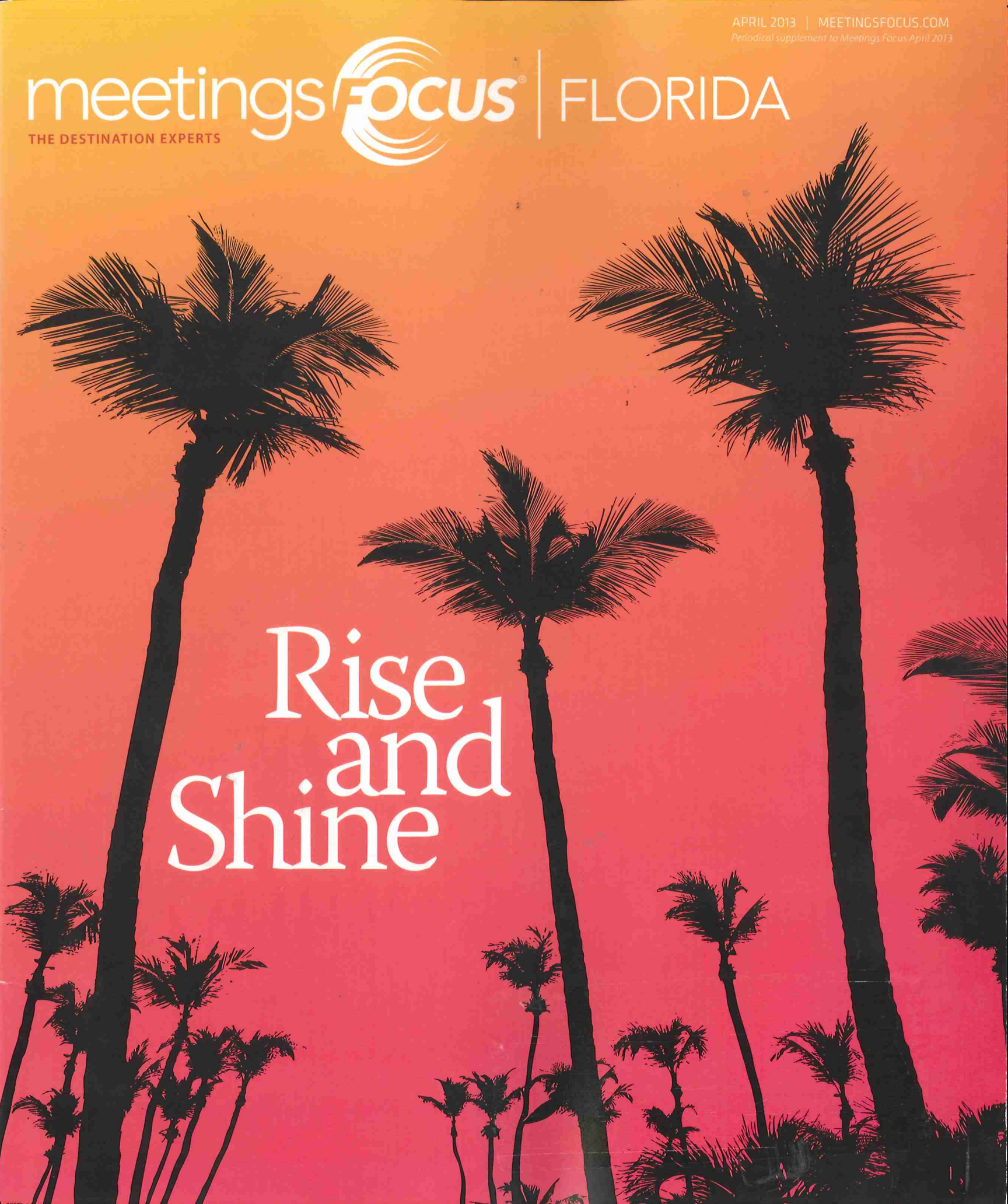
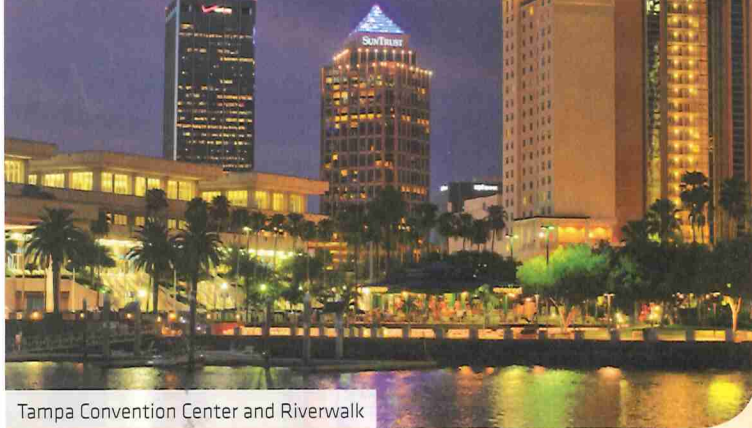


