



Restaurants



Jose Garces taps into his Chicago pizza roots with Hook & Master in Kensington. There's a tiki lounge, too.

The Iron Chef is emerging from the pandemic with a bar-lounge offering three different pizza styles, tiki cocktails, and seafood small plates.



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Chef Jose Garces at Hook & Master, his first new restaurant in years.
MONICA HERNDON / Staff Photographer

by Michael Klein
Updated 3 hours ago

Let's wrap our tentacles around Jose Garces' first brick-and-mortar restaurant in seven years.

Of the many recent entrants in [Philadelphia's burgeoning pizza scene](#), no restaurant offers three varieties of pies as well as a menu of small-plate seafood dishes, a nautical-themed dining room, a second-floor tiki lounge, and a seasonal outdoor dining area billed as an octopus' garden.

[Hook & Master](#), opening Friday, Oct. 29, at Second and Master Streets in Kensington, joins a collection of recent restaurant openings nearby.

Wednesday, October 27, 2021

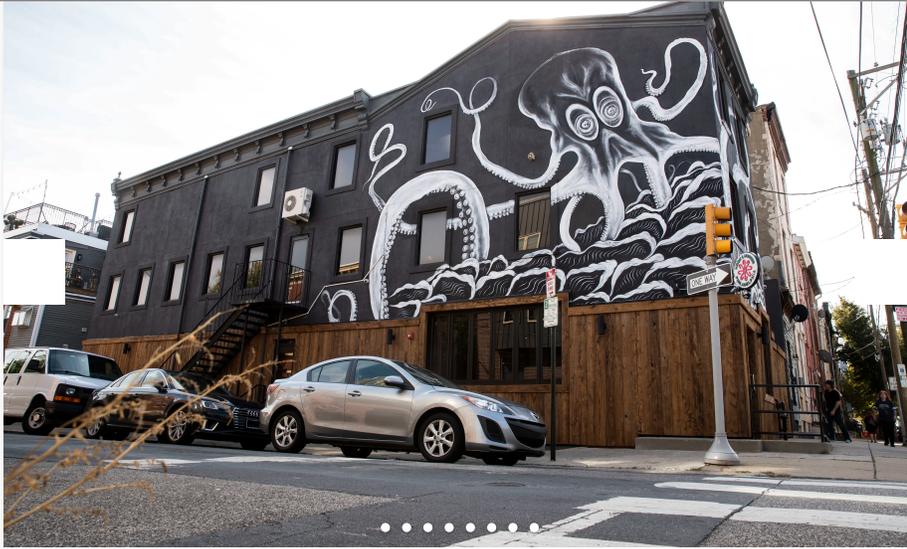
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An octopus wraps its tentacles around Hook & Master at Second and Master Streets.

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The disparate concept came to Garces shortly after he was offered the chance to open a restaurant in the building that previously housed the Liquid Room.

While considering chefs, he was introduced to Steven Seibel, who had been chef at Broad Street Ministries (after a year of handling kitchen production for three meal sites of Sunday Suppers) and baked Brooklyn-style pizzas out of his South Philadelphia home under the name [Seibel Pies](#).

Seibel had Garces over for dinner. "I got to know him and really saw his passion for pizza," Garces said. "And I was like, 'Wow. This could really



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The second thing Seibel said was, “Chef, I’ve never run a restaurant before,” Garces recalled. “And I’m like, ‘Don’t worry. All I need is your passion for pizza. I’ll teach you how to open a place, how to run it, and I will support you.’ ”

While Garces and his chefs developed the small-plate menu — such dishes as clams and chorizo, togarashi crab, Calabrian camarones — Seibel expanded his pizza repertoire beyond the Brooklyns he already had down. With inspiration from [Vito & Nick’s](#) and [Pat’s](#) in Chicago, he and Garces created a thin-crust, square-cut tavern style. [Pequod’s](#) informed what Garces calls the pan pizza, with its 12-inch focaccia-like crusts that are saucy in the middle and have cheese running up the deep inside edges. Toppings can be mixed or matched on all varieties.

All told, Seibel built a pizza menu that is among the most ambitious in the area.

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“It’s been a lot of fun to see him grow throughout this process,” Garces said. “Now he is getting into his sweet spot where he’s going to shine.”

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Garces said. "This should be like, you come out from work, you grab a bottle of wine, you get a pizza, you come home."

Though Hook & Master is full service, "this is not a sprawling, big-box restaurant," Garces said. "It's a bar-lounge. I'm not opening a 150- or 200-seat restaurant." It was designed by Bridget McMullin and the McMullin Design Group, whose intention is to evoke a dark and moody, "under the sea" vibe on the first floor that evolves into a tropical island vibe on the second floor.

