



## Chef Marc Murphy dishes on his new Tampa restaurant at the Hard Rock Hotel

Grey Salt, the new restaurant by celebrity chef and *Chopped* judge Marc Murphy, at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Tampa, just opened about a month ago. I caught up with chef Murphy at the **Palm Beach Food & Wine Festival** to get the skinny on the new spot.



Photo courtesy marc-murphy.com

**OW: What made the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Tampa a good place for you to open a new restaurant?**

MM: An old friend of mine who used to work at the Borgata [in Las Vegas] now works at the Hard Rock and we just fell into conversation and it just came out naturally. We thought, hey, we've always wanted to work together; let's do it now.

**OW: How did you decide what kind of restaurant you wanted to open?**

MM: Because of my background, having been born in Italy and living in France and all over the Mediterranean, I thought a Med-inspired restaurant because, when you think about where Tampa is geographically, there's all this great seafood and local produce, so **Grey Salt** was born.

**OW: What kind of feel does Grey Salt have?**

MM: I call it an "oasis" in the middle of the casino. It's a beautiful place. We didn't want to do another Landmarc because Landmarc is a very family-friendly restaurant. We wanted this to be a bit more upscale since it's in a casino where most, if not all, of our guests will be 21 and up. It's about 240 seats, tons of private event space, and it's an open kitchen so our guests can feel like they're part of the action.

**OW: Who's helming the kitchen?**

MM: We hired a local chef who is from Tampa but who worked at some of the best restaurants, including Jean-Georges and some of my restaurants in New York. My executive chef in New York came down and mentored him for six months and now that we've been up and running, the place is getting mad press and rave reviews.

**OW: What does your menu look like and what kind of wine program are you running?**

MM: We're cooking on all wood-burning grills. There are a lot of grilled flatbreads, pastas, as much fish from the Gulf as possible, shrimp skewers and fattoush salad, to name a few. Our beverage director has put together a wine list that's in the same vein as Landmarc with a few surprises thrown in. The wine list is pretty balanced but it's Mediterranean-focused.