pho (the national dish of Vietnam) are available, the crispy imperial rolls (\$14), green curry (\$18), and pineapple ginger fish are all highly recommended. An unusual side note—the restaurant shares space with the French Pantry, connected by a cocktail bar that stretches between both restaurants, a connection that makes sense considering the historical ties between France and Vietnam.



Banh mi



Although Jacksonville has its fair share of notable pizza places, **Electric Dough Pizza Co.** is the latest to join that list. Created by Chef Tom Gray (Prati Italia, Town Hall), and located in the old San Marco Theatre, pizzas crafted here are made using traditional Roman-style dough with the baked, cheesy edge similar to Detroit-style pies. Crispy and airy at the same time, the Mighty Quinn, (cacio e pepe sauce, mushrooms, arugula, fontina, porcini-truffle aioli) and the Godfather II, a meat-lover's dream, are two menu standouts. Both are \$20 for a medium and pair nicely with an Aperol Spritz. A full bar makes Electric Dough a great happy hour destination as well.

**Dorothy's Downtown** is a relative newcomer to Jax's urban core. Under the culinary leadership of Louisiana-born Chef Marvin Barnes, Jacksonville diners here can savor authentic Creole cuisine. Exuding a somewhat vintage vibe with a touch of elegance throughout the space, you're going to find flavors and dishes unlike anything you'll find around town. The Voodoo Balls (\$10) made with crayfish, crab and rice, accompanied by Thai chili sauce; short rib poutine (\$18) with gravy & cheese curds; and fried chicken and gumbo (\$28) with andouille sausage and yellow rice; bring the true taste of the Crescent City to the First Coast. Laissez les bon temps rouler.



Fried chicken & gumbo





Another newcomer to Jax Beach is **Izakaya Ko**, serving a wide variety of Japanese style tapas in a visually engaging and casual space. Whether your selections are hot, cold, yakitori or sushi, everything is expertly prepared, beautifully presented and full of flavor. Along with an eclectic selection of sakes, beers and wines, you'll be hard pressed to find anything comparable along the coast. Chef Adi Wirawan recommends the crab fried rice (\$14) with blue crab, garlic confit, green onion; Takoyaki (\$8) served with Japanese aioli, sweet soy, bonito flakes, kizami nori; and Chirashi (\$28) with six pieces of sashimi over sushi rice.

So many choices. So many meals to still to come. ✨



If you're looking for authentic Mexican flavors, **Ajua** (pronounced ah-HOO-ah) in Jacksonville Beach is the place. The deep, rich earth tones that grace the dining room are easy on the eyes, allowing you to focus on the flavors and textures of your meal—everything made in house and from scratch. While their quesabirria tacos (\$18) and huitlacoche quesadilla (\$17) are top sellers, other more intriguing selections includes the pan de aire nachos (\$12)—a puffed air bread stuffed with nacho toppings, and the flavor-forward 32-oz. Tomahawk steak (\$96) topped with chipotle/adobo butter. On game days, check out the Mexican-inspired wings and sliders.