



Dining BY DESIGN

RESTAURANTS HOUSED
IN FUN, FASCINATING DIGS

BY LIBBY BOREN MCMILLAN

AS SEEN IN
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totimedia.com
Published by
TOTI Media



The Ice Plant in St. Augustine (top and below) is a voluminous industrial building renovated with Prohibition-era style inspiration.

TOP PHOTO BY KELLY CONWAY; BOTTOM PHOTO BY JOE MILLS

“As an architect, I believe a great restaurant offers intrigue: The place in which we eat is as essential as the flavors and how we are served. Whether large or small, charming, grand, indoors or out, a celebration of the architectural space enhances the flavor of the food and intensifies the perception of the dining experience.” — Joyce Owens, AIA; principle architect, Studio AJO of Fort Myers; 2017 president-elect AIA Florida chapter

Y ou don’t have to be an architecture buff to enjoy eating in a beautiful or intriguing space. Determined to double the dining pleasure of our readers, we sought out Florida’s most architecturally interesting places in which to have a meal. There’s no better resource for such recommendations than the Florida chapter of the American Institute of Architects. With a robust 13 local components across the Sunshine State, members focus on shaping Florida’s future through great design, engaging with their various communities as often as possible. So without further ado, here’s a great list for your glovebox; come hungry for eye candy!

Destin

The Back Porch Seafood and Oyster House was once a two-story A-frame stilted fishing shack on the beach. Along the way, it’s been converted into a popular seafood restaurant where oysters come with a beautiful view of the beach. 1740 Scenic Highway 98; 850-837-2022; theback-porch.com

Fort Lauderdale

The first home ever built on Fort Lauderdale’s beach—Jova House, circa 1927—remains its oldest structure. This lovely stucco dwelling by architect Francis L. Abreu holds today’s **Casablanca Café**. Reflecting Mediterranean Revival style, the café offers patrons a charming environment of spiral staircases, decorative tiles, lovely arches and wrought-iron details. 3049 Alhambra St.; 954-764-3500; casablancacafeonline.com

Originally a roadhouse saloon, the wonderfully casual **Rustic Inn Crabhouse** has enjoyed its current purpose for more than 50 years. Outdoor seating practically floats above an inland waterway, and the Rustic Inn’s seafood motivates a steady stream of loyal patrons. 4331 Anglers Ave; 954-584-1637; arkrestaurants.com

Lauderdale’s AIA component also gives props to the new chef-driven tapas bar **Sun Surf Sand (S3)**, where every seat has a water view. Its external structure and patio match the style of the Hilton Fort

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CASABLANCA CAFÉ



Casablanca Café in Fort Lauderdale (left and right) reflects Mediterranean Revival style.



Lauderdale Beach Resort, but S3's sleek, dark interior color scheme visually contrasts the landmark hotel's bright white beach vibe. 505 N. Fort Lauderdale Beach Blvd.; 954-523-7873; s3restaurant.com

Gainesville

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' famous Cross Creek hamlet is the inspiration behind **The Yearling Restaurant**. This rambling "cracker-style" eatery oozes rustic Southern charm. Adding to the old-fashioned vibe are classic dishes such as catfish, clams, cooter (turtle), gator and frog legs. *Florida Trend* magazine named it a Top Restaurant 10 years in a row. 14531 E. County Road 325, Hawthorne; 352-466-3999; yearlingrestaurant.net

Also making Gainesville AIA's list are open-air **Ballyhoo Grill** (3700 W. University Ave.; 352-373-0059; ballyhoogrill.com), with its thatched roof; **Satchel's Pizza** (1800 NE 23rd Ave.; 352-335-7272; satchelspizza.com), where one table is actually inside an old van; and **Mojo Hogtown BBQ** (12 SE 2nd Ave.; 352-727-7871; mojobbq.com), with exposed brick and ceiling beams that make an inviting atmosphere.

