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**CITY PAPER**

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# A satisfying new menu has saved Mt. Pleasant's The Americano

Realizing the Americano Dream

By [Eric Doksa](#)



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*Peppadew peppers, pepper jack cheese, pickled red onion, and chimichurri dress the spiced chicken torta at The Americano*

## The Americano

Cuban, Mexican

Mt. Pleasant

[theamericanomp.com](http://theamericanomp.com)

Serving: Lunch & Dinner (Tuesday–Sunday)

Entree prices: Moderate (\$10-\$18)

The building at 819 Coleman Blvd. has seen its fair share of tenants. The location has gone from being home to a bistro to serving dolmades under the name Samos to shifting to plate-sized raviolo and succulent roasted Cornish hens when Ben Berryhill purchased the space in 2011. But it was only a year later that Berryhill's popular Next Door restaurant surprisingly closed.



• Jonathan Boncek

- *Crispy Beef Empanadas*

Now we have The Americano, a bright, Latin-themed restaurant that would feel right at home in South Beach. Gone is the front valet lot; in its place you'll find a large outdoor patio outfitted with tropical plants, palm trees, and strands of lights. Inside, plush turquoise booths, light pink napkins, and dark wood take center stage, while the main bar can be accessed inside and out.

The changes at The Americano didn't stop after opening. Just three days into service, the executive chef left, and it wasn't long before the menu saw its first revision. Enter Nathan Thurston, formerly of Stars Rooftop and Grill Room. Working in a consultant role, Thurston was able to transform a bland and boring menu into something worthwhile. He took a beat up truck and turned it into a shiny new sports car. He's the mechanic The Americano needed.

Dishes like the super-thick, sticky-sweet plantain soup have been replaced by an addictive crab and conch chowder with smoked bacon, corn, leeks, and crispy fried strings of sweet potatoes (\$8).



Jonathan Boncek

- *Chicken Taco*

The original tacos, which came in the form of platters with cold, hard flour tortillas and boring bland fillings, have been scratched off the menu and replaced with a lineup of legit tacos that are sold a la carte. While the former steak taco was chewy and near flavorless, the new version is juicy and robust with char-grilled steak, fresh slices of avocado, and crispy fried onions. A sprinkling of queso fresco and a dapple of mild chili sauce on top of the taco make it outright delicious (\$4.50). There are dishes like sweet guava barbecue chicken with kale slaw and avocado (\$4) and fried oysters with grilled corn romaine lettuce with chili aioli, although the sauce for the latter could use a little more kick (\$4.75). The shrimp is lightly seasoned and griddled before joining a cilantro-spiked slaw, roasted corn salsa, and avocado (\$4.50), while the house-ground beef — seasoned with the likes of cumin, poblano, cinnamon, and chili powder — is a nice surprise (\$3.75). The tacos are mid-sized and not over-stuffed, and though we're partial to the corn tortillas, the griddled flour tortillas aren't bad. The menu carries on with more of a Latin theme, as opposed to strictly Cuban fair. There's guacamole, ceviche, and a stellar yellowfin tuna tower stacked with avocado, mango salsa, and a drizzle of cilantro oil that's bursting with citrus (\$12). The scallops stood out in the ceviche trio, though they would benefit from a bit more salt (\$12.50), and the beef



empanadas scream to be ordered. They're large and crisp, filled with juicy spiced ground beef, and the sweet peppadew sauce takes the dish from good to great (\$7).

The tortas have taken a positive turn too. The pulled pork has been replaced with roasted pork and chipotle black beans (\$10.50) and there's now a mojo-style chicken torta with pepper jack cheese, peppadew peppers, pickled red onions, and chimichurri (\$9.50).



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- *A South Beach vibe plays out on theAmericano's interior murals*
- There are plates of guava barbecue baby back ribs (\$14), black bean cakes (\$10.50), and puerco asado (\$13.50). Hungry diners should order the pollo con mojo, a spiced, slow-roasted, and grilled half a chicken with sweet plantains and Cuban rice (\$13.50).

Three incredibly sweet and buttery hockey puck-like scallops get another turn in the platos category and rest on a bed of vibrant orange sweet potato puree with sweet corn vinaigrette, all topped with thin crispy strips of brisket that resemble jerky, otherwise known as vaca frita (\$18). Of the sides, there are yucca fries, patatas bravas, and fried sweet plantains. The street corn is off the cob and lacking seasoning, but the black beans, rice, and chimichurri in the Cuban rice make up for it.



• *Tuna Tower*

• Jonathan Boncek

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The service is respectable, and the one constant between opening and present is the bar program. Brent Sweatman, also bar manager at The Rarebit, has created another stellar

drink menu. The combination of hibiscus-infused tequila, grapefruit soda, salt, lime juice, agave, and vanilla bitters makes for one hell of a Paloma (\$8), and fans of the copper mug will like his Latin take on the popular Moscow Mule — rightly named the Mexican Mule — with blanco tequila, limeade, and Sweatman's housemade ginger beer (\$7). With a stylish space, excellent bar program, and a menu finally taking a turn for the better, what can possibly go wrong? The location is due for a successful operation, but several concepts have tanked in the past, even the ones that showed a lot of promise. The original menu and execution set up TheAmericano for failure, but as long as the cocktails are flowing and the kitchen can keep the momentum going when Thurston's time is up, TheAmericano will be in for the long haul.

**Tags:** [TheAmericano](#), [Nathan Thurston](#), [Ben Berryhill](#), [Brent Sweatman](#)