

Miami Herald

Three stories of Italy



If the [Brickell City Centre](#) hopes to be the center of the neighborhood, then the upcoming three-story Italian food hall hopes to be its epicenter.

La Centrale (pronounced Chen-TRAH-leh) is the newly revealed name of the multilevel vertical mall that will house a host of Italian-inspired restaurants, cafes, a bar, a wine shop and a cooking school over its 38,000 square feet inside the Brickell City Centre. Construction began this week, and the hall is slated to open in the fall.

“We believe Miami is having a great moment now, especially culturally,” said New York City restaurateur Jacopo Giustiniani, who is designing La Centrale’s food concepts.

New York and Chicago travelers might liken it to Miami’s own version of Mario Batali’s [Eataly](#), the multilevel food hall and cooking school. However, La Centrale will be less a market and more a bundling of eateries that will represent an ambitious 20 regions in Italy. Each floor will have a discrete use, just as each restaurant and station will have a distinct focus.

Giustiniani founded the three [Felice restaurants](#) and wine bars in New York and is teaming up with Matthias Kiehm, whose expertise is hotels and hospitality. La Centrale's financial backers are said to be a private Italian family, but Giustiniani declined to name them.

Giustiniani said he hopes La Centrale will feel like “a trip, a tour, a vacation in Italy without taking a plane.”

That Italian *giro* begins on the ground floor “mercato,” with a focus on quick-service Italian street food: an espresso bar, juice bar, housemade pizzas, pastas and breads.

“It's casual, fresh,” Giustiniani said.

Things slow down on the second floor, which will focus on two major sit-down restaurants, one seafood-focused, the other an Italian steakhouse focusing on the Chianti region. At a vegetarian bar, fresh mozzarella will be hand-pulled. A bar in the middle of the landing is made to see and be seen. And to top it off, there will be a gelato and sweets shop.

“They each have their own identity and style,” Giustiniani said.

An “Italian wine mecca” is what you'll find on the third floor, Giustiniani said. There will be a wine bar and retail shop, focusing mostly on Italian wines. There also will be an intimate cooking school that will instruct students on how to make all manner of pasta and pizzas using fresh, local produce and imported products sold onsite.

[Brickell is home to slew of new restaurants](#), from Uruguayan grill [Quinto la Huella](#) and [Sugar](#) in the East Miami hotel to Michael Schwartz's [Fi'lia](#) and José Andrés' [Bazaar Mar](#) in the [SLS Brickell](#).

But Giustiniani feels the time and place is right for an Italian-centric food hall with food that reminds him of his childhood in Florence.

“I want to cook what my mama cooked for me and what I grew up with,” he said. “It's easy to eat Italian food almost every day.”