Jacksonville

The dazzling hub creating a buzz in Jacksonville is **Moxie Kitchen + Cocktails**, which encourages patrons to "eat with their eyes." Atlanta-based A13's bold design mixes organic elements (log beams from the 1800s; walls and bar top from century-old logs) with clean modern components (metal, leather). Mouth-watering food comes as no surprise, with a James Beard Award-nominated chef at the helm. 4972 Big Island Drive; 904-998-9744; moxiefl.com

Miami

M.I.A. Beer Company's owners ditched their architecture careers in 2008 for another shared interest—brewing. The industrial-style space they created for fellow beer and food

enthusiasts sports roll-up doors and a view of the brewing process. "They produce different beers in the facility, and offer tours," says Jaime E. Sobrino, AIA. "It's fun and interesting, plus a nice place to catch a game!" 10400 NW 33rd St., Doral; 786-801-1721; mia.beer

Studio Collective designed two entries at EAST Hotel (788 Brickell Plaza; 305-712-7000; east-miami.com): **Quinto la Huella**, a bold mix of modern shapes and organic elements, as backdrop for its Uruguayan menu; and **Sugar**, the hotel's 40th-floor rooftop bar and garden, a lush oasis in the urban sky, replete with Asian tapas. Nearby, Four Seasons Hotel Miami's **Edge Steak & Bar** (1435 Brickell Ave.; 305-381-3190; edgerestaurantmiami.com), also gets a nod from Miami AIA members, its mix of clean design and retro furnishings a hit for Handel Architects. At **Seaspice** (422 NW North River Drive; 305-440-4200; seaspicemiami.com), architect Santiago Jose Pelaez converted a Miami River-front post-industrial warehouse into a sophisticated globally-inspired dining destination.

Miami Beach

Iconic oceanfront resort hotel Fontainebleau Miami Beach's mid-century design inspires many an architectural pilgrimage. Within the resort is the riveting **Hakkasan**, winner of awards from *Michelin Guides*, *Wine Spectator* magazine and Zagat. Hakkasan's Cantonese and dim sum delights are served amid beautifully carved teak walls and turquoise hues. Designers Gilles & Boissier knocked it out of the park on this one. Miami's AIA also gives kudos to the resort's ocean-view **Scarpetta**, designed by David Collins Studio. 4441 Collins Ave.; 877-326-7412; fontainebleau.com

Two renovations make the Miami Beach list: architect John Pawson's **Matador Room**, in what was the Seville Beach Hotel, circa 1955, and now is The Miami Beach EDITION (2901 Collins Ave.; 786-257-4600; matadorroom.com); and **27**, on-site restaurant at Freehand Miami (2727 Indian Creek Drive; 305-531-2727; thefreehand.com), an historic art deco hotel near the beach that's a restoration of the 1930s Indian Creek Hotel.

