

## Miami Downtown Development Authority Launches Discount Program to Help Local Restaurants



As the coronavirus continues to strangle Miami's restaurant economy, the Miami Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is stepping in to help.

This week, the DDA launched the initiative "Go Local, Go Direct" to encourage downtown residents to stay home while also helping local restaurants save on fees charged by delivery services such as Uber Eats and Postmates.

Participating restaurants agree to offer a discount of 10 percent or more on delivery orders that are placed directly. So far, the list includes Alloy Bistro, Eternity Coffee Roasters, Fleming's Steakhouse, Fooq's, Fratelli Milano, Pilo's Street Tacos, Pizza Piola, Pubbelly Sushi, Puroast Coffee, and Zest Marketplace.

According to the DDA, the city's urban core is home to 350 restaurants that serve a residential population of 100,000 across Brickell, downtown, and the Arts & Entertainment District.

The DDA is also distributing free hand sanitizer to residents and visitors through its Downtown Ambassadors and is a founding partner in the relief fund for bar and restaurant workers that was created by the South Beach Wine & Food Festival and Florida International University's Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management.

Pubbelly Sushi partner José Mendín says it should be "a no-brainer" for residents to order food directly through their favorite restaurants. "By ordering direct, we're keeping business in-house and we're keeping our employees working by helping deliver your food," Mendín tells *New Times*. "The 30 percent fee companies like Uber Eats charge instead goes back to our employees."

And now there's a 10 percent discount on direct orders.

(Speaking of that 10 percent, Mendín is offering the discount at all Pubbelly locations when customers order direct. Each location offers takeout and delivers within a three-to-five-mile radius. The restaurants, which also serve beer, wine, and sake to-go, are open until 10 p.m., though he recommends calling in case restrictions have changed.)

Mendín says that although Pubbelly is doing a fair amount of takeaway business, he has temporarily shuttered Rivertail in Fort Lauderdale and La Placita in the MiMo District. "We had support but not enough to keep them open," he says. "There just wasn't enough demand for Puerto Rican food to-go. La Placita was more of an experiential restaurant."

Echoing a common refrain among local chefs, he adds, "I'm trying to keep as many of my employees working as I can. Hopefully, this pandemic passes as fast as possible."