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www.BiscayneTimes.com

Volume 7, Issue 5



Dirt & Dreams

By Christian Cipriani

Cover photo by Silvia Ros Illustration by James Dougherty

All those vacant lots in Edgewater? We have plans for them!

Few areas along the Biscayne Corridor blossomed so brightly, then suffered so deeply from the recent building boom and bust as Edgewater. But Edgewater isn't like most neighborhoods. Less than five years ago, this

small waterfront enclave was at the heart of Miami's "Manhattanization" — a projected home to more than 6000 new luxury lofts and condos, and a hip, fresh destination for young professionals and Miami Beach exiles.

Real estate developers, a number of whom had no experience building high-rise condominiums (or much of anything else), swarmed over the low-rise neighborhood, gobbled up apartment buildings, evicted tenants by the hundreds, and

demolished what was already a rare commodity in Miami: affordable housing.

In one sense, the frenzy of activity was understandable. Geographically

Continued on page 14



A MODERN ITALIAN CAFFE

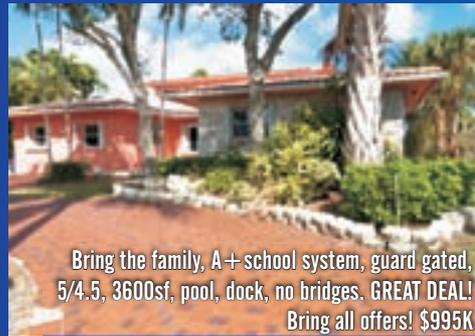
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New to market...Bay Harbor Townhouse 2+den/2.5, 2 car gar, pool \$469K or for rent \$2800/month



Zen flare in Keystone Point, totally renovated waterfront on quiet cul-de sac, 5bd/5ba, 180 ft on water, 2 car garage. Owner financing.



Residences of Bay Harbor, Brand New 4 level corner with side yard, like a home, interior elevator, rooftop terrace, 2 car gar \$950K



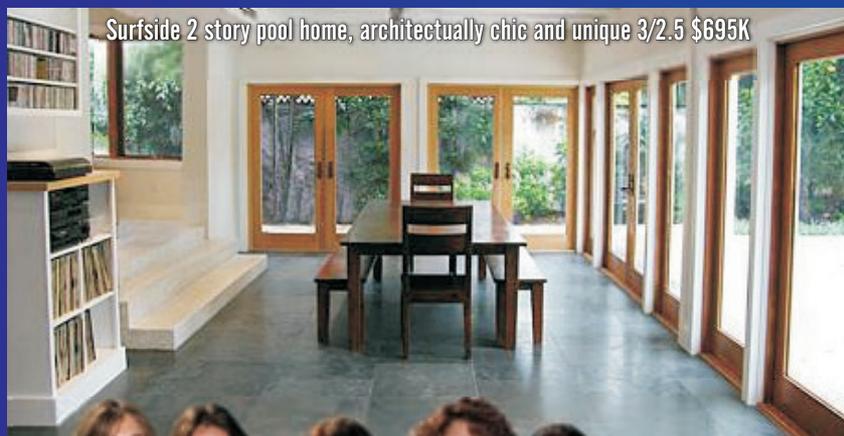
Hot North Beach new contemporary townhouse 2/2.5, 2 car garage. \$475K



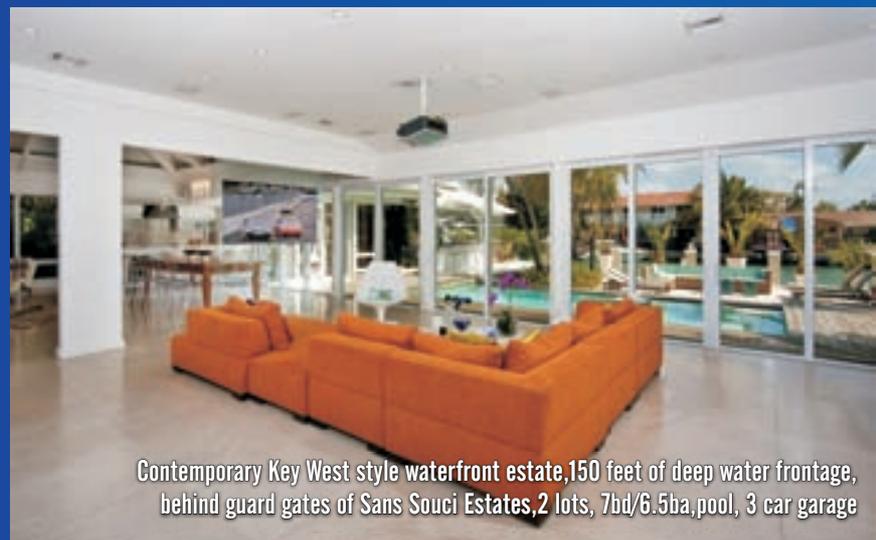
New to Market Keystone Point Waterfront 3/2, 1 car garage, new marble floors, big yard, dock.



Bay Harbor Islands oversized corner lot remodeled 6/3.5, 3750 sf, pool \$1.275M



Surfside 2 story pool home, architectually chic and unique 3/2.5 \$695K



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SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

INTERNATIONAL Hispanic Theatre Festival JULY 8-26



1 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
"A wordless fusion of physical and visual feats, performed at close range to the audience!"
-The New York Times

2 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
"A mentally and sensually invigorating experience!"
-The Miami Herald

3 Fuerza Bruta
7:30 & 10PM **Z**
Come early or stay late and enjoy a drink at the G-Lounge!

4 Fuerza Bruta
7:30 & 10PM **Z**

5 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
"Explosion of a show!"
-CBS4

NOW PLAYING!
FUERZA BRUTA
Look Up!

7 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
"Not many shows can boast that they deliver something you've never seen before. THIS ONE DOES."
-New York Daily News

8 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
Carta de una Desconocida
8:30PM **C**

9 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
Carta de una Desconocida
8:30PM **C**

10 Fuerza Bruta
7:30 & 10PM **Z**
Flamenco "Gipsy Fusion"
8PM **Z**
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
Carta de una Desconocida
8:30PM **C**

11 Fuerza Bruta
7:30 & 10PM **Z**
Flamenco "Gipsy Fusion"
8PM **Z**
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
Nezahualcoyotl
8:30PM **C**

12 **XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:**
Nezahualcoyotl
5PM **C**
Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
Flamenco "Gipsy Fusion"
7:30PM **Z**



14 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
"Gobsmackingly incredible! A sexy, heart-pounding fantasy!"
-New York Daily News

15 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
Bodas de Sangre
8:30PM **C**

16 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
"Wet and Wild."
-Sun-Sentinel
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
Bodas de Sangre
8:30PM **C**

17 Fuerza Bruta
7:30 & 10PM **Z**
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
Bodas de Sangre
8:30PM **C**

18 Fuerza Bruta
7:30 & 10PM **Z**
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
El Evangelio Según Clark
8:30PM **C**

19 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
El Evangelio Según Clark
5PM **C**



"A dazzling blend of erotic, hypnotic, aquatic!"
-New York Post

21 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
"Unexpected magnificence. Be in the mood for an unusually beguiling time!"
-The Star-Ledger

22 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
"Madness! A Truly one-of-a-kind diversion!"
-The Star-Ledger
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
Aire Frio
8:30PM **C**

23 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
"Dreamlike show... thrilling!"
-The Miami Herald
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
Aire Frio
8:30PM **C**

24 Fuerza Bruta
7:30 & 10PM **Z**
"Overhead water wonderland!"
-CBS4
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
Aire Frio
8:30PM **C**

25 Fuerza Bruta
7:30 & 10PM **Z**
"A sexy, heart-pounding fantasy!"
-New York Daily News
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
Aire Frio
8:30PM **C**

26 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
"A holiday from the real world!"
-The Guardian, London
XXIV Intl. Hispanic Theatre Festival:
Aire Frio
5PM **C**

Party before and after the show in the G-Lounge by Barton G!



28 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
"A wordless fusion of physical and visual feats, performed by a cast of beauties at close range to the audience!"
-The New York Times

29 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
"No spoken word...a unique world of music and energy."
-CBS4

30 Fuerza Bruta
7:30PM **Z**
"A gravity-defying from the makers of *De La Guarda* that has to be seen to be believed!"
-Variety

31 Fuerza Bruta
7:30 & 10PM **Z**
"A dazzling blend of erotic, hypnotic, aquatic! Undeniably spectacular!"
-The New York Post

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dade or Miami-Dade? You Be the Judge

As much as I'm rankled by the county's name change that Frank Rollason wrote about ("Twisting History for Shameless Pride," June 2009), if the old adage about history being written by the victor was held without exception, then our county would have been called Micanopy County, after the first Seminole to fire his weapon at the Dade Battle in 1835.

That was the shot that struck and killed Maj. Francis Langhorne Dade. Of course back then the Seminoles were on the run, considered obstacles to progress. They had no political clout, and hadn't yet figured out how to get mega rich through casino gambling.

We can only pray that if there is any justice in this world, Alex Penelas, who initiated the county name change from Dade County to Miami-Dade County, will go the way of Chief Micanopy — unheralded and nearly forgotten.

In that same June issue, but on a more earthy note, someone must have had a lot of fun writing the photo caption for Jeff Shimonski's "Your Garden" column headlined "Things You Can Do With Palms." I know it will be a while before I see "epiphytically and

terrestrially" in the same sentence again. At least I hope so.

*D.C. Copeland
Miami Beach*

Transcontinental Mash Note

Kudos from a West Coast reader to publisher/editor Jim Mullin and the *Biscayne Times* staff. As mentioned in Jack King's column "Miami's Media Muddle" (June 2009), they are putting out a marvelous monthly "clean-cut, hyper-local niche newspaper-magazine hybrid" powerhouse!

My hopes are that the business community and readers will continue to support the *BT*, recognizing the gem that it is.

*Pat Burke
San Diego, CA*

Full-force Smackdown Floors Discredited Publishing Tycoon

I once thought *Biscayne Times* editor and publisher Jim Mullin was a principled, smart journalist. I don't anymore.

Jack King's commentary "Miami's Media Muddle" in the *BT* should embarrass both Mullin and the writer. It calls *Miami New Times* "a shadow of its former self," says the staff is "down to

nothing," and asserts "the value of the editorial content is even less."

This is utter garbage.

First because it is factually incorrect: The editorial staff — which by the way is bigger than it has been in years — has won more awards than ever before in the last two years. We took the Investigative Reporters and Editors prize last year for the best investigation in America after breaking news of the sex offenders living under the Julia Tuttle Causeway. And we have delivered more than 40 state and regional awards, better than ever in our history. What has the *Biscayne Times* won? Ever?

Second because the piece is ethically challenged. Not only did it fail to mention that after almost 20 years, Mullin left *New Times* in disgrace after the suicide of a local African-American politician. But it didn't say that eight people listed on the masthead as "contributors" have received *New Times* paychecks. Perhaps bitterness drove the comments. But how would the reader know?

I guess Jack King forgot to call for a response. He may not know better. Mullin should.

*Chuck Strouse, editor
Miami New Times*

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Letters

Continued from page 4

Jen, Is There Anything Left? Anything At All?

Ever since our friend with multiple mango trees moved from Miami Shores, we've been approaching summers with mango lust and no way of satisfying it. If I read Jen Karetnick's "Mango Mania" correctly (June 2009), and she's looking for mango fans to cart off some of her excess fruit, we'd like to volunteer to help out!

Wendy and Rich Wallace
Davis Harbor

Editor's note: Response came fast and furious to Jen's call for local mango-heads to pick tons of fruit that might otherwise go to waste. Drop us line at letters@biscaynetimes.com and we'll respond with an update.

Open BT, Place Tongue Firmly in Cheek, Savor Wendy's Latest

I want to let you know how much I enjoy reading Wendy Doscher-Smith's articles each month. As a native of the Binghamton, New York, area, I can relate to her musings about living there.

Her laments about Binghamton's dreary, cloudy weather and cold winters are dead-on accurate, and it's fun to hear mention of local references.

In "Changing Seasons — It's a Killer" (June 2009), her recounting of a conversation with a waitress at breakfast one morning did not paint the locals in a very good light. However, I laughed, partially out of embarrassment, as I have shared Wendy's experience with the prevailing mindset of the Binghamton area.

As a single person, I found Binghamton to be a wonderful place to be *from*. In

spite of the recent massacre at the American Civic Association, Binghamton is a wonderful, safe place to raise a family, with good schools and a good quality of life (except for the climate).

I look forward to future contributions from this writer and will read, with "tongue-in-cheek" amusement, her acculturation into her new community.

Gerry Vergason
Miami Shores

Never See the Light of Day, Practically

I read Wendy Doscher-Smith's article on the American Civic Association shooting ("Dark Skies, Cold Rain, and Death," May 2009) from a link on my Yahoo home page, which has a link to *Southern Tier* news. I live in Titusville, Florida, about three hours north of Wendy's former home in Biscayne Park. I'm sorry to see what's happened to the Binghamton area, which I still call true home. I grew up in Vestal for my first 24 years, and here for the next 24. I get back once a year.

I wanted to applaud Wendy's sense of the real, which is the way she described the weather. I have always said that we have as many bad days as you have good. It's a depressing thought to know that you won't see daylight from November until May (usually). Problem is, the poor bastards who grow up and never leave there don't know the difference.

I could not function without a healthy dose of rays. I do take it for granted now, as Wendy probably did. Yes, it's hot and muggy sometimes, but for my money you can always get out of the heat, as opposed to....

Enough about what she already knows. She also described Vestal using just one word — Stepford — and I can

see it, from an outside view. It used to be much different without the clogging near Rano Boulevard. I'll return there when I retire, and will be glad for it, weather and all. We'll split the time between here and there.

I'm going to make my wife read aloud your article and maybe, just maybe you've described it in such a way as she'll finally get what I mean when I say, "Cold... gray... ugly".

I don't know how long Wendy's been there, or how she found her way there (I'd like to hear that one), but the next time she passes into Vestal, she should blot out the commercial stretch of the parkway and make her way south on Route 26, find the old cemetery just before Vestal Center up on the left, then make her way to Gardner Road, turn right and get to Tracey Creek Road, turn right and pass by the two really old cemeteries along Tracey Creek.

Wendy will have seen the *real* Vestal — quiet, old, settled. I make that trip every time I'm home. She'll see that Vestal is as quiet as any place you can find. And on her way back she should be sure to stop at the Vestal Bakery. The absolute best pizza in the county, and I'll pay if she disagrees.

Thanks again for the article. See you later. I've got to close the blinds.

Michael McDonough
Titusville

Gravy Train: A Midwestern Wonders About Miami and Money

I recently relocated to Miami from the Midwest. Erik Bojnansky's story "Gravy Train" (May 2009), regarding City of Miami employees who made more than \$200,000 last year, was not surprising. However, I would like to know how

many City of Miami employees are driving city vehicles?

We are renting in a Miami neighborhood, and right by us there are two neighbors who work for the city and drive city vehicles. How much does this cost the city annually in vehicle maintenance and insurance? Is it really necessary? Just wondering.

Carol Cottrell
Miami

Gravy Train: Just Wait, Bigger Problems Lie Ahead

Congratulations to Erik Bojnansky on "Gravy Train," a great piece of journalism. Thank you for exposing the cronyism so prevalent in the City of Miami. The even bigger problem comes later, when these employees retire and start collecting defined-benefit pensions based on these bloated salaries.

I'd like Erik to do a follow-up about recent employees who have retired on these inflated salaries and what it is costing us in annual pensions for such gross mismanagement.

James Sullivan
Edgewater

Gravy Train: The Common Thread — Unions

Has anyone else noticed the common thread that seems to run through every story about inflated salaries and wasteful spending, whether it involves firefighters, police officers, sanitation workers, or auto industry employees?

Unions!

They have gotten out of control.

Michael Murawski
Miami-Dade County

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Turnkey Art Deco gem nestled in Upper E. Side/Belle Meade & historic MiMo District. Renovated w/great attention to detail. 2BR home w/detached off. cottage for studio/home office. Main house has vaulted-beamed ceilings, wood floors, fireplace, French doors & formal dining. Kitchen w/Woodmark cabs. & stainless appls. Wonderful natural light & lush yard w/locking & mature trees. Think Zen meets tropical Art Deco oasis.

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Home Specialist
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24 NE 36th Street

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Commercial Specialist
305-799-7436
janerussell@ellimanflorida.com



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The Waverly - Surfside Oceanfront
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Madeleine Romanello
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305-282-2133
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Offered at \$4,300/month

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305-282-2133
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Great rentals in Morningside
609 NE 61st Street

Charming restored Art Deco building in Morningside area 1/2 block to bay. New bathrooms and kitchens. One unit is a little cottage with it's own entrance, tile floors, lots of charm and great garden at \$ 550. One bedroom plus den also for rent at \$ 950 with beautiful wood floors and privacy. Call Liann Yikoon at 305-336-3189

Offered from \$550/month

Madeleine Romanello
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mromanello@ellimanflorida.com



Amazing Storefront Opportunity
1473 NE 123 St

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Commercial Specialist
305-799-7436
janerussell@ellimanflorida.com



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BizBuzz: July 2009

Sales, special events, and more from the people who make Biscayne Times possible

By Pamela Robin Brandt
BT Contributor

Though summer has barely begun, the kids are already tired of having nothing to do but drive you nuts. But **MeteGoal Indoor Soccer** (7616 NE 4th Ct.; 305-756-1700 or Katie@metegoal.com), where patrons can play in air-conditioned (and secure, safe) comfort, has a solution: weekly summer soccer camps run by Coach Joao Moraes from the Brazilian Soccer Training Center. The five-day, Monday-Friday sessions (9:00 a.m. to noon for kids 4-6, 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. for ages 7-10), formerly scheduled to run through mid-August, have just been extended with two more sessions that carry the camp through September 4, to accommodate students who return to school late. Price is \$150 per child per weekly session, with a 10 percent discount offered to those who sign up and pay for four weeks in advance. (Note: MeteGoal's new Loyalty Program offers adult players a deal, too: For every five hours your team rents a field at the \$100 per hour regular rate, the sixth hour is 50 percent off.)

If reading about all that exercise has made you hungry, bring this issue's ad for **Bagels & Company** (11064 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-892-2435) to the shop for this month's take-out special: Buy a dozen bagels and get an additional dozen for free, a coupon good for the same, or a free pound of cream cheese). The ad coupons are also good for two eat-in deals — on Fridays, any half-pound deli sandwich for \$5, and on Tuesdays, a free entrée with the purchase of an entrée and beverage.

From science fiction to self-help, gaming to gay studies, art to animals, mysteries to music: Whatever your

reading or listening preference, **Trader John's Book & Record** (484 NE 125th St.; 305-899-7172) has it. Normal prices at this jam-packed used-book shop (which also carries audio and video recordings) are already a steal, but just in time for the peak of beach reading season, owner John Martin is offering readers of his ad an additional ten-percent discount.

If reading at home, you'd naturally like to be relaxing in your condo on a Roche Bobois couch. But that kind of furniture can set you back as much as the condo, unless you find it among the ever-changing but always quality stock at new advertiser **Midtown Consignment** (2328 N. Miami Ave; 305-573-5307). At this glam warehouse, you can consign your vintage 1960s coffee table and 1920s cigarette cases, or buy similarly used upscale treasures for prices that won't break the bank.

Considering the dramatic storms that heralded the start of 2009's hurricane season, readers will be happy to hear about **MFS Roofing** (888-283-6820 or www.mfsroofing.com), new to the BT family but a company with 35 years' experience dealing with South Florida emergencies. In fact they have a 24-hour hotline so experts can respond immediately, whether it's a major reroofing or minor leak. Traditional tile and natural slate; mod metal and fiberglass; cost-effective asphalt — MFS has worked with

it all. The company also keeps up to date on zoning, permitting, and homeowner association requirements, and promises "to get the job done right the first time, on time and within budget, guaranteed."

Summer means cooking out, and not just in the USA. At the **Royal Bavarian Schnitzelhaus** (1085 79th St. Causeway; 305-754-8002) chef/owner Alex Richter offers ribs, chicken, and various steaks done the German way — marinated in dark beer before cooking on the biergarten's outdoor grill — as well as a more

unique treat: steckerlfisch, whole whitefish on a stick, subtly smoked over coals. The savory fish popsicles,

served with German potato salad, and other BBQ specials, will be served Friday-Sunday from 5:00 p.m.

Summer is ice cream season too, and for those seeking to indulge without the guilt, new advertiser **Yogen Früz** is now open (100 S. Biscayne Blvd., #109; 305-371-5117). The Canadian chain, trendy since the mid-1980s, is particularly known for its festive, customer-controlled mix-in blends.

Belly dancing is a bonus every Saturday night at the Lebanese eatery **Bistro 82** (8201 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-403-2995), but once each month owner Mona Issa ups the ante with a kicked-up performance. The special show July 25 will feature live Arabic music plus a classical belly dancer that Issa describes as "really

something special."

Luxury real estate can be a hard sell in this economy, but new advertiser **Nancy Batchelor**, an associate of EWM (305-903-2850), has a file full of thank-you letters praising her for doing a great job in a tough market. Recognized at EWM's "Chairman's Club" level (the top half of one percent of Realtors nationally) for the past five years, Batchelor is also a yachting enthusiast who loves showing waterfront properties by boat.

During summer's "dog days," don't forget the real dog. On July 4, the Doggie Bag Café at **Smiling Pets** (7310 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-710-7266) will be initiating a self-service dog wash, offering all the tools for owners to clean up their pets. And on July 11, proceeds from the café's "Dog Days of Summer Yappy Hour" will benefit Dachshund Rescue of South Florida.

Finally, speaking of reality, actual and virtual: Despite reports on several Websites, the **News Lounge at 55th Street Station** has not changed its name to Local 55. We'd definitely chide the rumor-mongers for inaccuracy were it not for our own wee peccadillo last month. Um, you readers who showed up at the Station expecting to find a new shuttle to South Beach? It's actually a virtual trolley, a new feature on the Station's Website (www.the55thstreetstation.com). Sorry. Chalk it up to too many of the Lounge's four-buck happy hour cocktails.

Something special coming up at your business? Send info to bizbuzz@biscaynetimes.com. For BT advertisers only.

Let BizBuzz be your guide as you indulge in a tasty treat, whip yourself into shape, or go wild at a seasonal sale.

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Yogen Früz **NEW**
100 S. Biscayne Blvd. #109
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ON SATURDAY, YOU WERE ALWAYS THERE WITH US. ⁺

SATURDAY / JULY 11 / 7-10 PM

/ BAS FISHER INVITATIONAL / You Were Always There With Us

by Kathleen Hudspeth

BFI is pleased to present the first solo show of works by Kathleen Hudspeth. "You Were Always There With Us" is an exhibition of drawings and prints, which address the seemingly contradictory ideas of oppression and inclusion.

Located in Buena Vista Building_180 N.E. 39th Street_Suite 210

/ LOCUST PROJECTS /

Inside: BALLS IN THE AIR / Not Just Talking Heads

For one night only, Locust Projects is a Wet Heat Project documentary studio.

"BALLS IN THE AIR, Not Just Talking Heads": Come and play your part, it's 60 seconds not "60 Minutes." Make-up, green room, rushes... One art season is history, the next is what you'll make it. In the final cut, every answer counts.

Outside: Jason Hedges

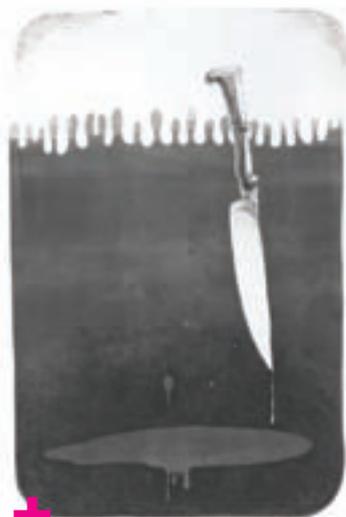
Jason Hedges presents "Untitled (Judd Caja China)," a new performance installation in Locust Projects' courtyard area. Hedges' artwork borrows from primitive cooking methods, in this case "Under Ground Pit Cooking," and the evolution of this method in contemporary times. The union of these sources creates a dialogue between artistic expression, survival, community and current state of humanity on local and global levels.

Located at Locust Projects_155 N.E. 38th Street_Suite 100

/ DIASPORA VIBE GALLERY /

Diaspora Vibe Gallery is a local arts organization offering support and exhibition opportunities to Emerging Artists from Latin America and Caribbean Diaspora. Working closely with young artists within the community, Diaspora Vibe Gallery continues to reach into the community at local, national, and international levels, seeking fresh new faces and expanded support.

Located in The Madonna Building_3938 North Miami Avenue



⁺ You Were Always There With Us.

Above: "Cutting The Passage" by Kathleen Hudspeth, 2009. Litho and Oil-Based Monotype, 41.75" x 30"



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It's Summertime and You Know What That Means

While you're in cool North Carolina, local politicians will be making hot deals — for themselves

By Jack King
BT Contributor

It's July and the silly season (political version) is fully upon us. This is the time of year when our local politicians believe that we are not only stupid, but we're also out of town on vacation and they can do anything they want because no one is watching. For those of you not as old as I am, that's what happened to Coconut Grove in August 1925, when the City of Miami held an election to annex the Grove. No one was here to vote against it.

City politicians found this ploy so successful that they've used it virtually year since then to cut sweetheart deals for themselves while sticking it to their constituents, those morons.

This year looks to be no exception. The operators of a Coconut Grove marina that sits on city land decided several years ago that they would like to have a four-story office building right on the water. The rationale was that they needed the space for boat sales and executive offices. Forget the fact that they already had about 10,000 square feet of empty office space.

The issue has been bouncing around city hall for about two years now, morphing with modifications to make it more palatable, but it always seems to come back looking like the thing it is: an office building on city parkland overlooking Biscayne Bay. The operators tried to sneak it through again at the last commission meeting in June. Thanks in no small part to the effort of Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, the issue now appears to be dead, at least for the moment.

I guess the campaign contributions the operators made to the three

clowns — Commissioners Joe Sanchez, Angel Gonzalez, and Michelle Spence-Jones — didn't quite get the job done. Hey guys, pony up more cash and try again!

•••

Most everyone in Florida knows that Florida's Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink is leading the Democratic field in the run for governor. She is from Tampa and is still trying to find her way around South Florida politics. It really showed last month when her team sent out invitations to a fundraiser hosted by two of Miami's least reputable characters, Johnny Winton and Seth Gordon. Winton went a few rounds with airport police, lost his job as a Miami city commissioner,

and pled out to lesser charges that didn't include head-butting a cop.

The Sink campaign quickly removed Winton from the host committee, but kept Gordon. And then Gordon defended Winton by telling the *Herald*: "So he mouthed off to a cop. Tempers flared and people misbehaved, but it was no high crime and misdemeanors." I always find it interesting when Gordon defends people, usually his public-relations clients, for their less-than-stellar behavior. He did it again in late June when Sink booted George Lindemann as co-chair of the very same fundraiser. Lindemann, as reported in the *Herald*, was convicted of insurance fraud in 1996 after ordering the death of a valuable horse. He was sentenced to 33 months in prison. "George doesn't deserve

to continue to be a punching bag," Gordon told the *Herald*. In 2000 Gordon himself was yanked from the campaign staff of State Attorney Kathy Rundle after Miami-Dade homicide detectives informed her that Gordon remained a suspect in the 1975 murder of his first wife. (Gordon was never charged and has denied any involvement in the crime.)

Gordon heads up the PR firm of Gordon Diaz-Balart and represents heavy-hitter clients who want to pave over all of Miami, and politicians who can help them do it. Oh yeah, that Diaz-

Balart is Tia Diaz-Balart, wife of U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart. Watch your step, Alex.

•••

Florida's U.S. Senate race is already generating a lot of interest, at least among Republicans. Marco Rubio, the Republican version of a Christian Atilla the Hun, has garnered some serious right-wing support from the likes of Mike Huckabee and South Carolina's Mark Sanford. (Let me repeat the warning I gave to Alex Sink: Watch your step, Marco.)

They know that Rubio already has 20 percent of the Republican primary vote. Conventional election wisdom says that would be a great base upon which to start building. Unfortunately the other 80 percent of the party thinks he's a right-wing nut job. And they're right.

So on the other side of the Republican coin we have our wonderful governor, Charlie Crist. He got elected

primarily because he'd never been indicted and has done nothing wrong. He's done nothing right, either. As a matter of fact, he's just done nothing, period. Crist may be a really nice guy, but the campaign, especially the primary, will expose him as lightweight and Rubio as a nut case. If the Democrats can get through the process without a self-inflicted gunshot wound, Florida will then have two Democratic senators, although I often wonder about Bill Nelson.

