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Miami's Best New Restaurants of 2009

Dining

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Over the past year, Miami has welcomed some spectacular new restaurants to its ever-expanding dining scene.

Big-name eateries such as Hakkasan and Mr. Chow made their debut and put Miami on the map when it comes to world-class dining.

So of all the places that opened their doors in 2009, which ones really stood out from the rest? Here's a look at our favorites and their recipes for success:

Gotham Steak, Scarpetta and Hakkasan

The billion-dollar renovation of the iconic Fontainebleau Miami brought a trio of

restaurants that took Miami's dining scene to new heights.



Chef Alfred Portale of [Gotham Steak](#), the first offshoot of New York City's celebrated Gotham Bar & Grill, knows a thing or two about pleasing a discerning clientele. The New York City eatery has become a mainstay steakhouse in the Big Apple, which isn't exactly an easy feat. The James Beard Award winning chef now splits his time between Miami and New York to make sure the same level of excellence is maintained at both locations.

At [Scarpetta](#), another New York City import, the main attraction is an array of pasta dishes that are simply divine. And at [Hakkasan](#), the first stateside location of this legendary London eatery, diners will find an unmatched ambiance with seductively-lit dining alcoves, impeccable service and Chinese food that's so outstanding it is transforming the experience of Oriental dining.

Area 31

This [award-winning restaurant](#), inside the Epic Hotel, was temporarily closed after three guests fell ill due to a problem with the hotel's water filtration system. But don't let that scare you away -- this is a top-notch restaurant you definitely don't want to miss.

The restaurant opened to rave reviews and was even named one of Esquire's Best New Restaurants of the Year. As Esquire noted, "Never have American chefs had such access to high-quality fish. In the case of Area 31, the access is via Fishing Area 31, a patch of ocean - stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to the western Atlantic, and from the top of South America halfway up the Eastern Seaboard - designated by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization for sustainable fishing. John Critchley draws on this backyard abundance as he becomes Miami's most exciting new chef."

Joey's

It may seem like risky business to open a new restaurant in Miami's gritty arts district, but that's exactly what [Joey's](#) did. And so far, it's worked. The modern Italian cafe is situated in a loft-like space with a concrete floor and glass mosaic mural and marble tables. It's an unassuming little place that serves as the perfect pit-stop after a performance at the nearby Performing Arts Center. As for what to order? Pizza from the wood-stone oven is the way to go.

Sra. Martinez

This [tapas restaurant](#) in the design district has been getting some major buzz, and for good reason. Chef and owner Michelle Bernstein is kind of a big deal on the culinary scene. In the late 1990's, she catapulted South Beach's Tantra to international fame and it wasn't long after that she became a co-host on Food Network's Melting Pot. And not long after that, the Miami native battled Bobby Flay on Iron Chef America and won. Bernstein is clearly a trailblazer and her latest restaurant is blazing trails, too.

Meat Market

This [Lincoln Road steakhouse](#) knows how to grill up some grade-A beef. Steaks come in three tiers -- simple, ultra-premium/reserve or house specialty -- and can be ordered wood-grilled or broiled. But good steaks alone don't make a good steakhouse. The sides are an important accoutrement. And Meat Market succeeds in that category as well with heaven-in-your-mouth dishes like truffled cream corn, sweet potato fries with honey creme fraiche and brown butter popovers.

Mr. Chow

Opened in August 2009 inside the beautiful W Hotel, [Mr. Chow's](#) creative Chinese cuisine is pleasing the palates of Miami's most sophisticated diners. The inside of the restaurant is drop-dead gorgeous (don't miss the 123-foot gold-leaf and Swarovski crystal chandelier designed by Mr. Chow himself) and the spacious outdoor patio is dreamy on a balmy evening.