

## 22 South Food Hall is officially back in the Historic Manhattan Casino • St Pete Catalyst

Written by Administrator  
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The [22 South Food Hall](#) has officially relaunched, with its First Friday Grand Opening Celebration taking place today between 5 and 10 p.m.

Located in the historic Manhattan Casino building, the food hall is an integral part of the ongoing Deuces revitalization efforts in the Midtown area of St. Petersburg. After opening with much fanfare earlier this year, the concept was abruptly closed due to the passing of key investor Vincent Jackson, a former Tampa Bay Buccaneer. The Urban Collective group promptly stepped up to keep the dream alive.

One member of the collective, Jabaar Edmonds, said being able to relaunch 22 South is an amazing opportunity for both him and a deserving community.

“It means everything to be able to help and give back,” said Edmonds. “It’s a very special place in the community, and we have to preserve every nook and cranny we can.”

The plan is for the space to offer products made by local artisans, food-oriented boutiques and butcher shops, and feature interactive elements such as entertainment and classes.

While the official grand opening is tonight, the dining room was already bristling with customers anxious to sample the new menus during a media event Thursday afternoon. Louie’s Italian Eatery, Scratch Snacks, Harper’s Burgers and Betterway Barbecue are currently open in the food hall, and Irie Mon Jamaican Grill is expected to open shortly.

In addition to ample parking behind the building, arriving patrons are greeted by the inviting smells emanating from Betterway Barbecue’s grill and smoker. Customers can order food from any of the restaurants simultaneously, and the food will arrive at the same time – and on the same check.

The dining area is upscale and modern and features two full-service bars. There is also a secluded, private dining area off to the side that can seat groups of up to 16 people.

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Louie Spetrini, CEO of His Hospitality and founder of Louie's Italian Eatery, said the food hall serves as an incubator for restaurant concepts, and as those concepts move into their own brick and mortar locations, new restaurants will fill the space. 22 South also features a job training program for people to gain hospitality experience before venturing out to find other jobs.

A big part of 22 South's plans lies in the restored event space in the Manhattan Casino. Built in 1925, the Manhattan Casino once hosted musical legends such as James Brown and Louis Armstrong. Bar and Events Manager Clifford Hobbs said it was a haven for artists of color to perform when they were not allowed in many parts of the city.

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"Now it's back, yet the mission statement hasn't changed," said Hobbs. "We are an incubator – or a catalyst if you will. Where the dreamers can test their vision in a safe space."

Hobbs adds that the Manhattan Casino will be the glue that connects the many beautiful communities of St. Petersburg, as it did in its glory days almost 100 years ago.

"Like historian Gwendolyn Reese said, 'It's St. Pete's cultural center where ALL are welcome, and everyone can celebrate together.'"

**Read more** <https://stpetecatalyst.com/22-south-food-hall-is-officially-back-in-the-historic-manhattan-casino/>