•••

As I write this I'm in Chicago on a beautiful summer day. Yesterday I went to a White Sox game (the Cubs are out of town) because I believe that baseball should be played outside and during the day. On the way to the stadium, I got a tour of McCormick Place, Chicago's convention facility. The operation is 2.6 million square feet and hosts more than 3 million visitors each year. And when I say 3 million, I mean 3 million who are actually registered to attend the conventions, not bogus estimates that come out of the Greater Miami Visitors and Convention Bureau. This place actually works.

My friend here says all of Chicago loves the convention business because it really does generate jobs and keeps the restaurant business (and others) busy all year. It's such a simple concept: Build something that will actually bring visitors to your area and let them spend money. If we would build a convention facility like Chicago's, we could really generate enough money to pay for the Marlin's stadium. Somehow I think we are going about this backwards.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

The Coconut Grove marina operators tried again to sneak through their waterfront office scheme at the last commission meeting in June.

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Hurricane season is here. Are you worried?

Compiled by Victor Barrenechea — BT Contributor



Fernan Hernandez
Architect
Midtown

Of course I'm always nervous. I just hope that whatever comes isn't as bad as what came before. I haven't done anything to prepare. I have shutters on my home, that's basically all you can do besides [stock] food and water. In the past three years, nothing major has happened, but the weather's been changing so much recently that you can't really tell what's going to happen.



Monica d'Achon
Business Owner
Upper Eastside

No. If we are prepared, there are no worries. We have water, flashlights, candles, our windows are protected. In our home, we tie down the trees so they don't fall over or get uprooted. I'm not worried at all. We're prepared. We know where we have to go if we have to evacuate. There's always enough of a warning.



George Cohen
Manager
Miami Shores

I worry every year, mostly for the business. I prepare. I check my roof, I check my shutters. Every year I check. Last year when they said something was coming, we put up the shutters and left them up all season. I think people in Florida are mostly prepared. They have the main, basic things: shutters, generators. It's something we have to live with every year. All those little things should be taken care of before June.



Victoria Chorsi
Sales
MiMo

I'm not really prepared. I know it's going to be crazy this year. Last year we barely had any storms. It's been a few years since we've been hit. I feel like this is the year. I'm expecting something like 2005 when we had Katrina and Wilma. After last year, which was so calm, we're due for it.



Ann Mason
Nutritionist
North Miami

I'm not worried. I live in a condo and I feel secure in an apartment as opposed to a freestanding house. The wind can't blow it down. Plus I'm inland and I'm on the second floor. I make sure I have water, batteries, candles, ice. As long as I'm indoors I feel safe. I think tragedy from hurricanes comes when we live in poorly structured homes or low lands. That's when it's something to worry about.



Marie Philemom
Multimedia Coordinator
Miami Shores

Hurricanes have never freaked me out — not even Andrew. I always feel really safe when a hurricane hits. You put down the shutters. We have water, candles, flashlights. There's no big body of water near me so I'm not concerned about flooding. I think after the series of hurricanes, like Katrina and everything, people are more scared. I think it's understandable. Before people weren't really prepared. They've learned their lesson.

Vacation at Home Sale July 1st - July 12th

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Dirt & Dreams

Continued from page 1

the area couldn't have been more promising. Edgewater extends from roughly NE 15th Street to the Julia Tuttle Causeway, and from Biscayne Bay to NE 2nd Avenue — precious bayfront property central to every major destination in the county.

But in another sense, the transformational dreams made little sense. Edgewater was one of Miami's poorest areas. Its streets were narrow, some of them so narrow two-way traffic was impossible. Public transportation for thousands of new residents was woefully inadequate. Infrastructure fundamentals like water mains, sewers, and storm-water runoff systems were old and crumbling.

None of that dampened the aspirations of developers who envisioned towering condos with alluring names like Onyx, Ice, Quantum, Blue, Aria. Advertising campaigns promised an urbane, sophisticated lifestyle filled with gorgeous people, classy restaurants, and tree-shaded promenades.

But the gentrification of this working-class, predominately Caribbean

and Latino community, once known as Miami's first suburb and dotted with waterfront mansions and quaint bungalows, never materialized. The grandiose fantasy was vaporized by the collapse of the real estate market. Today the neighborhood is a patchwork of half-filled condos, a handful of up-and-coming shops and restaurants rubbing elbows with aging, down-market businesses — and many, many vacant lots.

Many millions of dollars' worth of dirt now lies fallow, from oversized parcels whose owners abandoned major development plans to a smattering of mini lots popular for illegal dumping. Depending on how you count them, there

A marina at the 28th Street inlet could also be a pick-up point for a water taxi that shuttles residents to the Upper Eastside, downtown, and Coconut Grove.

are somewhere around 50 vacant lots in Edgewater. Some are fenced; most are not. All of them, however, have potential, and they invite creative thinking about

that potential. They are an imagineer's equivalent of the painter's blank canvas.

As a resident of Edgewater, I've done my share of daydreaming about what might become of all these vacant lots. And now, thanks to the power vested in me by *Biscayne Times* as its Real Estate Potentate, I can wave my wand and make dreams come true, at least figuratively. I carefully surveyed my neighborhood, consulted with everyone from civic activists to urban planners, and conjured some solutions.

MARKET FORCES

1776 Biscayne Blvd.

Having sat vacant since a developer in Houston shelled out \$5.6 million for it back in 1996, this is one of the few lots where I don't have a mere suggestion, but rather a Draconian decree. This *must* become a high-end grocery store — and at 83,000 square feet it *can*. Most neighborhood residents are all too aware that Publix and Price Chopper leave a lot to be desired. (Note to Miami Shores readers: Our Publix is *nothing* like yours.) A Publix GreenWise market

— or better yet a Whole Foods — would offer an attractive alternative for healthy eaters, luring foodies from the luxury condos on Bayshore Drive all the way up to NE 36th Street. A neighborhood that eats well lives well.

BETTER HOMES

421 NE 22nd St.; 418-446 NE 22nd Terr.; 413 NE 23rd St.; 513 NE 23rd St.; 601 NE 23rd St.; 516 NE 26th Terr.; and more

Some of these parcels, like 513 NE 23rd St., are already prepped for development; others are the home of ill-fated projects like Loft 26, down the road at 516 NE 26th Terr. Together they are worth millions. These and similar lots are ideal places for novel solutions to multifamily housing, such as low-rise "Mat Buildings." A concept that traces back to Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital design, Mat Building is a style of interconnected, modular architecture in which living units are linked by communal courtyards (similar to Moroccan housing). Coupled with a wider range of unit prices, the Mat style would encourage resident interaction — something Edgewater's diverse population needs. From a

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- 1 - UPSCALE GROCERY
- 2 - MODULAR HOUSING
- 3 - WATER SPORTS
- 4 - PUBLIC PARKS
- 5 - INDIE CINEMA
- 6 - SONESTA HOTEL
- 7 - COMMERCIAL SPACES
- 8 - COMMUNITY GARDENS

(c) 2008 Google Imagery, Digital Globe, Sanborn, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, GeoEye, Tele Atlas

Dirt & Dreams

Continued from page 14

planning standpoint, the effect of mixing income levels in close proximity tends to benefit an area more than isolating people into groups.

Two large lots, one of them waterfront, at the foot of NE 32nd Street would be ideal for mixed housing, and would be especially attractive by virtue of their proximity to a major community park just to the south. (See GREEN DREAMS below.)

BAYFRONT BENEFITS

The NE 28th Street Inlet

Public Marina: At the dead-end of NE 28th Street a developer from Aventura owns both the north and south lots, while another owns the waterfront lots on the north side of NE 27th St. The rest of the vacant space around the inlet is owned by the City of Miami. With only three major stakeholders — one being the city, which could provide financial incentives for the private owners — there’s both the space and means to create a modest public marina. Rental slips, a bait

and supply shop, a café, boat and jet ski rentals — the works. This would liven up Edgewater’s midpoint and give residents a real reason to visit the waterfront.

Water Taxi: A marina could also be a pick-up point for a water taxi that shuttles residents to the Upper Eastside, downtown, and Coconut Grove. This idea was the subject of a design class taught at the University of Miami by

A few movie screens, some unique concessions, and a combination of independent and mainstream releases, and people would line up, guaranteed.

architect Ricardo Lopez. “The bay is Miami’s greatest physical asset,” says Lopez. “The Biscayne Water Trolley would offer solutions to a number of issues: more transit options, reducing future congestion, enhancing parks, increasing property values, and more.” One of Lopez’s students designed a water-taxi station at the end of NE 20th Street that included docks and a fish

market, essentially extending Margaret Pace Park north into the bay and creating brand-new reasons for residents to patronize the area.

Kayak and Canoe Launch: While we’re at it, let’s create an offshoot of the marina on the vacant parcel six blocks north (640 NE 34th St.) by offering a launch ramp for man-powered watercraft. Set up a rustic, open-air kiosk that rents canoes and kayaks (and sells kites!), and also leases storage space for privately owned paddle boats, and

soon residents will be flocking to check out the spoil island east of NE 22nd Street, take off on Biscayne Bay adventures, or just laze away a few hours on the water in the sunshine.

GREEN DREAMS

Edgewater has a couple nice green spaces, but that’s about it. There is, of course, the one major park

— Margaret Pace Park, behind Cité. Then there’s Martell Park, a diminutive pocket of green for humans and dogs behind Blue Condominium on NE 36th Street. Otherwise the neighborhood is one big concrete jungle. We need *much* more green space, and all the shade we can get.

Richard Strell, head of the Neighborhood of Edgewater Association of Residents (NEAR), believes that green spaces can soon be created on the cheap: “Even more lots may become available in the coming years for purchase from the county due to unpaid property taxes. If empty lots like these are for sale at bargain-basement prices, the city could purchase them for both mini and full-size parks.”

Major Community Park

Waterfront lot between NE 30th Terrace and NE 31st Street

Continued on page 16



Bayfront Benefits: The inlet at NE 28th Street will become a full-service marina, plus café.



Reel Potential: A state-of-the-art independent cinema will fit nicely on this lot at 345 NE 32nd Street.



UM student Priscilla Wood envisioned a marina complex just north of Margaret Pace Park.

Dirt & Dreams

Continued from page 15

This perfect, three-acre lot of prime waterfront real estate was once home to Bayfront Manor, a sprawling, horseshoe-shaped apartment complex popular with young professionals, especially journalists (for some reason). In 1991 it was purchased for just \$2 million. Last year it was valued at more than \$27 million! For 18 years the New York-based owners have been bidding their time, but in the meantime it would make for a spectacular park. Just as Margaret Pace Park spawned a whole network of valuable development around it, residential and commercial interests within the radius around this park and the marina complex a few blocks south would thrive.

Horticultural Park
246 NE 26th Terr.

At just under an acre, this shady slice of green on the west side of Biscayne Boulevard was picked up in 2001 by a Brickell developer for \$2.1 million. But there's been no move to develop since, so we're thinking it would make a great horticultural park. With a little help from the city and the *BT*'s resident plant and park experts, Jeff

Shimonski and Jim W. Harper, this could become a mini-Eden of exotic plants — not to mention a reason to step out and meet the neighbors. Also throw in some public WiFi to lure the laptop crowd.

Community gardens — a great source of fresh food, a reason to get out with neighbors, and more eyes on our streets? Sounds like a recipe for success.

Bark Parks and Mini Parks

2300 Biscayne Blvd.; 411 NE 24th St.; 325 NE 26th St.; 330 NE 27th St.; 3200 Biscayne Blvd.

A few benches, some shade trees, and doo-doo bags are all these plots need to come alive as off-leash dog parks and neighborhood mini parks.

REEL POTENTIAL

345 NE 32nd St.

Edgewater residents who want to catch a movie must trek to Miami Beach, Aventura, or Coconut Grove — and frankly

we're sick of it. Site of the unrealized, 33-story Park Lane Tower, this 1.4-acre lot across the street from Walgreens would be perfect for a boutique theater like the one planned for the Design District's outdoor *Living Room* site, which never happened. It could even have a stage and double as a theater for drama. The Miami Beach-based owner of the property has been paying hefty taxes on the \$1.8 million lot for more than 20 years. A few screens, some unique concessions, and a combination of independent and mainstream releases, and people would line up, guaranteed. You'd also see clusters of restaurants and bars pop up around it.

CHECKING IN

1701 NE 4th Ave.

This is one idea I can't take credit for, because it's already in progress. The Sonesta Mikado Hotel Miami, one block west of Margaret Pace Park and Biscayne Bay, broke ground last month. The latest project from Florida East Coast Realty tycoon Tibor Hollo, this 252-room mixed-use hotel will also

have 119 residences. An upscale restaurant, pool bar and grill, 45,000 square feet of office space, a fitness center and destination spa, and a 12th-floor pool deck are also in store — not to mention 500 construction jobs over the next 22 months and more than 200 permanent positions.

ISLAND INSPIRATION

I sat down with Nikolay Nedev, a partner in the architecture firm NC-office, to get additional urban planning insights. Like UM's Ricardo Lopez, Nedev was trained to zoom out and consider an area's overall potential. Some of his low-impact solutions to Edgewater's street layout (very long blocks with dead ends) include carving north-south alleyways east of Biscayne. This would make it much easier for residents to walk from one block to another, which would encourage social interaction. Grander visions include a new north-south street along Biscayne Bay — sort of like Ocean Drive built out over the bay and connecting all

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BT photos by Christian Cipriani

Dirt & Dreams

Continued from page 16

those dead-end streets. “Once those streets are extended, you could create artificial islands built into the bay with a loop road, similar to the Venetian Islands but very close to land,” says Nedev. “This would create small lakes or large pools between the land and the newly formed islands.”

This is probably the best — and most unlikely — thing that could ever happen to Edgewater.

CRITICAL COMMERCE

Nedev and Lopez both recommend as much *commercial* density as possible. There are plenty of residential mixed-use projects, but dedicated retail and commercial areas allow people to work and play in Edgewater — not just live in it. There are many promising parcels: Several blocks of vacant land on either side of NE 18th Street and Biscayne Boulevard, and east toward NE 4th Avenue, as well as tracts at 2655, 2701, and 2990 Biscayne Blvd. These and other plots

could support a variety of offices, stores, and businesses to support residents working — and walking — in the neighborhood.

GROWING GREENS

Community Gardens

Beyond bark and mini parks, activist Richard Strell has another vision for smaller vacant lots: community gardens. “They could be farmed by local residents, nonprofits, schools, inmates in for minor crimes, and so forth,” says Strell. “They already do this in other

cities, and the gardens could be structured so the development rights of the owner are not threatened when they’re ready to build.” A great source of fresh food, a reason to get out and commune with neighbors, and more eyes on our streets? Sounds like a recipe for success. I found 11 parcels, none of which fall in the shadow of a high-rise, that would work well. There may be more. This simple but brilliant idea is, as they say, shovel-ready.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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A Life Without Guard Gates

When there's nothing between you and the harsh world, engage it

By **Kathy Glasgow**
BT Contributor

School is out, hurricane season is back, and after a year of peace and quiet, the sounds of violence are returning to our hood. About once a week, usually around midnight, a fat burst of gunfire goes off, sounding like it's right in our front yard. It stops after 15 seconds or so, then a breathless pause, and sometimes we'll hear a car drive off and sometimes we won't. The dogs resume their barking; soon another helicopter makes its shuddering sweep overhead.

After more than three years in Liberty City, I've come to recognize the immutable cycles of life here. Everything comes back. There are always babies to replace the old-too-early children to replace the dead and imprisoned adults. One family moved out of the rental house next door, a new family moved in, and suddenly we began to find wads of dirty diapers tossed into our yard. (My



husband, usually calm when disgusted, was livid, growling, "You don't even see this in Cuba!") We walked over and asked them to stop, and they did.

Next door to that family sits a little lopsided wood-frame house, long ago painted sky blue. Several mornings I've seen different men picking their way to

the street through tall weeds on either side of the house, still closing their pants. In front of the house, almost in the roadway, a dark blue T-shirt hangs on a makeshift wooden cross. The beautiful defiant face of a young black man adorns the shirt. Another neighborhood dope boy shot to death last month.

I've noticed that when violent death touches the people on my block, they don't mourn loudly. Last time a kid died, a black spray-painted RIP appeared on what serves as a sidewalk in front of our house. It freaked us out until the mother of two of the boys who did it explained that our sidewalk was just the clearest space they could find. Everybody seems to get quiet after someone dies, but now I know they're just regrouping, waiting to strike back. No one would consider letting vengeance belong only to the police, or even God.

The revolving seasons in my neighborhood are linked less to the weather and more to the revolving prison and jail populations. So the wannabe thugs who were taken off the street last year and the year before have been coming back home all grown up into real thugs. It looks as though they're beginning to reach another critical mass — big

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Continued from page 18

enough to where law enforcement agencies pay attention and start arresting again. Regardless, I know mass arrests aren't going to change the character of this hood any more than the decked-out churchgoers down the block at Razor Sharp Ministries.

You never know what will wake you up at night or what you'll find when you go out to get the paper in the morning. You're always hoping the pops are fireworks and not gunshots. The uncertainty and insecurity weigh on you. Finally I decided to give up and get out of our house and our neighborhood. Several months ago I figured our only options were to short sell our house or give it back to the bank. I spoke with a real estate agent who assured me he could get rid of our house, no problem, for a third of what we paid for it. My husband was less willing to give up. He has lived in a baseball stadium in Havana, has been shot and stabbed, and spent five years in the Combinado del Este prison. That's not

to say he doesn't appreciate the hazards of life in Liberty City, but he is slightly more tolerant. Nevertheless he agreed to go along with a short sale.

After I decided to get the hell out of the ghetto, I continued to frequent areas where I felt less foreign, such as the Biscayne Corridor and the Design District. Neighborhoods reborn from inner-city decay, some enclaved by barricades and guardhouses. Teeming with beautiful, creative, successful people with the means and the aesthetic will to create their environment in their own image.

Then I would have to drive home to Liberty City. I've always been depressed by NW 79th Street. To me, it's one of the ugliest stretches of real estate anywhere. (Last I heard, there exists some kind of 79th Street improvement association that I keep telling myself to contact.)

Anyway, during the past few months, I began to get over the shock of switching from paradise to hell, the sudden descent from society's penthouse to its back porch. I started to like the back porch. You may be slouched over sweating and swatting mosquitoes, but you're just a few steps away when the musical

ice cream truck comes by. You don't get the penthouse view and you aren't protected by barricades or civility; you have to engage with whatever's out there. When I thought about it, I decided this was an acceptable way to live.

It's actually what I and millions of middle-class Americans have been programmed to avoid. We have grown up prizing — requiring — security, privacy, self-determination. In recent decades other values have become equal imperatives, such as self-expression, self-development, environmental protection. The trouble is, fulfilling one's human potential and controlling one's environment have become so costly that only the elite can afford them. They're the people who can move to a city or a neighborhood because they like it, not because they can get a job there. Sandra Tsing Loh calls them the creative class. At about the time I was beginning to rethink life in Liberty City, I read a beautiful piece she wrote for the March 2009 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, "Class Dismissed."

What struck so close to home in Tsing Loh's essay was her discussion of the hip, progressive, expensive

communities that have evolved across the U.S. over the past 30 years. Luxury towns like Seattle, San Francisco, Austin. Bigger but with many similarities to the Biscayne Corridor.

Where these metro areas develop, Tsing Loh and her sources assert, property values increase at far higher rates than in less desirable cities; levels of education also go way up, while racial, ethnic, and philosophical diversity decline. "The age of narcissistic creative-class strivers has brought this country cool new neighborhoods and an infinitely better selection of coffees and greens, but it has also brought shameful social stratification and a consumer binge that our children's children may well be paying off," Tsing Loh concludes.

I can't judge how directly this applies to Miami, but it rings true to me. I'd still rather live in a seventh-floor condo with a view of Biscayne Bay than in our bullet-pocked bungalow to the west. Who wouldn't? For at least the next few years, though, I've decided to relish the view from the back porch.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Opportunity in Adversity

The financial crisis gives Miami a chance to get back to basics

By Frank Rollason
BT Contributor

It's budget time for local governments, and the pressure is on like never before. The county's newly elected property appraiser has already sounded the alarm, delivering the "bad news" to municipal leaders that the assessed value of real estate has dropped significantly. That will have a negative impact on governmental coffers. The leaders have only two choices — they can raise their millage rate or cut their budgets.

The millage is the rate at which we are taxed on our real property, and it is set by our local elected officials. Right now in the City of Miami, we have a millage rate of 8.25, which means that we pay \$8.25 for every \$1000 of assessed value. So if the value of your home is currently set at \$400,000, you multiply the millage rate (8.25) times 400 (the number of thousands in real-estate tax imposed by the city alone



in the amount of \$3300. Your *total* property taxes, including those levied by all the taxing authorities (the county, the school district, and the state) would be \$8862.

Now, let's say your assessed value has dropped 20 percent to \$320,000 and the millage rate remains the same. Your new City of Miami taxes would be \$2640 — a reduction of \$660. However, here comes the rub. If the current

millage rate is maintained, the available property taxes to the city government will drop by the same 20 percent. You can see the dilemma facing our elected officials. They must either raise the millage to make up the difference, cut the budget by the amount of lost tax revenue, or enact some combination of the two. No elected official wants to sit in the "raise taxes" hot seat.

Before commissioners finalize the budget, they must first set the maximum millage rate for the coming year. They can lower it at the final hour, but once set, they cannot raise it. So to hedge their bets, they will almost surely raise the millage rate to a level that will produce enough revenue to run the city — based on projected new property assessments. Therefore it is our elected city commissioners and no one else who ultimately determine what our taxes will be.

The commissioners and the mayor set the tone for what kind of budget the city administration will propose. For instance, if the commission were to pass a resolution directing the city manager to present a budget requiring no millage increase, the administration would have clear marching orders to develop a budget significantly reduced from last year.

Such a directive would, in turn, elicit a response from the administration that

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Adversity

Continued from page 20

services will most certainly have to be cut, usually through staff layoffs. This is known as the “sky is falling” scenario. All the doom-and-gloom predictions are delivered to the elected officials with a basic message: “Sure, we can cut the budget, but you commissioners will be responsible for cutting those services your constituents now enjoy, from police and fire protection to trash pickup, parks programs, road maintenance, and much more.”

You can imagine the commissioners squirming, then posturing, as they prepare us for the inevitable.

We taxpayers recognize the realities facing us and that something has to give. First, our basic services (police, fire, solid waste) are not going to be cut — that would be political suicide. We will probably end up with a hybrid of the two options, some cuts and some millage increase, with the hope that property values will come rise over the next few years and the millage can be lowered.

The main issue to be addressed is how we got into this position. Governments

have a tendency to grow in size and expenditures, consuming greater and greater amounts of money until the squeal factor kicks in — that’s the point at which taxpayers start raising hell. When times are good and residents are sharing in a booming economy, it’s easier to spend more without sparking complaints.

It’s been relatively painless for our elected officials over the past few years because the cash flow has increased as a result of property values rising at an unprecedented rate. The assessed values have increased so much, in fact, that Miami commissioners have been able to lower the millage side of the tax equation while revenues actually increased. Though they boast that they’ve lowered our taxes, they really have not. They’ve just lowered the *rate* at which taxes are calculated. Today, however, the “cheese is binding,” as they say, and something must change. I suggest the following actions be taken by our elected officials:

- Keep the millage exactly where it is right now. Because that will mean a drop in revenue, the stage will be set for meaningful budget cuts.

- Direct the city manager to develop a “zero-based budget” (ZBB) instead of the “line-item budget” currently employed. A ZBB process requires city departments to begin with zero dollars and build up their proposed budgets from there, starting with required or mandated expenses (union contracts, service contracts, fees, and so on), and working their way toward the end product. This method quickly and clearly identifies discretionary expenditures that can be eliminated — just as you and I do every day, depending upon our available cash.

The line-item-budget process allows departments to begin planning where they left off the previous year and make adjustments, usually by implementing five-percent or ten-percent reductions. The “damaging results” of those cuts (the doom-and-gloom scenario) are then presented to the commission by the city manager. Keep in mind that roughly 80 percent of Miami’s budget is consumed by salaries and fringe benefits. Significant cuts are simply not possible without impacting employees. By utilizing the ZBB process, the impact on the

employees will be greatly reduced as unnecessary programs and expenditures are ferreted out.

- Eliminate all departments and offices not specifically called for in the city charter. It’s time to get back to basics, and there is no better way to trim the fat than to eliminate those functions not dictated by the voters of the city. If a function is truly necessary for the health, safety, and welfare of the residents, just place it before the voters and have it approved and made a mandate of the charter — plain and simple.

It’s also time for our elected officials to bring the mission of the municipal government into focus. The pending budget crisis should be viewed as an overdue opportunity to get the city back on track providing the basic services for which it was formed, building up reserves for lean times, and making this community an affordable place in which to live, work, raise a family, and retire without the constant fear of being pushed out because of taxes that are out of control.

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Never Too Late to Learn — or Teach

By Jen Karetnick
BT Contributor

I hadn't meant to take the poetry class. What I really wanted to do, as a Tufts University junior, was enroll in the fiction-writing course. But by the time my number was called for course selection, all the short-story workshops were filled. So I settled for Poetry Writing 101, and watched the rest of my life begin.

I'm not being too dramatic when I say that my instructor, Deborah Digges, a poet who, at that time, had one well-received book to her credit, changed the direction of my future. I penned complete drivel for the first half of the semester, poems too bad to present for criticism.

Soon I had to pull an all-nighter to study for a midterm in a class I'd barely attended, and I also was supposed to turn in a poem. Sometime between 4:00 and 7:00 a.m., I must

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have accessed my subconscious in a type of narcoleptic trance and wrote the first true poem of my life, a piece about a friend battling an eating disorder that my peers said was so good it could "stand up and walk out of the room." Deborah agreed, called me into her office, and told me I had made a breakthrough. I was what she called a "real" poet.

I don't remember what course I was studying for or what I got on my midterm, but with regard to poetry, I remember every detail of that week in my life. The impact it had on me was beyond significant. I was bewildered because I didn't know where that poem and its language had come from. But I was also elated. Writing that poem, I had been

on a high, and like any addict, I wanted to experience that feeling again. Right away, if possible.

From that moment on, with Deborah's encouragement, I considered myself a writer, destined to go straight from college into a prestigious master's program — which may seem more common now, but back in 1990 was unheard of, at least to my stockbroker father. When I was accepted into the University of California, Irvine (at that time, ranked number two in the nation for poetry master's degree programs), I received financial aid in the form of a teaching assistantship and moving expenses. And still my dad couldn't help but ask if I wanted to move to New York City instead, like many of my suburban peers, and enter the field of finance.

Rather than scream "Hell, no!" I politely thanked him and went on to take the next steps on what I considered to be my life path.

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Continued on page 23

A large, ornate, classical-style painting of a dome interior, likely a cathedral or grand hall, with intricate architectural details and figures. The painting is the background for a red banner containing text.

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Teach

Continued from page 22

I've never regretted it, though nearly 20 years and several books in a variety of fields later, I am making roughly the same annual income I did in the first few years after I graduated from UCI and moved to Miami. Actually, less.

Though I led adjunct workshops at local colleges and spent a year at a private school teaching English, I never really used that degree, and a second master's degree in fiction that I took from University of Miami a few years later, in the spirit they were intended. They're designed to give writers a profession — in short, teaching — so they can have holidays and summers in which to pursue their own craft. I've been lucky enough to find steady work as a writer, but I've missed out on sharing an academic community, being around other poets and fiction writers, going to readings and being inspired by them. I've missed inspiring fledgling writers myself, showing them the metaphoric light that Deborah Digges revealed to me. And I believe, as a

result, I've produced less creative work than I might have.

I'd only very recently been contemplating this, along with the reduction of markets for my travel and food articles, when an acquaintance at Miami Country Day School stopped me on my way to pick up my kids. "Have you heard about the new charter school?" she asked. I hadn't. She explained that Miami Arts Charter, a new public school that would occupy the former Biscayne Boulevard headquarters of WPLG-TV (Channel 10), would emphasize music, dance, art, photography, acting, and creative writing. Knowing my daughter was into the arts, she thought maybe I'd like to send her. "Are you kidding?" I joked. "I'll probably apply myself."

As a teen flutist who attended New England Music Camp in the summers, I would have adored the opportunity to go to a middle or high school like Miami Arts. But because, darn it, you can't go backward in time, I decided I should apply to teach creative writing there. I sent in my application that very night, April 9. Alfredo de la Rosa, the director, called me the next morning, and now I'm

looking forward to teaching poetry and fiction workshops for grades 6-12 for the 2009-10 school year.

