THE EDITION HOTEL — TAMPA'S FIRST 5-STAR EXPERIENCE

Michelin-Starred Chef Helms Luxurious New Food & Beverage Offerings

Story By Kathryn Deen
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Walk into the Tampa Edition and escape into a dream world of luxury and quality where everything is executed to the nines. The Big Guava just got a big upgrade, ushering in the Bay area's first five-star hotel and residences in September.

The collaborative concept from Ian Schrager and Marriott International is a magnet within the buzzing Water Street Tampa, a $3.5-billion redevelopment project by Strategic Property Partners (SPP) in partnership with Cascade Investment LLC and Tampa Bay Lightning owner Jeff Vinik. With the Edition at the forefront, Water Street is amplifying the restaurant and bar status of one of the fastest growing cities in the U.S.

"Edition is one of the most innovative players in the hospitality industry and their opening in Water Street Tampa highlights the neighborhood as a new cultural and culinary focal point for the city," Lee Schaffler, SPP's chief portfolio officer, shares with Tampa Magazines. "The Tampa Edition is creating truly memorable, world-class dining experiences in Tampa."

Its seven new food and beverage concepts raise the bar on an already elevated culinary scene. After all, Tampa ranked as WalletHub's eighth best foodie city in America for 2022 and received its first Michelin reviews in 2022. (Read about a Michelin-awarded restaurant on Page 30.)

Only the second Edition to open in Florida after Miami Beach, the Tampa Edition is the 15th in the world. Just a handful, including lucky Tampa, boast Michelin-starred chefs. The culinary genius helming five of the Tampa Edition's dining and imbibing options is John Fraser, highly praised by Edition founder Schrager.

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a. The Tampa Edition **b.** Putting the finish touches on the Seared Scallop with cauliflower, pine nut risotto and rosemary plume **c.** "We've designed a system and a space that we think meets the standards of Michelin," says chef John Fraser, pictured in Lilac.

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"Recognized as one of the best chefs in the world, his health and wellbeing-focused cooking style is appropriate not just for Florida's climate, but it also fits into Water Street's wellness principles," Shrager shares in a release. "This is a great opportunity to bring a world-class, internationally recognized Michelin star chef to Tampa."

In Tampa, Fraser oversees Lilac, the signature fine dining venue; Azure at Edition, an elevated, beachy lunch and dinner concept; and Market at Edition, an enticing morning-to-night eatery — as well as the Lobby Bar and Pool Bar. He strives to elevate food to an art form and create gathering places to make special memories.

After working in a variety of prestigious restaurants in California and Paris, Fraser founded the hospitality group JF Restaurants in 2007. Subsequently, he opened several successful restaurants in New York City, receiving a Michelin star for Dovetail and Nix. Fraser is hopeful that the Tampa Edition has what it takes to earn the city's first star.

The renowned restaurateur and chef draws inspiration for his menus from his Los Angeles roots, Greek heritage and love of vegetables. He says he's thrilled to help set the stage for the burgeoning Water Street Tampa. Fraser has created successful signature restaurants for the Times Square and West Hollywood Edition Hotels, so he likened working on Tampa's to getting the band back together.

"One of the reasons we love partnering with the Edition is that all the senses are alive," he shares. "It's an incredible vibe. The cuisine gives a little bit of surprise with small touches and tableside moves."

It may be Fraser's third Edition, but Tampa has made its own unique impression upon him. He notes its mix of Southern charm and hospitality and Midwestern style and openness to embrace new ideas. He was surprised to open to a line out the door and had to turn people away. He also was pleased with local dinners "openness

and an adventuresome spirit" when it comes to dining and was equally happy with the hiring process to fill out his Tampa team.

"We've got a pretty incredible amount of talent in Tampa, which speaks to the culture of the restaurants that exist already," Fraser notes.

Fraser worked with his award-winning beverage director of JF Restaurants, Amy Racine, to curate the Tampa Edition's drink program. Racine, a Cleveland, Ohio, native, has worked at Michelin-starred restaurants in California and New York, as well as the Times Square Edition.

"We're so excited about the cocktails at the Tampa Edition," Racine says. "Each outlet has a unique identity and we learned so much and had a ball in creating the programs."

Run separately from Fraser, the Punch Room, a drinks-only establishment; and the Arts Club, a light bites, drinks and entertainment venue; are also showstoppers. Here's a closer look at all seven of the Tampa Edition's dining and drinking delights organized by floor.

LILAC: INTIMATE FINE DINING

The Tampa Edition's finest dining option, Lilac, boasts adventuresome Mediterranean cuisine. The cozy venue is inviting with warm lighting, pear green velvet booths, rich walnut flooring and an open kitchen on the ground level. Inspired by Fraser's Greek heritage and his affinity for Turkish cuisine, the menu features sophisticatedly executed, fresh, seasonal ingredients.

Fraser brings precision and playfulness to the dishes. The caviar service comes on layers of spinach béchamel and onion crème with a side of duck fat hash browns. The Tuna Tartare Mont Blanc is topped with garlic meringue. Poultry Liver Mousse is served with port wine jam on croissants, giving a gourmet nod to PB&J.

"It's a really craveable menu and we're trying to really have some fun and not take ourselves too seriously," he says. "It's that fine dining luxury undercurrent and at the same time, how do we make you smile?"