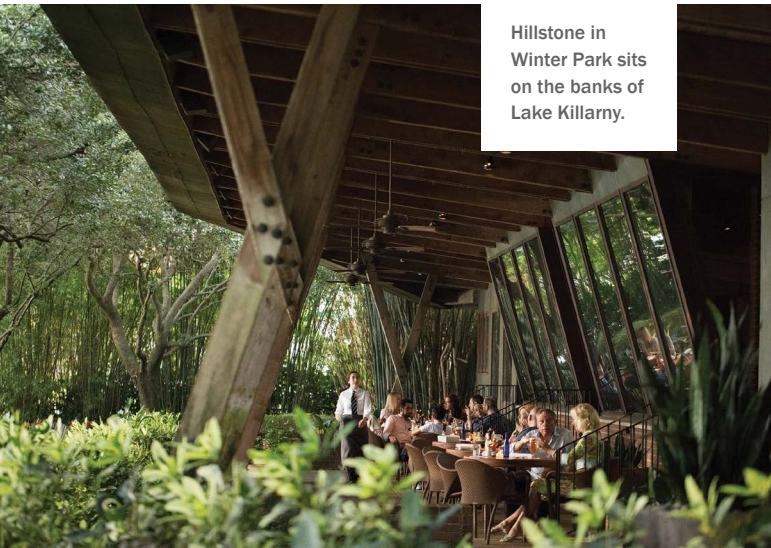
Orlando and Winter Park

Orlando's **East End Market** is home to several dining options in a shared space with a shared kitchen. The two-story building that holds this inspiring and collaborative mix of eateries is both modern and folksy. In this case, design actually drives the business model. 3201 Corrine Drive, Orlando; 321-236-3316; eastendmkt.com

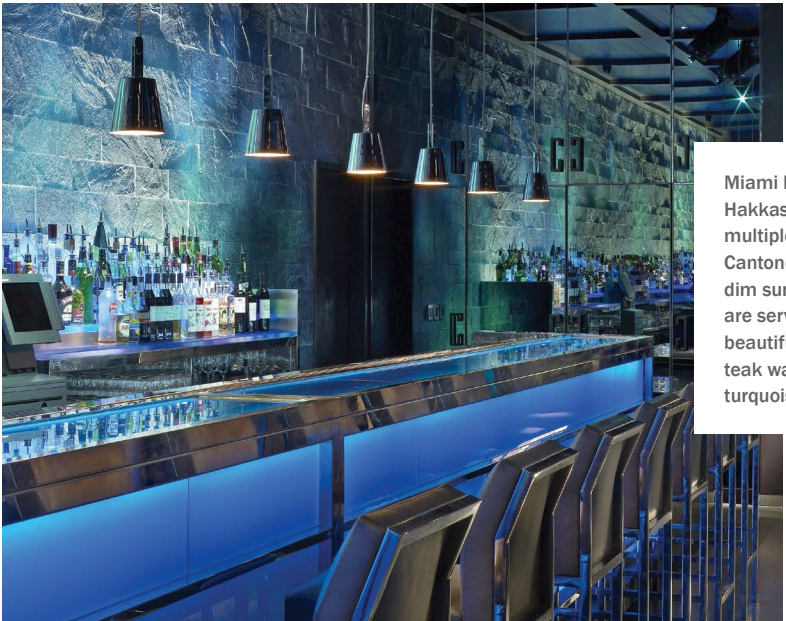
Hillstone sits on the banks of Lake Killarny in upscale Winter Park. The featured dining area is a pavilion at the end of a dock, relaxing diners with strings of lights and a beautiful view of the sunset over the lake. 215 S. Orlando Ave., Winter Park; 407-740-4005; hillstonerestaurant.com

Palm Beach and Delray Beach

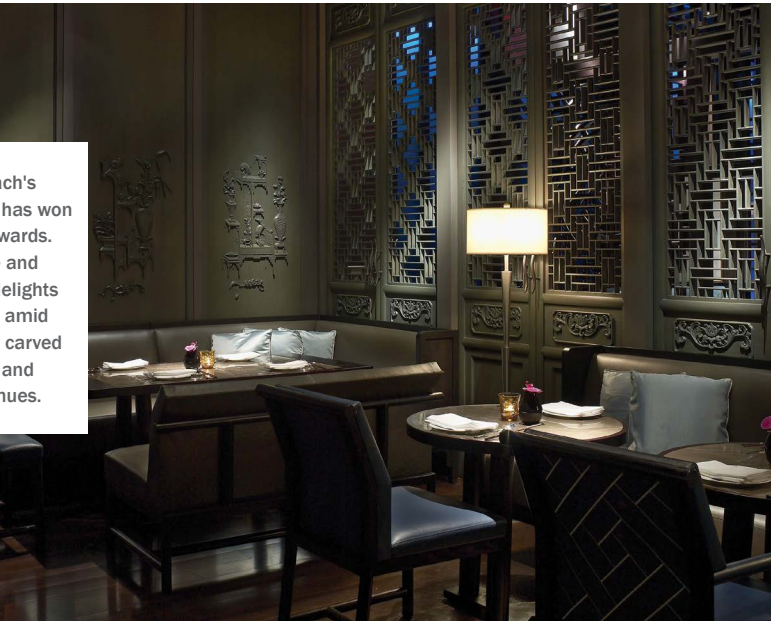
Henry Flagler's **The Breakers** resort, circa 1926, holds 10 dazzling restaurants within its grand confines, and all are open to the public (1 S. County Road, Palm Beach; 877-724-3188; thebreakers.com).



