

# Brava's Star

by LINDA DOMINGO



**CHEF HECTOR TORRES**  
**OVATIONS FOOD SERVICES,**  
**ADRIENNE ARSHT CENTER,**  
**MIAMI •**

"Some people think, 'Why would I have chicken when I have the option to have snapper or short ribs?' " explained Ovations Food Services chef Hector Torres of Miami's Adrienne Arsht Center. Although all of these dishes are on the prix fixe menu at Brava on the second floor of the center's Ziff Ballet Opera House, he combats the dismissive mindset with a beautifully plated chicken fontina served with local produce. "It's not just chicken on a plate. We make sure all the flavors are there, and everything complements that dish. It's the same experience if you have snapper as if you have our chicken fontina."

Torres' approach has made it one of the most popular items at the restaurant, which takes inspiration from Spain, Italy and Latin America to create a fine dining experience that stands up to the center's performances. To create the dish, Torres takes airline cut chicken, skin on, and marinates it for about four hours before separating part of the skin, to make room for a stuffing of spinach, mushrooms and Fontina cheese. The chicken is then seared in a pan with a splash of oil. Torres moves it to an oven, heated to 300-325 degrees, for 20 minutes.

Farm fresh vegetables, including diced squash and cherry tomatoes, are sautéed and seasoned with basil and Parmesan cheese. They act as a base for the chicken, and the whole plate is topped with a mushroom demiglace. Asparagus and malanga chips finish the dish. All of the produce is provided by a Miami purveyor that sources local and seasonal fruits and vegetables, so the chicken is accompanied by different ingredients throughout the year, depending on what's fresh.

"Step by step, we just try to make sure that everything is perfect," Torres said.

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**CHICKEN FONTINA .....\$49 AS PART OF A THREE-COURSE, PRIX FIXE MEAL**  
**PAIRS WITH .....CUCUMBER GIMLET**

Ovations Food Services took over food and drink operations at the Adrienne Arsht Center in September 2014, launching the reimagined Brava in November. The company placed chef Hector Torres, who brings the flavors from his Puerto Rican upbringing as well as years of American culinary training, at the helm.

"I grew up in the market and the farm, in Puerto Rico in the 1970s—I'm not that old, just to let you know," he laughed. "... My grandfather had a beautiful farm and we did what we could to bring produce to the market. ... I grew up with that sense of what it means to respect the food."

After graduating high school, Torres went straight into the industry, working with a catering company before moving to New Jersey and starting at the Trump Taj Mahal in Atlantic City, where he moved through the ranks and honed his culinary skills.

