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## Seasalt and Pepper Owners, Investors Battle for Control of Riverside Hot Spot

By Zachary Fagenson

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Photo by Zachary Fagenson

The scene at Seasalt and Pepper is about to get a bit more heated.

The honeymoon on the Miami River seems to be coming to a bitter end.

[Seasalt and Pepper](#) co-owner Stephane Dupoux has sued partner Carlos Miranda along with investors in Miami-Dade County court alleging he was stripped of his management roles and barred from the restaurant's bank accounts, according to court documents.

At the same time, Seasalt is also embroiled in a legal battle with its investors. The restaurant alleges that its initial success pushed investors to drastically alter the terms on a nearly \$3 million loan in hopes of clawing back more money along with an ownership stake in the celebrity-laden riverside restaurant.

In the first suit, Dupoux, who designed Nikki Beach and legendary Paris hot spot Buddha Bar, claims that the restaurant is making \$300,000 weekly but that the widely publicized relationship between him and Miranda, a real estate developer who has worked with Starwood and Mandarin Oriental, has

soured, leading to Dupoux's being forced out of day-to-day operations in mid-February.

"The chef as well as some members of the kitchen have advised that if Stephane gets back into management, they will leave the restaurant," said Robert Zarco, the restaurant's attorney.

The legal spat was first reported by [the Daily Business Review](#).

Miranda, according to the lawsuit, has made a series of decisions, including firing key management, changing staff uniforms, and abandoning the restaurant's marketing strategy. Lawyers have sought to ban Dupoux from entering the restaurant, while Dupoux is suing to have a third party appointed to temporarily run the business.

Lawyers for Dupoux did not respond to calls for comment.

Seasalt opened to a flurry of fanfare earlier this year and within weeks had already hosted a bevy of celebrities, including Jay Z, Beyoncé, and the Estefans all on the same night.

It was that success that Zarco said drove a trio of investors to change the restaurant's loan terms.

The build-out of the two warehouses, which Miranda said was in the neighborhood of \$7 million, was partly financed through a series of short-term, six-figure loans each with a 9 percent interest rate totaling \$2.8 million.

Now investors are seeking to boost that rate to 25 percent and are demanding a 30 percent equity stake in the restaurant.

"They see the restaurant is a huge success and are saying, 'Oh my God, we passed on a huge opportunity,'" Zarco, who described the lawsuit as frivolous, said. "They thought they were going to hold this guy hostage."

*New Times* was unable to reach a representative for Parallel Fund III, the main investor. Yunexy Eloy, a minority partner and owner of Hollywood, Florida-based cloud computing company WHOA.com, declined to comment.

"I have nothing to say about anything," Eloy said Wednesday.

Despite the ongoing battle between investors and the restaurant, Zarco said Miranda and Dupoux are in agreement in the lawsuit against investors, even though Eloy was appointed corporate secretary after Dupoux was stripped of his roles.

"We're not rolling over," Zarco added.

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