

FLORIDA BUILDINGS I LOVE



The Columbia Restaurant, on Seventh Avenue in Ybor City, dates to 1905. HAROLD BUBIL PHOTOS/SARASOTA HERALD-TRIBUNE

No. 67: Columbia Restaurant, 1903-05, Tampa

**Harold Bubil** Real Estate Editor Emeritus  
Sarasota Herald-Tribune | USA TODAY NETWORK

The venerable Columbia Restaurant has locations in Sarasota, St. Augustine, Celebration and Clearwater Beach, and two smaller cafes in Tampa, and I’ve eaten at all but two of them.

But when it comes to enjoying chicken or fish with an enormous mound of yellow rice, black-bean soup, warm Cuban bread with the crumbly crust, and, of course, the olive-laden “1905 Salad,” there’s nothing like the mothership — the 1,700-seat, block-long “Gem of Spanish Restaurants” in Tampa.

Each location has delightful spaces, but none of them do more than echo the Ybor City location’s authentic, Spanish-inspired architecture. Each dining room is different, and the nightly (except Sun-

day) Flamenco music performances only add to the atmosphere.

Casimiro Hernandez Sr. started the restaurant on Seventh Avenue in 1905, and the Columbia has been in operation ever since. He expanded the restaurant in 1919.

“The original building was much smaller. We began as a small, 60-seat café in 1905,” said Angie Geml, Columbia Restaurant Group’s marketing and public relations manager. “But we actually started in our original part of the building in 1903, when (Hernandez) opened the Saloon Columbia on Dec. 17, 1903, the same day that the Wright Brothers took flight. In 1905, the Saloon Columbia became the Columbia Café. So the building was there in 1903.”

**See COLUMBIA, Page 31**



The Columbia Restaurant’s neon sign in Ybor City.





• SWIM IN YOUR PRIVATE POOL • ENJOY HOW QUIET INSIDE

• MINUTES TO SHOPPING, DINING AND BEACHES



Labels in floor plan: TWO CAR GARAGE, BEDROOM 2, BATH 2, KITCHEN, DINING, GATHERING ROOM, DEN, Foyer, OWNER BATH, LAUNDRY, OWNER SUITE, OPT. POOL, COVERED LANAI, OPTIONAL BRICK PAVER POOL DECK

**From \$599,900**

**The Matera I**  
1,491 Liv. S.F.

20 Single-family (1 and 2 story) Courtyard Homes with two or three-car garages and quaint courtyards for private swimming pools, spas, fire pits, etc., located along E. Venice Avenue just minutes to downtown Venice and beaches.

**ASK ABOUT OUR READY HOMES**  
**FURNISHED MODELS - OPEN DAILY!**

902 E. Venice Avenue, Venice, FL 34285  
ProGroup-Realty.com • 941.786.9403  
Pro Group Realty and Property Management, LLC

Prices, terms, and availability are subject to change. Floor plans, photographs, renderings elevations and sizes are approximate for presentation purposes only and may vary. MPS DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION, LLC CGC061063.

FO-33907579

Energy

Continued from Page 11

Establish efficient habits

Simple changes like adjusting your thermostat, turning lights off when you leave the room and keeping windows and doors shut when the air conditioning is on can go a long way, Glover says. Installing a smart thermostat, which automatically adjusts the temperature based on time, your habits and the season, can also help, she adds.

Hicks suggests leaving window coverings closed during the day to help keep the sun’s heat out of your home and getting a seasonal tuneup to your air-conditioning system to make sure it’s working efficiently. Changing your air filter monthly or quarterly also helps it run better, she adds.

Make small upgrades

Small home improvement projects, such as adding or replacing weather stripping that seals leaks around doors and windows, can significantly reduce your energy consumption, Hicks says. “Walk around your house with a lit candle and if the flame flickers, that’s where drafts are coming in. That’s a good candidate for weather stripping,” she says.

Another simple job involves swapping out incandescent bulbs for LED light bulbs, which use at least 75% less energy, according to the Energy Department. “It seems like nothing but has an enormous impact when we do it collectively,” Glover says.

Update your appliances

While purchasing new appliances can be expensive, the investment can pay off in energy savings, especially

when you select products with the Energy Star certification, a program run by the Environmental Protection Agency. “If you have an old appliance and you can afford to upgrade to something energy-efficient, do that,” Glover says, but notes that you should also prioritize other home updates such as better insulation.

**Tackle home improvement projects**

According to Angi’s State of Home Spending in 2022 survey, 29% of homeowners say they plan to add solar panels to their home within the next five years. Updating the heating, ventilating and air conditioning system, or HVAC, was another popular choice (23%). Those kinds of big investments can pay off over the long run, says Hicks, who adds that federal income tax credits are available to help offset some of those costs.

Installing doors as a barrier to different zones in the house can help improve efficiency by letting you control what gets warm and what stays cool, says Jonathan Flynn, a senior building analyst with Home Energy Consultants in Pleasant Valley, New York, and a certified Home Energy Rating System rater. “One of the big flaws in most two-story homes is that there is a stairway that leads up and no door at the top or bottom,” he says.

To prevent that energy leakage, Flynn installed a sliding door at the bottom of the stairs in his own home, but he recognizes that doing so might not be practical or desired by all homeowners with open floor plans. Still, he encourages homeowners to at least consider making these kinds of changes, even if they aren’t currently popular.

After all, he adds: “Energy efficiency work in your home is one of the few investments you can make that will actually pay you back.”



