

STAMFORD DOWNTOWN

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER

BE TRANSCENDED INTO AN ALBANIAN TREASURE...



Ramiz Kuka and Cka Ka Qellu staff

The best way to enter the new Albanian restaurant **Cka Ka Qellu** (pronounced SHA ka chell-OO) is to head to the end of Summer Street, walk across Main Street onto the one block long Clark Street, and there a Mediterranean oasis awaits you. A hidden treasure tucked down the alley at **15 Clark Street**, you'll be greeted by an old-world courtyard featuring a large fountain with brass topped café tables and covered by a wooden framed pergola with a live grapevine awning.

Step inside the large space and be transcended into the Albanian culture. Long wooden tables are adorned with crystal chandeliers, accenting the two-story mezzanine. A grand piano and antique string instruments rest in the corner, not silent for long. Antique doors, tools, brass coffee mills, and dishes of hammered metal and embroidered costumes, some from the 18th century belonging to the owner, Ramiz Kukaj, have been collected from the old country and are widely on display. *The NY Times* claims the décor has "been airlifted from an Albanian farmhouse".

Adding a third restaurant to his busy restaurant repertoire including Cka Ka Qellu on Arthur Avenue established in 2017 and Cha Ka Qellu on 31st Street (between Park & Lexington) in Manhattan which opened in 2000, owner Ramiz has spent one year transforming the space at 15 Clark Street into an Albanian embassy of sorts. The traditional food emulates northern Albania's Adriatic coast, sharing many dishes with its neighbors in the Balkan region. Ramiz describes his inspiration:

"During my young age and before the war, one of my passions was photography. That dream was taken from me by the Serbian regime during the 1990s Kosovo war. After being forced to leave the country, I left castles and homes that got destroyed and burned in Kosovo. I escaped to Albania and lived in Korca (a city in Albania) for a year and a half, this is the birthplace of renowned photographer Gjon Mili. When I arrived in the United States, I had nothing but memories of those castles left behind and was still passionate about photography. When I was looking for Gjon Mili's hometown, it was my first visit to Stamford in 1995. Ever since Cka Ka Qellu became an idea with Stamford in my mind. I felt that I had to put my dreams together as part of my décor, which is brought from the castles that were destroyed and burned and survived and, of course, Gjon Mili's photography."

Cha Ka Quella is a saying often used in Albanian, explains Ramiz, "our grandfathers and fathers were poor and had suffered a lot, but they would welcome guests into their homes, saying ...welcome, please come in and enjoy bread, salt & heart and what we have left. Our Albanian home belongs to God and guests."

NOCHES DE COLOMBIA OPENS AT 84 WEST PARK PLACE



Juan Rodriguez and Jhonny Ospina

Partners Juan Rodriguez and Jhonny Ospina are pleased to be opening their latest Stamford Downtown 100% authentic Colombian restaurant. The chain began when the family came to the US in 1997 and established their first small project in New Jersey. **Noches de Colombia** grew rapidly attracting individuals, couples and families looking for a comfortable environment with traditional authentic “mom’s cooking” Colombian food. Today they have 29 locations, 25 in New Jersey, 3 in New York and now their first venture into Connecticut is **84 West Park Place** in Stamford Downtown. Many may have frequented their Port Chester, New York location which is directly under the AMC Theatre, adjacent to Costco.

The 9,000 square foot, Noches de Colombia restaurant, is designed to be the ideal hang-out for the local community offering the perfect combination of slow-cooked meals seasoned to perfection, music, conversation, and of course the flat-screen entertainment for the quintessential soccer fans around the world. Authentic Colombian food offers something for every generation. The scent of creamy garlic-butter sauces and sweet plantains creates an authentic Colombian experience that patrons will gravitate to. Try signature dishes such as Bandea Paisa, a hallmark symbol of Colombian culture, as well as their custom roasted coffee from the Colombian Paisa region. Known for its bakery, grilled steak, seafood, and chicken dishes, this family-friendly restaurant also offers tropical cocktails such as passion fruit sangria, pina coladas, and mango lime margaritas.