This is going to be challenging. I'm not planning on giving up any of my writing for consumer publications — not this column nor my dining criticism for *Miami Monthly* magazine. I also have book contracts to fulfill (I'm currently writing one about brisket with my sister, and co-authoring former Miami chef Carmen Gonzalez's book on Puerto Rican cuisine). But Miami Arts wouldn't have it any other way. Like a university, they only want working professionals as instructors.

It's going to be a challenge for me emotionally, too. On the same evening I sent my résumé, April 9, or perhaps the next morning, my mentor Deborah Digges drove from where she was teaching at Tufts University to Amherst. Perhaps she was speculating on her life, her two failed marriages — one to a pilot, one to a renowned poet — and her third to a fellow Tufts professor which ended prematurely when he died from cancer only a couple of years into their relationship. Perhaps she was musing about her

first son, whom she rescued from Boston gangs and drugs. I speculate here because I only know what was reported in the papers — that she was found dead on April 10 outside the university football stadium. The police investigated, and the official conclusion was that she jumped, an apparent suicide.

Deborah's fourth book of poetry appears this fall, and she left behind a half-finished autobiography. It would seem she had some things literary to live for, in addition to a grandson. But it's useless to posit. She was a lovely and talented poet and memoirist, and I imagine that all her students, past and present, whether poets or teachers or lawyers or computer programmers, feel the same sense of loss I do.

I don't have the conceit to believe she passed on some kind of mystical baton to me by the coincidence of her death and my career decision. But if I can give just one promising young person what she gave me, then I'll know it was a worthwhile choice.

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Spray Can Confidential

A new book showcases Miami's graffiti artists, also known as criminals

By Anne Tschida
Special to BT

Grffiti has been controversial from its inception, when lovers in antiquity tagged their devotion on Greek pillars. (Yes, they actually did.) Its controversial nature has made it hip and edgy in cultural circles ever since, while at the same time remaining, for many city dwellers, an unwanted, symptomatic marker of urban blight.

A recently released book documenting Miami's graffiti underscores these elements. James and Karla Murray started photographing the city's walls back in the late 1990s, and some stunningly gorgeous paintings leap off the pages, along with poignant imprints of Miami's structural decay. Accompanying the visuals is revealing commentary — in untranslated street lingo — from our home-grown



1492 by Miami artists BANE, SEGE, CROM, FIVE, DASK, and PRISCO.

taggers, bombers, artists, and vandals.

There's a lot to be learned about Miami's unique urban culture between the covers of *Miami Graffiti*, from the bold and beautiful to the ugly and dangerous. For instance, there's a fascinating dynamic between the legal or "permission" walls — elaborate works that are either commissioned by an owner or painted on

abandoned sites — and illegal tagging, done quickly and on the sly at night.

Another aspect peculiar to the Miami scene is the concentration on abandoned locations, called "penits" — short, we are told from graffiti artist FREEK, for "penitentiary." An old penitentiary was reportedly the first unoccupied place to be discovered and plastered with graffiti art

in Miami-Dade. Hence much of Miami's most intricate graffiti is hidden from public view in places like the interior walls of an old factory in Hialeah and the Miami Marine Stadium on Virginia Key.

The striking, wild color schemes are also unique to Miami. It's not unexpected

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Photos courtesy of James and Karla Murray

School Dazed in El Portal

Church wants to sell, charter wants to build, neighbors want none of it

By Rob Jordan
Special to BT

El Portal is the kind of place where roof repairs and garage alterations often top the agenda at the planning and zoning board's bi-monthly meetings at Village Hall. But an April hearing before the board was something all together different. Several angry and at times perplexed residents spoke adamantly against a proposal for the village. They warned it would bring heavy traffic, litter, crime, "drug dealers all around," and even "sexual deviance." It

would amount to an "invasion," in one resident's words.

The target of their ire? A plan by MG3 Developer Group of Hollywood to expand the Rader United Methodist Church property at the corner of NE 2nd Avenue and 87th Street. The vacant 58-year-old church would become a 50-classroom charter school with up to 1000 students. Imagine Schools, a nonprofit organization, would run the school. The developers were requesting a zoning variance in order to go forward with the expansion plans.

"It would change the character of the town," said Courtney Kirk, who lives

three doors down from the church. Kirk argued that, at 54,000 square feet including the original building, the school would be out of scale with the residential community.

Ken Hector, whose house is next door to the church, worried about trees lost to construction and having an expansive parking lot for a backyard view.

Resident Deborah Tomkinson read from a lengthy letter to the board warning of "catastrophic change."

Members of the planning and zoning board, who double as members of the village council, seemed as puzzled as

the residents. Occasionally interrupted by peacock mating calls piercing the night air outside, they asked whether the hearing was for a variance or site-plan approval. The answer was not immediately forthcoming.

More confusion ensued when Councilman Harold Mathis asked whether MG3 had actually purchased the property. The answer was no. Then on what grounds, Mathis asked, could MG3 request a variance? Again no clear answer.

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North Miami's Great Divide

A new mayor confronts east vs. west, white vs. black, rich vs. poor

By Michael W. Sasser
Special to BT

When Scott Galvin first entered North Miami politics in the early 1990s as president of the West Side Property Owner's Association, the sizable but generally unremarkable bedroom community already had a history of geographic division. "I heard, early on, that there was a rivalry between Italians [on the west side] and the Irish [on the east side] that dated back to the very beginning of the city," recalls Galvin, now a ten-year veteran of the city council.

That's saying something, given that North Miami was incorporated in 1926.

In the early 1990s, as Galvin began his civic involvement, ethnic enclaves had yet to develop in the city of about 60,000, then best known for housing the original Mario the Baker pizzeria

and Florida International University's north campus. "It was mostly about geography and economics then," recounts Galvin. "All but one of the city council members were from Keystone or Sans Souci, and elections were all at-large. There was a sense by some that the city was mostly interested in what affected the east." Keystone Point and Sans Souci are North Miami's relatively tony waterfront communities, traditional home to many Anglo and Jewish households.

But much has changed since the early 1990s. North Miami's political environment was stirred up by the



North Miami Mayor Andre Pierre: The election "teaches us we're making progress."

transition to district elections in 1992, which gave rise to westside representation on the city council and elsewhere. A burgeoning African-American community was supplanted by an

unprecedented influx of Haitian Americans, who settled mainly on the city's western side.

In 2001 the nation's media paid close attention as Joe Celestin became the first Haitian-American mayor in the United States. Subsequently North Miami was widely lauded for electing the country's first Haitian-American majority city council.

Unfortunately Celestin's administration was characterized mostly by theatrics. "It was a crazy time," Galvin says. "During those years, there were several high-level firings. I think it made it hard to attract serious job applicants."

Despite well-publicized antics such as having his car repossessed from the city hall parking lot, trying to have a street named after himself, and sporting a police department badge, Celestin

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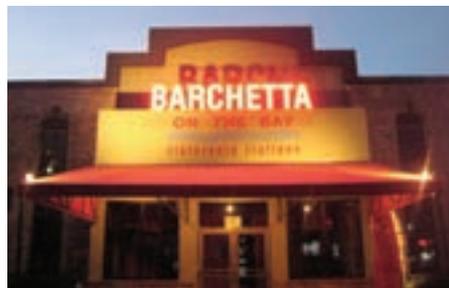
From Crude to Prude

Once sin city, North Bay Village now battles bare breasts

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Contributor

North Bay Village, a city dredged from the bottom of Biscayne Bay, has seen its share of scandal. But so far it's never allowed a strip club within its borders, and many residents want to keep it that way — even if it means spending thousands of dollars at a time when money is scarce. However, such a "gentlemen's club" may be opening for business nonetheless.

This past March, Michael Pulwer, owner of Miami-based Pleasure



Coming attractions: Prime rib and leg of stripper.

Emporium adult stores, entered into a contract to purchase Barchetta on the

Bay, the former bayfront restaurant at 1601 79th Street Causeway, for an undisclosed sum. His plan: Transform it from an Italian restaurant into a steakhouse featuring nude female dancers.

Ironically the Realtor brokering the deal is one of North Bay Village's own: Commissioner George Kane, who once tried to sell the property to North Bay Village itself — for a new \$11 million city hall. "Actually that was what I thought would be the highest and best use for it, but it didn't go anywhere," Kane says. "That would have been a great place for city

hall visibility, but I don't get to vote on it because I'm the Realtor."

So Kane and his client accepted the pending offer from Pulwer, whose representatives then declared their intent to turn Barchetta into a dual-purpose flesh pit — one part for eating, the other for ogling.

Commissioner Kane's constituents were not amused.

"You know who goes to those clubs?" asks 36-year resident Ann Bakst. "People

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Prude

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who are basically sexually not all together.”

Citing a 1964 law prohibiting adult entertainment anywhere in North Bay Village, city officials refused to grant an operating license to Pulwer, who promptly sued, claiming a violation of his First Amendment right to free expression — in this case, nude dancing.

City commissioners then hired constitutional law attorney Bruce Rogow for \$35,000 to develop a new law, one that doesn't ban strip clubs outright but requires that they be 500 feet away from residential areas, parks, religious institutions, and schools. North Bay Village being less than a square mile in size, this restriction would leave just one specific place where women could entertain while naked — namely, Broadcast Key, an island that is home to WSVN-TV (Channel 7) and an unused radio tower owned by developer Scott Greenwald. (Greenwald did not respond to a *BT* request for comment.)

On June 22, the commission passed a first reading of the proposed ordinance by a vote of 4-0, with Kane abstaining. A second and final reading is scheduled for this month. Says city manager Matt Schwartz: “This new ordinance will pass constitutional muster.”

Pulwer's attorney, Mark Goldstein, believes the new ordinance unlawfully

“singles out” his client. In addition, says Goldstein, for months the city has used the old, unconstitutional law to block Pulwer from doing business. “This is a fight that the city is ill-advised to take on,” he asserts, warning that Rogow's fees plus damages owed to Pulwer could cost North Bay Village up to \$300,000. (Federal Judge Cecilia Altonaga heard arguments from both sides on June 24. No decision had rendered by *BT*'s press deadline.)

Forking over several hundred thousand dollars is about the last thing North Bay Village needs right now. Facing a 20 percent drop in its tax base, the city is already cutting services and slashing staff salaries. “Basically we're looking at how the city will survive the next two years without raising taxes,” says Richard Chervony, president of the watchdog group Citizens for Full Disclosure of North Bay Village. Still, Chervony supports the potentially costly fight against X-rated businesses. “If I want to frequent a strip club,” he says, “I will get in my car and drive to a strip club. It is going to further depreciate property values. It's the wrong element to bring to the city.”

David Lombardi, president of Wynwood-based Lombardi Properties, agrees that a strip club won't boost property values. “It brings in all these cheesy, horny idiots who want to get drunk,” he says. “I really don't think it'll be positive

for the area. What's it going to bring? A liquor store? A condom store?”

Jeff Morr, president and CEO of Majestic Properties, concurs in Lombardi's assessment, but allows that an upscale adult club — one that is low key — may not be so bad for property values. “It might bring in a little excitement,” he offers.

Once upon a time, excitement was not foreign to these parts. In the 1950s, a string of restaurants and nightclubs sprung up along the causeway, attracting celebrities like Frank Sinatra and Judy Garland. For a time Dean Martin owned his own club, Dino's. Alleged mafia lieutenants were also hanging around, and quite possibly getting a piece of the action. Prostitutes were also busy, though discreet.

Doing business where Barchetta now stands was Nick and Arthur's, which had a reputation for excellent food throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s, the property was taken over by Billy's on the Bay. When Billy's took off for Broward, Landry's Seafood Restaurant moved in, and after Landry's closed in 1996, the place changed hands so many times locals lost track.

By 2004 hotelier Frederic Puren had become the owner and opened Roger's, which lasted a couple of years. Puren then leased the 12,300-square-foot facility to Claudio Gottardo, who renamed

it Barchetta and opened for business as an Italian restaurant. That too ended in failure — at least as an eatery. In recent months, Barchetta has been operating as an after-hours club for special events. City manager Schwartz says neighbors began complaining about noise and fights, but Gottardo has begun working with city officials and now has North Bay Village off-duty police officers providing security.

Although Ann Bakst has complained about Barchetta's late-night shenanigans, the longtime activist predicts that its mutation into a nudie bar will be much worse. “It is going to bring hookers!” she exclaims. “More hookers than they had in the Sixties. Girls are going to be walking the streets down here to meet the guys coming out of the strip joint, coming out fully erect!”

Attorney Goldstein scoffs at such talk. He assures that the new club will be first-rate. The only things it will attract to North Bay Village are Mercedes, Porches, and luxury power boats docking from the bay. “We're not talking about opening up a brothel in a residential area,” he stresses. “We're talking about a high-end adult-entertainment facility in a commercially zoned area.”

Brandon Dane contributed to this report.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

North Miami

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served until 2005. And then something happened that is rarely seen in South Florida politics.

An Anglo, openly gay candidate named Kevin Burns defeated Haitian-American Jean Monestime, a moderate city council member, by a whopping 22 percentage

points. As in every recent North Miami election, Burns won the vast majority of votes in predominantly Anglo precincts while Monestime won most precincts dominated by Haitian Americans. But there was some apparent crossover for Burns.

That crossover appeal was put to the test in 2007, when Burns ran for re-election, again against Monestime. The mayor may not have fully bridged the

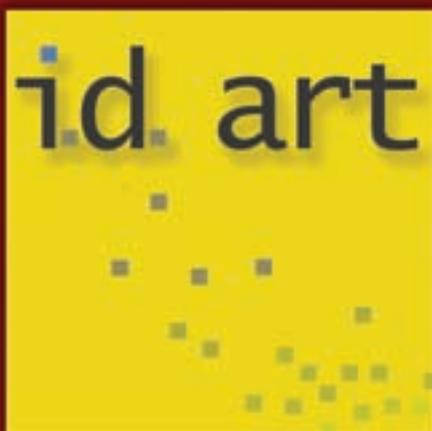
city's great divide, but his appeal crossed over enough for him to win again, by a margin of 54 to 46. It was the first time in 18 years a North Miami mayor had been re-elected without a runoff.

That success, however, was not embraced by everyone. “Kevin Burns favored one side,” says Herntz Phanord, a popular Haitian-American radio host. “He catered to people he had relationships

with. We had no access.”

Given North Miami's history of an east-west divide that also demarcates the city racially and ethnically, this year's mayoral showdown between city clerk (and former mayor) Frank Wolland and attorney Andre Pierre, a relative political newcomer, was considered a

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School

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Further complicating matters, MG3 representatives at first said their contract to purchase the property was not contingent upon receiving the needed zoning variance. Moments later they reversed themselves, saying they would not close on the deal without it.

Pamela Butler, a development coordinator with MG3, explained after the hearing that the developer had “followed the instruction of [village] staff,” and had understood it was okay to apply for a variance while under contract to purchase the property. “I’m used to dealing with cities like Fort Lauderdale,” she said with

apparent frustration. “Maybe El Portal doesn’t get a lot of redevelopment.”

Then Mathis took aim at MG3. “I just can’t believe they came to us and they didn’t own the property,” he complained. “If you’re going to come to us and ask for a variance, have all your ducks in a row.”

The church has been silent and empty since 2007, when the Catholic Archdiocese of Miami purchased it for \$3.6 million. At the time, Father John Madigan told the *BT* the church would be converted to a convent for Discalced Carmelite nuns, a cloistered order whose members avoid contact with the public and lead lives of contemplation and prayer. But plans for the convent “kind of fell apart,” according to archdiocese spokeswoman



In El Portal, the path from church to charter school is far from smooth.

Mary Ross Agosta. “We just changed direction with that piece of property,” she noted, citing “serious budget cutting”

amid a down economy. (Catholic archdioceses nationwide, Miami’s included, are shuttering churches and schools and selling off property in the face of massive legal costs related to sex-abuse cases and trends like low attendance, a priest shortage, and rising costs.)

Addressing residents’ concerns during the hearing, the project’s architect, Gustavo Carbonell, was confident the school would be well received, and would even raise local property values. He spoke glowingly of Imagine Schools, saying, among other things, that they would “not tolerate” any misbehavior. However, Carbonell acknowledged that

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North Miami

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toss-up before the June 2 runoff. When the smoke cleared, Pierre had won 53 percent to Wolland’s 46 percent.

Although both candidates garnered strong support from their respective Haitian-American and Anglo communities, there was solid evidence of crossover voting. For example, in Precinct 140 (polling place: the Haitian Baptist Church), Wolland won a respectable 111 of 378 votes cast. Similarly, while Wolland dominated Precinct 148 (polling place: Temple Beth Moshe) with 73 percent of votes cast, Pierre’s 27 percent dwarfed the 7 percent Monestime collected two years earlier. Similar examples of limited

crossover abound among the city’s 24 voting precincts.

Complicating the matter and revealing perhaps the ethnic undercurrent of North Miami’s east-west divide is the fact that Pierre himself lives in Sans Souci. Which raises an intriguing question: Can the political dynamics of a Haitian-American leader from the east side, supported by many on the west side, surmount the city’s geographic and ethnic divisions? “I think he can be a transition figure if he doesn’t repeat the mistakes Celestin made,” says Scott Galvin.

Former Mayor Burns, who supported Pierre in the runoff, believes that the prospects of achieving something like civic harmony will be affected less by ethnic politics and more by Pierre’s approach to issues he’ll deal with as mayor,

or as Burns puts it: “What to wade into and what not to wade into.”

Community Relations Board member and civic activist Roseline Philippe also sees identity politics as less important than other issues. “Most the time, I don’t think it’s a racial thing,” she says. “I think it’s more about economics and opportunities. At election time, though, it’s like Democrats and Republicans — people gravitate to like kinds.”

Radio personality Phanord says he would be surprised if, in the next election, Pierre didn’t capture a higher percentage of Anglo votes than this year. “I think the moment is right,” he asserts, “and I hope that Andre can be an agent for change.”

To his credit, the affable Pierre recognizes that he has been given an

opportunity to bring together North Miami’s disparate neighborhoods, and says he appreciates the chance. “This election teaches all of us that change has come to North Miami,” Pierre tells the *BT*. “It is demonstrated in who came out to vote for me, and because this is the first time a Haitian candidate has gotten good support from all over the city. This teaches us that we’re making progress.”

Change has certainly been the one constant in the North Miami political landscape over the past 20 years. But so has one other thing — namely, that those who believe they can predict what those changes will be are very likely to end up with a Mario the Baker pizza pie in their faces.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Graffiti

Continued from page 24

that Miami’s artists would use more tropical and bright colors than their northern counterparts, but it’s somewhat surprising to learn that the brilliant color

schemes really took off after the arrival here of a specific European paint that could withstand our withering weather.

Perhaps most interesting is the claim by the artists and the authors that Miami is an especially hazardous place to practice graffiti. In the book, under a photograph

of a mural complete with tell-tale lettering signatures but also with images of Columbus landing in the New World, we read the story of CROME and CROOK’s arrest and prosecution. It was a highly publicized case, after which the duo say the law came down hard and “changed the history of

graffiti in Miami.”

The authors agree. “It’s true that Miami officials and authorities come down very hard on graffiti artists — New York takes a tough stance on graffiti as well but there

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School

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his familiarity with the company was limited to its Website.

According to that Website, Imagine Schools is the nation's largest and fastest growing charter-school organization, operating 72 schools in 13 states, including Florida, where it runs 18. Nationally, 51 percent of Imagine's students come from low-income families; 39 percent are black, 33 percent white, and 22 percent Hispanic.

Imagine has received approval from Miami-Dade's school district to open its first charter school in the county, says district spokesman Tony Cotarelo. The charter company, however, has not yet specified a location for its new facility, even though it anticipates opening for the 2010-2011 school year. If that sounds a little vague, school district officials likely were reassured by the fact that Octavio Visiedo and Alan Olkes, former Miami-Dade schools superintendents, work for Imagine. Olkes runs the company's operations and development in Florida, Louisiana, and Texas, while Visiedo is in charge of tutoring and testing services at

all Imagine schools.

At the hearing, El Portal councilwoman Linda Marcus seemed dubious of charter schools in general. She worried aloud about what she said was a 50-percent failure rate, and she questioned how Imagine would guarantee enrollment, especially in an area with several nearby schools.

MG3 executive Gustavo Bogomolni, dressed in jeans and an untucked shirt, explained that Imagine's research and marketing would ensure a strong enrollment. Marcus was dissatisfied with that response and expressed frustration that no Imagine representatives were on hand to answer questions.

Councilwoman Claudia Cubillos, an experienced educator, remained silent during the hearing. Cubillos runs the private Miami Preparatory School and Ms. Claudia's Tutoring Service.

Village attorney Joseph Geller waded into the discussion by questioning whether a charter school was even permissible, noting that El Portal's outdated zoning code was written before charter schools existed. Although the code mentions schools, it does so under the heading

"government services." Charter schools are private, not public.

Geller also suggested MG3 had been remiss, wondering aloud why they hadn't contacted him for clarification and stating that a related traffic study was the developer's responsibility and not simply a cooperative gesture, as Carbonell had suggested. Finally Geller pointed out there was something seriously wrong with MG3's paperwork. Despite not yet owning the church property, MG3 had submitted a property owner's affidavit signed by Bogomolni.

MG3's Pamela Butler explained that Bogomolni had signed the affidavit and added the written clarification "under contract," to specify that he was poised to purchase the property.

Not long after that public meeting sputtered to a somewhat confused close, another was scheduled at the behest of county Commissioner Audrey Edmonson, an El Portal resident and former mayor. That gathering took place June 25, again at Village Hall. Since the first meeting, MG3 had submitted the traffic study to the village, and now the developer hoped to address residents' concerns in more detail.

But just six residents attended, and they were outnumbered by MG3 architects, engineers, and legal counselors. Undaunted, the developer's associates launched into their pitch: The church was the *only* location in El Portal zoned for a school, architects had reconfigured the parking loop to minimize congestion and noise, a "tot lot" would be built for public use. All this and more would be discussed at one more community meeting and then finally at a planning and zoning hearing on July 15.

Residents remained skeptical. PJ Mills, for one, had little faith in the process. "We're going to get it whether we like it or not," he grumbled. "It'd be nice if El Portal could vote about this."

And with that, the meeting concluded where it began — on the front steps of Village Hall, not inside it. None of El Portal's council members, or any other officials, showed up, and no one had a key to the building.

Biscayne Times intern Alex Katechis contributed to this report

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Graffiti

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are many areas that graffiti artists can still paint,” say the Murrays. “The City of Miami does not want graffiti in it *at all* and is trying very hard to maintain a certain image as a tourist destination.”

Obviously there is irony in graffiti artists complaining about the law while engaging in what is, in many cases, illegal activity.

Upper Eastside resident Earle Loomis is having none of it. While he doesn't object to some of the colorful murals, he complains to the *BT* that the rest is “defacement, pure and simple.” Loomis says random tagging has become much worse over the past six months, possibly mirroring the bad economy, and that authorities, contrary to the opinion of artists in *Miami Graffiti*, simply turn a blind eye.

Like the “broken window” theory of law enforcement, which posits that a broken window, if not repaired, inevitably attracts more vandalism and then more serious crime, Loomis says the unchecked graffiti he is now seeing in and around the Upper Eastside also leads to degradation. “It suggests a lack

of upkeep, a lack of caring,” which he believes will eventually bring down the whole neighborhood. And like the accumulation of rubbish in a vacant lot, Loomis believes the graffiti has reached a critical mass: “It’s everywhere now, so much so that it almost becomes invisible. Where is the responsibility?”

And indeed graffiti can be ugly, in both expression and execution — gangs leave their signatures, intentionally defacing and marking their territory, an unsettling message, to say the least, for people who live nearby. “We can understand the public outcry against illegal graffiti when it is purely destructive in nature and ruins private property,” say the Murrays. “But we don't understand why the beautiful, colorful work that actually helps beautify a neighborhood gets lumped in with the ugly.”

Graffiti artists highlighted in the book express contradictory views of controlling — or nurturing — the form. Some say severe crackdowns by authorities do indeed dampen their interest in covering walls, while others say it increases their desire to go out and spray



Wild Things by Miami artists SEEL, FREEK, and MEKS.

— the more illegally, the better.

However, law enforcement isn't the only obstacle to creating graffiti in Miami. An artist known as GS1, whose paintings include both lettering and characters, notes that “Miami neighborhood kids are tough.” He recounts a time working at the “Hialeah Penit” when “a lot of rapes happened there. When the gangster kids who lived in the trailer park besides [sic] the place started realizing that ‘writers’ from good neighborhoods were going there, they started robbing them of their money, good shoes, and watches... Eventually the city bulldozed the place because so much crime was going on.”

It turns out that Miami graffiti artists skirting the lines of authority constantly run into

those who've long lived across the divide. When painting a wall in Overtown, ZAME recalls that “some dude threw a bottle at us. We ran around the corner from the wall after him and there were like 20 heads there and they yelled at us, ‘Yo, don't heat up this spot.’ Although we had permission to paint the wall from the bodega owner, all those guys were selling drugs around the corner. They were worried that we were going to heat things up.”

But of course if there weren't an element of danger, graffiti wouldn't have the attraction it has — for the people who create it, the galleries that highlight it, and the residents who despise it.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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It's Not Always About the Money

A steady paycheck has allowed Brook Dorsch to follow his heart

By Victor Barrenechea
BT Contributor

You've heard it offered as advice, either comically or seriously: Don't quit your day job. Brook Dorsch, founder and co-proprietor of the Dorsch Gallery, took it seriously. Since the early 1990s, when his fledgling gallery enjoyed an auspicious opening and operated out of his Coral Way apartment, Dorsch's role as a promoter of art has always been something more than a hobby.

He was one of the early pioneers to set up shop the heart of Wynwood, and over the years his eye for art has established the gallery as a trendsetter, ahead of the gallery curve, fostering and influencing Miami arts while maturing into a legitimate business that still exhibits challenging work.

Yet he never gave up his day job.

For years Dorsch has held a steady position with a local maritime satellite telecommunications company. That financial foundation has allowed him and his wife and co-gallerist, Tyler Emerson-Dorsch, the luxury of not being completely controlled by commercial considerations. "If it's something that needs to be shown," says Dorsch, "I want to show it. I don't need to show something to make a sale."

Walking the tightrope between a do-it-yourself alternative space and a commercial salesroom, the gallery only acquired air-conditioning within the past few years, and it did double duty as the Dorsch home until August of last year. The art they display may be daring, but the way they've run their business is not.

Dorsch was born in New Jersey in 1961, but his family soon migrated to New York, living in towns such as Nyack and New City, not too far north of Manhattan. In the late 1970s it would be music, not art, that dominated his passions, specifically the burgeoning punk scene in New York City, which had Dorsch regularly heading down to the city to catch bands on weekends.

Only later in life would he correlate the underground music scene's rebellious spirit with the world of contemporary art in which he would subsequently immerse himself. "When I started seeing contemporary art,"



Dorsch Gallery's 7000 square feet allows for creative display.



Brook Dorsch on the early days: "There was a lot of energy, but there weren't many sales."

recalls Dorsch. "I realized the punks were doing the same thing."

In the early 1980s, the family moved to Miami, where Dorsch's stepfather opened a designer jeans shop. For his part, Dorsch concentrated on taking computer classes, eventually landing a good job. But by 1991 he'd fallen in with Miami's art crowd, which inspired him to take up painting for himself.

In those days, Miami arts centered around an enclave of galleries in Coral Gables that would host art walks every



Tyler Emerson-Dorsch, now gallery co-curator with her husband, is ushering in changes.

first Friday of the month. Dorsch recalls, "It was a mass of galleries, but you always saw the same thing every month, with a few exceptions." As a reaction to the safely predictable nature of a lot of the work, Dorsch began putting on his

own art show in his Coral Way apartment.

A small sidewalk sandwich board reading "Dorsch Gallery"

led the way to the 500-square-foot apartment, where visitors could see early works by people like Franklin Einspruch and video pieces by Rene

Barge, as well as other local artists working in various media. Soon he realized his passion lay in curating rather than painting, and he concentrated on that. His apartment would host more than 50 shows over the next few years. "There was a lot of energy back then," Dorsch remembers, "but there weren't many sales."

A breakthrough came in 1999, when artist Robert Chambers curated a show of works by Robin Griffiths, called "Ball and Chain." Chambers crammed the apartment so full of Griffiths' work that only four or five people could fit in the apartment at one time. It generated a buzz in New York City, the first time Dorsch Gallery had garnered attention outside Miami.