Smiles come easy when the tableside champagne cocktail cart rolls around, as well

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d. & e. Lilac **f.** Shrimp Plancha at Lilac

as the popular Grouper Cataplana (Portuguese stew) cart, one of several entrees made for two.

"We're trying to encourage conviviality and community in the way in which you eat," he says.

Fraser touts the four-course, pre-fixed dinner for an exquisite sampling of the menu with an optional wine pairing. Signature dishes include the Braised Prime Short Rib cooked on a rotisserie, and the Herb Fusilli with a soft egg and sherry-braised chanterelle mushrooms. Cocktails take a Mediterranean twist on classics, such as a Halva Epresso Martini and a Tarragon Boulevardier with apricot.

MARKET: MORNING-TO-EVENING DELIGHT

The hotel's staple restaurant for breakfast, lunch and dinner offers indoor and outdoor seating, a traditional bar and a coffee and pastry bar. Market's side entrance off Water Street welcomes neighborhood foot traffic. Fraser touts a variety of light, healthy fare, as well as pizzas and pastas, giving an Italian trattoria flair.

"We put a lot of time and effort into our pizza program," he shares. "We zeroed in on the texture and a ferment. The crust is my favorite part."

Neapolitan-style, the dough is fermented for two days. A mixture of staple pizzas and rotating specials come with sides of marinara and garlic olive oil. Of course, the drink program also deserves attention.

"The Market is an exclusively negroni and spritz concept," Racine notes. "Highlights include our version of the Sbagliato with Averna and a buffet of salumi, olive and Italian imported cheese."

The wine list features dry Lambrusco and a combination of both undiscovered and well-known Italian varietals.

LOBBY BAR: ELEGANT CHEER

The Lobby Bar serves up classic cocktails with a Mediterranean twist, such as the Artichoke Negroni, along with shareable small plates. A scalloped American Black Walnut bar takes center stage with cognac leather stools and surrounding tables with cheery yellow upholstery.

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i.

g. The main bar at Market at Edition **h.** The coffee and pastry bar at Market **i.** Neopolitan-style Margherita (back) and Brussels Sprouts pizzas with a Lightning Spritz (left) and a Cacao Negroni at Market

"I'm the most surprised by the way the community is using the Lobby Bar," Fraser shares. "It's been packed from day one. You just can't get a seat."

ARTS CLUB: A SOPHISTICATED PARTY TRIO

When night falls, the Arts Club comes alive on select days, with three connected spaces each taking on their own bold personalities on the second floor. In the Lounge, snap a picture in the photo booth and relax on black leather couches dimly lit by candles. Snack on indulgent dishes as you sip cocktails and let the DJ's music transport you.

In the next room, a long marble bar space provides a lively transition before making your way into the Radio City Music Hall-inspired Arts Club Cabaret. About 350 disco balls adorn the cabaret's ceiling, reflecting red velvet drapery, and a small stage houses entertainers for intimate performances.

PUNCH ROOM: OLD HOLLYWOOD GLAMOUR

Across from the Arts Club, sip punch served from vintage, sterling-plated bowls and be transported to an era past. The menu takes you on a mixology tour through different regions of the Caribbean, plus a daily punch complemented by elevated bar snacks. Delight in the melding of aged spirits, spices, teas and tropical fruits in selections such as The Black Pearl and The Tampa Punch.

The atmosphere is cozy, mature and exclusive, with a glass-encased fireplace, walnut-paneled walls all made from a single tree and jewel-toned velvet curtains and seating. Only a handful of Editions have a Punch Room and Tampa's is the first in North America.

AZURE: BEACH BUNGALOW CHIC DINING

Perched on the ninth floor, Azure, which means blue in Greek, gives a nod to the blue sky and water views, with balcony and indoor dining available for lunch and dinner. Fraser drew from his Greek heritage to curate the menu.

"This is different than anything we've had before," he notes. "We're excited to be offering more innovative ways of looking at the world of Greece."

He calls it Greek grazing, with homemade pita, dips and mezze, kabobs and his first-ever Greek fried chicken in the lineup. The bungalow beach chic venue flows lengthwise in an expansive space

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j. The Lobby Bar **k.** The Arts Club Cabaret **l.** The Punch Room

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m.

n.

m. The Pool Bar **n.** Poolside cabanas on the ninth floor

of about 5,000 square feet each of indoor and outdoor seating, anchored by a white oak and marble racetrack bar and lined with nooks of white leather and linen seating. The same menu is available poolside for more casual dining.

POOL BAR: ROOFTOP BEAUTY

For one of the most scenic drink stops in town, catch a sunset at the Pool Bar on the ninth floor. Bask in a canopy of Bougainvillea as you take in panoramic views of Downtown Tampa. You'll find fresh juices with a coastal feel, such as the smoky Spicy Maria with fresh tomato water, black salt and Aperol, and the Green Juice Bloody with celery, jalapeño, vodka and lemon — also available at neighboring Azure.

"They all feel great to sip under the sun and by the pool," Racine shares. "We also feature large format cocktails and wine bottles to share and bottle service with unique juices and garnish for the cabana."

Resident DJs set the mood. Nearby cabanas are reserved for hotel guests and residences. For tips on maximizing your Edition experience, visit tampamagazines.com. TM