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Dinner and a movie at Cobb CineBistro? We'll drink to that

The Hyde Park CinéBistro entrance leads to a cocktail lounge and this modern-looking bar.



[Photos by Luis Santana/tbt®]

Dinner and a movie — the classic date night, a tradition that I suppose dates back as long as there have been movies. About the only way to improve upon this formula would be to add cocktails into the mix. But then why not take it one step further and [consolidate](#) the three — dinner, cocktails and a movie — into one neat and tidy package?

That's the concept behind Cobb Cinema's chain of CinéBistro theaters, two of which are located in the bay area — one in Hyde Park and one in Wesley Chapel. On paper, CinéBistro seems like a tough pairing to pull off. It's a movie theater with a cocktail lounge in the lobby and a full food menu and drink list that guests can order from and enjoy right in the theater.

The challenge is to make all of the components work together seamlessly while still retaining the independent quality of each. If the cocktail lounge is up to snuff but you're forced to consume your martini in a theater with sticky floors and stale popcorn in the seats, then it loses some effect. If the theater is nice and polished but the menu consists of nothing but junk food and candy, then there's a bit of an incongruity.

I've been going to the theater complex at Hyde Park Village off and on for years. When it was a Madstone Theater, I stopped in to watch the latest independent and foreign films. When it was a Sunrise Cinema, I spent a few days surviving nearly on popcorn alone as I made my way through several screenings a day during the Tampa International Film Festival. And more recently, I've found myself in one of CinéBistro's oversized theater rocker seats (with attached movable tabletop), sipping a cocktail and enjoying a movie.

[editorial]



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It's a good concept, and CinéBistro pulls it off well. Whereas a traditional movie theater entrance leads to a familiar lobby and concession stand, Hyde Park CinéBistro's leads to a slick-looking cocktail lounge, [complete](#) with sofas, tables and plush chairs lined up at a smart-looking bar. Although popcorn and candy are readily available, this is no ordinary concession area, clearly evidenced by the half-dozen beer taps, wine bottles and full liquor selection. And instead of nachos and soft pretzels, there's a full menu, from light fare all the way up to full dinners.

The Wesley Chapel CinéBistro is a little different, located upstairs, above the traditional Grove 16 theaters. However, both CinéBistro locations are for the 21-and-up crowd only, adding to the decidedly grown-up vibe. The food and drinks are as modern and well-designed as the interiors; as such, it's exactly the kind of place you can go for your combination dinner-movie-drink date without skimping on any of the three.

Of course, the drink list is my specialty, so I'll keep the focus there. The house cocktail menu features a handful of original cocktails inspired by the classics, by which I mean both classic cocktails and classic cinema — most feature some sort of movie-themed name. These are good drinks, too — the kind that would play just as well in a dedicated cocktail lounge. The list changes on occasion, so there's a good chance that you'll see something new on subsequent visits. The beer and wine lists are also fairly extensive, with many craft-beer options (most in the bottle) and a wide range of wines served in 6-ounce and 10-ounce sizes, as well as by the bottle.

Of course, the food and drinks are not limited to the lounge. Servers roam the aisles prior to the start of the movie, taking orders and delivering them directly to your seat for you to enjoy as you watch the feature. Eating a hot meal and sipping from a cocktail glass inside a movie theater seems unusual at first, but I can assure you that it's easy to get used to.

For an everyday moviegoing experience, I'm perfectly content with sticky floors, greasy popcorn and preposterously sized soft drinks. But CinéBistro is a unique concept with a solid execution, where you can have dinner right in your theater seat and wash your Twizzlers down with a mojito without being asked to leave by a flashlight-wielding usher. It's definitely one to experience.



[Cinebistro's root beer float (\$9.50):]

Pinnacle Whipped Vodka, Frangelica, CocoVine and a splash of root beer.