In 1997 the respected Ambrosino Gallery moved out of the Gables after a four-year stint. Owner Genaro Ambrosino surprised many by taking over a sprawling, 10,000-square-foot warehouse in an obscure industrial area sandwiched between Coconut Grove and Coral Gables. According to Dorsch, this launched a new phase for art in Miami, one in which vast warehouse spaces presented new and exciting opportunities for exhibiting art. Soon they began replacing traditional storefront galleries. "When Genaro got that big space, I thought, 'Wow, this is on a completely new level!'" Ambrosino's bold move prompted him to scout around for a warehouse of his own.

By 1998 the alternative art space Locust Projects had opened its doors in the Wynwood warehouse district, and Dorsch would follow in January 2000, purchasing his own 7000-square-foot space and joining the Bakehouse Art Complex, the Martin Margulies Collection, and the Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, which were already established in the neighborhood.

Back then, the area was still crime-ridden. In fact a dilapidated bungalow on Dorsch's warehouse property was a notorious crack house. "There was no one here at night except for a few drug dealers and homeless people," Dorsch recalls. (The bungalow itself starred in an early show called, appropriately, "Crack House.")

Continued on page 31

Genaro Ambrosino's bold move out of the Gables prompted Dorsch to scout around for a warehouse of his own.

Dorsch

Continued from page 30

Before long many more galleries migrated to Wynwood, including experimental spaces such as the now-defunct Rocket Projects, Gables refugees such as the Fredric Snitzer Gallery, and private collectors like the Rubell family. "It was a real exciting time in Wynwood," says Dorsch. "It was a really fun time to be here. There was a lot of camaraderie in the scene."

Art Basel Miami Beach, which Dorsch describes as a "serious game-changer," canceled its 2001 debut fair following the attacks on September 11. But Miami's local art community managed to put on strong and well-attended exhibits originally designed to coincide with Basel. Says Dorsch: "Nobody had realized there was this welling-up of what was going on in Wynwood. You didn't realize how big the scene had become."

Two years later Dorsch helped found the Wynwood Arts District Association, of which he is currently the co-chairman. The association organized monthly art walks, produced maps of all the galleries in the area



An opening party in early 2000, soon after the gallery's Wynwood debut.

(now more than 50), and remains active in efforts to improve the neighborhood. Meanwhile the Dorsch Gallery itself has continued its growth, participating in national and international art fairs and developing an impressive roster of local artists such as Ralph Provisero, Richard Haden, and Brandon Opalka.

Tyler Emerson and Dorsch met in 2004. By then Emerson was already curating exhibitions locally. She was a graduate of Bard College's prestigious curatorial studies center, a former Miami Art Museum staffer, and director at the Fredric Snitzer Gallery. After a successful stint at the Baltimore Museum of Art,

where she curated an influential show featuring several art-world luminaries, she returned to Miami in 2007 and married Dorsch.

Only last year, however, did Tyler jump aboard as co-gallerist, bringing along some big changes. For one, the gallery now keeps regular hours, something Dorsch couldn't do on his own. There is also a change in how shows are created, with the two alternating and sometimes sharing curatorial duties, but also bringing in more talent from outside the city.

After nearly two decades of operating a gallery while keeping a full-time day job, Dorsch remains passionate about that peculiar mixture of commerce and aesthetics. "It's a very strange business to be in," he observes, "because it doesn't really follow any business model. You need to follow your eye and you need to follow your heart. I get very excited when other people see what I see in work. Then it sells itself."

For more information call 305-576-1278 or visit www.dorschgallery.com

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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305-573-2101

www.101exhibit.com

Through July 18:

"A Phantasy Pheast" by Jim Pollock

ABBA FINE ART233 NW 36th St., Miami
305-576-4278

www.abbafineart.com

July 11 through August 7: "Cuba" with various artists

Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.**ALEJANDRA VON HARTZ FINE ARTS**2134 NW Miami Ct., Miami
305-438-0220

www.alejandravonhartz.net

Through September 5: "Luna Park" with Daniel Arsham, Luis Gispert, Gean Moreno, Martin Oppel, Ernesto Oroza, and Gavin Perry

Reception July 11, 7 to 11 p.m.**AMAYA GALLERY**2033 NW 1st Pl., Miami
917-743-2925

www.amayagallery.com

Call gallery for exhibition information.

ARNO VALERE ART GALLERY BY RICART3900 NE 1st Ave., Miami
305-576-5000

www.valericartgallery.com

July 11 through July 25: Solo show by Carolus

Reception July 11, 6 to 10 p.m.**ART FUSION**1 NE 40th St., Miami
305-573-5730

www.artfusiongallery.com

July 3 through September 23:

"Esoteric Illusions" with various artists

Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.**ART GALLERY AT GOVERNMENT CENTER**111 NW 1st St., Suite 625, Miami
305-375-4634

www.miamidadearts.org

Through August 7:

Solo show by Robert Chambers

ARTFORMZ171 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-572-0040

www.artformz.net

Through September 5:

"Hotter Than a Match Head" with Natasha Duwin, Sibel Kocabasi, Ray Paul, P.J. Mills, Alette Simmons-Jimenez, Rosario Rivera-Bond, Rai Escala, Anja Marais, Ramón Williams, Guillermo Portieles, Donna Haynes, and Gisela Savdie

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Through July 11:

Solo show by Kathleen Hudspeth

Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.**Robert Chambers, *Impact Painting, Impact Drawing Machine, ceramic tea saucers, ink, graphite, and paint, 2009*, at the Art Gallery at Government Center.****BERNICE STEINBAUM GALLERY**3550 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-573-2700

www.bernicesteinbaumgallery.com

Through September 5:

"Nine Lives: Dog Days of Summer" with various artists

Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.**CAROL JAZZAR CONTEMPORARY ART**158 NW 91st St., Miami Shores
305-490-6906

www.cjazzart.com

By appointment: carol@cjazzart.com

Call gallery for exhibition information.

CENTER FOR VISUAL COMMUNICATION541 NW 27th St., Miami
305-571-1415

www.visual.org

Ongoing:

Solo show by Clarence Laughlin

CHAREST-WEINBERG GALLERY250 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-292-0411

www.charest-weinberg.com

Through August 8: Pedro Barbeito and Jason Gringler

CHELSEA GALLERIA2441 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-576-2950

www.chelseagalleria.com

Through August 1:

"Cosmos" by Tonel

Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.**CS GALLERY**787 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-308-6561

www.chirinosanchez.com

Call gallery for exhibition information.

DAMIEN B. CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER282 NW 36th St., Miami
305-573-4949

www.damienb.com

Call gallery for exhibition information.

DAVID CASTILLO GALLERY2234 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-8110

www.castilloart.com

Through August 1:

Group show with Adler Guerrier, Aramis Gutierrez, Quisqueya Henriquez, Susan Lee-Chun, Pepe Mar, Glaxis Novoa, Javier Piñón, Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, Frances Trombly, and Wendy Wischer

Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.**DELUXE ART GALLERY**2051 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
786-200-4971

Call gallery for exhibition information.

DIANA LOWENSTEIN FINE ARTS2043 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-1804

www.dlfinearts.com

"2 Girls and a Boy" with Katherine Ordenez, Chottip

Nimla, and Michael Okey

Through July 31:

"Summer Exhibition" with various artists

Reception July 11, 7:30 to 10 p.m.**DIASPORA VIBE GALLERY**3938 NE 39th St., Miami
305-573-4046

www.diasporavibe.net

Through July 23:

"Mr. Meyers, My Sweet Jane" by

Danny Ramirez

DORSCH GALLERY151 NW 24th St., Miami
305-576-1278

www.dorschgallery.com

Through July 18:

"F(r)acture: divisions in painting" curated by Brook Dorsch, with Alicia Gibson, David Marsh, Jordan Massangale, Patrick McElnea, Brandon Opalka, Jane Parshall, Carlos Rigau, Karen Seapker, and Kevin Van Gorp

Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.**DOT FIFTYONE ART SPACE**51 NW 36th St., Miami
305-573-9994

www.dotfiftyone.com

Call gallery for exhibition information.

EDGAR ACE GALLERY7520 NE 4th Ct., Miami
305-877-2401

Call gallery for exhibition information.

EDGE ZONES CONTEMPORARY ART47 NE 25th St., Miami
305-303-8852

www.edgezones.org

July 11 through July 31:

Group show with various artists

Reception July 11, 8 to 11 p.m.**ELITE ART EDITIONS GALLERY**151 NW 36th St., Miami
305-403-5856

www.elitearteditions.com

Call gallery for exhibition information.

ETRA FINE ART10 NE 40th St., Miami
305-438-4383

www.etrafineart.com

Call gallery for exhibition information.

FACHE ARTS

750 NE 124th St., North Miami #2

305-975-6933

www.fachearts.com

Through July 20:

"Color Exposure" by Carla Fache

FREDRIC SNITZER GALLERY2247 NW 1st Pl., Miami
305-448-8976

www.snitzer.com

Call gallery for exhibition information.

GALLERY DIET174 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-571-2288

www.gallerydiet.com

Through August 1:

"Oh Nancy" curated by Brian Burkhardt with various artists

Reception July 11, 7 to 9 p.m.**GARY NADER FINE ART**

62 NE 27th St., Miami

305-576-0256

www.garynader.com

Call gallery for exhibition

information.

HARDCORE ARTS CONTEMPORARY SPACE3326 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-1645

www.hardcoreartcontemporary.com

Through July 4:

"Time Machine" by

Robert Zuckerman

HAROLD GOLEN GALLERY2294 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-989-3359

www.haroldgolengallery.com

Call gallery for exhibition information.

INTERFLIGHT STUDIO GALLERY250 NW 23rd St., Loft 206, Miami
305-573-1673

www.flightstudiogallery.com

Call gallery for exhibition information.

KELLEY ROY GALLERY50 NE 29 St., Miami
305-447-3888

www.kelleyroygallery.com

Through September 30:

"Handmade Horizons and Songs" by Sebastian Spreng

Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.**KEVIN BRUK GALLERY**2249 NW 1st Pl., Miami
305-576-2000

www.kevinbrukgallery.com

Through July 31:

Summer show with various artists

Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.**KUNSTHAUS MIAMI**3312 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-438-1333

www.kunsthhaus.org.mx

Through August 30:

Group show with Armando de la Garza,

Ivan Puig, and Leonardo Ramírez

Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.**LEITER GALLERY**6900 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
305-389-2616

Call gallery for exhibition information.

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Art Listings

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LOCUST PROJECTS

155 NE 38th St., Miami
305-576-8570
www.locustprojects.org
July 11:
"BALLS IN THE AIR" by Wet Heat Project
Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.

LUIS ADELANTADO GALLERY

98 NW 29th St., Miami
305-438-0069
www.luisadelantadomiami.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

LURIE - KAVACHNINA GALLERY

46 NW 36th St., Miami
305-448-2060
www.lurie-kavachnina.com
Through July 11:
Group show with various artists
Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.

LYLE O. REITZEL GALLERY

2441 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-1333
www.artnet.com/reitzel.html
Call gallery for exhibition information.

MARIO FLORES GALLERY

12502 NE 8th Ave., North Miami
561-201-2053
www.mariofloresgallery.com
Through July 20: "Identity" by Luisa Elena Betancourt
Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.

MIAMI CENTER FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS

1601 SW 1st St., Miami
305-649-9575, www.mcpagallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.



Allison Layton and Leslie Shershow, *Championship Rings*, bronze and gold plate, 2009, at Gallery Diet.

MIAMI ART GROUP GALLERY

21 NW 36th St., Miami
305-576-2633
www.miamiartgroup.com
Ongoing:
Solo exhibition by James Kitchens

MIAMI ART SPACE

244 NW 35th St., Miami
305-438-9002
www.miamiartspace.com
July 11 through July 18:
"EXTEMPORE" with Marisela Esteves,
Julie Pagano, Niko Yulis, and Samara Banks
Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.
Reception July 16, 6 to 9 p.m.
Reception July 18, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

MIAM-DADE COLLEGE, CENTER GALLERY

300 NE 2nd Ave.,
Bldg. 1, Room 1365, Miami
305-237-3696
www.mdc.edu
Call gallery for exhibition information.

MIAMI INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ART AND DESIGN

1501 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
305-428-5700
www.mymiu.com
Through July 11:
MFA exhibit with various artists
July 16 through August 14:
"Like Cats and Dogs" with various artists
Reception July 16, 5 to 8 p.m.

MUSEO VAULT

346 NW 29th St., Miami
305-571-1175
www.museovault.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

OUR HOUSE WEST OF WYNWOOD

3100 NW 7th Ave., Miami
305-490-2976
www.oh-wow.com
Through July 24:
"IT'S NOT THE HEAT, IT'S THE HUMILITY" by Michael Genovese
Reception July 11, 8 to 11 p.m.

PANAMERICAN ART PROJECTS

2450 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-2400
www.panamericanart.com
Through July 4:
"Primary Colors" with various artists
July 11 through August 13:
Shows by Leopoldo Romañach and the Cuban Vanguardia and Héctor Molné
Reception July 11, 6 to 9 p.m.

PRAXIS INTERNATIONAL ART

2219 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-2900
www.praxis-art.com
July 11 through July 21:
"MFANow 2009" with Andre Debus, Arina Gordienko, Damien Mohl, Joyce Ho, Zachari Logan, and Sarah Awad
Reception July 11, 7 to 10 p.m.

PRESSITON ART GALLERY

4100 N. Miami Ave., Miami
786-925-2930
www.pressitonart.com
Through July 4: "Madrigal" by Katherine Mann

Continued on page 34

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Ongoing show with Kevin Brady, Manuel Carbonell, Nichole Chimenti, Carter Davis, Stephen Gamson, Raquel Glottman, Jim Herbert, Jennifer Kaiser, Alex Paiva Lopez, Andy Piedilato, Tomy F. Trujillo, Jonathan "Depoe" Villoch, and Giancarlo Zavala

SPINELLO GALLERY

531 NE 82nd Terr., Miami
786-271-4223
www.spinellogallery.com
Through July 4:
"Encore" with TYPOE and Santiago Rubino

STASH GALLERY

162 NE 50 Terr., Miami
305-992-7652
www.myspace.com/stashgallery
July 10 through August 10:
"I don't think he gave her the time that night but damn near - damn near" by Joseph O'Neal
Reception July 10, 7 to midnight

STEVE MARTIN STUDIO

66 NE 40th St., Miami
305-484-1491
www.stevemartinfineart.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI PROJECTS SPACE

2200 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-284-2542
Call gallery for exhibition information.

UNTITLED 2144

2144 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
305-576-2112
www.untitled2144.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

WALLFLOWER GALLERY

10 NE 3rd St., Miami
305-579-0069
www.wallflowergallery.com
myspace.com/wallflowergallery
Call gallery for exhibition information.

WOLFGANG ROTH & PARTNERS FINE ART

201 NE 39th St., Miami
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www.wrpfineart.com
Through July 31
Summer group show with various artists

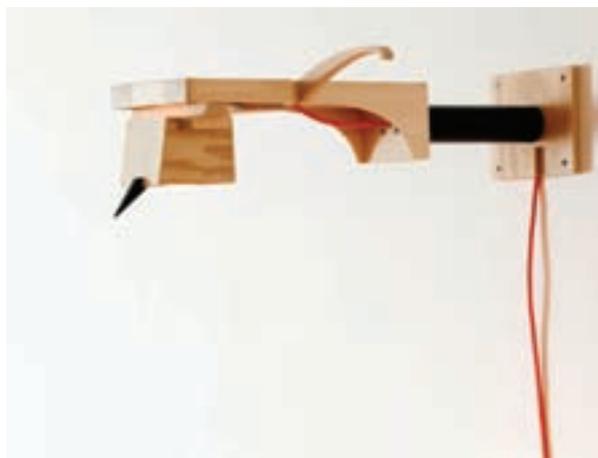
MUSEUM & COLLECTION EXHIBITS

CIFO (Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation)

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FROST ART MUSEUM

11200 SW 8th St., Miami
305-348-0496
http://thefrost.fiu.edu/
Through August 16:
"Because I Say So" sculpture from the Scholl Collection
Through August 23: "2009 Cintas Finalist Fellowship Exhibition" with various artists
Through September 16:
"Genetic Portraits" by Nela Ochoa
Through September 20:
"What Comes After" by Nancy Friedemann



Luis Gispert, *Stylus (Prototype)*, wood, halogen lighting fixture, 2009, at Alejandra von Hartz Gallery.

LOWE ART MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

1301 Stanford Dr., Coral Gables
305-284-3535
www.lowemuseum.org
Through October 4:
"Through the Lens: Photography from the Permanent Collection" with various artists

MIAMI ART MUSEUM

101 W. Flagler St., Miami
305-375-3000
www.miamiartmuseum.org
Through September 13: "NeoHooDoo: Art for a Forgotten Faith" with various artists
Through October 11:
"Recent Acquisitions" with various artists

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

770 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-893-6211
www.mocanomi.org
Through September 13:
"Convention" with Julieta Aranda, Fia Backström, Xavier Cha, Anne Daems & Kenneth Andrew Mroczek, Fritz Haeg, Corey McCorkle, Dave McKenzie, My Barbarian, Christodoulos Panayiotou, Sean Raspet, Superflex and Jens Haaning, and Miami's Jim Drain, Gean Moreno, and Bert Rodriguez

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305-576-1051
www.margulieswarehouse.com
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THE RUBELL FAMILY COLLECTION

95 NW 29th St., Miami
305-573-6090
www.rubellfamilycollection.com
Call for operating hours and exhibit information.

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170 NW 23rd St., Miami
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"Daydreams" curated by Tyler Emerson-Dorsch with various artists

Compiled by Victor Barrenechea
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art@biscaynetimes.com

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Culture Briefs

Kids Only: Calling All Explorers!

Kids like to get out and explore their surroundings. The Historical Museum of Southern Florida (101 W. Flagler St.) helps them take that one step further. One giant step. Called the Tropical Explorers Summer Camp, it offers one-week camps **through August 21**, taking kids ages 6 to 12 on field trips to places like Metrozoo, Butterfly World, and various historical sites. Things to do could include riding an airboat, creating art with sand, constructing a paddle boat, or making an Egyptian water clock. HMSF members \$165. Nonmembers \$190. Weekdays 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Call 305-375-1492 or visit www.hmsf.org.



A Blazing Birthday Bash at Bayfront

Fireworks don't get much better than those lighting up the sky for "America's Birthday Bash" at Bayfront Park (301 Biscayne Blvd.) on **Saturday, July 4**. This annual all-day event includes free admission, food kiosks galore, a free Kids' Zone from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. with inflatable slides, a kiddie carousel, hoops, face painting, and more. The main event, the fireworks display, is launched from a barge floating in Biscayne Bay and is said to be one of the largest in South Florida. It explodes at 9:00 p.m. Good views from anywhere in the park. No bottles, cans, or coolers allowed. Call 305-358-7550 or go to www.bayfront-parkmiami.com.

Ben Franklin's John Hancock for Youngsters

The Miami Children's Museum (Watson Island, MacArthur Causeway) will celebrate America's 233rd anniversary with kids in mind (no surprise there). On **Saturday, July 4**, museum festivities will include kids making art, playing games, and competing for a "patriotism prize" for the best red-white-and-blue outfit. In addition (and here's the surprise) there'll

be a special appearance by one of the nation's founding fathers, none other than Ben Franklin, who'll be on hand to sign the Declaration of Independence — again. City of Miami residents \$6; others \$12; infants under one year free. Open 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Call 305-373-KIDS or visit www.miamichildrens-museum.org.



La Niña del Fuego

Concha Buika has been hailed by critics and adored by fellow Spaniards. She's been called a "trailblazing force in contemporary Spanish music." And she's not easy to categorize — a kind of modern cultural hybrid, a vocalist with family roots in Africa and a Spanish flair for flamenco, all of it blended with jazz, R&B, funk, gypsy, and Cuban rhythms. Buika's 8:00 p.m. performance on **Thursday, July 9** at the intimate Gusman Theater (174 E. Flagler St.) is a do-over for a Rhythm Foundation concert canceled last year after a visa snafu. Tickets range from \$27 to \$52 and are available at the Gusman box office (305-372-0925) or through Ticketmaster.



Introducing the Bikini — Scandalous!

Ten decades of bathing suits will be on display **July 10-October 11** in "Beauty on the Beach — A Centennial Celebration of Swimwear" at the Wolfsonian-FIU Museum (1001 Washington Ave., Miami Beach), appropriately within walking distance of the beach. The exhibition reveals how these garments' designs and the marketing of them have reflected our views of health, body shape, and beauty. Noted fashion photographer Miles Ladin's corollary exhibit explores

contemporary swimsuit culture in Miami Beach. Admission is \$7. Seniors, students, children \$5. Museum galleries are open Wednesday-Sunday, noon until as late as 9:00 p.m. Free admission Friday after 6:00 p.m. Call 305-531-1001 or visit www.wolfsonian.org.

All Hail the Mighty Mango!

The International Mango Festival, where mangoheads die and go to heaven, returns to Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (10901 Old Cutler Rd., Coral Gables) **Saturday and Sunday, July 11-12**. On display for viewing, tasting, and buying will be an astonishing variety of the luscious fruit from all over the world. You'll find smoothies, cooking demonstrations, learned lectures, and trees for sale, including a miniature species that grows full-size fruit. On Sunday the annual brunch is expected to sell out as usual, and no wonder when the chefs are Mango Gang originals like Allen Susser and Mark Militello. (Reservations required.) Admission excluding brunch is \$20, seniors \$15, children 6-17 \$10. Call 305-667-1651 or visit www.fairchildgarden.org.

Zo's Free Block Party at the Triple A

Alonzo Mourning left the Heat, but not his fans and friends. Zo's Summer Groove Block Party and its all-star basketball game returns to the American Airlines Arena (601 Biscayne Blvd.) on **Sunday, July 12**. Bring the family at noon for the free block party outside the arena — great entertainers, music, food, giveaways, and rides continue until 6:30 p.m. Inside you'll find contests, giveaways, and possible encounters with very tall men who make a living throwing a ball at a hoop. Did we mention the game from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.? Or the jamming half-time show? NBA newbies take on the old pros. Game tickets \$5-\$60. Call 305-476-0095 or visit ticketmaster.com.

Yes, It's Even Better Than Pinocchio

If you've ever seen a sophisticated, professional puppet show, you know it's something magical. Now children and parents alike have a unique opportunity to see one that brings together Miami's own famed

puppet creator, the artist Pablo Cano, and the phenomenally skilled hands of master puppeteer James Hammond. In conjunction with the painting and photography exhibition "Dog Tales: Words and Images, Facts and Fiction" at Miami-Dade's main library downtown (101 W. Flagler St.), *Dog*, a shadow-puppet theater production for all ages, will be presented free on **Saturday, July 18** at 2:00 p.m. Call 305-375-2665 for more information.



There's a Fish Story Down on the Farm

Miami-Dade County is one of the leading areas for fish farming in the United States. Broadly known as aquaculture, it's the cultivation of a multitude of fresh and saltwater species, from tropicals for fish tanks to catfish and salmon for dinner, but also crustaceans like shrimp, and even aquatic plants. The Aquaculture Tour, presented by the county's Fruit and Spice Park (24801 SW 187th Ave., Homestead) will have Chris Rollins leading you **Saturday, July 25** to a few of those farms to meet the proprietors and learn more about this growing industry. Fee is \$25. Tour runs from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Call 305-247-5727 or visit www.fruitandspicepark.org.

Seniors Are All Wet — and Loving It

If you're of a certain age, you may know that exercise using water resistance helps aches and pains, especially arthritis. Good reason to sign up for Miami Shores' Arthritis Aquatic Program, at which low-impact water exercise is conducted at the Shores swimming pool (10200 Biscayne Blvd.). Fun in the pool isn't just for whipper-snappers! Open to all seniors. Bring your own towel. One-hour sessions are 10:00 a.m. **Tuesdays and Thursdays**, and 11:00 a.m. **Sundays**. Village residents \$48.50 per month, nonresidents \$60.75. Reduced prices for single sessions. For more information call Lorne Salzar at 786-507-8836.

Compiled by BT intern Brian Horowitz
Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Where the Wild Things Still Are

Sprawling and verdant, Greynolds Park has something for just about everyone

By Jim W. Harper
BT Contributor

You wanna iguana? Need a little “Love-In”? This signature annual event for hippies takes place each May, but the big green lizards are on display daily at Greynolds Park. They fit in with the park’s prehistoric past and its spacious wetlands.

Not to be confused with Greynolds Park East on Biscayne Boulevard, this Greynolds is the real deal. At 249 acres, it has miles of trails, a nine-hole golf course, and even a real campground for group rentals. But let’s put aside the campers and golfers and focus on the average visitor.

Greynolds Park is free on weekdays but charges \$5 per vehicle on weekends and holidays. Two entrances make it easily accessible to the Biscayne Corridor crowd and the surrounding North Miami Beach community, but the main entrance on Dixie Highway holds special



BT photos by Jim W. Harper

Once the highest point in the region, The Mound is capped with a coral-rock tower.

The most distinctive feature of the park, smack in the middle, is The Mound. Reaching to a non-Floridian height of 46 feet, this verdant hill rises to a peak that is capped with a coral-rock tower. For many years it was the highest point in the county and served as an outlook to the bay in the east and the Everglades in the west.

As lovely as The Mound may be, its guts are composed of leftover machinery from a rock pit that operated here in the early 1900s. In 1936 the land was dedicated as the county’s second park, beaten to the punch only by Matheson Hammock Park. But its history is much, much older. Archeological evidence points to Tequesta and other tribes living here to at least around 500 B.C.

The park is named after A.O. Greynolds, the owner of the Ojus Rock Company who

The first stop behind the entrance gate features warning signs for alligators, tons of turtles, and schooling tarpons the size of 12-year-olds.

features warning signs for alligators, tons of turtles, and schooling tarpons the size of 12-year-olds (tarpon don’t like Kix). Despite the signs that warn against feeding wildlife, the turtles appear quite well trained. Alligators may not be visible, but they are probably lurking somewhere.

You’re even less likely to see the highly endangered saltwater crocodile, but one

appeal. People who enjoy feeding cereal to turtles know all about it (apparently they love Kix).

has been spotted in the park in years past. Manatees are much more common visitors. Bats and owls reside here.

This first stop behind the gate

The park’s rich menagerie of wildlife



How big is Greynolds? Big enough to include a nine-hole golf course, where kids can learn to play.

centers around two bodies of water: the Oleta River and the bird rookery. The rookery is a poorly marked tangle of dead-end trails through a thick mangrove forest. One entrance by the golf course is marked as both West Lake Trail and Lakeside Nature Trail. The other main entrance has a quaint stone bridge but no signage. Once inside, you will need at least a half hour to find another exit.

donated 110 acres of land to the county. The park was the first project developed by Adrian Barnes and Charles Crandon.

Newest feature at Greynolds is the renovation of its sizable boathouse, near The Mound, which was dedicated on June 13. By “boats” the house refers to kayaks and canoes, which can be rented between 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. No

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Continued on page 37

GREYNOLDS PARK

Park Rating

17530 W. Dixie Hwy.
North Miami Beach
305-945-3425
Hours: Sunrise to sunset
Picnic tables: Yes
Barbecues: Yes
Picnic pavilions: Yes
Tennis courts: No
Athletic fields: Yes
Night lighting: Yes
Swimming pool: No
Playground: Yes
Special features: Golf course, campground, canoe rental

Wild Things

Continued from page 36

fishing is allowed within the park.

This giant cottage is composed of an attractive, sturdy mixture of coral rock and timber. The central mess hall or meeting room is where campers gather to grab popsicles and listen to scary stories.

Speaking of campers, the park is crawling with them. There are kids playing tug-o-war on The Mound, hit-

This park is ideal for a picnic. Some areas overlook the water, some peer into the woods, and some let you watch your kids on the playground.

ting the playground at the Mahogany Picnic Area, and getting back to nature at Camp Manatee. The park is one of six in the county that runs a camp program for children with disabilities, continuing until August 14. There is even a golf camp for Miami's young Tigers.

Back at the front gate, turn way from

the cereal-munching turtles to find a shady pathway leading into the woods. Soon you will come upon the charming covered wooden bridge, offering one of several vistas over the river and the lagoon. Across the water stands the two-story Lagoon Shelter, where large BBQ pits beckon for a big family cookout.

Jogging is popular along this trail, and a marked Mangrove Walk takes you deeper into the woods. Another trail, past the boathouse and near the playground,

takes you into a hardwood hammock. These woods are what South Florida used to look like.

Scattered around the park are some large sculptures. Markers could not be found, so their titles are up to your imagination. Look for *Curvy Hairdo*, *Square Jaws*, and *Happy Plane Crash*.

