

Commercia

Que Hospitality snaps up South End space for Spanish tapas restaurant



Image: Catalu

Catalu is coming to South End.

CATALU



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Que Hospitality is adding an authentic Spanish tapas concept in South End.

The Charlotte-based restaurant group – also behind Que Onda Tacos + Tequila and Que Fresa – has snapped up **the former Eight + Sand Kitchen space**. It's located at 135 New Bern St., in the New Bern Station development, between South Boulevard and the Lynx Blue Line.

“We have been thinking and dreaming about this concept for a long time, waiting for the right moment to make it a reality,” says Manny Flores, CEO of the hospitality group.

He expects to invest \$750,000 to transform the roughly 3,500-square-foot space. The restaurant, Catalú, should open by the end of April.

Flores says Catalú will be a cornerstone of Que Hospitality's portfolio. He's drawing inspiration from a decade of working with Jose Andres, an award-winning chef and humanitarian. Catalú represents a return to those Spanish hospitality roots. It will deliver the restaurant group's take on Catalonia, located in Spain's northeast region, showcasing authentic cuisine.

“A lot of the classic tapas come from there. We'll be focused on giving that contemporary twist,” Flores says.

Flores will work with his business partners, chefs Roger Lemus and Juan Romero, to develop the menu.

Expect options such as Ensaladilla Rusa, a Spanish potato salad, and Pan Con Tomate, a tomato bread highlighting Manolo's Bakery. Hot tapas will include the classic croquetas

as well as vegetarian dishes. Gambas al Ajillo, a garlic shrimp, and octopus-based dish Pulpo a la Gallega will be among the seafood tapas. Paellas will be on the menu as well.

Flores says the menu will continue to evolve as the hospitality group delves into its portfolio of recipes.

“We’ll be constantly traveling to Spain with a mindset of just understanding the culture, food, drink and way of life.”

Beverage Director Alex Canas will oversee a cocktail program that exclusively features Spanish wine and highlights gin-based drinks. There will be a variety of sangrias on draft, including the classic red and white as well as playful options such as sparkling, rosé and a seasonal option.

Flores says he’s always wanted to be in South End. This location fell into his lap, and it was a perfect fit with its tall ceilings and an open kitchen. The space is broken into multiple areas, with the bar and lounge set to the side. Glass garage doors open to the patio. The former mill room – previously for Eight + Sand’s bread program will be converted into a wine room, which Flores says will be a centerpiece.

For Flores, Catalú marks a pivotal step for Que Hospitality as it looks to become a leading restaurant group here. It has the teams and experience in place to build that brand. Flores says Que Hospitality always aimed to have at least three or four brands under its umbrella.

“I feel we’re ready to handle the next generation of restaurant brands we want to bring to Charlotte,” he says.

He's currently working with Romero to develop a contemporary South American concept as well.

Sherman Walters and Scott Lee with National Restaurant Properties represented Que Hospitality in the real estate negotiations.