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**ST. AUGUSTINE
PONTE VEDRA**
FLORIDA'S HISTORIC COAST®

Calling all Foodies! St. Augustine a melting pot of flavors waiting to be discovered Celebrate U.S. Hispanic Heritage Month

St. Augustine, FL – More than 56 million Latinos influence every facet of the national landscape – culture, education, workforce, family, politics, entertainment and lifestyle. From Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, Hispanic Heritage Month honors the accomplishments, history, and culture of people whose ancestors came from Spanish-speaking countries. Celebrate Hispanic culture by rediscovering the birthplace of Hispanic Heritage in the U.S., St. Augustine, and exploring its culinary scene which is inspired by centuries of its diverse heritage.

Visitors can explore the roots of the Spanish people who settled, built and called the city home since coming ashore 451 years ago. Walking through historical landmarks such as the Castillo de San Marcos, Fountain of Youth Archeological Park, Mission de Dios, Plaza de la Constitución, Fort Mose and the Colonial Quarter visitors are transported back in time to witness where the Hispanic spirit was born in the U.S.

As Latinos celebrate their heritage in the upcoming month the vital role food plays in Hispanic culture will be highlighted through culinary festivities. Food connects people: countries, communities, races, families and friends. A perfect example of this took place when the Spanish Admiral Pedro Menendez de Aviles and his fleet landed in St. Augustine on September 8, 1565. The Spaniards and native Timucua Indians, sat down together for the first Thanksgiving Feast – a thanksgiving meal that happened 55 years before the well-known New England Thanksgiving!

With more than four centuries of history, dining is a melting pot influenced by the diverse peoples and cultures that have called this area home. Blend a wide variety of lodging options, pristine Atlantic beaches, arts and culture, championship golf and plenty of old world charm and you've got a foodie's paradise like no other. Spain, Greece, Mexico, Minorca, Cuba and the Caribbean are just a few of cultures that not only make up St. Augustine's history, but add to the area's global cuisine. Collectively, the chefs of St. Augustine and Ponte Vedra routinely bring Hispanic flavors to northeast Florida. While there's much to see and do on Florida's Historic Coast, sightseeing is just a way to pass the time between meals.

EAT & DRINK

Family owned for over 100 years, the [Columbia Restaurant](#) has earned acclaim for its award-winning Spanish/Cuban cuisine and wine. Food lovers enjoy century-old family recipes in the Mediterranean-style dining rooms, filled with Spanish-style, hand-painted terra cotta tiles and fountains. The menu is vast, with soups, tapas, sandwiches and entrees. For starters the Costillitas de Cerdo Habana (tender baby pork ribs slowly roasted and tossed in mojo-marinated sweet onions) and the Stuffed Piquillo Peppers (filled with a mushroom, chorizo and Serrano ham filling baked in an almond pepper sauce and topped with Manchego cheese) will tantalize even the most discerning foodies. Two signature dishes that should not be missed. The world-famous "1905 Salad" prepared tableside. At first glance, its mundane ingredients (lettuce, thin strips of ham, Swiss and Romano cheese, tomato, and olives) do

not scream order me. However, once the award-winning garlic dressing is mixed in the salad a visit to Columbia quickly becomes what *USA Today* describes “One of 10 Great Places to Make a Meal Out of a Salad.” Another dish worth tasting, Grouper “Bilbao,” a traditional Basque dish baked in a clay casserole layered with sliced tomatoes, potatoes, onions, extra virgin olive oil, garlic and lemon. A visit to the Columbia is not complete without savoring their signature cold pitcher of Sangria or Mojitos; or sampling of fine Spanish wine like Montecillo or Campillo.

