

# Cultural Daily

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## Hotelier Robert Balzebre on Miami's Best New Beach Clubs

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Miami posted the highest hotel occupancy of any top-25 U.S. market in March 2025 at 83.2%, against a national average of 63.6%. Much of that traffic now spends its afternoons at a beach club rather than inside a room. Across Miami Beach and the bayfront, operators have turned pool decks and stretches of sand into ticketed daytime venues with cabanas, full kitchens, and DJ programming.

Miami's newest entry comes from **Robert Balzebre, the hotelier** behind the Kimpton Surfcomber. His ownership group opened Solei Beach Club on Collins Avenue earlier this year, an 11,500-square-foot oceanfront space built to draw locals as much as hotel guests.

## Why Day Clubs Took Over Miami's Shoreline

The beach club model treats daytime as prime time. Operators monetize sun, sand, and service through cabana rentals, private bookings, and food and beverage, often pulling in walk-up visitors who never check into the hotel. A Miami beach club competes on concept now, not just on location.

That shift rewards venues with a clear identity. Standout new beach clubs pair a distinct culinary point of view with design built for long afternoons and social media, a combination that keeps guests, and their spending, on site for hours.

Geography sorts the field into three lanes. Oceanfront clubs on the sand compete on direct beach access, rooftop venues sell skyline views and sunset programming, and bayfront spots trade on calm water and downtown sightlines. Each lane draws a slightly different crowd, and the best operators pick one and commit to it rather than trying to be everything at once.

The economics reach past the cabana ticket. A day club doubles as a marketing channel, introducing locals and visitors to a property they have never booked and converting some into overnight guests, event clients, and repeat regulars. It also smooths the calendar, since a hotel that lives on room nights sells nothing on a quiet weekday, while a club full of residents still earns through the off-season. That dual role, revenue center and customer funnel, is why operators now design the beach experience first and the lobby second.

## Robert Balzebre Brings a Coastal-Spain Concept to Collins Avenue

Solei replaced the Surfcomber's traditional pool-and-beach setup with a Mediterranean environment of thatched palapas, lounge seating, and private cabanas. The cabanas function as poolside suites with plush seating, big-screen televisions, and direct access to both the pool and the sand. Beyond them, the club rents 150 beach chairs and umbrellas on the beach.

A kitchen led by Executive Chef Gastón Javier Sanchez leans seafood-forward Mediterranean, with a raw bar, a pintxos section, and paella. Its bar pours signatures like the Spicy Señorita and a frozen flagship called the Passion Du Solei. Robert Balzebre describes the design intent in terms he applies across his hospitality projects.

## The Standout New Beach Clubs

- Casadonna, an Edgewater waterfront restaurant and club from the team behind Tao and Komodo, set inside a restored 1925 Mediterranean Revival building on Biscayne Bay
- Joia Beach, a sand-floored restaurant and beach club on Watson Island with skyline and bay views, cabanas, and weekend programming
- Strawberry Moon, the 24,000-square-foot swim club at The Goodtime Hotel from David Grutman and Pharrell Williams, known for twin pools and weekend pool parties
- Watr at the 1 Rooftop, a Japanese-influenced venue 18 stories above the 1 Hotel South Beach with golden-hour DJ sets
- Carbone Beach, the Major Food Group supper club that takes over a South Beach stretch each May during Formula 1 week, capped at 400 guests per evening
- Mr. C Coconut Grove, the Cipriani family's hotel with a rooftop pool deck of cabanas and daybeds, plus private Miami Beach access for guests who want the sand

## What Sets a Beach Club Apart

Access and identity define the tier. Faena Hotel anchors the luxury end with candy-striped umbrellas, beach butlers, and daybeds that book from \$500, while chaise lounges run \$150 to \$250 depending on the day. The long-running Nikki Beach on Ocean Drive, open through August 2027 before a planned redevelopment, still sets the template for barefoot daytime luxury that newer clubs chase.

Solei aims at a different opening in the market, a neighborhood day club that does not require a room key or a four-figure minimum. Robert Balzebre's record in South Beach hospitality, built on a \$35 million renovation that brought Kimpton to Miami Beach, shaped that bet on public access.

## Booking, Pricing, and Access

Most Miami beach clubs run on reservations. Cabanas and private events at Solei book in advance through the venue's website, and the restaurant serves daily from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., with the bar open until 6 p.m. Seasonal venues like Carbone Beach sell out fast and skew exclusive, with tickets that have reportedly run into the thousands of dollars during race week.

## Where Miami's Beach Club Scene Goes Next

Miami's beach club boom shows no sign of slowing as new hotels and reopenings add more daytime venues to the map. Nearly every luxury property in the pipeline now treats a signature pool or beach venue as a competitive necessity rather than a perk, which all but guarantees more openings through 2027. The clubs that endure will be the ones that give a clear reason to choose

them, through food, design, or access, rather than the ones that simply sell a lounge by the water. Robert Balzebre, for his part, treats the bet on Solei the way he treats his buildings.

*Photo: Barion McQueen via Pexels*

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