

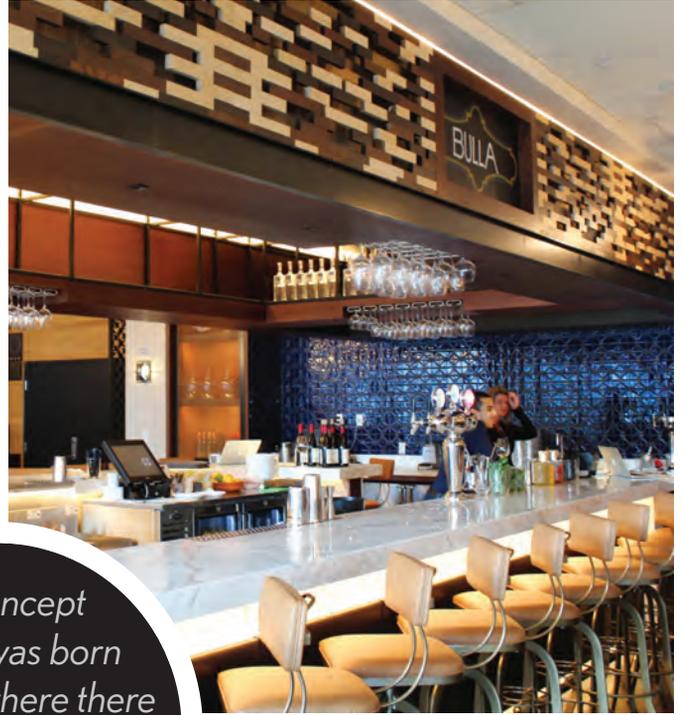
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LUXURY LIVING IN TAMPA BAY

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A Taste of Spain at Bulla Gastrobar



The concept of Bulla was born in Miami, where there are a lot of flavors and influences from different areas.



Photos courtesy of Bulla Gastrobar

On a recent Thursday night in SoHo, Bulla Gastrobar (pronounced boo-ya) was buzzing with energy: every seat at the bar taken by guests enjoying the last moments of happy hour, or Bulla Hour as it's known in the restaurant. Tables inside and out filled with parties sharing stories and laughs over tapas and raciones, or small sharing plates. The bartenders shaking up freshly-crafted, flavorful cocktails.

At the helm of Bulla Tampa is Executive Chef Keith Williamson. He brings with him 25 years of culinary experience, most recently as executive chef for Datz Restaurant Group, and prior to that at Appetit Catering at Eckerd College, Jackson's Bistro & Sushi and Ocean Prime Tampa. Hailing from the City of Brotherly Love, Chef Keith studied culinary arts at The Restaurant School in Philadelphia. He went on to hone his craft in San Francisco and Italy, where he worked alongside the executive chef of the Michelin One Star restaurant CaPeo in Genoa.

As servers scurried about delivering hot and cold tapas and cocktails to the guests, Chef Keith pointed to a few of the classics on the menu. Some notables are the Tortilla Española, a traditional Spanish potato omelet; Pintxos, skewers of marinated pork or chicken; and Croquetas, served traditionally with ham, or chicken with a hint of kimchi.

When asked why a Korean flavor like kimchi was added to a traditional Spanish dish such as Croquetas de Pollo, Chef Keith explained that it's a twist on tradition. The concept of Bulla was born in Miami, where there are a lot of flavors and influences from different areas, and those flavors and influences are reflected in the dishes found throughout Bulla's menu.

Ensalada de Pulpo is another dish that Chef Keith pointed out as one of his favorites: octopus served atop a salad of heirloom tomatoes, cucumbers, croutons and lemon. The octopus, along with the Pintxos and a handful of other meats and fishes on the menu, is prepared using a Josper charcoal oven-grill imported from Spain. "I don't think you can find better octopus anywhere," said Chef Keith. "The tender, warm octopus served with the cool tomato and cucumber salad..."

In addition to the tapas Chef Keith highlighted, Bulla guest favorites include Huevos "Bulla," a dish of eggs, Serrano ham, potato foam, truffle oil and homemade potato chips that is tossed table-side; and, not surprisingly, the seafood Paella with Valencia-style rice, red sofrito and saffron. A favorite for dessert is the Churros Con Chocolate served with chocolate and dulce de leche sauces for dipping are a must-have.

The next project for Bulla is Luna Lounge, its rooftop lounge that will be opening soon and is unique to the Tampa location. Bulla

Managing Partner Brian Sapoznik, who began his career with Carlos Centurion and the Centurion Restaurant Group as a server about 10 years ago and opened Bulla Tampa, gave us a sneak peek. The lounge's unobstructed views of downtown Tampa, Raymond James Stadium and beyond will be complimented by its casual vibe and music, and will feature the same drink menu available in the restaurant along with a pared down tapas menu to start. "There aren't any other views like this in Tampa," said Brian. "We're really excited to open Luna to our guests."

Bulla Gastropub serves lunch and dinner daily and brunch Saturdays and Sundays featuring bottomless sangrias and mimosas. Reservations are suggested. Luna Lounge will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Bulla Gastropubs can also be found in Coral Gables (the original), Doral, Winter Park all in Florida and Atlanta, Georgia, and will be opening soon in Plano, Texas and Charlotte, North Carolina. ●



Photos courtesy of Bulla Gastrobar



Bulla Gastrobar
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