

## OPENINGS

# KNOCK, KNOCK

THE BLUE DOOR HAS CAPTURED THE SPIRIT OF WEST PALM'S SOSO NEIGHBORHOOD

BY MARY MURRAY

A sense of place is key when establishing a memorable restaurant. A concept that succeeds in Miami, for example, might not work in Tampa or Jupiter. As the West Palm Beach dining scene has grown, it has developed its own unique personality—and few new restaurants have encapsulated that quite like **The Blue Door** in the South of Southern (SoSo) neighborhood.

Billed as a coastal bistro, The Blue Door boasts cuisine by Nano Crespo, who is best known as the executive chef and co-owner of The Drexel in Miami. Born in Argentina, Crespo can trace his love of cooking to making paella, pasta, and more alongside his father and grandmother. “She was really a gigantic influence,” he says of his grandmother, a first-generation immigrant from Italy who, at age 96, still enjoys spending time in the kitchen.

At The Blue Door, Crespo also serves as executive chef and co-owner and crafts Mediterranean-inspired fare that conveys a less is more approach. “I want to highlight the lightness of things,” he says. “You can serve a steak or a lamb rack, but there’s a way of making it not too heavy or not too much. That’s also the way I cook. I utilize a lot of fresh herbs, a lot of fresh ingredients. I don’t manipulate too much. I let the ingredients speak for themselves.

In this setting where it’s very lush and very green ... the whole thing works together.”

Crespo praises the omnipresent breeze across eastern West Palm Beach, a factor that greatly influenced the look of The Blue Door (conceptualized by interior designer and restaurant co-owner Sara Ricci). Guests enter through—you guessed it—a blue door and settle into an open-air space that is at once simple



NANO CRESPO (FAR LEFT), EXECUTIVE CHEF AND CO-OWNER OF THE BLUE DOOR, SERVES UP RAW PREPARATIONS SUCH AS STEAK TARTARE AND LOCAL TUNA CARPACCIO (ABOVE) AND FAVORITES LIKE CRAB CAKES (LEFT).



and elegant. It’s the perfect complement to a menu rich with locally sourced fish and produce. Crespo notes that fans of The Drexel will recognize the flat iron half chicken and lamb chop presentation. But while The Drexel showcases wood-fire preparations, The Blue Door exclusively uses gas stoves and grills. There’s also a number of raw items on the menu, including tuna carpaccio, snapper crudo, and steak tartare.

From the food to the setting, The Blue Door epitomizes the local pride, alfresco ease, and chic yet family-friendly atmosphere that permeates SoSo. Fellow co-owners Max Ricci and Michael Katzenberg live here, and Crespo and his wife, Tamara Magalhães (who is also the restaurant’s executive manager and co-owner), relocated to the area full-time earlier this year. Nowadays, they can often be found picking up fresh produce at Don Victorio’s, their 3-year-old daughter in tow. Much like his father and grandmother did with him, Crespo is sharing food with his daughter—and with a growing legion of fans.

“I try to keep a low profile,” he says. “I want people to get to know me through my cooking.” ([thebluedoorwpb.com](http://thebluedoorwpb.com))

