



Tampa Bay Dining Out

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James Beard semi-finalists announced

Chef Jeanie Roland of the [Perfect Caper](http://www.theprecapaper.com) (<http://www.theprecapaper.com>) in Punta Gorda is a James Beard semi-finalist again this year as best chef in the South. Coincidentally, I ate at the Perfect Caper on Tuesday night and proclaim the meal pretty darn perfect.

Roland's schtick is lots of organic, seasonal food with a touch of Asian. I had crispy pork belly in steamed buns for an appetizer and could have stopped there and floated off to food heaven. The doughy buns were smeared with hoisin sauce and a clever ginger dipping sauce accompanied. A pile of apple slaw, big shavings not shreds, was at the ready to be tucked in. I also had a bone-in beef fillet which was cooked perfectly. To gild the lily, we ordered the lobster mac-n-cheese to share. Completely unnecessary but totally delicious. Hubby had mini lobster tacos to start and crispy duck to finish. All good.

Another nearby chef who made the semi-finalist list is Jose Martinez of [Maison Blanche](http://maisonblancherestaurants.com) (<http://maisonblancherestaurants.com>) in Longboat Key. My colleague Laura Reiley reviewed Maison Blanche in December and gave it a rare 3 1/2 stars. Among her comments: "This time of year, with house guests visiting and the season's souped-up sociability, Maison Blanche is an exceptional reason to head south and beachward." Read her review in [here](http://tinyurl.com/vjwr88a). (<http://tinyurl.com/vjwr88a>)

To see the complete list of James Beard nominees, [go here](http://tinyurl.com/vjkkqx3) (<http://tinyurl.com/vjkkqx3>).