The main problem with this park, besides a lack of signage, is the same problem at every park in the Miami-Dade County system. Dogs are not allowed. My dog was chastised for not realizing this rule, a rule that makes little sense in a place with hundreds of acres and thousands of iguanas.



Family-friendly bike paths and hiking trails weave through the park for miles.

For families without dogs, though, this park is ideal for a picnic. The Oak Grove Picnic Area is a simple collection of benches under live oak trees, located in between the golf course and

the visitor's center. If beach volleyball is your game, try picnic areas near the north entrance. Some picnic areas overlook the water, some peer into the woods, and some let you watch your kids on the playground. Take your pick.

The other main activity here is wandering. By car you can wander down Palm Drive, where a cluster of towering Royal Palms peer down at you like giants. From here you can access the Oleta River Nature Trail.

Or wander by the golf course and into the bird rookery, where you might spy a flock of ibis or a single osprey. Here is where the saltwater crocodile has been spotted, but don't hold your breath looking for one. Instead beware of stepping on an iguana.

Greynolds is a great park, simply because of its size and its natural assets. Its major shortcoming, obvious in the summer, is no place to swim — especially with so much water around. But significant shade trees and breezes from the water help to keep things bearable. The Indians who discovered this land could stand the heat, and you can too.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Into the Vortex of Family

Remember me? Before you had kids, we were friends

By Jenni Person
BT Contributor

I remember when I first met my partner almost 15 years ago, all I wanted to do was be with him. Any time not working was spent in his arms or doing things together, including socializing and keeping up with a busy calendar of engaging parties, get-togethers, and events. But I had a couple of friends who would say to me: “Can we make a date to do something, just you and me? Like it used to be?” I tried to oblige.

But the truth was, my social life changed when I met someone with whom I wanted to spend the rest of my life. Of course I maintained my independent identity, but I was most happy and content just being with my *besher*, a Yiddish word that can most closely be translated as destiny. We quickly became engaged and about a year and a half after first laying eyes on each other, we were married.

We moved a lot for the next seven years, continuing to make new friends. And then came Goldi. New friendships with other parents emerged from baby/family-related things like Torah Tykes, a kid-centered community we forged at Temple Israel. And then came Izzi, born right into our existing social network of breeders and our glorious and more diverse extended community, which includes folks from all walks of life: single, married, kids, no kids, gay, straight, single parents, divorced parents — you name it.

But now it seems that one of the many challenges of being a parent is maintaining friendships with people who don't have kids. In my life there are



people without kids who simply blend into our family and function as another adult, another set of eyes, another person — like a grandparent, uncle, or aunt — to whom we send photos of the kids' antics and adventures, or invite to the school play.

I've written here about the extraordinary role of “Uncle Mitch” in our family's life. As a refresher, Uncle Mitch is a friend who pinch-hits for us with school pick-ups, on date night, at karate, and is often at our table for any old meal and for family gatherings and holidays. But then there are the folks who aren't as intimately involved and for whom the fact that we have kids is more complicated.

Perhaps you can relate to the experience of expanding your embrace around friends who don't necessarily need or want to be around your kids. It's tough,

especially for parents who work. We basically want to spend any nonworking awake time surrounded by the family.

I have one friend who simply is not a kid person. We've been close for nearly 20 years, a friendship dating way back to when I was single, rushing home to no one. When we make plans these days, we very laboriously work around my kids. She's actually perfectly fine hanging out at my house while Goldi and Izzi play in the background, but she steers clear of most events we host involving other families. And her real preference is solo-Jenni time. And of course I enjoy — and on some level *need* — the opportunity to have social one-on-one time with an adult friend who knows me as more than a mom. But it does feel very fragile, as if too much exposure to my mommy life would send this friend running in the other direction.

And then there's the kind of friend who is so kid-friendly she doesn't want to be *without* your kids. Until recently I had a close friend who fit that description. She was extremely generous with my kids, and fit into our family much like Uncle Mitch, treating Goldi and Izzi like family as she bestowed gifts from her long distance locale, traveled with us, and spent some holidays with us. She had been my closest friend for more than 20 years, although after college, always living in a different city. When I told her I'd become engaged, she said, “I can't believe you're marrying someone I've never met!”

That may have been the beginning of the end. But we stayed close and I even pulled myself away from my beloved on many occasions over the years to visit or travel with her. But then Goldi came along and my life changed. I was less mobile, not only because traveling with a kid and all their gear is a pain, but because I was nesting as I grew my family.

By the time Izzi was toddling, my friend began to complain about me seeming distracted, too busy, and about always having to visit me with no reciprocation. When I pointed out that I now required two and then three airfares to visit her, I heard a litany of reasons why I could afford it or that I should take a break and come by myself. Or in the most uncomfortable of responses, my friend offered to pay for my travel. But what she never grasped was my lack of time. Or that any available time I might have is time I want to spend as a family. It's hard enough to barely see your kids

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Continued on page 39

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COLUMNISTS: KIDS AND THE CITY

Family

Continued from page 38

and partner all week while you're working. Those fleeting weekend hours are prime time for being a family.

Now I have a new friend who has no kids. And she very much wants to be a family, with a partner. But she is working on the family solo for now, and unfortunately is challenged by fertility issues. She accepts me for the mommy I am and understands that even if they're

just playing in the background, I do need and want to be around my kids.

She is also very aware that everyone has their own problems and issues, so while there is a brief nod to "Well, at least

you *have* kids," any frustrations can be freely and naturally expressed.

It's hard enough to barely see your kids and partner all week while you're working. Those fleeting weekend hours are prime time for being a family.

And she is forthcoming about her unencumbered life: free to take risks that

don't affect anyone else and free to make plans without considering the needs of three other people. She

is happy to hang out at my house, talk to my kids. Recently we even braved Ikea

together with kids in tow. That takes a lot of patience. But afterward I felt badly. I wondered if I should I have made the Ikea date at a time when my partner could have stayed with the kids. And I wondered if imposing my motherhood on her is really like salt on a wound. But then I'm assuming she'd much just rather want to hang out with her friend Jenni and have deep, uninterrupted, adult conversations.

It's a delicate balance.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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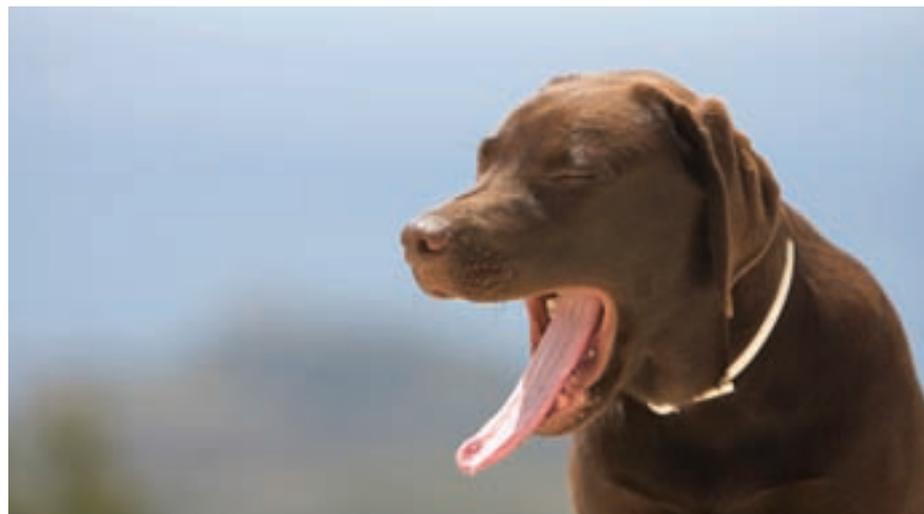
Lisa Hartman
BT Contributor

The readers of *Biscayne Times* and "Pawsitively Pets" have spoken! So this month I am answering your questions on behavior and problem-solving. Below are two of the e-mails I received recently. The first is from Sharon O., who asks:

Hi, Lisa. Here's a question I have pondered for a while: My dog yawns a lot, and often times it seems to me, inappropriately. She yawns, yes, when she is tired, but also when we are in training class, when we are driving down the street, when we are about to pull into my sisters house — replete with children and dogs and more. I suspect that yawning in dogs is a lot of things: boredom, excitement, tension. Is this correct? And is there negativity in it? Am I doing something wrong so that she feels she needs to yawn so often? Or am I just a very boring person looking for an excuse? Thank you for the opportunity to ask!

Thanks for writing, Sharon. Great question! I am sure you are *not* a very boring person, so stop worrying about that.

Yes, dogs yawn for a variety of reasons, but they mainly yawn from being tired or bored or because they are under some sort of stress. Yawning is considered a "calming signal," or a stress signal, as is lip-licking, shaking off, looking away or ignoring you, and sneezing. It is a signal that the dog is stressed, or she could be using yawns to calm something or someone in her environment. Without meeting with your



dog in person, it would be hard for me to say for sure.

Try to be aware of what is going on in her world. For example, if you are in a training class that uses harsh or primitive techniques (leash pops, physically holding dogs down on the floor on their side, prong collars, and so on), it will be stressful. In fact just being in a class for an hour with other dogs and owners is already a lot to deal with for the animal — and human.

Maybe you need to work a little farther away from the other dogs.

Riding in the car may be exciting for her, or maybe the vibration of the car makes her a bit queasy. Perhaps she knows she will soon be near your sister's little kids. Kids are scary for most dogs, with their

squealing and quick movements. Children should be taught to give dogs their space. In any case, she may be involuntarily telling you something.

I have noticed that certain breeds seem to use some signals more than others. For example, Dalmatians seem to shake off and sneeze more. I watched almost every Dalmatian do this at the Dalmatian National Specialty show before their "down and back" routines

(trot away and toward the judge). I have not seen any data yet about breed-specific signals, it is just my observation.

My Dalmatian seems to favor the "look away/ignore" behavior if he is not learning a new trick we are practicing, even when trained positively. Sometimes it is

"Am I doing something wrong so that she feels she needs to yawn so often? Or am I just a very boring person looking for an excuse?"

just too much to think about for him, or I may not be rewarding his tries enough to keep down his frustration.

Another note about training classes. I have witnessed a number of dogs in group-training classes stuck in a Catch 22: The dog is obviously stressed about practicing "heel" or some other command the owner is barking at him, so he looks away and yawns. The class trainer tells the owner the dog is not paying attention and to correct it, usually with a leash pop or yelling. The dog is now more stressed and looks away/yawns even more, or stops to scratch himself and is corrected/punished again. It's a vicious cycle.

Does your dog have allergies or some trouble getting air for some medical or structural reason? This too could possibly make her more apt to yawn.

Of course, you may just need to add a nap into her schedule.

Deborah Q. asks: *I understand why dogs mark outside, but why does my male dog mark in the house?*

Deborah, I am sorry for your problem. Dogs mark for a variety of reasons — to mark territory, to say that "Rocky was here" because there is already another scent there. Your dog probably doesn't see a reason to discriminate where he performs this natural behavior. And while unaltered males are the predominant markers, many neutered males and their female counterparts can keep up with them. (My little Crested female learned marking by watching her big brother.) House marking also happens a lot when two males live together. The bottom line is, dogs mark because *that's what dogs do*.

But marking outside is one thing, while

Continued on page 41

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Why?

Continued from page 40

marking inside the house is quite another. Yuk! You will have to address the problem from different angles. First, you need to get rid of the scent already in the house. They say vinegar is one of the only things that works well. If the dog has marked on carpeted areas, this will be a bit trickier to clean. But it must be done.

In addition, you must be around to catch him and stop him before he

marks. Each and every time. Usually saying a quick "Ah ha!" or sharp "Hey!" will suffice. But you must always be supervising him so you do not miss an opportunity to stop him. On the flip side, you must manage him during times you cannot watch. Crating him so he does not have the opportunity to mark would be a good idea.

If you have two males in the house, the same applies for both. Supervise all

interactions. If they are not neutered, you may want to think about doing so, as this

Marking outside is one thing, while marking inside the house is quite another. Yuk! First, you need to get rid of the scent already in the house.

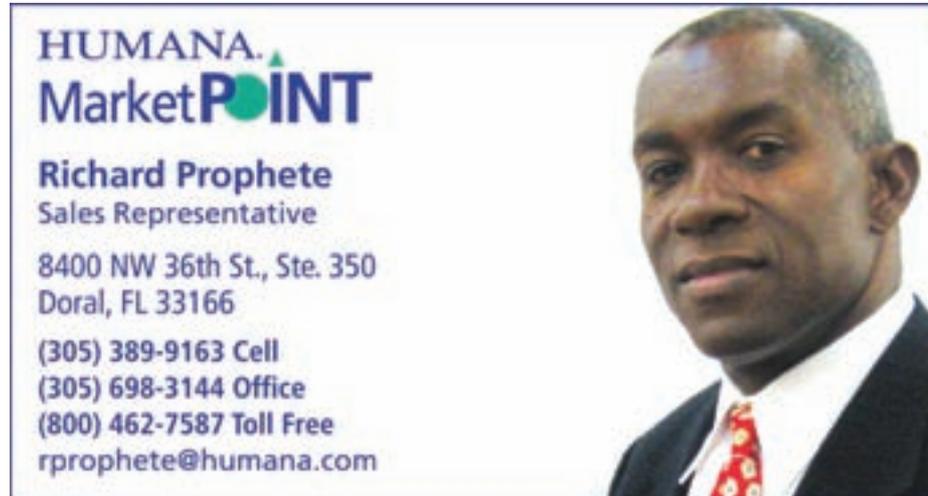
many times takes the edge off and also curbs a variety of behavior problems,

including dog-on-dog aggression and reactivity.

Have a training or behavior question you would like answered? Write to me. Your question may just show up in this column!

Lisa Hartman is head dog trainer for Pawsitively Pets. You can reach her at pawsitivelypetsonline@yahoo.com or www.pawsitivelypetsonline.com.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com




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Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Home Invasion Purse Snatch

300 Block NE 75th Street

It's one thing to leave your purse in a shopping cart then walk away, but it's quite another when it happens at home. This poor victim arrived to the sanctuary of her home and placed her purse on her kitchen table. She walked away, happened to glance at the wall mirror, and was horrified to see a strange man grab her purse and run out the front door. She bravely followed and saw the man get into the passenger side of silver car with a license plate number of either 4B4LUV or 484LUV. No love loss here, but those vanity plates will be easy to spot. Be on the lookout for stalking silver cars.

Strange Case of the Damp Suitcase

1700 Block of N. Bayshore Drive

Victim went to the closet to get his bag when he noticed that the bag was wet. The area surrounding the bag was also wet. This happened at a hotel, so the manager was called. Unfortunately there is no video of a possible intruder entering the room and no indication what the "wet substance" might be. However, the closet is right next to the bathroom.

Crooks Leave a Little Something Behind

3000 Block NE 2nd Avenue

Suspects broke into victim's building through a back window and ransacked the entire apartment, turning furniture upside down and raiding the refrigerator. They stole several items. To make matters worse, at least one of the suspects defecated on the bathroom floor. Not in the toilet. On the floor. It is unknown if DNA samples were taken.

A Criminal's Moral Justification

200 Block NE 82nd Street

Police responded to a report of a burglary in progress. Luckily an officer was right around the block. When the house was approached, the suspect was caught in the act and was told to come out through the window. He did as ordered and was arrested immediately, to which



he responded, "No one lives there. I was just looking for something to steal."

Killer K9

3000 Block of NE 2nd Avenue

A gated window had been pried open and broken as a burglar made his way inside a business. Alarms had gone off and police responded and set up a perimeter. Undeterred, the thief ran anyway, dashing between the police vehicles. However, a K9 unit had been dispatched near the edge of the perimeter. When the thug saw that, he stopped in his tracks and screamed, "You got me! You got me! Please don't let the dog bite me!" He was arrested before the dog had a chance to take a chomp.

Are Criminals Really This Dumb?

2000 Block of N. Bayshore Drive

With the bad economy, amateurs have spurred a crime wave. This hapless criminal tried to land a big score but wound up in a condo's trash room. Security guards forced the door closed, trapping him inside the dirty, skanky room while police were summoned. The would-be criminal's female lookout was detained as her male friend rolled around in filthy garbage. When he was arrested, the man blurted out: "I was only trespassing!"

Are Victims Really This Dumb?

7800 Block of N. Bayshore Drive

The victim operates a business — selling laptop computers — out of his apartment.

A customer had come in and was interested in purchasing one. The customer asked the proprietor if he could take the laptop outside so he could get a better view. (Perhaps he was a narcissist and wanted to look at his reflection in the screen?) Unfathomably, the victim (okay, let's be honest: the idiot) let him take it outside. He never returned. However, the victim did say he could identify the thief. Good luck!

Clearing Tables — Literally

5500 NE 4th Ct.

A woman enjoyed a great dinner the News Lounge, but inadvertently left her i-Phone on the table. (Thankfully it was one of the earlier models.) She returned and found it was gone. From another phone she called her own number. A raspy voice answered and said he would return the phone for a fee. The woman obtained a list of numbers dialed from her phone since the theft and showed it to News Lounge management. One of the numbers belonged to an employee, a busboy. Restaurant security questioned him, but he changed his story three times during the interview. The i-Phone is still missing. The fate of the busboy who really knows how to clear a table is unknown.

Lost in Translation

Design District

Sometimes police reports are either unclear or so ridiculous they defy comprehension — and logic. According to this police report, a woman took off

her \$8000 diamond earrings and placed them on the hood of her vehicle. (What?) At this time a diamond aficionado (Biscayne Corridor sleazebag) approached her and started some sort of asinine conversation. Shortly afterward the earrings, of course, were gone. (Huh?)

In Jail for a Buck and a Quarter

1000 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

A neighborhood lush attempted to leave a gas station food court with a can of beer, though apparently with no intention of paying for it. A parked police car was in front and an officer entered the store. The stumbling, tipsy man placed the can in his pocket and walked to the other aisle. He then placed the can, he thought inconspicuously, on a rack with potato chips. This did not fool the cop as he was arrested on the spot. The booze was returned to the refrigerator and the chips remained dry. The cost of the beer: \$1.29.

He Finally Did It

7100 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

The victim was awakened by a man standing over him in his bedroom, but was relieved when he realized it was only "Tattoo Mike," a former tenant. (Ex-tenants are welcome to trespass in his home?) He escorted Tattoo Mike to the door and told him not to come back. Several hours later, the landlord realized his television was missing. When police arrived to create the required report, the victim stated it was "probably" Tattoo Mike since he has "always" made threats to steal the television. Must be some television.

Fast Food Rage

200 Block of NE 62nd Street

The store manager at a fast food establishment admonished one of her employees for working too slowly. The employee flipped (not the burgers) then ripped off his uniform and threw it into the deep fryer. He then took his headset off and did the same. Uniform and headset were destroyed as the now terminated employee (we can assume) ran out the front door. Next stop the Golden Arches?

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Ants and Plants

Hollow limbs make for cozy homes — if you're very, very small

By Jeff Shimonski
BT Contributor

If you have ever pruned a *Triplaris* tree, you will notice that no matter how small the branches, they have hollow centers. Many other species of trees and shrubs that we grow here at Jungle Island also have branches with hollow sections, *Cecropia* (sometimes called yarumo or pumpwood) and *Clerodendrum* (Glory Bower) immediately come to mind. If you look further to other types of plants, there are orchids like *Schomburgkia* with hollow pseudo-bulbs and some *Epidendrum* species with hollow stems. There are epiphytic bromeliads like some *Tillandsia* species that form bulb-like rosettes.

What do all of these different species of plants with their hollow plant parts have in common? They are all myrmecophilic, or ant plants. They all have some kind of beneficial relationship with one or several particular species of ants.

I learned many years ago to be very careful what plants I grabbed or held onto while I was hiking through tropical forests. Touch or brush against the wrong plant and hundreds or even thousands of aggressive, biting or stinging ants would come out of the hollow stems and trunks to attack you. The beneficial relationship between ants and plants can be quite complicated, but usually it is based upon a favorable home for the ants and protection for the plants. Fortunately, it so far appears that these types of aggressive ant species have not relocated here in South Florida to inhabit their favorite plant species — so far.

One other interesting benefit that ants provide to many species of plants is dispersal of their seeds. This we see every day. Have you ever wondered how certain species of plants seem to grow in the most unlikely places, and how did they ever get there? The *Ficus* genus is notable for strangling other trees and growing high up on rock walls and the concrete embankments of expressways. Those seeds were brought there by ants.

A fig or ficus fruit, if it was pollinated, sometimes can contain hundreds of seeds. These seeds get dispersed by many different species of animals, from monkeys to birds. The seeds get passed intact by the animal and are deposited in one compact little pile. Now, this would not be a very efficient way for a plant to disperse its seeds, because upon germination all those little ficus plants would have to compete with each other and most would not survive.

It just so happens that the tiny seeds have a carbohydrate coating that ants like to eat. The ants carry the seeds to their nests and eat the coating, leaving the seed intact and unharmed. Some of the seeds germinate to eventually strangle other trees or dismantle expressways.

Some of the stranger and more horticulturally interesting groups of ant plants hail from Southeast Asia. These are the tuberous epiphytes, *Hydnophytum* and *Myrmecodia*. They are found growing in



The beautiful flowers of the Ant Tree, *Triplaris cumingiana*.

BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

of a very hot rock cliff in full sun in Sarawak, Malaysia. These *Dischidia*, some of which are called shingle plants, will grow very well in South Florida if protected from temperatures in the low 50s.

Hydnophytum and *Myrmecodia* grow very easily from seed. They should be kept in clay pots with excellent drainage or grown on wood or coconut panels. It is likely too cold in winter here to plant them onto the trunks of trees.

These are great conversation plants to have on a hot and sunny balcony or patio. Both genera have the same bulbous bases and get about the same size but are still distinct enough to tell apart without getting too technical. The *Hydnophytum* have smooth bases and the *Myrmecodia* have spiny bases. There are many different species of *Dischidia* that we can also grow here, and of course some species are easier to grow than others. All of them are very unusual-looking and most have quite interesting flowers.

I have never seen ants here in South Florida taking advantage of the living quarters provided by these epiphytic ant plants, other than the occasional wandering individual, so don't worry about attracting ants to your home garden if you decide to grow these horticultural gems.

Jeff Shimonski is an ISA-certified municipal arborist, director of horticulture at Jungle Island, and principal of Tropical Designs of Florida. Contact him at jeff@tropicaldesigns.com.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

very nutrient-poor areas. Their tuberous bases can get quite large and are full of tunnels and cavities. It is in these cavities that ants live. Ants not being the greatest of housekeepers, much debris begins to accumulate and decompose in the tunnels. This becomes a great source of nutrients for the "ant plants," as they are commonly known.

Other epiphytic species that harbor and utilize ants in this part of the world are species of ferns like *Lecanopteris* (known simply as ant ferns), and the very interesting and diminutive succulent vines, *Dischidia*. Photos of this diverse group of epiphytes can be seen on my Website www.MalaysiaFlora.com in the gallery section titled Ant Plants. I photographed these plants on the top

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Dining Guide

RESTAURANT LISTINGS

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 197.

NEW THIS MONTH

MIAMI

BRICKELL / DOWNTOWN

Andú

141 SW 7th St.
786-871-7005

www.andurestaurant.com

This space's futuristic fairyland décor, highlighted by hanging glass pendants, makes it popular as a stylish hangout as much as a restaurant – and loungers are rewarded with a bar menu ranging from the traditional (zataar-spiked hummus) to the trendy (artichoke purée with feta); calamari with Meyer lemon brown butter is especially recommended. Tip: While entrées and sides on the changing main menu are also mostly Mediterranean, some of the kitchen's best shots stretch the concept considerably. So don't miss the fries with chipotle/Key lime aioli. \$\$\$

Eos

485 Brickell Ave. (Viceroy Hotel)
305-503-0373

Unlike their Michelin-starred New Adriatic restaurant Anthos, in Manhattan, this venture of chef Michael Psilakis and restaurateur Donatella Arpaia has influences ranging way beyond Greece to the whole Mediterranean region, and even Latin America. Unchanged is Psilakis' solid creativity, and a beautiful sense of balance that makes even very unfamiliar combinations taste accessible. So skip the safe stuff and go for the

luxuriantly custardy, egg yolk-enriched lobster and sea urchin risotto, or any raw seafood item, especially the unique marlin with pistachio, apricot, and house-cured speck. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

MIAMI

MIDTOWN / WYNWOOD / DESIGN DISTRICT

The Grrrlz of Sandwich

555 NE 15th St., 2nd floor (Venetia condo)
305-374-4305

Riot Grrrl DIY spirit shines in the homemade soups, sweets, salads, and exceptionally tasty warm baguette sandwiches (like prosciutto and fresh mozzarella, dressed with a unique sumac vinaigrette) at this concealed café, hidden on the Venetia condo's mezzanine. Owners Ana Oliva and Fadia Sarkis scour local markets daily for the freshest of ingredients, and their breads (plus light-crusted empanadas and sinful Ghirardelli chocolate cake) are all baked in-house. On Saturdays the grrrls'll even deliver you an elegant (yet inexpensive) breakfast in bed. \$

MIAMI

UPPER EASTSIDE

Fish Corner

5555 NE 2nd Ave.
305-757-5056

Inexpensive yet impeccable fish dishes have been the specialty at this casual eatery since it was opened, in late 2008, by Cuban-American owners whose day jobs, as seafood

wholesalers, ensured freshness. There have been recent changes, like a cafeteria counter to accommodate rushed lunchers, but no compromises in quality. The Arroz Amarillo con Mariscos behind the glass doesn't get topped with precision-cooked seafood till the last minute. The Minuta sandwich is a whole yellowtail (served tail-on, as proof). And there's still no permanent menu, because here, catches of the day really do change daily. \$-\$\$

One Sumo

7281 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-7866

The concept here is fast-food Fitness – capital "F" intended. In fact, though some call this minimalist space a smoothie joint, its numerous drink blends (categorized by function – prework-out, low-glycemic, kid-pleasers, and more, all fruit-sweetened without added sugars) are deliberately termed shakes to differentiate them from not-necessarily healthy smoothies. Additionally there's solid sustenance that goes beyond standard gym snacks: Asian-inspired rice or low-carb salad plates, topped with freshly flash-griddled beef, chicken, seafood, or veggie teriyakis. \$\$-\$\$

Bistro 82

8201 Biscayne Blvd., 305-403-2995

As with Latin American food, much Middle Eastern restaurant fare blurs borders, making it hard to pinpoint individual countries' culinary characteristics. Here, though, national identity is strong. Virtually all dishes, from savory falafel to sweet k'nafeh (a traditional cheese breakfast pastry that doubles as dessert), are crafted from the authentic Lebanese recipes of owner Mona Issa's mom. Casually exotic décor makes the spot dateworthy too, especially on Saturday nights when belly dancing is featured. \$\$

NORTH MIAMI

The Bridge

2286 NE 123rd St.
305-891-8282

Since the original Mark's Place, eateries in this space have come and gone rapidly, but with 18 successful restaurants in Uruguay, The Bridge's owners have confidence in their winning formula. Prices are affordable; ambiance is warm; cocktails are formidable. And food is a crowd-pleasing mix of continental and Latin steakhouse fare: an entrana with fries for traditionalists; a pork chop with strawberry sauce, apple mash, and glazed carrots for more elegant tastes. Note: The chivito sandwich here (tenderloin steak, bacon, ham, melted cheese, and olives on a baguette) may be Miami's most satisfying sinful pleasure. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

Racks Italian Bistro and Market

3933 NE 163rd St. (Intracoastal Mall), 305-917-7225

The complexity of the Racks concept makes a sound-bite description impossible. It's part Italian market, with salumi, cheeses, and other artisan products plus take-out prepared foods; part enoteca (wine bar, featuring snacks like addictive Portobello fritti with truffle aioli, especially enjoyable on the waterfront deck); part ristorante (pastas and other Big Food); part pizzeria. What's important: All components feel and taste authentically Italian. Just don't miss the coal-oven pizza. Superior toppings (including unusually zesty tomato sauce) plus an astonishingly light yet chewy crust make Racks' pies a revelation. \$\$

MIAMI

Brickell / Downtown

Restaurant listings for the BT Dining Guide are written by Pamela Robin Brandt. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, but restaurants frequently change menus, chefs, and operating hours, so please call ahead to confirm information. Icons (\$\$\$) represent estimates for a typical meal without wine, tax, or tip. Hyphenated icons (\$-\$\$\$) indicate a significant range in prices between lunch and dinner menus, or among individual items on those menus.