The décor offers a warm ambiance, brass fixtures align the Venetian style autumn-colored walls, and auburn chandeliers hang dim lights above petrified mahogany wood tables. The attractive lower level is appealing for private parties and events. Dine-in or take-out, catering is also available. For more information, see nochesdecolombia.com.



LEARN MORE

STAMFORD DOWNTOWN HOSTS 11TH ANNUAL DECK THE DOWNTOWN CONTEST



In the spirit of the holiday season, Stamford Downtown is once again hosting its 11th annual storefront façade decorating contest called “Deck the Downtown” featuring over 30 Stamford Downtown participating businesses to ensure the Downtown looks dazzling for the 2021 holiday season.

This popular event asks the public to select our winners by casting a vote online no later than by Monday, December 20th at 5 pm. All voters will be automatically entered to win a \$100 Stamford Downtown Card (our digital gift card is redeemable at 50+ downtown businesses). Once all votes are tabulated, the Best of Show winner with a Grand Prize of \$750 and the Honorable Mention winner with a second-place prize of \$500, will be announced on December 21st. Prize money awarded by Stamford Downtown will be dedicated to permanent spring façade improvements at the winning businesses in collaboration with Stamford Downtown. Please come Downtown to enjoy the festive storefronts and don't forget to cast a vote for your favorite!



THE STAMFORD ART ASSOCIATION CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

The Stamford Art Association Celebrates 50 Years of Bringing Art to the Community is a juried exhibit that features artwork by Stamford Art Association members. The exhibition was juried by Marguerite Weinert, recently retired SAA Gallery Manager. Ms. Weinert worked for the Stamford Art Association for 20 years and curated many of its exhibits. The exhibition will be on view from December 9, 2021, through January 28, 2022, at the Stamford Jewish Community Center (1035 Newfield Avenue).

Since its inception, the Stamford Art Association has continuously served the community and is pleased to partner with the Stamford JCC to celebrate its 50th year. Christine Irvin, SAA's President, says "We are excited to host this exhibit to honor our member artists who continue to be the creative spark that inspires us."

Now in its 50th year, the Stamford Art Association was established in 1971 in an 1874 historical townhouse by 24 artists to showcase emerging and professional artists. The SAA is a nonprofit organization whose members include painters, sculptors, printmakers, photographers, and multimedia artists. It hosts 10 virtual and in person exhibits at the Townhouse Gallery yearly and curates the Art at the Ferguson art series at the Ferguson Library. Most exhibits are juried with prominent jurors from art schools, galleries and institutions from Connecticut and New York. All artists, not just members, are welcome to submit their work for exhibits. The Gallery is free and open to the general public. The [Stamford Art Association Townhouse Gallery](#) is located at 39 Franklin Street.

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SHELLS GRILL BRINGS SEAFOOD FARE TO THE DOWNTOWN



Shells Grill at 261 Main Street

Brian Chan, Partner and General Manager of **Shells Grill**, the newest restaurant to open in Stamford Downtown, was attracted to the area's vibrant restaurant scene. Like Manhattan, you can find just about every type of nationality represented in the food available along with the blocks that encircle the Columbus Park area. Having owned and managed five restaurants in New York, Shells' owners are seasoned restaurant operators ready to welcome you to their latest 80 seat restaurant and bar located at **261 Main Street**, directly across the street from Riviera Maya.

Shells Grill serves up traditional seafood including oysters, lobsters, king crab legs, mussels, and crawfish prepared any way you like it, with both Cajun and teriyaki styles being popular favorites. Shells offer an expansive menu with affordable pricing as the owners have worked hard to keep prices reasonable even when seafood costs have continued to escalate. The attractive restaurant décor boasts a nautical sea shanty theme which provides a great atmosphere for either date night or a family night out. Dine-in or take-out, more information can be found at ShellsGrill.com.

**HAPPY
HOLIDAYS!**

**FROM
STAMFORD
DOWNTOWN**

