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The Uber-Chic Tongue & Cheek

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Reported by Shireen Sandoval, Deco Driver Anchor / Entertainment Reporter - email

If Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte and Miranda were still wearing designer duds and dishing the deets on their dudes, they'd definitely be doing it on Miami Beach at "The Uber-Chic Tongue & Cheek."

The new eatery isn't just 'sexing up the Magic City,' because God knows we have enough of that, it's also solidifying the beach's hipster vibe (in a Leah Dunham and her hit HBO TV show, "Girls," kind of way.) And while I'm not a foodie per se, I do know what tastes good, looks fabulous and feels fashionable.

The first time I walked into "Tongue & Cheek," it glowed with the warmth of an old friend and its open lay-out buzzed with a beautiful energy. While the place is drenched in dark wood, its walls are white and highlighted with exposed brick and subway tile.

At night, the combination creates a perfect cocoon of color. It reminds me of the light that radiates from the sun (just as it slips beneath the earth's surface) on a hot, crystal-clear summer evening. It's insanely rich and embarrassingly decadent.



If those wonderfully lit walls could talk, I'm sure they'd say something like this (with a coy smile): "Hi Shireen, nice to meet you. I'm sexy and sophisticated, but if you really get to know me, I'm charming, too. Pull up a seat, have a drink and stay for awhile." And well, that's exactly what I did.

Despite my on-time arrival for my dinner reservation, I bee-lined it to the bar (which is long and languid with a beautiful sand-colored, quartz countertop) to enjoy the atmosphere and catch up with a close friend. We traded stories over a buttery Chardonnay and chatted up the bartender about his signature drinks.

I thought the following were fashionably fun: The Cucumfortably Numb, The Clarence Worley (yes, like the character in the movie "True Romance,") The Donkey Punch and my favorite, The

Molecular Cocktail, which is an interesting twist on a Caipirinha made with cranberries, steeped in a steamy liquid nitrogen disguise.

My dinner was simple yet succulent, per my request to the chef (the menu is American fare.) I'm not a big eater, but I do love food. I just prefer it to be as clean and delicious as possible. I enjoyed the "Florida Heirloom Tomato Salad" a lot, but I had a full-on love affair with "The Roasted Beet Salad" and I don't even like beets! It's the perfect combination of earthy sweet and tangy tart.

Then, as fate, destiny, God, Buddah or whomever or whatever would have it, I would go on to taste the "Gin & Juice." Not the Snoop Dogg kind (I'm really more of a Rick Ross girl anyway.) The Japanese Hamachi kind, which was accented with grapefruit sorbet, avocado and jalapeño. Cue the dramatic music please...

Suddenly, the clouds parted ways, angels started singing and the sun threw its glorious spotlight onto my plate and I moaned like Meg Ryan did in the movie, "When Harry Met Sally." You know, in the famous diner scene?

The thing is, I wasn't faking it and believe me, I've faked it before in many food situations. I'm an entertainment reporter, (for the love of God!) But this, my friends, this was the real deal. It was my first official food orgasm. Now, I get why Louis Aguirre (my Deco Drive co-worker) moans and groans his way around Miami doing all those food stories.

After I was done, I refrained from asking for a scotch on the rocks and a cigarette. Although, I'm sure they would have provided me with both. In the kitchen, they were probably screaming: "Just try and shut the crazy girl up!"

We finished off dinner with a light fish and a yummy desert, but honestly, I don't remember much after the "Gin & Juice." Maybe, Snoop was onto something after all (with his mind on his money and his money on his mind,) he was probably having Hamachi the whole time, but I digress...

There are a lot of reasons (in my humble opinion) why "T&C" has the right recipe to make a restaurant work, but mainly, I think it has to do with its secret ingredient A.K.A., Chef Jamie DeRosa. Jamie is an affable South Floridian (by way of New York) who graduated from Johnson & Wales University. His enthusiasm for what he does is infectious.

What's more, the guy wants to do more than just put fabulous food in your stomach, he wants customers at "The Cheek" (as he lovingly calls it) to have a multi-dimensional dining experience. What I mean is, it's not just about sitting down and getting your grub on, it's about fulfilling expectations that customers have (in this day and age) about a certain type of lifestyle. In other words, it better look, smell, taste, sound and feel great (all the time) or people aren't coming back.

Jamie's also a think tank. He knows what's going on around him. More specifically, in pop culture. He gets that social media plays a huge role in the popularity of food, fashion, film, art and music. He realizes how one complements the other and with that knowledge, he's made "The Uber-Chic Tongue and Cheek" relevant.

In the meantime, he's the kind of guy who doesn't judge me because I don't know much about Pule, an extremely expensive, rare cheese made in Serbia from donkey milk. (I looked it up on Wikipedia.) And I, of course, don't judge him because he doesn't know the difference between Haute Couture and Pret-a-porter. Although, I wouldn't put it past him.

He did however, recently, in his typical cheeky manner, bust my balls about touching up my blog pictures too much. Oh my god, I told some of my fashion friends about that and we had a good laugh. Jamie, you can never have too many pairs of shoes or be too photoshopped. Welcome to fashion-land.

Although, Tongue & Cheek (the saying) implies something said in jest, or in a witty, sardonic (I prefer morose) kind of way, I'm not joking when I write this...

It's been a long time since I've found a place that talks to me. You know, speaks to me. One that makes me wanna get prettied-up in a proper dress, a pair of heels and the perfect purse. A place where I can see and be seen, without it feeling trite or obtuse. A place, where I can gather with my girls and get the goods on their lives, their loves and well, just let go and be ME... "The Uber-Chic Tongue & Cheek," does that and more... that's why it's one of my favorite things.



Tongue & Cheek
431 Washington Avenue
Miami Beach, Florida 33139
305-704-2900 reservations
Twitter - @TandCMiami
IG - @tandcmiami
FB - Tongue & Cheek