\$= \$10 and under

\$\$= \$20

\$\$\$= \$30

\$\$\$\$= \$40

\$\$\$\$\$= \$50 and over

Abokado

900 S. Miami Ave., 305-347-3700
www.abokadosushi.com

Hamachi chiles rellenos? Shiso leaf "nachos" topped with raw spicy tuna, kaiware sprouts, and other Asian ingredients? The Viva, a sushi roll that starts with standard Japanese (spicy tuna, cucumber, avocado), adds Latin sabor (jalapeño, cilantro), wraps it in a flour tortilla, and garnishes it with heat (spicy snow crab mix)? Miami hasn't tended to initiate too many food "firsts," but this Japanese/Pan-Latin fusion place is surely one. Prices are higher than at neighborhood sushi spots, but in keeping with Abokado's Mary Brickell Village neighbors. \$\$\$

Acqua

1435 Brickell Ave., Four Seasons Hotel
305-381-3190

Originally an Italian/Mediterranean restaurant, this comfortably elegant, upscale spot switched chefs in 2006, resulting in a complete menu renovation. Thailand's famed sense of culinary balance is now evident throughout the global (though primarily Asian or Latin American-inspired) menu, in dishes like yuzu/white soya-dressed salad of shrimp tempura, a tender pork shank glazed with spicy Szechuan citrus sauce, or lunchtime's rare tuna burger with lively wasabi aioli and wakame salad. For dessert few chocoholics can resist a buttery-crusted tart filled with sinfully rich warm chocolate custard. \$\$\$

Area 31

270 Biscayne Boulevard Way
305-524-5234; www.area31restaurant.com

Not that the sleek interior of this seafood restaurant (named for

fishing area 31, stretching from the Carolinas to South America) isn't a glamorous dining setting. But we'd eat outside. From the expansive terrace of the Epic condo and hotel on the Miami River, the views of Brickell's high-rises actually make Miami look like a real city. It's hard to decide whether the eats or drinks are the most impressive. The food is impeccably fresh regional fish, prepared in a clean Mediterranean-influenced style. The cocktails are genuinely creative. Luckily you don't have to choose one or the other. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Azul

500 Brickell Key Dr., 305-913-8254

Floor-to-ceiling picture windows showcase Biscayne Bay. But diners are more likely to focus on the sparkling raw bar and open kitchen, where chef Clay Conley crafts imaginative global creations – many of them combinations, to satisfy those who want it all. One offering, "A Study in Tuna," includes tuna sashimi, Maine crab, avocado tempura, and caviar, with several Asian sauces. Moroccan lamb is three preparations (grilled chop, harissa-marinated loin, and bastilla, the famed savory-sweet Middle Eastern pastry, stuffed with braised shank. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Bali Café

109 NE 2nd Ave., 305-358-5751

While Indonesian food isn't easy to find in Miami, downtown has secret stashes – small joints catering to cruise-ship and construction workers. This cute, exotically decorated café has survived and thrived for good reason. The homey cooking is delicious, and the friendly family feel encourages even the timid of palate to try something new. Novices will want Indonesia's

signature rijsttafel, a mix-and-match collection of small dishes and condiments to be heaped on rice. Note: bring cash. No plastic accepted here. \$\$\$

The Bar at Level 25 (Conrad Hotel)

1395 Brickell Ave., 305-503-6500

On the Conrad's 25th floor, The Bar's picture-windowed space is not just a watering hole with panoramic views. At lunch it's an elegant sandwich bar; at night it's a raw bar (with pristine coldwater oysters) and (best) a tapas bar serving pintxos. That's just the Basque word for tapas, but here there's nothing mere about the generously portioned small plates. They range from traditional items like cod fish equixada and saffron-sautéed Spanish artichokes to inventive inspirations like foie gras and goat cheese-stuffed empanadas. \$\$\$

Blu Pizzeria e Cucina

900 S. Miami Ave. (Mary Brickell Village)
305-381-8335; www.blurestaurantsgroup.com

If the super-sleek interior is too formal for you, opt for a casual patio table while studying the menu over an order of warm gnocchetti bread sticks, or creamy-centered suppli alla romana (porcini-studded tomato and mozzarella rice croquettes). The place looks upscale, but prices of even the fanciest entrées don't exceed \$20. The fare is wide-ranging, but you can't go wrong with one of the thin-crusted, brick-oven pizzas, whether a traditional margherita or inventive asparagi e granchi (with lump crab, lobster cream, mozzarella, and fresh asparagus). \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Continued on page 45

DINING GUIDE

Restaurant Listings

Continued from page 44

Café Sambal

500 Brickell Key Dr.

305-913-8358; www.mandarinoriental.com/miami

Though the Mandarin Oriental Hotel describes this space as its "casual hotel restaurant," many consider it a more spectacular dining setting than the upscale Azul, upstairs, owing to the option of dining outdoors on a covered terrace directly on the waterfront. The food is Asian-inspired, with a few Latin and Mediterranean accents. For the health-conscious, the menu includes low-cal choices. For hedonists there's a big selection of artisan sakes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$

Miami's Finest Caribbean Restaurant

236 NE 1st Ave., 305-381-9254

Originally from Jamaica, proprietor Miss Pat has been serving her traditional homemade island specialties to downtown office workers and college students since the early 1990s. Most popular item here might be the weekday lunch special of jerk chicken with festival (sweet-fried cornmeal bread patties), but even vegetarians are well served with dishes like a tofu, carrot, and chayote curry. All entrées come with rice and peas, fried plantains, and salad, so no one leaves hungry. \$

Dolores, But You Can Call Me Lolita

1000 S. Miami Ave., 305-403-3103

www.doloreslolita.com

It's hard to figure why a Mediterranean/Latin restaurant (with Asian touches) would be named after a line in a 1950s novel about a New England pedophile. But everything else about this casually stylish spot is easy to understand — and easy on the wallet. All entrées cost either \$18 or \$23, a price that includes an appetizer — no low-rent crapola, either, but treats like Serrano ham croquetas, a spinach/leek tart with Portobello mushroom sauce, or shrimp-topped eggplant timbales. The best seats are on the rooftop patio. \$\$\$

Fresco California Bistro

1744 SW 3rd Ave., 305-858-0608

This festively decorated indoor/outdoor bistro packs a lot of party spirit into a small space, a large variety of

food onto its menu. To the familiar Latin American/Italian equation, the owners add a touch of Cal-Mex (like Tex-Mex but more health conscious). Menu offerings range from designer pizzas and pastas to custardy tamales, but the bistro's especially known for imaginative meal-size salads, like one featuring mandarin oranges, avocado, apple, blue cheese, raisins, candied pecans, and chicken on a mesclun bed. \$\$

Garcia's Seafood Grille and Fish Market

398 NW N. River Dr., 305-375-0765

Run by a fishing family for a couple of generations, this venerable Florida fish shack is the real thing. No worries about the seafood's freshness; on their way to the dining deck overlooking the Miami River, diners can view the retail fish market. Best preparations are the simplest. When stone crabs are in season, Garcia's claws are as good as Joe's but considerably cheaper. The local fish sandwich is most popular — grouper, yellowtail snapper, or mahi mahi. \$\$\$

Grimpa Steakhouse

901 Brickell Plaza, 305-455-4757

www.grimpa.com

This expansive indoor/outdoor Brazilian eatery is sleekly contemporary, but no worries. The classic sword-wielding gauchos are here, serving a mind-reeling assortment of skewered beef, chicken, lamb, pork, sausages, and fish. And included in the price (dinner \$47, lunch \$34) is the traditional belly-busting buffet of hot and cold prepared foods, salad, cold cuts, and cheeses. A pleasant, nontraditional surprise: unusual sauces like sweet/tart passion fruit or mint, tomato-based BBQ, and mango chutney, along with the ubiquitous chimichurri. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$

Il Gabbiano

335 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-373-0063

www.ilgabbianomiami.com

Its location at the mouth of the Miami River makes this ultra-upscale Italian spot (especially the outdoor terrace) the perfect power lunch/business dinner alternative to steakhouses. And the culinary experience goes way beyond the typical meat market, thanks in part to the flood of freebies that's a trademark of Manhattan's Il Mulino, originally run by Il Gabbiano's owners. The rest of the food? Pricy, but portions are mammoth. And

the champagne-cream-sauced housemade ravioli with black truffles? Worth every penny. \$\$\$

Indochine

638 S. Miami Ave.

305-379-1525; www.indochinebistro.com

Indochine has succeeded by morphing from mere restaurant into hip hangout. Copious special events draw everyone from downtown business types to the counterculture crowd. Not that there's anything "mere" about the range of food served from three Asian nations. Light eaters can snack on Vietnamese summer rolls or Japanese sushi rolls. For bigger appetites, there are Thai curries and Vietnamese specialties like pho, richly flavored beef soup with meatballs, steak slices, rice noodles, and add-in Asian herbs and sprouts. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Iron Sushi

120 SE 3rd Ave., 305-373-2000

(See Miami Shores listing)

La Loggia Ristorante and Lounge

68 W. Flagler St.

305-373-4800; www.laloggia.org

This luxuriantly neo-classical yet warm Italian restaurant was unquestionably a pioneer in revitalizing downtown. With alternatives like amaretto-tinged pumpkin agnolotti in sage butter sauce and cilantro-spiced white bean/vegetable salad dressed with truffle oil, proprietors Jennifer Porciello and Horatio Oliveira continue to draw a lunch crowd that returns for dinner, or perhaps just stays on through the afternoon, fueled by the Lawyer's Liquid Lunch, a vodka martini spiked with sweetened espresso. \$\$\$

La Moon

144 SW 8th St., 305-860-6209

At four in the morning, nothing quells the munchies like a Crazy Burger, a Colombian take on a trucker's burger: beef patty, bacon, ham, mozzarella, lettuce, tomato, and a fried egg, with an arepa corn pancake "bun." While this tiny place's late hours (till 6:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday) are surprising, the daytime menu is more so. In addition to Colombian classics, there's a salad Nicoise with grilled fresh tuna, seared salmon with mango salsa, and other yuppie favorites. \$\$\$

Le Boudoir Brickell

188 SE 12th Terr. 305-372-2333

www.leboudoirmiami.com

At this French bakery/café, mornings start seriously, with choices ranging from quality cheese, charcuterie/pâté, or smoked salmon platters to chic Continental and complete American breakfasts. At lunch, generously salad-garnished, open-faced tartines are irresistible. But sophisticated salads and homemade soups make the choice tough. And do not skip dessert. Superb sweets include rich almond/fresh raspberry or properly tangy lemon tarts, traditional Madeleines, airy layered mousses, and addictive mini-macaroon sandwich cookies with daily-changing fillings. \$\$\$

Miami's Chophouse

300 S. Biscayne Blvd.

305-938-9000

www.mannyssteakhouse.com

Located directly opposite Prime Blue Grille, Miami's most intentionally female-friendly steakhouse (light décor, lightened dishes), is Manny's, Miami's most intentionally masculine steakhouse. Here, ensconced in your black leather booth, everything is humongous: dry-aged choice-grade steaks like the Bludgeon of Beef (a boldly flavorful 40-ounce bone-in ribeye, described as "part meat, part weapon"); king crab legs that dwarf the plate; cocktail shrimp that could swallow the Loch Ness monster whole; two-fisted cocktails that would fella a T-Rex. Not for the frail. \$\$\$

Novecento

1414 Brickell Ave., 305-403-0900

www.bistronovecento.com

For those who think "Argentine cuisine" is a synonym for "beef and more beef," this popular eatery's wide range of more cosmopolitan contemporary Argentine fare will be a revelation. Classic parrilla-grilled steaks are here for traditionalists, but the menu is dominated by creative Nuevo Latino items like a new-style ceviche de chernia (lightly lime-marinated grouper with jalapeños, basil, and the refreshing sweet counterpoint of watermelon), or crab ravioli with creamy saffron sauce. Especially notable are the entrée salads. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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The BRIDGE RESTAURANT
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By Bill Citara
BT Contributor

Over there it's considered one of the world's great wines, made in styles ranging from bone dry to syrupy sweet, capable of aging for decades, and a delightful companion to all manner of foods.

Over here it's considered — well, it's hardly considered at all, is typically made in styles ranging from tasty to insipid, is capable of aging for days, even weeks, and is a delightful companion to all manner of foods — if anyone actually cared enough to buy a bottle and drink it.

That "it" would be Riesling, the national grape of Germany, renowned in Alsace, respected in Europe, and generally ignored in the U.S., where it ranks somewhere between White Zinfandel and turpentine on the enological scale. But despite the fact that most domestic Riesling seems to be consumed by people whose local 7-Eleven is out of Sprite, there are a handful of American vintners producing more complex and exciting wines — Trefethen and Stony

Hill in the Napa Valley, several wineries in New York's Finger Lakes region. Unfortunately these wines are produced in small quantities, are hard to find, and exceed our skinflint price limit.

Still, even on the other side of the tracks, where we drink, you can get some pretty good Riesling for the money. Styles range from dry to varying degrees of sweetness, offering a smoky minerality, lush floral flavors, or some combination of the two, which make it a good match with spicy Asian or Latin dishes, as well as a simple, pleasing pour at the beach or in your backyard.

Jekel Vineyards is probably one of the best California wineries you've never heard of, and its 2007 Riesling — sourced from cool-climate Monterey County vineyards best suited to the grape — was easily the best of the tasting. Smooth, elegant, with unusual complexity for the price, its creamy texture, beguiling flavors of ripe peaches and apricots, and long lemon-orange finish should make it appealing to wine phobes and philes alike.

On the drier side of the equation are a pair of New World Rieslings, the

nonvintage Pacific Rim and the 2007 Yalumba. The Pacific Rim is the antithesis of sweetish, floral Rieslings; instead it is flinty to the point of austerity with a tangy mineral edge. The Yalumba, from southern Australia, adds a bit more orange and peach fruit to the mix, giving it a Meyer lemon-like softness and backing off the minerals.

Somewhere in the middle are the 2007 Chateau Ste. Michelle and a German import, the 2007 Blitz (curious name, no?). The Ste. Michelle is very fruity, almost candied, with a bit of spritz on the palate and flavors of orange, honeysuckle, and white peach. The Blitz delivers a richer texture and



more complexity, with smoke and citrus aromas and an initial sweetness that gives way to mild lemon-lime flavors.

Sweet teeth will ache for the 2008 Petals, a low-alcohol wine (9.5 percent) from Germany with a colorful floral label. Inside is a very floral, tropically fruity wine with just enough acidity to keep it honest, a good wine for barbecues and the beach, and at \$7.99, a Riesling worth caring enough to actually buy.

The Jekel is available at the Aventura ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525) for \$10.99. The Pacific Rim and Chateau Ste. Michelle are at the North Miami Crown Wine & Spirits (12555 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-9463) for \$7.99 and \$9.99, respectively. At the North Miami Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270) are the Yalumba (\$9.99), Blitz (\$8.99), and Petals (\$7.99).

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Restaurant Listings

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Oceanaire Seafood Room

900 S. Miami Ave.
305-372-8862

www.theoceanaire.com

With a dozen branches nationwide, Oceanaire may seem more All-American seafood empire than Florida fish shack, but menus vary significantly according to regional tastes and fish. Here in Miami, chef Sean Bernal supplements signature starters like lump crab cakes with his own lightly marinated, Peruvian-style grouper ceviche. The daily-changing, 15-20 specimen seafood selection includes local fish seldom seen on local menus: pompano, parrot fish, amberjack. But even flown-in fish (and the raw bar's cold-water oysters) are ultra-fresh. \$\$\$

Pasha's

1414 Brickell Ave.
305-416-5116

The original branch on Lincoln Road was instantly popular, and the same healthy Middle Eastern fast food is served at several newer outlets. The prices are low enough that you might suspect Pasha's was a tax write-off rather than a Harvard Business School project, which it was by founders Antonio Ellek and Nicolas Cortes. Dishes range from falafel and gyros to more unusual items like muhammara (tangy walnut spread) and silky labneh yogurt cheese. Everything from pitas to lemonade is made fresh, from scratch, daily. \$\$\$

Peoples Bar-B-Que

360 NW 8th St., 305-373-8080
www.peoplesbarbque.com

Oak-smoked, falling-off-the-bone tender barbecued ribs

(enhanced with a secret sauce whose recipe goes back several generations) are the main draw at this Overtown institution. But the chicken is also a winner, plus there's a full menu of soul food entrées, including what many aficionados consider our town's tastiest souse. And it would be unthinkable to call it quits without homemade sweet potato pie or banana pudding, plus a bracing flop — half iced tea, half lemonade. \$\$\$

Perricone's

15 SE 10th St.
305-374-9449; www.perricones.com

Housed in a Revolutionary-era barn (moved from Vermont), this market/café was one of the Brickell area's first gentrified amenities. At lunch chicken salad is a favorite; dinner's strong suit is the pasta list, ranging from Grandma Jennie's old-fashioned lasagna to chichi flocchi purses filled with fresh pear and gorgonzola. And

Sunday's \$15.95 brunch buffet (\$9.95 for kids) — featuring an omelet station, waffles, smoked salmon and bagels, salads, and more — remains one of our town's most civilized all-you-can-eat deals. \$\$

Provence Grill

1001 S. Miami Ave., 305-373-1940

The cozy dining room (and even more charming outdoor terrace) evoke the south of France. But the menu of French bistro classics covers all regions: country-style pâté maison with onion jam, roasted peppers, and cornichons; steak/frites (grilled rib-eye with peppercorn cream sauce, fries, and salad); and four preparations of mussels. Deal alert: An early-bird prix-fixe menu (5:30-7:30 p.m.) offers soup or salad, entrée, dessert, and a carafe of wine for \$44 per couple. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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Restaurant Listings

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The River Oyster Bar

650 S. Miami Ave., 305-530-1915
www.therivermiami.com

This casually cool jewel is a full-service seafood spot, as evidenced by tempting menu selections like soft-shell crabs with grilled vegetables, corn relish, and remoulade. There are even a few dishes to please meat-and-potatoes diners, like short ribs with macaroni and cheese. But oyster fans will find it difficult to resist stuffing themselves silly on the unusually large selection, especially since oysters are served both raw and cooked – fire-roasted with sofrito butter, chorizo, and manchego. There's also a thoughtful wine list and numerous artisan beers on tap. \$\$\$

Rosa Mexicano

900 S. Miami Ave., 786-425-1001
www.rosamexicano.com

This expansive indoor/outdoor space offers a dining experience that's haute in everything but price. Few entrées top \$20. The décor is both date-worthy and family-friendly – festive but not kitschy. And nonsophisticates needn't fear; though nachos aren't available, there is nothing scary about zarape de pato (roast duck between freshly made, soft corn tortillas, topped with yellow-and-habane-ro-pepper cream sauce), or Rosa's signature guacamole en molcajete, made tableside. A few pomegranate margaritas ensure no worries. \$\$\$

Soya & Pomodoro

120 NE 1st St., 305-381-9511

Life is complicated. Food should be simple. That's owner Armando Alfano's philosophy, which is stated above the entry to his atmospheric downtown eatery. And since it's also the formula for the truest traditional Italian food (Alfano hails from Pompeii), it's fitting that the menu is dominated by authentically straightforward yet sophisticated Italian entrées. There are salads and sandwiches, too. The most enjoyable place to dine is the secret, open-air courtyard. Alfano serves dinner on Thursdays only to accompany local musicians and artists. \$-\$\$

Taste of Bombay

111 NE 3rd Ave., 305-358-0144

Depending mostly on the predominant nationalities of downtown construction workers at any given time, Taste of Bombay has also served sushi, Philippine, and Chinese food. Best bet, though, is the all-you-can-eat Indian buffet lunch spread, featuring six changing entrées (a mix of meat, poultry, fish, and vegetable curries) plus veggie pakoras, rice, salad, chutneys, hot naan bread, and a dessert. The place looks plain outside, but it's pleasantly exotic enough inside for a bargain business lunch. \$\$

Tobacco Road

626 S. Miami Ave., 305-374-1198
www.tobacco-road.com

Prohibition-era speakeasy (reputedly a fave of Al Capone), gay bar, strip club. Previously all these, this gritty spot has been best known since 1982 as a venue for live music, primarily blues. But it also offers food from lunchtime to late night (on weekends till 4:00 a.m.). The kitchen is especially known for its chilli, budget-priced steaks, and burgers. There's also surprisingly elegant fare, though, like a Norwegian salmon club with lemon aioli. A meat-smoker in back turns out tasty ribs. \$

Midtown / Wynwood / Design District

Adelita's Café

2699 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-1262

From the street (which is actually NE 26th, not Biscayne) this Honduran restaurant seems unpromising, but inside it's bigger, better, and busier than it looks. Unlike many Latin American eateries, this one sticks close to the source and proves a crowd-pleaser. On weekends especially, the dining rooms are packed with families enjoying authentic fare like baleadas (thick corn tacos), tajadas (Honduras's take on tostones), rich meal-in-a-bowl soups packed with seafood or meat and veggies, and more. \$

Bengal

2010 Biscayne Blvd.
305-403-1976

At this Indian eatery the décor is cool and contemporary: muted gray and earth-tone walls, tasteful burgundy banquettes. And the menu touts "Modern Indian Cuisine"

to match the look. Classicists, however, needn't worry. America's favorite familiar north Indian flavors are here, though dishes are generally more mildly spiced and presented with modern flair. All meats are certified halal, Islam's version of kosher – which doesn't mean that observant orthodox Jews can eat here, but Muslims can. \$\$\$

Bin No. 18

1800 Biscayne Blvd.
786-235-7575

At this wine bar/café, the décor is a stylish mix of contemporary (high loft ceilings) and Old World (tables made from wine barrels). Cuisine is similarly geared to the area's smart new residents: creative sandwiches and salads at lunch, tapas and larger internationally themed Spanish, Italian, or French charcuterie platters at night. Though the place is small and family-run friendly, chef Alfredo Patino offers sophisticated snacks like the figgiutto: arugula, gorgonzola dolce, caramelized onions, pine nuts, fresh figs, and prosciutto. Free parking behind the building. \$\$

Buena Vista Bistro

4582 NE 2nd Ave., 305-456-5909

If a neighborhood eatery like this one – which serves supremely satisfying bistro food – were within walking distance of every Miami resident, we'd be a helluva hip food town. Like true Parisian bistros, it's open continuously, every day, with prices so low that you can drop in anytime for authentic rillettes (a rustic pâté) with a crusty baguette, steak with from-scratch fries, salmon atop ratatouille, or many changing blackboard specials. Portions are plentiful. So is free parking. \$\$

Captain Joe Seafood & Pasta Grill

3401 N. Miami Ave. (Shops at Midtown)
305-573-6111

This Shops at Midtown eatery begins at 8:00 a.m. with eggs, pancakes, French toast, and bagels. After that it's a seafood-oriented menu of fast-casual food. Best values are combo platters such as shrimp and a grilled kebab, a hefty fried or grilled fish sandwich, or a Caribbean paella. The last is more like a pilaf than Spain's saffron-rich creation, but is packed with enough mussels, fish, calamari, chicken, and small shrimp to feed two. \$

The Daily Creative Food Co.

2001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-573-4535

While the food formula of this contemporary café is familiar – sandwiches, salads, soups, breakfast food, and pastries, plus coffee and fruit drinks – a creative concept differentiates the place. Signature sandwiches are named after national and local newspapers, including Biscayne Times, giving diners something to chat about. Sandwiches and salads can also be do-it-yourself projects, with an unusually wide choice of main ingredients, garnishes, breads, and condiments for the creatively minded. \$

Delicias Peruanas

2590 Biscayne Blvd., 305-573-4634

Seafood is the specialty at this pleasant Peruvian spot, as it was at the nearby original Delicias, run by members of the same family. The food is as tasty as ever, especially the reliably fresh traditional ceviches, and for those who like their fish tangy but cooked, a mammoth jalea platter. As for nonseafood stuff, Peru practically invented fusion cuisine (in the 1800s), such as two traditional noodle dishes: tallerin saltado and tallerin verde. \$\$

18th Street Café

210 NE 18th St.
305-381-8006; www.18thstreetcafe.com

Most of the seating in this cool little breakfast/lunch room is in a sort of giant bay window, backed with banquettes, that makes the space feel expansive. This pioneering place deserves to survive, even if just considering the roast beef sandwich with creamy horseradish – an inspired classic combination that makes one wonder why more places in this town don't serve it. Other culinary highlights include a turkey/pear/cheddar melt sandwich, and really sinful marshmallow-topped brownies. \$

Five Guys Famous Burger and Fries

3401 N. Miami Ave. (Shops at Midtown)
305-571-8345; www.fiveguys.com

No green-leaf faux health food here. You get what the name says, period, with three adds: kosher dogs, veggie burgers, and free peanuts while you wait. Which you

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Restaurant Listings

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will, just a bit, since burgers are made fresh upon order. Available in double or one-patty sizes, they're well-done but spurtingly juicy, and after loading with your choice of free garnishes, even a "little" burger makes a major meal. Fries (regular or Cajun-spiced) are also superior, hand-cut in-house from sourced potatoes. \$

Fratelli Lyon

4141 NE 2nd Ave.
305-572-2901; www.fratellilyon.com

This Italian café has been packed since the moment it opened. No surprise to any who recall owner Ken Lyon's pioneering Lyon Frères gourmet store on Lincoln Road (1992-97), another joint that was exactly what its neighborhood needed. The restaurant's artisan salumi, cheeses, flavorful boutique olive oils, and more are so outstanding that you can't help wishing it also had a retail component. Entrées include properly al dente pastas, plus some regional specialties like Venetian-style calves liver, rarely found outside Italy. \$\$\$

Grass

28 NE 40th St.; 305-573-3355

Chef Michael Jacobs's menu travels beyond pan-Asian and Mediterranean influences into the Americas. Entrées range from comfort food (cunningly reinvented mini pot pies) to high-status extravagance (stone-seared, authentic Kobe steak). For healthy grazers, raw-bar selections include ceviches and a large seafood platter. There's also a snack menu (pristine coldwater oysters, a crab salad timbale, parmesan-truffle shoestring fries, mini-Kobe burgers) served till the wee hours, providing a welcome alternative to the Boulevard's fast food chains. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Joey's Italian Café

2506 NW 2nd Ave.
305-438-0488

The first new restaurant in the Wynwood Café District, this stylish indoor/outdoor Italian hangout is as casually cool as one would hope — and as affordable. There's a five-buck half-serving of spaghetti al pomodoro and respectable vino for under \$30. And few can resist delicately thin, crunchy-crust pizza like the creative Dolce e Piccante or orgasmic Carbonara. Pastas are fresh; produce is largely local; the mosaic-centered décor is minimalist but inviting. And no need to be wary of the warehouse district at night: Valet parking is free. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Kafa Café

3535 NE 2nd Ave.
305-438-0114

www.kafamidtown.com

Operated by a brother/sister team (both originally from Ethiopia), nothing on the breakfast and lunch menus tops \$8, and portions feed an army (or several starving artists). Signature item is the formidable Kafa Potato Platter — home fries mixed with bacon, ham, peppers, onion, and cheese; accompanied by eggs, fresh fruit, and bread. Lunch's burgers, salads, and overstuffed sandwiches come with homemade soup or other sides, plus fruit. Dinner features an authentic Ethiopian menu, plus beer and wine selections. \$-\$\$

Latin Café 2000

2501 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-3838

www.latincafe2000.com

The menu is similar to that at many of our town's Latin cafés, largely classic Cuban entrées and sandwiches, with a

smattering of touches from elsewhere in Latin America, such as a Peruvian jalea mixta (marinated mixed seafood), or paella Valenciana from Spain, which many Miami eateries consider a Latin country. What justifies the new millennium moniker is the more modern, yuppified/yucafed ambiance, encouraged by an expansive, rustic wooden deck. \$\$

Lemoni Café

4600 NE 2nd Ave.
305-576-5080

The menu here reads like your standard sandwiches/salads/starters primer. What it doesn't convey is the freshness of the ingredients and the care that goes into their use. Entrée-size salads range from an elegant spinach (goat cheese, pears, walnuts, raisins) to chunky homemade chicken salad on a bed of mixed greens. Sandwiches (cold baguette subs, hot pressed paninis, or wraps, all accompanied by side salads) include a respectable Cuban and a veggie wrap with a deceptively rich-tasting light salad cream. \$\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

3201 N. Miami Ave. (Shops at Midtown)
305-576-5463

Like its South Beach predecessor, this Lime was an instant hit, as much for being a hip new Midtown hangout as for its carefully crafted Tex-Mex food. The concept is "fast casual" rather than fast food — meaning nice enough for a night out. It also means ingredients are always fresh. Seafood tacos are about as exotic as the menu gets, but the mahi mahi for fish tacos comes from a local supplier, and salsas are housemade daily. Niceties include low-carb tortillas and many Mexican beers. \$

