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FORWARD

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Tropical Tastes

MIAMI'S DAZZLING HOTELS ARE HOME TO SOME OF THE CITY'S MOST SENSATIONAL RESTAURANTS

Miami has long been a meeting point for people from across the globe. Lying at a veritable crossroads of continents, oceans and seas, the South Florida metropolis is home to a thriving Latin American community, as well as thousands of immigrants from Canada, Europe, the Middle East and beyond. This multicultural wealth has translated into a dynamic culinary scene that is perhaps the most inventive in all of North America. Miami hotels in particular have laid claim to some of the city's most creative chefs, serving delectable, highly unusual dishes in seductive settings



PLAYGROUND



MIAMI
Pao by Paul Qui

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Faena Hotel, 3201 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, faena.com
When the Faena Hotel opened in Miami Beach, at the very end of 2015, it recaptured the Art Deco glamour that once characterized the town. Housed inside the landmark Saxony, which in the 1940s was the area's first luxury resort, the Faena shimmers with brilliantly colored murals, massive golden columns and an iconic gilded mammoth standing guard near the oceanfront pool. At the heart of the hotel, you'll find Pao restaurant, a beacon of Asian fusion cuisine helmed by chef Paul Qui. Born in the Philippines, 38-year-old Qui first made a name for himself in Austin, Texas, where he owns a few humble restaurants that began as food trucks and where he serves his signature fried chicken. (You can sample this dish at Pao, with sweet chili sauce and roasted banana ketchup.)

At Pao, Qui has let his creativity run wild, and the dinner menu offerings are as thrilling as the \$6 million unicorn statue that reigns supreme at the center of the restaurant. Particularly impressive dishes include the Unicorn, a pudding-like mixture of sea urchin, sweet corn, sake aioli, chili and lime. Served atop a bed of peppercorn, this heady treat is one for the ages. You can also sample the lacquered pork belly with black garlic caramel and long pepper, the delicately roasted fish with cilantro, chili and garlic-ginger rice, and the melt-in-your-mouth smoked shortrib *asado*, made from Wagyu beef cooked for 72 hours and accompanied by Japanese sweet potato purée. There's also a nice



selection of *crudos*: the toro - seared tuna belly with strawberry gazpacho - is a combination of complex tastes, nicely balancing the tang of the tuna with sweet hints of strawberry.

Be sure to try at least one dessert. Choose the Volcanic Earth, a decadent mix of cocoa, cardamom toffee, yuzu chocolate mousse and mandarin sorbet, or the roasted tea meringue with white chocolate, kaffir lime-mango sorbet and orange honey. As you dig into these sweet affairs, sit back in your circular booth and imagine yourself in an exclusive cabaret during the Prohibition era. Pao will satisfy your taste buds and your imagination.