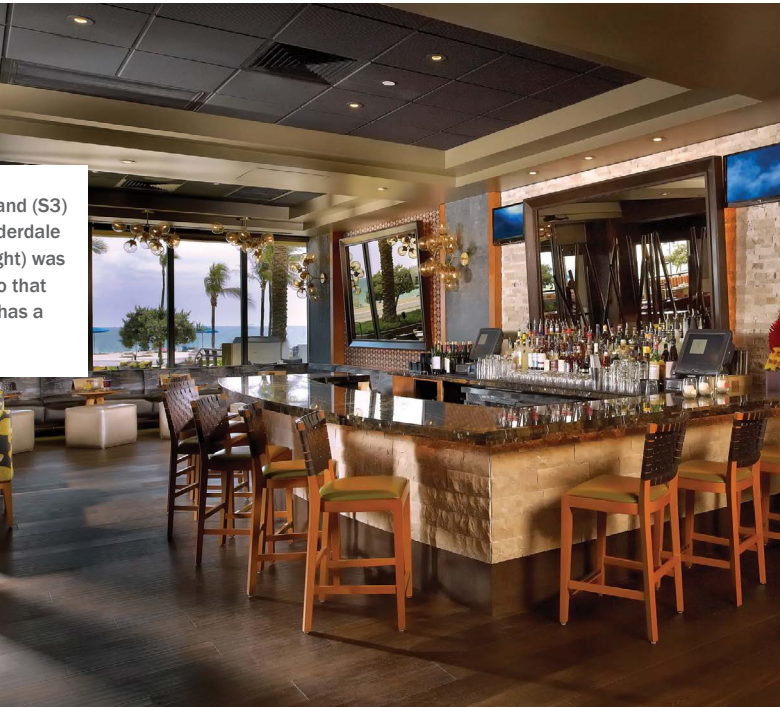
Hillstone in Winter Park sits on the banks of Lake Killarny.



Miami Beach's Hakkasan has won multiple awards. Cantonese and dim sum delights are served amid beautifully carved teak walls and turquoise hues.



Sun Surf Sand (S3) in Fort Lauderdale (left and right) was designed so that every seat has a water view.





The Veranda Restaurant in downtown Fort Myers (left) occupies two homes that were joined together. At right, DaRuMa in Fort Myers is a modern Japanese steakhouse.



A second National Historic Register location—**Sundy House** (106 S. Swinton Ave., Delray Beach; 561-272-5678; sundyhouse.com)—is the oldest house in Delray. It’s also served as a church and a schoolhouse, before settling in as a tropical restaurant. **Renato’s** (87 Via Mizner, Palm Beach; 561-655-9752; renatospalmbeach.com) lies within Addison Mizner’s architectural wonderland. Created in 1923, Via Mizner was inspired by medieval Spanish castles; winding hidden walkways lead to dinner.

