

## SIP & SWOR



**Q&A**

## Made in MIAMI

CHEF MICHAEL BELTRAN DISHES ON HIS GROWING PORTFOLIO OF MAGIC CITY RESTAURANTS

BY PAUL RUBIO

With numerous accolades under his belt—including a Michelin-starred restaurant—chef Michael Beltran is an inspiring local success story. Born and raised in Little Havana, Beltran layers his Cuban-American roots and global influences into an eclectic (and ever-growing) set of Magic City restaurants. The latest plot point for the 39-year-old? The Oyster Bar in CocoWalk Coconut Grove, an intimate showcase of his talents, with seafood as his muse. The noted chef sat down with *Aventura* to dish on his fabulous new additions to the restaurant landscape, awards, motivation, and more. (*arietehospitality.com*)

**Aventura:** How did opening your first restaurant, *Ariete*, in 2016 pave the way for your future in the Miami restaurant scene?

**Beltran:** *Ariete*, my first love and what I feel is my first child, was always the dream and it continues to be. Every day I almost need to pinch myself to believe that it is real. *Ariete* is the foundation of the home I have created, and it has set the standard of my Ariete Hospitality Company as a whole.

**With so many of your restaurants in Coconut Grove, it seems that you have a special spot for the neighborhood. Tell us more about that and about one of your latest additions there, *The Oyster Bar*.**

The Grove embodies so much culture and truly captures the feeling of Miami—what's not to love? It's a home for bohemian culture and beautiful waterfront views, [and] overall, a very special place to be. The vision for *The Oyster Bar* [and soon, its companion restaurant, *Eva*] is to continue that beautiful culture that the Grove is known for. We encourage guests to spend a day in the Grove, enjoy a



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: MICHAEL BELTRAN; THE FARMER APPLE-TIZER AT *ARIETE*; SHRIMP ESCARICHÉ AT *THE OYSTER BAR*; ESCARLOTS IN PASTRY WITH HERRING BUTTER AND HORSERADISH CREAM AT *BRASSERIE LAUREL*.

ARIETE HOSPITALITY GROUP

drink at *The Oyster Bar*, maybe stop into *Chug's Diner* for a coffee, and later experience a 12-course tasting at *Ariete*.

**You're making your mark in Downtown Miami with *Brasserie Laurel*. What's the concept behind the restaurant? How does it fit into downtown's evolving restaurant landscape?**

*Brasserie Laurel*... man, I really do love that place. The menu speaks to old brasserie meets French nouvelle with some whimsy. It is really a love story I have with classic French cuisine. The opportunity to be a part of downtown and pioneer dining there is something I am very proud of.

**We're obsessed with so many of your dishes, but could you walk us through a personal favorite from one of your restaurants?**

Tamal on cazuela at *The Gibson Room* stands out to me. It's based off my abuelo's recipe,

which I have tweaked through the years. When we opened *The Gibson Room*, the overall idea was to elevate the cuisine of the Shenandoah neighborhood, which is the neighborhood I grew up in and my family still lives in. A humble dish like tamal en cazuela (a corn porridge) is traditionally served with crispy pork. But at *The Gibson* it is served with Hudson Valley foie gras and "mojo" of dehydrated fruit and crispy duck confit. This makes it an epic dish, to say the least.



BRASSERIE LAUREL

CLOCKWISE FROM INSET: CAST-IRON PANCAKE AT CHUG'S DINER; THE BAR AT BRASSERIE LAUREL; TAMAL EN CAZUELA AT THE GIBSON ROOM.



**It was no surprise to see Ariete garner a Michelin star. But we were excited to see Chug's Diner—a love letter to your Cuban-American roots—also get a Michelin Bib Gourmand Award. What does all the recognition mean to you?**

Recognition is nice, but the response we have received from the community is what makes it most special. Often, I will get stopped by someone



on the streets and they will convey how proud they are of Ariete and Chug's. Telling a new Cuban and Cuban-American story through food and on the world stage is something that makes me emotional just thinking about it. However, it also means there is still work to do. The standard of excellence has been raised for us as a company and we keep pushing to improve. To me, it is very special. It means that there is a prep cook who started as a dishwasher and has now progressed to carry a Michelin star with them forever. That is a

feeling that you could never put a price tag on.

**At which of your restaurants are we most likely to find your family hanging out and why?**

Easy—Chug's. The food at Chug's is inviting, fun, and new. My nieces love a good croqueta, a delicious pancake, and a slice of pastry chef Devin Braddock's Chocolate Pie (an ode to the original Burger King Hershey's Chocolate Pie). Chug's has so much to offer and it's simply a welcoming and comfy place to dine and hang out.