

Where There Were No Food Halls, Tampa Suddenly Has Two



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And that's far from the only interesting news out of this evolving Florida city.

DAVID LANDSEL February 06, 2018

When The Hall on Franklin, an ambitious sit-down service food hall opened up last fall in the up-and-coming Tampa Heights neighborhood of—you guessed it—Tampa, everyone around here went a little bit crazy, in a good way.

In a slightly more refined environment than one might expect from the wildly-popular genre, you had a talented chef doing poke bowls, a master mixologist behind the bar, the couple behind a popular local restaurant doing casual bites, and all kinds of other things that made it awfully hard to not stop by to see what the fuss was all about.

A lot of people did stop by, and they're still going—a lot has happened on the local food scene of late, but The Hall felt like one of its biggest recent successes.

And then, *déjà vu*, a few months later, it happened all over again. Just seven minutes away on foot, in the same neighborhood, the hotly anticipated Heights Public Market, a 22,000-square-foot food hall that's part of an ambitious mixed-use redevelopment right along the Hillsborough River, has just made its debut.

Once more, the crowd appears to have gone wild. A neighborhood that was kind of a blank space for a long time, one freeway overpass away from downtown Tampa, has now become a major destination for not one, but two food halls.

The Hall on Franklin, which has six vendors plus one very good cocktail bar, is less than half the size of the new Heights Market, which has 13 vendors (and space for one more), serving up everything from wood-fired

pizza to ramen to barbecue and acai bowls—the sort of things you expect to find in a new food hall—along with some cool surprises, including an outpost of a local wine bar.

While having both projects in the same neighborhood might give pause, it's worth remembering that this has happened in other cities, including but not limited to New York, where the Gansevoort Market famously opened a few years back, just one block from the very popular Chelsea Market. (They're both still there.) Also worth bearing in mind: the ongoing evolution of the Tampa Bay area, now home to more than three million people, and an increasingly diverse group, at that.

Tampa, at the heart of that region, has demonstrated in recent years that it's hungry for more, and it's getting what it wants, looks like—from memorable meals at restaurants like Rooster & The Till and Ulele, to those award-winning beers at Cigar City Brewing (which operates a tasting room relatively close to both food halls, you might like to know), can Tampa's breakout moment be far away? We're certainly paying attention.