Garces retained Shannon Mustipher, author of the book *Tiki: Modern Tropical Cocktails*, to visit and develop the drink menu with bar manager Pete Adams.

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Garces, 49, who's opened nearly 30 restaurants since 2005's debut of Amada in Old City, has been on an upswing lately, bouncing back from financial issues that forced the [bankruptcy sale of his much of his company](#) in 2018. "I think it was a humbling experience and one that I certainly learned from," Garces said. "In life, you'll go through those experiences, and I really try to put that behind me and focus on the future more than anything."

He still carries national recognition from his stint 12 years ago on *Iron Chef America*. He recently partnered with a Cookunity, a meal-subscription business, which uses his recipes to prepare dishes that are delivered to customers at home from commissary kitchens in a few cities, including Chicago, Austin, and Brooklyn.

On the restaurant side, [he recently reopened Volvér](#) at the Kimmel Center, cleverly partnering with up-and-coming chefs of color for a guest chef series. His Basque-style Tinto, on 20th Street near Rittenhouse Square, was converted over the pandemic into a wine shop

featuring hard-to-find bottles alongside a pintxo bar. Village Whiskey next door was enlarged. The Olde Bar, which opened at the end of 2014

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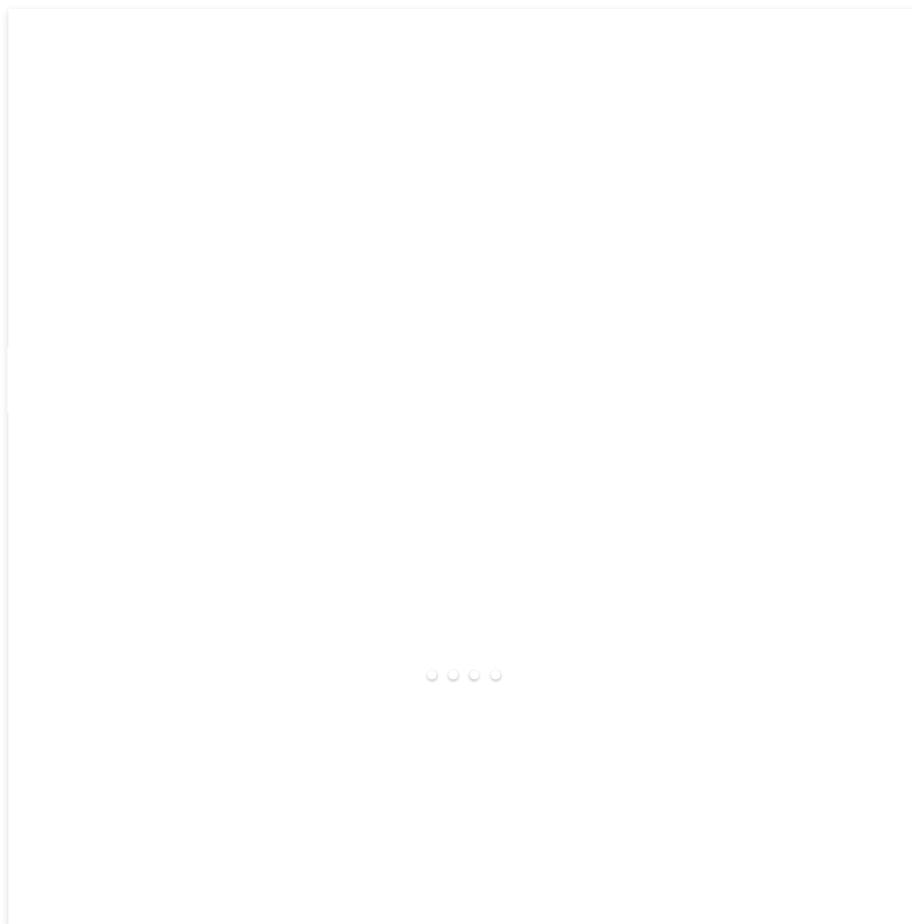
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casinos, including Amada, in Ocean Casino Resort.

Distrito, his Mexican cantina at 40th and Chestnut Streets in University City, also is the home base of two delivery-only restaurants, Livy's Plant Based Foods and Rustika.

He and his partners seem keen on these ghost kitchens, opening them in other cities. "With the uncertainty of restaurant dining, we're really beginning to explore these other avenues of food and beverage that are non-brick and mortar," Garces said.

"The food industry as a whole is evolving. We're in a pretty pivotal place. I love that. It's a challenge. It's a puzzle." For now, Hook & Master is open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Wednesday to Sunday for takeout pizza, and 4 to 10 p.m. Wednesday to Sunday (bar open till midnight).



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Michael Klein   



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Michael Klein an hour ago

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