Lost & Found Saloon

185 NW 36th St., 305-576-1008

www.thelostandfoundsaloon-miami.com

There's an artsy/alternative feel to this casual and friendly Wynwood eatery, which, since opening as a weekday-only breakfast and lunch joint in 2005, has grown with its neighborhood. It's now open for dinner six nights a week, serving Southwestern-style fare at rock-bottom prices. Dishes like piñon and pepita-crust salmon, chipotle-drizzled endive stuffed with lump crab, or customizable tacos average \$5-\$8. Also available: big breakfasts and salads, hearty soups, housemade pastries like lemon-crust wild berry pie, and a hip beer and wine list. \$

Maino Churrascaria

2201 Biscayne Blvd.
305-571-9044

This very upscale Brazilian steakhouse has all the features you expect, including all-you-can-eat meats carved tableside and a lavish buffet. What sets Maino apart from typical rodizio palaces is its family-run feel, intimate rather than intimidating, plus its attention to every detail. While it's rare at most rodizio joints to get meat done less than medium, Maino will cook to order. One other welcome difference: There are à la carte starters and pastas for lighter eaters and noncarnivores, and some lunch specials. Free parking, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Mario the Baker

250 NE 25th St.
305-438-0228

(See North Miami listing)

Michael's Genuine Food and Drink

130 NE 40th St.
305-573-5550

An instant smash hit, this truly neighborhood-oriented restaurant from chef Michael Schwartz offers down-to-earth fun food in a comfortable, casually stylish indoor/outdoor

setting. Fresh, organic ingredients are emphasized, but dishes range from cutting-edge (crispy beef cheeks with whipped celery, celery salad, and chocolate reduction) to simple comfort food: deviled eggs, homemade potato chips with pan-fried onion dip, or a whole wood-roasted chicken. There's also a broad range of prices and portion sizes to encourage frequent visits. Michael's Genuine also features an eclectic, affordable wine list and a full bar. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Mike's at Venetia

555 NE 15th St., 9th floor, 305-374-5731
www.mikesvenetia.com

This family-owned Irish pub, on the pool deck of the Venetia condo, for more than 15 years has been a popular lunch and dinner hang-out for local journalists and others who appreciate honest cheap eats and drinks. Regulars know daily specials are the way to go. Depending on the day, fish, churrasco, or roast turkey with all the trimmings are all prepared fresh. Big burgers and steak dinners are always good. A limited late-night menu provides pizza, wings, ribs, and salad till 3:00 a.m. \$\$\$

Moriano

3221 NE 2nd Ave., 786-953-8003
moriano.wordpress.com

Ultra-thin, crisp-crust pizzas. Made-from-scratch specials like green bean and parmesan soup, or prosciutto and mozzarella-stuffed gnocchi that you really have not seen on every other menu in town. High-quality ingredients, wine and beer, low prices, enthusiastic hands-on owners committed to arts-oriented creativity. A comfortable hang-out atmosphere. This tiny café, where "processed food" is a dirty word, has it all — except a high-visibility location or media hype. So discover it for yourselves. (There's ample free street parking, too.) \$\$\$

Orange Café + Art

2 NE 40th St., 305-571-4070

The paintings hanging in this tiny, glass-enclosed café are for sale. And for those who don't have thousands of dollars to shell out for the local art on the walls, less than ten bucks will get you art on a plate, including a Picasso: chorizo, prosciutto, manchego cheese, baby spinach, and basil on a crusty baguette. Other artfully named and crafted edibles include salads, daily soups, several pastas (like the Matisse, flocchi pouches filled with pears and cheese), and house-baked pastries. \$

Out of the Blue Café

2426 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-3800
www.outofthebluecafe.net

Forget impersonal chain coffeehouses. This artist-friendly, independent neighborhood café serves a full selection of coffee drinks made with the award-winning beans of Intelligentsia, a roasting company that works directly with artisan growers to encourage sustainable agriculture. Also served: breakfast and lunch sandwiches, imaginative salads, soups, homemade pastries, and creamy fresh-fruit smoothies. With tables, sofas, and lounge chairs inside an old Midtown house, plus free wireless Internet access, the space is also just a pleasant place to hang out. \$

Pacific Time

35 NE 40th St.
305-722-7369

www.pacifictimemiami.com

Everyone knew Jonathan Eismann's original Pacific Time, for many years Lincoln Road's only serious restaurant. How different is its new incarnation? Very, and it's all good, starting with far superior acoustics, an admirably green ecological policy, and a neighborhood-friendly attitude. While the addition of Mediterranean influences to the Pacific Rim menu may sound

confusing, trust us: A meal that includes a butter-grilled asparagus with prosciutto, soft-cooked egg Milanese, and preserved lemon; plus an Asian-accented creamy corn/leek soup with Peeky Toe crab dumplings, coriander, and mustard oil makes perfect sense on the tongue. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Pasha's

3801 N. Miami Ave.
305-573-0201

(See Brickell/Downtown listing)

Pizzafiore

2905 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-0900

Dainty designer pizzas? At this New York-style pizzeria, it's all about heftiness. A special slice/soda deal features two pizza triangles bigger than most Miami mini-skirts. Whole pies come medium (large), large (huge), and extra-large (think truck tire). And with fully loaded pizzas like the Supreme Meat Lover priced only a few bucks more than a basic tomato/cheese, it pays to think big about toppings too. Other Italian-American fare is also available, notably pastas and subs. \$\$\$

Primo's

1717 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-371-9055

The imposing, cavernous lobby of the Grand doesn't have that "do drop in" locals' hangout vibe. But this lively Italian spot is actually a great addition to the neighborhood. The pizzas alone — brick-oven specimens with toppings ranging from classic pepperoni to prosciutto/arugula — would be draw enough. But pastas also please: diners' choice of starch, with mix-and-match sauces and extras. And the price is right, with few entrées topping \$20. The capper: It's open past midnight every day but Sunday. \$\$

Sake Room

275 NE 18th St., 305-755-0122

www.sakeroom.com

Sake takes a back seat to sushi — and sophisticated décor — at this small but sleek restolounge. Among the seafood offerings, you won't find exotica or local catches, but all the usual sushi/sashimi favorites, though in more interesting form, thanks to sauces that go beyond standard soy — spicy sriracha, garlic/ponzu oil, and many more. Especially recommended: the yuzu hamachi roll, the lobster tempura maki, and panko-coated spicy shrimp with hot-and-sour mayo and a salad. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

S & S Diner

1757 NE 2nd Ave.
305-373-4291

Some things never change, or so it seems at this classic diner. Open since 1938, people still line up on Saturday mornings, waiting for a seat at the counter and enormous breakfasts: corned beef hash or crab cakes and eggs with grits; fluffy pancakes; homemade biscuits with gravy and Georgia sausage — everything from oatmeal to eggs Benedict. The lunch menu is a roll call of the usual suspects, but most regulars ignore the menu and go for the daily blackboard specials. \$\$\$

Sra. Martinez

4000 NE 2nd Ave.
305-573-5474

No Biscayne Corridor resident needs to be told that this lively tapas bar is the second restaurant that Upper Eastside homegirl Michelle Bernstein has opened in the area. But it's

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no absentee celebrity-chef gig, Bernstein is hands-on at both places. Her exuberant yet firmly controlled personal touch is obvious in nearly four dozen hot and cold tapas on the menu. Items are frequently reinvented. Keepers include wild mushroom/manchego croquetas with fig jam; white bean stew; crisp-coated artichokes with lemon/coriander dip; and buttery bone marrow piqued with Middle Eastern spices and balanced by tiny pickled salads. \$\$\$

Tony Chan's Water Club

1717 N. Bayshore Dr.
305-374-8888

The décor at this upscale place, located in the Grand, looks too glitzy to serve anything but politely Americanized Chinese food. But the American dumbing-down is minimal. Many dishes are far more authentic and skillfully prepared than those found elsewhere in Miami, like delicate but flavorful yu pan quail. Moist sea bass fillet has a beautifully balanced topping of scallop, ginger, cilantro, and subtly sweet/salty sauce. And Peking duck is served as three traditional courses: crêpe-wrapped crispy skin, meat sautéed with crisp veggies, savory soup to finish. \$\$\$-\$

W Wine Bistro

3622 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-7775

Both bistro and retail wine shop, this Design District spot is run by Florent Blanchet, an energetic young Frenchman who was previously a wine distributor. His former gig led to connections that mean if wine lovers don't find the bottle they want, Blanchet can probably get it within 24 hours. Food is sophisticated light bites like a shrimp club sandwich with pancetta and sun-dried tomato aioli, and smoked duck salad with goat cheese croutons and a poached egg. At night there are tapas. \$\$\$

Zuperpollo Biztro Reztocafe

3050 Biscayne Blvd.
305-573-8485 www.zuperpollo.com

This bistro is a branch of the popular Uruguayan eatery Zuperpollo, on Coral Way since 1986. It's way in back,

past a guard desk and an elevator bank, behind an unmarked door. Diners who find it discover an extensive pan-Latin menu of breakfast food, salads, substantial meat and fish entrées, homemade pastas and soups, desserts, and sandwiches, including Uruguay's famed, overstuffed chivito, sometimes called "a heart attack on a bun." And naturally, from the rotisserie, there's the signature zuper chicken. \$\$\$

Upper Eastside

Andiamo

5600 Biscayne Blvd.
305-762-5751; www.andiamopizza.com

Sharing a building with a long-established Morningside car wash, Andiamo is also part of Mark Soyka's 55th Street Station - which means ditching the car (in the complex's free lot across the road on NE 4th Court) is no problem even if you're not getting your vehicle cleaned while consuming the brick-oven pies (from a flaming open oven) that are this popular pizzeria's specialty, along with executive chef Frank Crupi's famed Philly cheese steak sandwiches. Also available are salads and panini plus reasonably priced wines and beers, including a few unusually sophisticated selections like Belgium's Hoegaarden. \$\$

Anise Taverna

620 NE 78th St.
305-758-2929; www.anisetaverna.com

The new owners of this river shack are banking on Greek food and festivity for success - a good bet, judging from their wildly popular previous eatery, Ouzo. The mainly mezze menu ranges from traditional Greek small plates to creative Mediterranean-inspired dishes like anise-scented fish croquettes with spicy aioli. But don't neglect large plates like whole grilled Mediterranean fish (dorade or branzino), filleted tableside. The interior is charming, and the outdoor deck on the Little River is positively romantic. \$\$\$-\$

Boteco

916 NE 79th St., 305-757-7735

This strip of 79th Street is rapidly becoming a cool alt-tourism enclave thanks to inviting hangouts like this rustic

indoor/outdoor Brazilian restaurant and bar. Especially bustling on nights featuring live music, it's even more fun on Sundays, when the fenced backyard hosts an informal fair and the menu includes Brazil's national dish, feijoada, a savory stew of beans plus fresh and cured meats. But the everyday menu, ranging from unique, tapas-like pastéis to hefty Brazilian entrées, is also appealing - and budget-priced. \$\$

Le Café

7295 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-6551

For anyone who can't get over thinking of French food as intimidating or pretentious, this cute café with a warm welcome, and family-friendly French home cooking, is the antidote. No fancy food (or fancy prices) here, just classic comfort food like onion soup, escargot, daily fresh oysters, boeuf bourguignon (think Ultimate Pot Roast), Nicoise salad, quiche, and homemade crème brûlée. A respectable beer and wine list is a welcome addition, as is the housemade sangria. Top price for entrées is about \$14. \$\$\$

Canela

5132 Biscayne Blvd., 305-756-3930

When this little neighborhood oasis opened, the formula was Cuban cooking at lunch, Catalan tapas at night. The menu is now more uniform: contemporary Spanish and pan-Latin tapas, sandwiches, salads, sides, and entrées at all hours, just a far more elaborate selection at night. The tapas list is impressive, with an unusually large selection of seafood and vegetarian items such as spinach sautéed with pine nuts and raisins. Don't miss the ultra-creamy croquetas, grilled asparagus with aioli, and habit-forming Brazilian cheese bread. \$\$\$

Captain Crab's Take-Away

1100 NE 79th St., 305-754-2722

The drive-through window says "fast food," and so do this long-lived seafood shack's low prices. But there the resemblance ends. For about the price of a bucket of the Colonel's chicken you can get a bucket of the Captain's savory garlic crabs. The King's burger meal or the Captain's similarly priced fried (or garlic boiled or New Orleans-spiced) shrimp meal? No contest. Also popular: crab cakes and conch. For fish haters, spicy or garlic chicken wings are an option. \$\$\$

Casa Toscana

7001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-3353

www.casatoscanamiami.com

Tuscan-born chef/owner Sandra Stefani cooked at Norman's before opening this Upper Eastside jewel, whose 30 original seats have been supplemented by a wine room/garden for tasting events and private dining. Stefani travels regularly to Italy to find exciting, limited-production wines and inspiration for truly Tuscan specials with honest, authentic flavors, such as grilled wild boar sausages with lentil croquettes. Menu favorites include pear and ricotta raviolini, grilled eggplant slices rolled around herbed goat cheese and sun-dried tomatoes, and a light ricotta tart with lemon and rosemary. \$\$\$

Che Sopranos

7251 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-8282

This branch of a Miami Beach Italian/Argentine pizzeria, housed in a charming bungalow and featuring a breezy patio, covers multicultural bases. If the Old World Rucola pizza (a classic Margherita topped with arugula, prosciutto, and shredded parmesan) doesn't do the trick, the New World Especial (a Latin pie with hearts of palm and boiled eggs) just might. Also available are pastas, salads, sandwiches, dinner entrées (eggplant parmigiana with spaghetti, lomito steak with Argentinean potato salad), and desserts (tiramisu or flan). \$

Chef Creole

200 NW 54th St., 305-754-2223

Sparkling fresh Creole-style food is the star at chef/owner Wilkinson Sejour's two tiny but popular establishments. While some meatier Haitian classics like griot (fried pork chunks) and oxtail stew are also available - and a \$3.99 roast chicken special - seafood is the specialty here: crevette en sauce (steamed shrimp with Creole butter sauce), lambi fri (perfectly tenderized fried conch), poison gros sel (local snapper in a spicy butter sauce), garlic or Creole crabs. The Miami branch has outdoor tiki-hut dining. \$\$\$

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Restaurant Listings

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Dogma Grill

7030 Biscayne Blvd.
305-759-3433
www.dogmagrill.com

What could induce downtown businessmen to drive to the Upper Eastside to eat at a few outdoor-only tables just feet from the busy Boulevard? From the day it opened, people have been lining up for this stand's sauce-garnished, all-beef, soy veggie, turkey, and chicken hot dogs. The 22 varieties range from simple to the elaborate (the Athens, topped with a Greek salad, including extra-virgin olive oil dressing) to near-unbelievable combinations like the VIP, which includes parmesan cheese and crushed pineapple. New addition: thick, juicy burgers. \$

East Side Pizza

731 NE 79th St., 305-758-5351

Minestrone, sure. But a pizzeria menu with carrot ginger soup? Similarly many Italian-American pizzerias offer entrées like spaghetti and meatballs, but East Side also has pumpkin ravioli in brown butter/sage sauce, wild mushroom ravioli, and other surprisingly upscale choices, including imported Peroni beer. As for the pizza, they are classic pies, available whole or by the slice, made with fresh plum tomato sauce and Grande mozzarella (considered the top American pizza cheese). Best seating for eating is at the sheltered outdoor picnic tables. \$

El Q-Bano Palacio de los Jugos

8650 Biscayne Blvd.
305-758-2550

In case you were wondering if it's too good to be true — it isn't. El Q-Bano's owners are indeed related to the family that operates the original three Palacios de los Jugos — which means no more schlepping way out west. Recommended are moist tamales, tasty sandwiches (especially the drippingly wonderful pan con lechon), rich flan, and the fresh tropical juices that justify the aforementioned excesses. For even heartier eaters, there's a changing buffet of daily specials and sides. \$\$\$

Europa Car Wash and Café

6075 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-2357

Giving new meaning to the food term "fusion," Europa serves up sandwiches, salads, car washes, coffee with croissants, and Chevron with Techron. Snacks match the casual chicness: sandwiches like the Renato (prosciutto, hot cappicola, pepper jack cheese, red peppers, and Romano cheese dressing); an elaborate almond-garnished Chinese chicken salad; H&H bagels, the world's best, flown in from NYC. And the car cleanings are equally gentrified, especially on Wednesdays, when ladies are pampered with \$10 washes and glasses of sparkling wine while they wait. \$

Garden of Eatin'

136 NW 62nd St., 305-754-8050

Housed in a yellow building that's nearly invisible from the street, the Garden has the comfortable feel of a beach bar, and generous servings of inexpensive Afro-Caribbean vegan food. Large or small plates, with salad and fried sweet plantains (plus free soup for eat-in lunchers), are served for five or seven bucks. Also available are snacks like vegetarian blue corn tacos, desserts like sweet potato pie, and a breakfast menu featuring organic blueberry waffles with soy sausage patties. \$

Gourmet Station

7601 Biscayne Blvd., 305-762-7229

Home-meal replacement, geared to workaholics with no time to cook, has been popular for years. But the Gourmet Station has outlasted most of the competition. Main reason: deceptive healthiness. These are meals that are good for you, yet taste good enough to be bad for you. Favorite items include precision-grilled salmon with lemon-dill yogurt sauce, and lean turkey meatloaf with homemade BBQ sauce — sin-free comfort food. Food is available à la carte or grouped in multi-meal plans customized for individual diner's nutritional needs. \$\$\$

Jimmy's East Side Diner

7201 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-3692

Open for more than 30 years, Jimmy's respects the most important American diner tradition: Breakfast at any hour. Admittedly the place closes at 4:00 p.m., but still. There are blueberry hot cakes and pecan waffles; eggs any style, including omelets and open-face frittatas; and a full range of sides: biscuits and sausage gravy, grits, hash, hash browns, even hot oatmeal. Also available are traditional diner entrées (meat loaf, roast turkey, liver and onions), plus burgers, salad platters, and homemade chicken soup. \$\$\$

Kingdom

6708 Biscayne Blvd., 305-757-0074

This indoor/outdoor sports bar serves low-priced but high-quality steaks, plus more typical bar food that's actually far from the usual processed stuff. Philly cheese steak sandwiches, big enough for two, are made from hand-sliced rib eye; sides include fries and beer-battered onion rings, but also lightly lemony sautéed spinach. And the burgers rule, particularly the Doomsday, a cheese/bacon/mushroom-topped two-pound monster that turns dinner into a competitive sport. No hard liquor, but the beer list makes up for it. \$\$\$

Luna Café

4770 Biscayne Blvd., 305-573-5862

The ground floor of the Wachovia Bank building may not seem a particularly evocative locale for an Italian eatery, but once inside, the charming décor and the staff's ebullient welcome indeed are reminiscent of a café in Italy. The kitchen's outstanding feature is a brick oven, which turns out designer pizzas and crisp-skinned roast chickens. Otherwise the menu holds few surprises — except the prices, unusually low for such a stylish place. No dish exceeds \$22. \$\$\$

Magnum Lounge

709 NE 79th St., 305-757-3368

It's a restaurant. It's a lounge. But it's decidedly not a typical Miami restorlounge, or like anything else in Miami. Forbidding from the outside, on the inside it's like a time-trip to a cabaret in pre-WWII Berlin: bordello-red décor, romantically dim lighting, show-tune live piano bar entertainment, and to match the ambiance, elegantly updated retro food served with style and a smile. For those feeling flush, home-style fried chicken is just like mom used to make — in her wildest dreams. \$\$\$

Metro Organic Bistro

7010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-751-8756

Big changes have come to Karma the car wash, the first being a separate new name for the revamped restaurant: Metro Organic Bistro, an all-organic fine-dining restaurant where simple preparations reveal and enhance natural flavors. An entirely new menu places emphasis on grilled organic meat and fish dishes. Try the steak frites — organic,

grass-fed skirt steak with organic chimichurri and fresh-cut fries. Vegetarians will love the organic portabella foccacia. Dine either inside the architect-designed restaurant or outdoors on the patio. Beer and wine. \$\$\$

Michy's

6927 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-2001

Don't even ask why Michele Bernstein, with a top-chef resumé, not to mention regular Food Network appearances, opened a homey restaurant in an emerging but far from fully gentrified neighborhood. Just be glad she did, as you dine on white almond gazpacho or impossibly creamy ham and blue cheese croquetas. Though most full entrées also come in half-size portions (at almost halved prices), the tab can add up fast. The star herself is usually in the kitchen. Parking in the rear off 69th Street. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Moonchine

7100 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-3999

Like its Brickell-area sibling Indochine, this friendly Asian bistro serves fare from three nations: Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Menus are also similar, split between traditional dishes like pad Thai and East/West fusion creations like the Vampire sushi roll (shrimp tempura, tomato, cilantro, roasted garlic). But it also carves out its own identity with original creations, including yellow curry-spiced fried rice. Nearly everything is low in sodium, fat, and calories. A large rear patio is inviting for dining and entertainment. \$\$\$

Moshi Moshi

7232 Biscayne Blvd.

786-220-9404

This offspring of South Beach old-timer Moshi Moshi is a cross between a sushi bar and an izakaya (Japanese tapas bar). Even more striking than the hip décor is the food's unusually upscale quality. Sushi ranges from pristine individual nigiri to over-the-top maki rolls. Tapas are intriguing, like arabiki sausage, a sweet-savory pork fingerling frank; rarely found in restaurants even in Japan, they're popular Japanese home-cooking items. And rice-based plates like Japanese curry (richer/sweeter than Indian types) satisfy even the biggest appetites. \$\$\$

News Lounge

5582 NE 4th Ct.

305-758-9932; www.the5thststation.com

Mark Soyka's new News is, as its name suggests, more a friendly neighborhood hangout and watering hole than a full-fledged eatery. Nevertheless the menu of light bites is — along with other lures like an inviting outdoor patio and rest rooms that resemble eclectic art galleries — part of the reason visitors stay for hours. Especially recommended are fat mini-burgers with chipotle ketchup; a brie, turkey, and mango chutney sandwich on crusty baguette; and what many feel is the original café's Greatest Hit: creamy hummus with warm pita. \$

Red Light

7700 Biscayne Blvd., 305-757-7773

From the rustic al fresco deck of chef Kris Wessel's intentionally downwardly mobile retro-cool riverfront restaurant, you can enjoy regional wildlife like manatees while enjoying eclectic regional dishes that range from cutting-edge (sour-orange-marinated, sous-vide-cooked Florida lobster with sweet corn sauce) to comfort (crispy-breaded Old South fried green tomatoes). Not surprisingly, the chef-driven menu is limited, but several signature specialties, if available, are not to be missed: BBQ shrimp in a tangy Worcestershire and cayenne-spiked butter/wine sauce, irresistible mini conch fritters, and homemade ice cream. \$\$\$

Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus

1085 NE 79th St., 305-754-8002

With Christmas lights perpetually twinkling and party noises emanating from a new outdoor biergarten, this German restaurant is owner Alex Richter's one-man gentrification project, transforming a formerly uninviting stretch of 79th Street one pils at a time. The fare includes housemade sausages (mild veal bratwurst, hearty mixed beef/pork bauernwurst, spicy garlicwurst) with homemade mustard and catsup; savory yet near-greaseless potato pancakes; and, naturally, schnitzels, a choice of delicate pounded pork, chicken, or veal patties served with a half-dozen different sauces. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Soyka

5556 NE 4th Court

305-759-3117; www.soykarestaurant.com

This expansive, contemporary hangout was often credited with almost single-handedly sparking the revitalization of the Biscayne Corridor's Upper Eastside. Soyka remains a solid neighborhood restaurant that is a perfect fit for its area. Comfortably priced yuppie comfort food like meatloaf with mashed potatoes, crab cakes with spicy-sweet slaw, a wild mushroom/smoked mozzarella pizza, or a Cobb salad may not be revolutionary fare, but Soyka continues to thrive while more ambitious, nationally publicized restaurants have come and gone. Take-out orders and breakfast are now available. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Sushi Siam

5582 NE 4th Ct., 305-751-7818

On the menu of sushi-bar specialties plus a small selection of Thai and Japanese cooked dishes, there are a few surprises, such as a unique lobster maki that's admittedly huge in price (\$25.95), but also in size: six ounces of crisp-fried lobster chunks, plus asparagus, avocado, lettuce, tobiko (flying fish), masago (smelt) roes, and special sauces. Thai dishes come with a choice of more than a dozen sauces, ranging from traditional red or green curries to the inventive, such as an unconventional honey sauce. \$\$\$

UVA 69

6900 Biscayne Blvd.

305-754-9022; www.uva-69.com

Owned and operated by brothers Michael and Sinuhé Vega, this casual outdoor/indoor Euro-café and lounge has helped to transform the Boulevard into a hip place to hang out. Lunch includes a variety of salads and elegant sandwiches like La Minuta (beer-battered mahi-mahi with cilantro aioli and caramelized onions on housemade foccacia). Dinner features a range of small plates (poached figs with Gorgonzola cheese and honey balsamic drizzle) and full entrées like sake-marinated salmon with boniato mash and Ponzu butter sauce, and crispy spinach. \$\$\$

Ver-Daddys Taco Shop

7501 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-303-9755

At this soulful taco shop, the menu descriptions are in common English ("cinnamon puffs" drizzled with honey and lime, not "buñuelos"). But taco fillings range from ground beef and shredded chicken to more unusual pork in chili verde or Baja battered fish (authentically garnished with Mexican crema and cilantro-spiked cabbage). And all offerings can be loaded with other garnishes from the kitchen (refried beans, cheese, crema) or less perishable offerings from a salsa bar. For the health-minded, oils are nonhydrogenated, and sauces/seasonings are all housemade and free of preservatives. \$

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Restaurant Listings

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Wine 69

6909 Biscayne Blvd.
305-759-0122

You might think this is just a wine shop, but it's actually about wine, food, and art, and how they work together. Wines are available retail (discounted 35-50 percent for in-house drinkers), with 40 sold by the glass. Food, designed for pairing, includes a \$25 three-course dinner. The menu is mostly light bites with intriguingly inventive touches: a seared Cajun tuna salad with wasabi sauce; crab cakes with Asian sriracha chili sauce. The art involves revolving exhibits, plus an art lecture series featuring wines picked by owner Ben Neji. \$\$

Yiya's Gourmet Cuban Bakery

646 NE 79th St., 305-754-3337

A true community jewel, this bakery is also a most welcoming café, serving lunch specials from chef Delsa Bernardo (who co-owns the place with attorney Abbie Cuellar) that are homemade right down to the herbs grown on the bakery's window sills. Bernardo's pan con lechon sandwiches and flaky-crust Cuban pastries are legend. But she also crafts treats not found at average Cuban bakeries, like pizzas using homemade Indian naan bread. Additionally Bernardo carries unique treats produced by a few friends: candies, cupcakes, and exotically flavored flans. \$

NORTH BAY VILLAGE

Bocados Ricos

1880 79th St. Causeway; 305-864-4889

Tucked into a mall best known for its Happy Stork Lounge, this little luncheonette services big appetites. Along with the usual grilled churrascos, there's bandeja paisa, Colombia's sampler platter of grilled steak, sausage, chicharron, fried egg, avocado, plantains, rice, and beans. Don't miss marginally daintier dishes like sopa de costilla, if this rich shortrib bowl is among the daily homemade soups. Arepas include our favorite com cake: the hefty Aura, stuffed with chorizo, chicharron, carne desmechada (shredded flank steak), plantains, rice, beans, and cheese. \$\$\$

Edy's Chicken & Steak

1624 79th St. Causeway
305-864-9958

What differentiates Edy's from other chicken joints is the signature Peruvian pollo a la brasa, char-broiled in a wood-fired rotisserie. The rotation makes the bird self-baste, keeping even the white meat juicy under its crispy, nearly fat-free skin. Spicing is also superior. Owner Edy Demovsek's dozen-ingredient marinade recipe came from a visit to Peru, but has been tweaked with spices from her hometown — Chiang Mai, Thailand. The result is subtly mouth-warming heat absent from average chain chickens. \$\$\$

Japanese Market and Sushi Deli

1412 79th St. Causeway; 305-861-0143

Inside a small market that is widely considered Miami's premier source of Japanese foodstuffs, the "Sushi Deli" restaurant component is nothing more than a lunch counter. But chef Michio Kushi serves up some sushi found nowhere else in town. Example: traditional Osaka-style sushi — layers of rice, seasoned seaweed, and marinated fresh mackerel, pressed into a square box, then cut into lovely one-bite sandwich squares. While raw fish is always impeccable here, some unusual vegetarian sushi creations also tempt, as do daily entrées. \$

Mario the Baker

1700 79th St. Causeway
305-867-7882

(See North Miami listing)

Oggi Caffè

1666 79th St. Causeway
305-866-1238

www.oggicaffe.com

This cozy, romantic spot started back in 1989 as a pasta factory (supplying numerous high-profile restaurants) as well as a neighborhood eatery. And the wide range of budget-friendly, homemade pastas, made daily, remains the main draw for its large and loyal clientele. Choices range from homey, meaty lasagna to luxuriant crab ravioli with creamy lobster sauce, with occasional forays into creative exotica such as seaweed spaghetti, with sea scallops, shitakes, and fresh tomatoes. \$\$\$

Shuckers Bar & Grill

1819 79th St. Causeway
305-866-1570

"Cheap eats and a million-dollar view" is the sound bite manager Philip Conklin uses to describe this outdoor beach bar, hidden in back of a bayfront motel. The joint dates from South Beach's late 1980s revival, but the kick-off-your-shoes vibe couldn't be farther from SoBe glitz. The food ranges from classic bar favorites (char-grilled wings, conch fritters, raw or steamed shellfish) to full dinners featuring steak, homemade pasta, or fresh, not frozen, fish. \$\$\$

Sushi Siam

1524 NE 79th St. Causeway, 305-864-7638

(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

NORTH BEACH

Ariston

940 71st St., 305-864-9848

Ariston's classical Greek cuisine is based on recipes of co-owner Thanasis Barlos's mom Noni and executed by CIA-trained chef Alexia Apostolidis. Concentrate on the menu's authentic treats like the lightest, most savory whipped tarama (caviar spread) west of Athens; ultra-rich tzatziki (Greek yogurt with cukes, garlic, and olive oil); bracing avgolemono (egg-thickened chicken/lemon soup); char-grilled sardines with greens and citrus dressing; or an inspired eggplant/ground beef moussaka, bound here with an almost sinfully custardy béchamel. \$\$\$

Café Prima Pasta

414 71st St., 305-867-0106, www.primapasta.com

Opened in 1993 with 28 seats, this family-run landmark has now taken over the block, with an outdoor terrace and multi-roomed indoor space whose walls are full of photos of their clientele, including national and local celebs. Particularly popular are homemade pastas, sauced with Argentine-Italian indulgence rather than Italian simplicity: crabmeat raviolotti in lobster cream sauce, black squid ink linguini heaped with seafood.