Sarasota

Gulfshore AIA members concur with locals that **Shore Diner**, on St. Armands Circle, is a must. This uber-cool destination has an inviting indoor-outdoor transition and a mid-century Southern Californian beach vibe. That’s why you’ll find so many locals here. 465 John Ringling Blvd.; 941-296-0301; dineshore.com

Appealing **Louie’s Modern**, designed by Solstice Planning and Architecture, is another visual stunner, this time with a cosmopolitan atmosphere. Note the interesting lighting design, while enjoying large windows, great use of wood and a view into the kitchen. Patrons love the indoor-outdoor bar. 1289 N. Palm Ave; 941-552-9688; louiesmodern.com

Southwest Florida

Architect David Poorman’s plans turned a former gas station in Naples into **D’Amico’s The Continental American Provisions and Craft Bar**. This steakhouse is where patrons relax and dine amid great integration of indoor and outdoor spaces, including a wonderful courtyard. 1203 Third St. S, Naples; 239-659-0007; damicoscontinental.com

The Veranda Restaurant occupies two homes built in downtown Fort Myers in the early 1900s; 70 years later, Peter Putlizer, son of the illustrious publisher, joined the houses together. In 1978, they were transformed into The Veranda, a longtime hub for special occasions. 2122 Second St., Ft Myers; 239-332-2065; verandarestaurant.com

DaRuMa Japanese Steakhouse and Sushi Lounge also makes the AIA’s list of intriguing spots in Southwest Florida. The Fort Myers-based restaurant’s Teppanyaki tables anchor a modern Japanese steakhouse. 13499 S. Cleveland Ave., Ft Myers; 239-344-0037; darumarestaurant.com

Space Coast

Historic downtown Melbourne got a lift with the addition of eye-popping **Matt’s Casbah**. Its open patios, bright colors and unexpected use of sun shades, textiles and lighting make it a draw day and night. A globally inspired menu includes sushi. (801 E. New Haven Ave., Melbourne; 321-574-1099; mattscasbah.com). Up the street, a 1905 Queen Anne-style house holds **The Mansion** (1218 E. New Haven Ave. Melbourne; 321-345-5800; thebigmansion.com), a renovated space by Claude Beaujean. It features classic Floridian design elements such as Bahama shutters and carved wood details. The building’s Cellars shop sells wine, beer and espresso.

St. Augustine

The AIA upped its cool factor by including restaurant and distillery combo **The Ice Plant**, a voluminous industrial building renovated with Prohibition-era style inspiration. Ice for drinks is cut from 300-pound slabs, an homage to the plant’s origins. You’ll enjoy coastal fare inside this Florida Trust for Historic Preservation award winner for Outstanding Achievement in Restoration/Rehabilitation. 110 Iberia St; 904-998-9744; iceplantbar.com

Tampa Bay

Smith-Dalia Architects turned heads when it created **The Restaurant at Oxford Exchange**. The Tampa building’s fabulous English brickwork heralds back to 1890, when this National Register edifice served as the original stable for the Tampa Bay Hotel. The Restaurant’s fine art, coffered ceilings

and the addition of a luxe, English-style bookstore set the scene for a most memorable meal. 420 W. Kennedy Blvd; 813-253-0222; oxfordexchange.com

Beck Group has wowed with its conversion of the original Tampa Bay Water Works building into **Ulele**, a Native American-style restaurant and brewery on the edge of downtown Tampa. High ceilings, an abundance of windows and exposed brick walls create a rich interior ambience while outdoor seating is also available. “Ulele is a thoughtfully restored 1903 pump station on the Hillsborough River,” says Kim Headland, AIA; adding that the food is “amazing.” 1810 N. Highland Ave., Tampa Heights; 813-999-4952; ulele.com

Vero Beach

Resilient through three hurricanes, **The Ocean Grill** sits directly on the Atlantic. Built of reclaimed barn siding and fitted with fixtures and furnishings that come from around the world, this restaurant takes full advantage of its views with oversized windows. Expect classic seafood and steak. 1050 Sexton Plaza; 772-231-5409; ocean-grill.com

Freelance writer Libby Boren McMillan is a frequent contributor to TOTI Media.



LEFT PHOTO COURTESY OF THE VERANDA RESTAURANT; RIGHT PHOTO COURTESY OF DARUMA JAPANESE STEAKHOUSE AND SUSHI LOUNGE