

March 7, 2017

## The Brick in Downtown Dadeland Brings Relief to Kendall

BY ZACHARY FAGENSON

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Grass-fed hanger steak. *See more photos from The Brick in Kendall.*

*Photo by [CandaceWest.com](http://CandaceWest.com)*

**For decades, Kendall has been filled with mostly humble mom-and-pop spots wedged into an ever-expanding sprawl of chain restaurants. Gated communities and strip malls orbit around Dadeland Mall.**

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But relief is here, and it's a porchetta sandwich. The hub is a glossy spear of roast pork belly wrapped around a tender slug of herbed loin. Pickled onion and arugula offer a spicy, piquant counterpoint to the fat, while a spongy brioche sucks up the juices and the yolk that dribbles from a fried egg.

The 3-month-old 140-seater is sparsely appointed. Its centerpiece is a weathered wood gazebo illuminated by strings of golf-ball-size lights. **The Brick** is located in the urban-styled retail-residential complex called Downtown Dadeland. This bustling area of cream-and-rust-colored buildings on the south side of Kendall Drive is composed of apartments stacked atop shops, restaurants, and cafés. It offers the experience of living someplace like Brickell without the expense and pretense. It's reminiscent of projects such as the Shops at Midtown Miami and Downtown Doral that cater to those who prefer to live within walking distance of most of what they need.

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## The kitchen stocks produce from Paradise Farms, Swank Specialty Produce, and Lakeland's C&W Farms.



Each of these areas has drawn notice from entrepreneurs. In Dadeland, the Brick sits next to Barley, the latest iteration of Jorgie Ramos' pork-heavy gastropub. Around the corner, former Michael's Genuine chef de cuisine Niven Patel will soon offer the South Indian cuisine of his youth.



Owner of the Brick, Corey Bousquet

*Photo by [CandaceWest.com](http://CandaceWest.com)*

At the Brick, there are grass-fed hanger steaks and rib eyes from Ocala's Adena Ranch. The deeply savory meat is healthier and leaves you feeling better than the corn-fed alternative. The hanger steak comes crowned with a forest-green turf of chimichurri that swaps an excess of oil and garlic for a hefty fistful of herbs that complement the beef.

This is what the Brick's owner, 28-year-old Corey Bousquet, was looking for when he set out to open his first place. Born and raised on the rural eastern end of Long Island, he waited tables during high school and then left to play Division III lacrosse and earn an education degree in Delaware.

After graduating, he turned down a job as a physical education teacher and relocated to Miami. Once here, he took a job as a lacrosse coach at the prestigious Gulliver Preparatory School. The father of one of his students was Scott Wessel of Scotty's Landing. Bousquet worked days at the school and nights at the restaurant and eventually persuaded Wessel to back him on the place that would become the Brick.



Seared monkfish

*Photo by [CandaceWest.com](http://CandaceWest.com)*

Bousquet also had the good sense to know he needed help. So he hired former Mango Gang member Allen Susser, who not only fleshed out the place's operations and opening menu but also set him up with topnotch suppliers. As a result, the kitchen stocks produce from Paradise Farms, Swank Specialty Produce, and Lakeland's C&W Farms.

All of those veggies play well around milky slices of hand-pulled mozzarella. Pickled Peppadew peppers and red onions offer heat, while a vinegar brine on plump garlic cloves brings out their sweetness. Other starters – the largest section on the two-page menu – are predictable except for Buffalo turkey wings doused in a Maytag blue cheese sauce. A white bean hummus sounds promising, but other than the Peppadews poking out of the smooth purée, it's bland and screaming for more tahini and acid.



White bean hummus

*Photo by CandaceWest.com*

For staples, the kitchen reaches a bit further. A sticky mound of grits began life at Arkansas' War Eagle Mill and are sweetened with corn kernels. The whole thing is plated with a hefty monkfish loin boasting a gorgeous sear that results in a texture part delicate snapper and part meaty swordfish.

The crusts on the menu's five pizzas strike a happy balance between flaky and crisp. Toppings range from classic margherita to Buffalo chicken and spicy Italian charcuterie. The prosciutto pie is good but doesn't need a final dab of aged balsamic.

From a trio of desserts, the best bet is the blond brownie affogato, which boasts bittersweet hunks of dark chocolate and pairs perfectly with a shot of espresso. The synthetic-tasting squiggle of chocolate on the plate, reminiscent of how a chain joint wishes a customer happy birthday, is unnecessary.

Still, Bousquet's kitchen does a fine job overseeing the execution of an approachable, well-sourced menu. The generous portions and bare-bones aesthetic of the space leave the feeling of money well spent. Places such as the Brick, its neighbors, and those in similar developments across Miami-Dade should give many others in the restaurant industry pause. There's a sizable, affluent customer base out here. The Brick is a fine, nearby alternative.

### **The Brick**

8955 SW 72nd Pl, Miami; 786-814-5909;

*thebrickmiami.com*. Monday through Thursday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., Friday 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 11 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

- *White bean hummus \$10*
- *Mozzarella board \$12*
- *Porchetta sandwich \$15*
- *Prosciutto pizza \$15*
- *Grass-fed hanger steak \$24*
- *Pan-roasted monkfish \$26*
- *Blond brownie affogato \$7*