Gourmands who love Latin flavors have the opportunity to enjoy an extraordinary culinary experience: Dine at the Chef’s Table at [Michael’s Tasting Room](#). As a child, Chef Michael Lugo often found himself in his grandmother's kitchen observing her skills in preparing traditional Puerto Rican dishes. Michael’s curiosity and appetite were the beginnings of what evolve into an authentic dining destination of his own. Chef Lugo and team will prepare an exquisite multiple course Tasting Tour exclusively prepared for the most demanding food lovers. A small sample of Chef’s Table menu include: Ceviche Tostones, shrimp cured in coconut leche de tigre with pink peppercorns, and avocado with crispy plantains; Vieras, seared sea scallops, leek risotto, vegetables, passion fruit vinaigrette; and Langosta Criolla poached lobster, Caribbean garlic butter, peppers, asparagus, onions, tomatoes, cilantro coconut rice. Chef’s Table seatings can be requested every evening for up to 10 guests.

It is well documented that Hispanics, love their spicy food! Datil peppers are St. Augustine’s best culinary surprises which bring a twist to its robust food scene. One of the hottest peppers in the world, these little green-orange peppers pack a bang, similar to the punch of a Scotch bonnet or habanero. Local lore says the Minorcans brought it over in the late 1700s, and it has continued to be farmed here ever since. Spice aficionados can savor Minorcan clam chowder arguably the destination’s signature dish. It can be found at countless of restaurants, but the version most acclaimed by locals is found at [Conch House](#). Additionally, the most common use of the datil pepper is in sauce form. Datil sauces are on menus across town. Barnacle Bill Downtown also tempts food lovers with Florida gator tail that’s served with a sauce that combines marinara, orange marmalade and datil hot sauce and their Dal’t Do It Shrimp will, no doubt, tingle their taste buds. [Taberna del Caballo in the Colonial Quarter](#) serves a flat bread of pulled pork and house-made datil barbecue sauce, also a creation of Executive Chef Michael Lugo and owner of Michael’s Tasting Room. Visitors and locals can also enjoy a plethora of spicy culinary treats during the [Datil Pepper Fall Festival](#) October 1-2 and the [Great Chowder Debate](#) Nov. 6th.

Last, but definitely not least of the Hispanic culinary tour Florida’s Historic Coast is taking a seat at one of the local bars. Ernest Hemingway said it best, “If you want to learn about a culture, spend a night in its bars.” From the battlefield to the bullfight, from Paris to Pamplona to Madrid to Peru to Key West to Cuba, Hemingway lived globally, but ate and drank locally, to get the flavor of the place.

A converted ice plant which dates back to the 1900s, [The Ice Plant Bar](#), reintroduces patrons to a time where having a cocktail and a bite was not only an experience, but a memorable event. While the building is historic, the cocktails are decidedly new. The overall contrast of classic and modern is worth toasting to, especially when spicy concoctions with datil pepper infusions are among its celebrated ingredients. The Ice Plant, which shares space with the [St. Augustine Distillery](#), is truly an Old Florida experience.

Another place that cannot be missed is tucked away behind an unmarked gate on Charlotte Street, the eclectic [Odd Birds Bar](#). Although a small place, Odd Birds offers a global drink menu, with bottles on the shelves representing traditional spirits from across the globe: cachaça from Brazil, aguardiente from Colombia, pisco from Chile and Peru, fernet from Argentina, singani from Bolivia, agave from several countries, among others. Bar bites also provide a taste of the exotic: meat or vegetarian arepas from the co-owner/bartender Cesar Diaz native Venezuela pair well with cocktail reactions. Diaz creates a cultural bridge and an opportunity for people to explore the world’s flavors without going to another country.

In celebration of U.S. Hispanic Heritage Month, it's time to plan a flavorful getaway to Florida's Historic Coast to rediscover the birthplace and gourmet passions of Hispanic culture!

Located midway between Daytona Beach and Jacksonville, Florida's Historic Coast includes historic St. Augustine, the outstanding golf and seaside elegance of Ponte Vedra and 42 miles of pristine Atlantic beaches. For more information on events, activities, holiday getaways, accommodations and to plan your vacation in St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches, go to the Visitors and Convention Bureau website at www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com, become a fan on [Facebook](#) or call 1.800.653.2489.

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