

## » DINING

# Communal Cuisine

At The Table and BarJme, you can forget everything your mother ever said about not talking to strangers.

Scroll through a Facebook feed or flip through the millions of groups created on Meetup.com, and it's obvious that there is a shift happening in the way we value community. People are craving connection.

Now this connection craze has made its way into the restaurant world, with more and more eateries realizing that people don't mind sitting next to someone they don't know; in fact, they kind of like it. These restaurants offer shared dining spaces, each with their own take on the trend. Next time you're hungry for a good meal and, possibly, a new friend, don't ask for a table for two... ask for a table for 20. **By Kristen Manieri**

### THE TABLE

- Part dinner party, part chef's table, The Table joins the wave of supper clubs that are popping up in cities across the country. The concept is simple: one communal table, 22 pre-registered guests and a multi-course menu that's not

revealed until arrival.

- Inside the lavish dining room located on Sand Lake's Restaurant Row, the foodie festivities begin at 7 pm, with glasses of champagne and appetizers passed around as guests arrive and mingle.
- Once everyone is seated at the



Chef Jamie McFadden in the kitchen



BarJme bite

enormous, ornately-set table, chefs Loren Falsone and Tyler Brassil reveal the evening's menu of five courses, each paired with wine. These seasoned gourmands have discovered the ideal blend of frou-frou and comfort food as they unwrap a bill of fare that's both adventurous and appealing.

- What follows are three-to-four-hours of "oohs" and "mmms" as one dish after another is delivered to the table, always with a personal tidbit from the chefs about how the dish was created and why specific ingredients were selected. It's not just dinner; it's an event.

- Reservations and advance payment are a must for those participating in this epicurean escapade. The \$100 per person price tag is a bargain when you consider that it includes all five courses, wine pairings, tax and gratuity.

- "The dining experience at The Table is designed to be just that, an experience," says Brassil. "The communal table is so popular because customers are thrilled about the opportunity to connect with other like-minded people."

- The dinner party vibe gives diners the sense they've been invited to an exclusive occasion that only the most interesting and affable people are allowed to attend.

- The Table is open to the public only on Friday and Saturday nights, but it can be booked for private parties any night of the week. [www.thetableorlando.com](http://www.thetableorlando.com)

### BARJME

- Chef Jamie McFadden does things a little differently at BarJme, a counter-cuisine-meets-chef's-table experience in Winter Park. Located inside McFadden's catering company headquarters in an ordinary, suburban strip

plaza, BarJme doesn't seem like much from the outside. But the "never judge a book by its cover" rule definitely applies here; amid the stainless-steel shelves lined with catering supplies, culinary magic is happening.

- Several times a month, a small gathering of 10 to 12 diners get to experience McFadden's culinary genius. These fortunate foodies sit on barstools at an L-shaped bar inside the kitchen within full view of the team of chefs who are busy whipping up the seven-to-10-course tasting menu unveiled at each intimate event.

- The chefs, including the award-winning McFadden, welcome interaction and inquiry from guests as they prepare the small tasting dishes and pass them to the eager gourmands. Along with the easy chatter that ensues among guests, the chef interaction is part of the evening's appeal. And while the menu selection changes continuously, the courses have one core element: they follow a breakfast, lunch and dinner theme every time.

- McFadden's highly experimental take on American mainstays translates into some inventive concoctions. Think foie gras French toast with rosemary-infused maple syrup or fried green tomatoes with goat feta and fig balsamic. The food is definitely out there, but that's the point.

- Reservations are required. The



Diners at The Table

\$95 per person charge includes all courses; tax and tip is extra. The schedule of events is posted at the beginning of each month at [www.cuisinierscater.com](http://www.cuisinierscater.com), as well as BarJme's Facebook page. You can bring your own wine without a corkage fee or purchase wine or beer on site.