meetings **focus** | FLORIDA

THE DESTINATION EXPERTS

Rise and Shine





Tampa Convention Center and Riverwalk

Food Finds

Expanded dining options for groups gathering in Florida range from French pastry on the go to scrumptious Italian specialties worth lingering over.

- ▶ The new **Chanticleer Bakery & Eatery** (www.sowalbakery.com) in Grayton Beach tempts diners with treats such as sweet potato pound cake and Scottish scones, as well as a full range of fresh-baked breads. Open for lunch and dinner, a 32-seat dining area is split into two separate areas, should groups want some privacy. It also offers outdoor seating and take-out service.
- ▶ One of the Florida Keys' largest meetings properties, **Hawks Cay** (www.hawkscay.com), just unveiled two new restaurants: Ocean, with an open kitchen that turns out fresh seafood, homemade pasta and signature pizzetas; and Tio's Cantina, which is located at the resort's marina and features such delectable menu items as fresh shrimp ceviche, mahi-mahi tacos and frozen Key lime margaritas, a refreshing treat after a hard day at the beach.
- ▶ The **Tampa Convention Center** (www.tampaconventioncenter.com) added a waterfront dining option for lunch, Bay Bistro, located on the ground floor of the center and offering views of Tampa's busy and picturesque Riverwalk. An eclectic menu offers everything from Southern-fried green tomatoes and "Brie-L-Ts" to grilled mahi-mahi and Portobello steak salad.
- ▶ Miami's South Beach has yet another new hot spot, **Dolce Italian** (www.dolceitalianrestaurant.com), serving a moderately priced menu of updated Italian classics, including selections from the mozzarella bar, Neapolitan pizzas, comforting spaghetti and meatballs, and the adventurous grilled octopus served on a bed of chickpeas and ginger pistachio farro grains. The restaurant offers semi-private dining space for up to 20.
- ▶ The new **Naples Food Tours** (www.naplesfoodtours.com) provides an opportunity to sample a variety of restaurants, markets and artisan shops in one of Florida's top foodie towns. On guided three-hour mini-bus tours, guests taste and talk as they interact with chefs and proprietors of locally owned restaurants and discover hard-to-find markets. Custom tours and dine-arounds are available for private groups.
- ▶ In Fort Lauderdale, the **Wine Cellar Lounge at Lago Mar Resort and Club** (www.lagomar.com) has a new look. Fresh colors, textures and patterns suggest the British West Indies, with tropical-fruit hues, dark-stained hardwoods and rattan, and palm frond-patterned carpeting. It makes happy hour even happier.
- ▶ Daytona Beach's **Ocean Center** (www.oceancenter.com) shows off its culinary creativity with new "chef's table" dinners just for meeting planners interested in booking the facility. "We used to take clients out to dinner somewhere in the area, but now we do a personalized chef's table with our chefs in the room to go through the menu," says Angela Cameron Daniels, the center's marketing director. "We have samples of linens and setups. It really lets the planners know what kind of unique presentations we can do."