



STUDIO ROBERT MCKINLEY

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TRAVEL

At the New Sant Ambroeus, Palm Beach's Golden Era Meets Italian Midcentury Design

The legendary Milanese–New York restaurant opens its most stylish location yet in Palm Beach, Florida

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When Sant Ambroeus opened its first U.S. location in [New York](#) in 1986, it was destined to become a meeting place for the city's cultural cognoscenti. After all, its mother [restaurant](#) became an instant classic among those in the know when it launched in Milan in 1936. Now, just in time for Northeasterners' seasonal migration south, a new Palm Beach outpost is primed to keep the ball rolling. Robert McKinley, who has designed Manhattan outposts for the brand, as well as hot spots like El Tucán nightclub and Marion brasserie in Miami, sipped his weight in coffee while touring cafés across Italy for inspiration. "Palm Beach's golden era coincided with Milan's refined design in the '50s," he says of the convenient link between the restaurant's original city and its latest setting, Royal Poinciana Plaza, architect [John Volk](#)'s shopping center from the same era that was recently refurbished. "It's just like in Italy, when you pop into a café for an espresso and take a breath from your day." Scroll down for a virtual tour of what's sure to become one of Palm Beach's most popular watering holes.



Photo: Courtesy of Sant Ambroeus

A gelato cart along Royal Poinciana Plaza's lushly landscaped courtyard features beehive-shaped pozzetti. The gold-leaf signage was hand-painted. "It isn't easy to find people who can still do it," said McKinley.



Photo: Courtesy of Sant Ambroeus

Since Sant Ambroeu sits a few blocks from the beach, Murano-glass light fixtures mimic waves and marine life; the mahogany walls and bar are by New York Handmade. “We had the space to go full throttle with custom lighting,” says McKinley of the restaurant’s 3,400 square feet.



“When I bring people a tin of cookies from Sant Ambroeus, they love the wrapping paper,” says McKinley. So he transformed it into custom wallpaper by Flavor Paper in Brooklyn. “It’s playful and sweet—perfect for a confectionery.”



Photo: Courtesy of Sant Ambroeus

Green jasper columns dominate the 150-seat dining room. Banquettes in coral fabric sourced from Dedar are another tropical touch. Terrazzo floors in a cream, pink, and black wave pattern pick up the sea motif. “I love the terrazzo floors in Italian cafés for their handmade feel. We were lucky to find expert workers in South Florida who could pour the floors without metal dividers.”

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