Though romantic enough for dates, the place is quite kid-friendly — and on the terrace, they'll even feed Fido. \$\$\$

Tamarind Thai

946 Normandy Dr.
305-861-6222; www.tamarindthai.us

When an eatery's executive chef is best-selling Thai cookbook author Vatcharin Bhumichitr, you'd expect major media hype, fancy South Beach prices, and a fancy SoBe address. Instead Bhumichitr joined forces with Day Longsomboon (an old Thai school pal who'd moved to Miami) at this unpretentious, authentic (no sushi) neighborhood place. Some standout dishes here are featured in the chef's latest tome, but with Tamarind's very affordable prices, you might as well let the man's impeccably trained kitchen staff do the work for you. \$\$\$

MIAMI SHORES

Iron Sushi

9432 NE 2nd Ave.

305-754-0311

www.ironosushi.com

With three Biscayne Corridor outlets (plus several branches elsewhere in town), this mostly take-out mini chain is fast becoming the Sushi Joint That Ate Miami. And why do Miamians eat here? Not ambiance. There isn't any. But when friends from the Pacific Northwest, where foodies know their fish, tout the seafood's freshness, we listen. There are some surprisingly imaginative makis, like the Maharaja, featuring fried shrimp and drizzles of curry mayo. And where else will you find a stacked sushi (five assorted makis) birthday cake? \$\$\$

Côte Gourmet

9999 NE 2nd Ave., #112

305-754-9012

If only every Miami neighborhood could have a neighborhood restaurant like this low-priced little French jewel. The menu is mostly simple stuff: breakfast croissants, crêpe, soups, sandwiches, salads, sweets, and a few more substantial specials like a Tunisian-style brik (buttery phyllo pastry stuffed with tuna, onions, potatoes, and tomatoes) with a mesclun side salad. But everything is homemade.

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including all breads, and prepared with impeccable ingredients, classic French technique, and meticulous attention to detail, down to the stylish plaid ribbons that hold together the café's baguette sandwiches. \$-\$\$

NORTH MIAMI

Los Antojos

11099 Biscayne Blvd.
305-892-1411

If it's Sunday, it must be sancocho de gallina, Colombia's national dish. If it's Saturday, it must be ajicaco. Both are thick chicken soups, full meals in a bowl. For Colombian-cuisine novices, a bandeja paisa (sampler including rice, beans, carne asada, chicharron, eggs, sautéed sweet plantains, and an arepa corn cake) is available every day, as are antojitos – "little whims," smaller snacks like chorizo con arepa (a corn cake with Colombian sausage). And for noncarnivores there are several hefty seafood platters, made to order. \$\$

Bagels & Co.

11064 Biscayne Blvd.
305-892-2435

While this place is often referred to as Guns & Bagels, one can't actually buy a gun here. The nickname refers to its location next to a firearms shop. But there's a lot of other stuff aside from bagels here, including a full range of sandwiches and wraps. Breakfast time is busy time, with banana-walnut pancakes especially popular. But what's most important is that this is one of the area's few sources of the real, New York-style water bagel: crunchy outside, challengingly chewy inside. \$

Bamboche

13408 Biscayne Blvd.
305-947-6339

Buried in a strip mall perpendicular to the Boulevard, Bamboche is worth the hunt on one of those head-splitting Saturdays, for a Haitian specialty not found in many area restaurants: bouillon tet cabrit, a soup packed with greens (like spinach, cabbage, cress, string beans) and root veggies that is reputed to be a miraculous hangover remedy. Along with bouillon, weekend specials include more unusual dishes like fritay, fried street snacks. Haitian standards (griot, tassot) are available daily, as are fresh-squeezed juices, lattes, and almost two dozen desserts. \$

Bar-B-Que Beach Sports Bar & Grill

12599 Biscayne Blvd.
305-895-3141

On Friday nights, there's karaoke, though from the décor – mixing Wild West rusticity with Key West flip-flops dangling from the ceiling – it's hard to know whether to brush up your Jimmy Buffett medley or "Tumbling Tumbleweeds." There are specials the other six days of the week as well, but don't forget the biggest draw: the barbecue, honest stuff that has been low-temperature smoked for 12 to 14 hours till tender yet resilient. Menu winners: succulent sliced brisket and delightfully juicy chicken. \$\$

Bulldog Barbecue

15400 Biscayne Blvd.
305-940-9655

www.bulldog-bbq.com

The BBQ master at this small, rustic room is pugnacious Top

Chef contender Howie Kleinberg, whose indoor electric smoker turns out mild-tasting 'cue that ranges from the expected pulled pork, ribs, brisket, and chicken to hot-smoked salmon and veggie plates. There are also creative comfort food starters like BBQ chicken flatbread, salads, and sweets. Sides include refreshing slaw; beans studied with "burnt ends" (the most intensely flavored outer barbecue chunks); and sweet potato or chipotle-spiced fries. The cost is comparatively high, but such is the price of fame. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Burritos Grill Café

11717 Biscayne Blvd.
305-891-1041

www.burritosgrillcafe

Originally a friendly little 125th Street hole-in-the-wall that garnered raves for its limited menu of terrifically tasty treats, Mario and Karina Manzanero's café is now in more sizable and atmospheric quarters. But the friendly, family-run (and kid-friendly) ambiance remains, as do the authentic Yucatan-style specialties. Standouts include poc-chuc, a marinated pork loin; tacos al pastor, stuffed with subtly smoky steak, onion, cilantro, and pineapple; sinful deep-fried tacos dorados; and signature burritos, including the Maya, filled with juicy cochinita pibil, refried beans, and pickled onions. \$\$

Canton Café

12749 Biscayne Blvd.
305-892-2882

Easily overlooked, this strip-mall spot serves mostly Cantonese-based dishes. However, there are also about two dozen spicier, Szechuan-style standards like kung po shrimp, ma po tofu, and General Tso's chicken. And there are a few imaginative new items, like the intriguingly christened "Shrimp Lost in the Forest," Singapore curried rice noodles, crispy shrimp with honey-glazed walnuts, and Mongolian beef (with raw chilis and fresh Oriental basil). Delivery is available for both lunch and dinner. \$\$

Captain Jim's Seafood

12950 W. Dixie Hwy.
305-892-2812

This market/restaurant was garnering critical acclaim even when eat-in dining was confined to a few Formica tables in front of the fish counter, owing to the freshness of its seafood, much of it from Capt. Jim Hanson's own fishing boats, which supply many top restaurants. Now there's a casual but pleasantly nautical side dining room with booths. Whether it's garlicky scampi, smoked-fish dip, grilled yellowtail or hog or mutton snapper, perfectly tenderized cracked conch or conch fritters, everything is deftly prepared and bargain-priced. \$\$

Casa Mia Trattoria

1950 NE 123rd St.
305-899-2770

Tucked away, off to the side on the approach to the Broad Causeway and the beaches, this charming indoor/outdoor trattoria seems to attract mostly neighborhood regulars. But even newcomers feel like regulars after a few minutes, thanks to the staff's Italian ebullience. Menu offerings are mostly classic comfort foods with some contemporary items as well. Housemade pastas are good enough that low-carb dieters should take a break, especially for the tender gnoc-chi with pesto or better yet, delicate fagottini – "beggar's purses" stuffed with pears and cheese. \$\$

Chéen-huyae

15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-956-2808

Diners can get some Tex-Mex dishes here, if they must. But the specialty is Mayan-rooted Yucatan cuisine. So why blow bucks on burritos when one can sample Caribbean Mexico's most typical dish: cochinita pibil? Chéen's authentically succulent version of the pickle-onion-topped marinated pork dish is earthily aromatic from achiote, tangy from bitter oranges, and meltingly tender from slow cooking in a banana leaf wrap. To accompany, try a lime/soy/chili-spiced michelada, also authentically Mexican, and possibly the best thing that ever happened to dark beer. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Chef Creole

13105 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-893-4246

(See Miami listing)

D.J.'s Diner

12210 Biscayne Blvd., 305-893-5250

Located in a Best Western motel, this place, run by a Chinese-American family, serves mostly basic American diner fare – burgers, sandwiches, about a dozen dinner entrées, fresh-baked apple pie, and, oddly, a whole section of Caesar salad variations. But it's also a secret source for Chinese food, mostly chow mien/chop suey-type dishes, but also a few dishes such as eggplant with garlic sauce and ma po tofu that are a step up in authenticity. \$\$\$

Here Comes the Sun

2188 NE 123rd St, 305-893-5711

At this friendly natural foods establishment, one of Miami's first, there's a full stock of vitamins and nutritional supplements. But the place's hearty soups, large variety of entrées (including fresh fish and chicken as well as vegetarian selections), lighter bites like miso burgers with secret "sun sauce" (which would probably make old sneakers taste good), and daily specials are a tastier way to get healthy. An under-ten-buck early-bird dinner is popular with the former long-hair, now blue-hair, crowd. Frozen yogurt, fresh juices, and smoothies complete the menu. \$\$\$

Le Griot de Madame John

975 NE 125th St.
305-892-9333

When Madame moved her base of operations from her Little Haiti home to a real restaurant (though a very informal one, and still mostly take-out), she began offering numerous traditional Haitian dishes, including jerked beef or goat tassot and an impressive poisson gros sel (a whole fish rubbed with salt before poaching with various veggies and spices). But the dish that still packs the place is the griot: marinated pork chunks simmered and then fried till they're moistly tender inside, crisp and intensely flavored outside. \$

Little Havana

12727 Biscayne Blvd.
305-899-9069

www.littlehavanarestaurant.com

In addition to white-tablecloth ambiance, this place features live Latin entertainment and dancing, making it a good choice when diners want a night out, not just a meal. It's also a good choice for diners who don't speak Spanish, but don't worry about authenticity. Classic Cuban home-style dishes like mojo-marinated lechon asado, topped with onions, and juicy ropa vieja are translated on the menu, not the plate, and fancier creations like pork filet in tangy tamarind sauce seem universal crowd-pleasers. \$\$\$

Maleewan Thai & Sushi

2224 NE 123rd St.
305-895-0393

Redecorated (tasteful bamboo-matted walls, silk flowers) since the days – many days – this space was occupied by the kosher sushi spot Tani Guchi's Place, Maleewan is now a cozy, neighborly nook at which to enjoy all the standard Japanese and Thai selections. Cooked sushi is the strong suit here, particularly the signature mammoth-size Maleewan roll, given zing by pickled Japanese squash and savor by a crispy yellowtail tempura topping. If you're craving more creative fare, check out the handwritten specials board on your way in. \$\$

Mama Jennie's

11720 NE 2nd Ave.
305-757-3627

For more than 35 years this beloved red-sauce joint has been drawing students and other starvation-budget diners with prodigious portions of lasagna, spaghetti and meatballs (the latter savory yet light-textured), veal marsala topped with a mountain of mushrooms, and other Italian-American belly-busters. All pasta or meat entrées come with oil-drenched garlic rolls and either soup (hearty minestrone) or a salad (mixed greens, tomatoes, cukes, brined olives, and pickled peppers) that's a dinner in itself. Rustic roadhouse ambiance, notably the red leatherette booths, add to Mama's charm. \$\$\$

Mario the Baker

250 NE 25th St.
305-891-7641

www.mariothebakerpizza.com

At this North Miami institution (opened in 1969) food is Italian-American, not Italian-Italian: spaghetti and meatballs, lasagna, eggplant parmigiana, and hot or cold subs. No imported buffalo, arugula, or other chichi stuff on the New York-style medium-thin-crust pizzas; the top topping here is the savory housemade sausage. And no one leaves without garlic rolls, awash in warm parsley oil and smashed garlic. New branches are now open in Miami's Midtown neighborhood and in North Bay Village. \$

North One 10

11052 Biscayne Blvd.
305-893-4211

www.northone10.com

After helming several NYC restaurants for China Grill Management, the homegrown married team of chef Dewey and sommelier Dale LoSasso returned to do their own thing in their own neighborhood. The menu is "creative comfort food": a shrimp waffle with basil butter; "steak and eggs" (a grilled NY strip with truffled goat cheese frittata and herb demiglace); a stone crab hot dog the chef invented for a Super Bowl party. The award-winning wine list inspires playfully themed pairing events. Prices are reasonable and parking is free. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Sara's

2214 NE 123rd St.
305-891-3312

www.saraskosherpizza.com

While this mainly vegetarian kosher place is best known for its pizza (New York-style medium crust or thick-crust Sicilian, topped with veggies and/or "meat buster" imitation meats), it's also offers a full range of breakfast/

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lunch/dinner vegetarian cuisine of all nations, with many dairy and seafood items too. Admittedly the cutesie names of many items – baygels, bergerrbite, Cezarrrr salad, hammm, meat-a-ball, schmopperrr – may cause queasiness. But the schmopperrr itself is one helluva high-octane veggie burger. \$-\$\$

Steve's Pizza

12101 Biscayne Blvd.
305-891-0202

At the end of a debauched night of excess, some paper-thin designer pizza with wisps of smoked salmon (or similar fluff) doesn't do the trick. Open till 3:00 or 4:00 a.m., Steve's has, since 1974, been serving the kind of comforting, retro pizzas people crave at that hour. As in Brooklyn, tomato sauce is sweet, with strong oregano flavor. Mozzarella is applied with abandon. Toppings are stuff that give strength: pepperoni, sausage, meatballs, onions, and peppers. \$

Tokyo Bowl

12295 Biscayne Blvd.
305-892-9400

This fast-food drive-thru (unexpectedly serene inside) is named for its feature item, big budget-priced bowls of rice or noodles topped with cooked Japanese-style items like teriyaki fish (fresh fish sautéed with vegetables), curried chicken and veggies, spicy shrimp, or gyoza dumplings in tangy sauce. There's also an all-you-can-eat deal – sushi (individual nigiri or maki rolls) plus tempura, teriyaki, and other cooked items for \$14; three bucks more for sashimi instead of sushi. \$-\$\$

Venezia Pizza and Café

13452 Biscayne Blvd.
305-940-1808

No frozen pizza crusts or watery mozzarella here. No imported designer ingredients either. The pies are New York-style, but the dough is made fresh daily, and the cheese is Grande (from Wisconsin, considered America's

finest pizza topper). Also on the menu are Italian-American pastas, a large selection of hot and cold subs, simple salads, and a few new protein adds – grilled chicken breast, fried fish, or a steak. \$-\$\$

Wong's Chinese Restaurant

12420 Biscayne Blvd.
305-891-4313

The menu reads like a textbook on how to please everyone, with food ranging from traditional Chinese to Chinese-American to just plain American. Appetizers include honey garlic chicken wings or Buffalo wings. A crab-claw starter comes with choice of pork fried rice or French fries. Seafood lovers can get shrimp chop suey, or salty pepper shrimp (authentically shell-on). And New Yorkers will find a number of dishes that are mainstays of Manhattan Szechuan menus but not common in Miami: cold sesame noodles, Hunan chicken, twice-cooked pork. \$-\$

Woody's Famous Steak Sandwich

13105 Biscayne Blvd.
305-891-1451

The griddle has been fired up since 1954 at this indie fast-food joint, and new owners have done little to change the time-tested formula except to stretch operating hours into the night and expand its classic menu to include a few health-conscious touches like Caesar salad, plus a note proclaiming their oils are free of trans fats. Otherwise the famous steak sandwich is still a traditional Philly. Drippin' good burgers, too. And unlike MacChain addicts, patrons here can order a cold beer with the good grease. \$-\$\$

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

Bamboo Garden

1232 NE 163rd St.
305-945-1722

Big enough for a banquet (up to 300 guests), this veteran is many diners' favorite on the 163rd/167th Street "Chinatown" strip because of its superior décor. But the menu also offers well-prepared, authentic dishes like peppery black bean clams, sautéed mustard greens,

and steamed whole fish with ginger and scallions, plus Chinese-American egg foo young. Default spicing is mild even in Szechuan dishes marked with red-chili icons, but don't worry; realizing some like it hot, the chefs will customize spiciness to heroic heat levels upon request. \$\$

Blue Marlin Fish House

2500 NE 163rd St.
305-957-8822

Located inside Oleta River State Park, this casual outdoor eatery is a rare surprise for nature lovers, especially since a young couple took over and upgraded the menu. The featured item is still the house-smoked fish this historic venue began producing in 1938, available in three varieties: salmon, mahi mahi, and the signature blue marlin. But the smokehouse now also turns out ribs and delectable brisket. Other new additions include weekend fish fries with live music. Entry is directly from 163rd Street, not through the main park entrance. No admission fee. \$

China Restaurant

178 NE 167th St.
305-947-6549

When you have a yen for the Americanized Chinese fusion dishes you grew up with, all the purist regional Chinese cuisine in the world won't scratch the itch. So the menu here, containing every authentically inauthentic Chinese-American classic you could name, is just the ticket when nostalgia strikes – from simple egg rolls to pressed almond duck (majorly breaded boneless chunks, with comfortingly thick gravy). \$-\$\$

Chipotle Mexican Grill

14776 Biscayne Blvd.
305-947-2779, www.chipotle.com

Proving that national fast-food chains don't have to be bad for either diners or the environment, Chipotle serves what the company calls "food with integrity." The fare is simple, basically tacos and big burritos: soft flour or crisp corn tortillas stuffed with chipotle-marinated steak or chicken chunks, bolder shredded beef barbacoa, or herb-scented pork carnitas. But these bites contain no evil ingredients (transfats, artificial color/flavor, antibiotics, growth hormones). And the food, while not the authentic Mex street stuff dreams are made of, is darned tasty, too. \$

Christine's Roti Shop

16721 NE 6th Ave.
305-770-0434

Wraps are for wimps. At this small shop run by Christine Gouvêla, originally from British Guyana, the wrapper is a far more substantial and tasty roti, a Caribbean megacrepie made from chickpea flour. Most popular filling for the flatbread is probably jerk chicken, bone-in pieces in a spiced stew of potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, and more chickpeas. But there are about a dozen other curries from which to choose. Take-out packages of plain roti are also available; they transform myriad leftovers into tasty, portable lunches. \$

El Gran Inka

3155 NE 163rd St.
305-940-4910

www.graninka.com

Though diners at this upscale Peruvian eatery will find ceviches, a hefty fried-seafood jalea, and Peru's other expected traditional specialties, all presented far more elegantly than most in town, the contemporary Peruvian fusion creations are unique. Especially recommended are two dishes adapted from recipes by Peru's influential nikkei (Japanese/Creole) chef Rosita Yimura: an exquisite, delicately sauced tiradito de corvina, and for those with no fear of cholesterol, pulpo de oliva (octopus topped with rich olive sauce). \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Hanna's Gourmet Diner

13951 Biscayne Blvd.
305-947-2255

When Sia and Nicole Hemmati bought the Gourmet Diner from retiring original owner Jean-Pierre Lejeune in the late 1990s, they added "Hanna's" to the name, but changed little else about this retro-looking French/American diner, a north Miami-Dade institution since 1983. Customers can get a cheeseburger or garlicky escargots, meatloaf in tomato sauce or boeuf bourguignon in red wine sauce, iceberg lettuce and tomatoes, or a mushroom and squid salad with garlic dressing. For oysters Rockefeller/tuna-melt couples from Venus and Mars, it remains the ideal dinner date destination. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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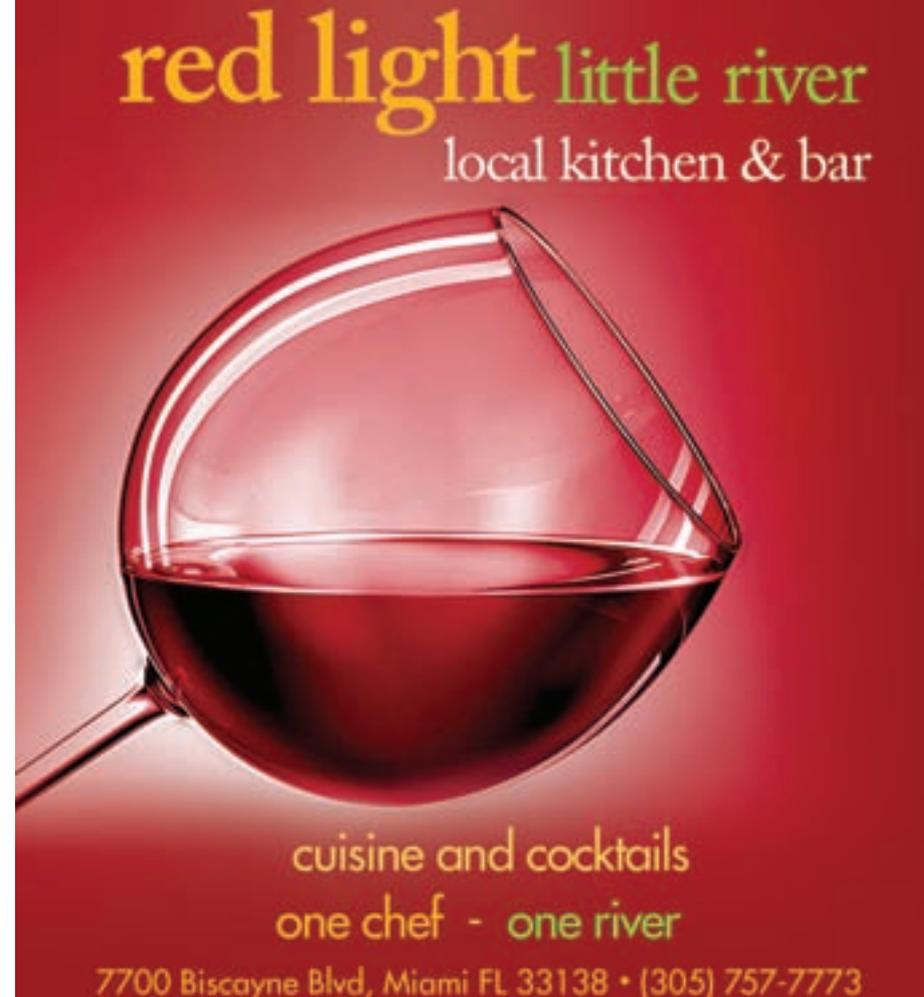


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Hiro Japanese Restaurant

3007 NE 163rd St., 305-948-3687

One of Miami's first sushi restaurants, Hiro retains an amusing retro-glam feel, an extensive menu of both sushi and cooked Japanese food, and late hours that make it a perennially popular after-hours snack stop. The sushi menu has few surprises, but quality is reliable. Most exceptional are the nicely priced yakitori, skewers of succulently soy-glazed and grilled meat, fish, and vegetables; the unusually large variety available of the last makes this place a good choice for vegetarians. \$\$

Hiro's Sushi Express

17048 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-949-0776

Tiny, true, but there's more than just sushi at this mostly take-out spin-off of the pioneering Hiro. Makis are the mainstay (standard stuff like California rolls, more complex creations like multi-veg futomaki, and a few unexpected treats like a spicy Crunch & Caliente maki), available à la carte or in value-priced individual and party combo platters. But there are also bento boxes featuring tempura, yakitori skewers, teriyaki, stir-fried veggies, and udon noodles. Another branch is now open in Miami's Upper Eastside. \$

Hiro's Yakko-San

17040 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-947-0064

After sushi chefs close up their own restaurants for the night, many come here for a rare taste of Japanese home cooking, served in grazing portions. Try glistening-fresh strips of raw tuna can be had in maguro nuta – mixed with scallions and dressed with habit-forming honey-miso mustard sauce. Other favorites include goma ae (wilted spinach, chilled and dressed in sesame sauce), garlic stem and beef (mild young shoots flash-fried with tender steak bits), or perhaps just-caught grouper with hot/sweet/tangy chili sauce. Open till around 3:00 a.m. \$\$

Heelsha

1550 NE 164th St., 305-919-8393

www.heelsha.com

If unusual Bangladeshi dishes like fiery pumpkin patee (cooked with onion, green pepper, and pickled mango) or Heelsha curry (succulently spiced hilsa, Bangladesh's sweet-fleshed national fish) seem familiar, it's because chef/owner Bithi Begum and her husband Tipu Raman once served such fare at the critically acclaimed Renaisa. Their menu's mix-and-match option allows diners to pair their choice of meat, poultry, fish, or vegetable with more than a dozen regional sauces, from familiar Indian styles to exotica like satkara, flavored with a Bangladeshi citrus reminiscent of sour orange. \$\$\$

Iron Sushi

16350 W. Dixie Hwy.

305-945-2244

(See Miami Shores listing?)

Jerusalem Market and Deli

16275 Biscayne Blvd.

305-948-9080

Specialties like shawarma, spinach pies, kebabs, hummus, and kibbeh (a savory mix of ground lamb and bulgur) are native to many Middle East countries, but when a Lebanese chef/owner, like this eatery's Sam Elzoor, is at the helm, you can expect extraordinary refinement. There are elaborate daily specials here, like lemon chicken or stuffed cabbage with a variety of sides, but even a common falafel sandwich is special when the

pita is also stuffed with housemade cabbage and onion salads, plus unusually rich and tart tahina. \$\$\$

Kabobji

3055 NE 163rd St., 305-354-8484

www.EatKabobji.com

This place makes a very good tahini sauce. In fact that alone is reason enough to visit. We prefer ours with this bright, cheery eatery's delightfully oniony falafel or a veg-garnished wrap of thin-sliced marinated beef schwarma. They also do a beautifully spiced, and reassuringly fresh-tasting, raw kibbi naye (Middle Eastern steak tartare). It's hard to resist putting together a grazing meal of starters and wraps, but there's also a roster of full entrées (with soup or salad plus starch), including tempting vegetarian and seafood meals for noncarnivores. \$\$

Kebab Indian Restaurant

514 NE 167th St.

305-940-6309

Since the 1980s this restaurant, located in an unatmospheric mini strip mall but surprisingly romantic inside (especially if you grab one of the exotically draped booths) has been a popular destination for reasonably priced north Indian fare. Kormas are properly soothing and vindaloos are satisfactorily searing, but the kitchen will adjust seasonings upon request. They aim to please. Food arrives unusually fast for an Indian eatery, too. \$\$

King Palace

330 NE 167th St.

305-949-2339

The specialties here are authentic Chinatown-style barbecue (whole ducks, roast pork strips, and more, displayed in a glass case by the door), and fresh seafood dishes, the best made with the live fish swimming in two tanks by the dining room entrance. There's also a better-than-average selection of seasonal Chinese veggies. The menu is extensive, but the best ordering strategy, since the place is usually packed with Asians, is to see what looks good on nearby tables, and point. \$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

14831 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-8800

(See Midtown / Wynwood / Design District listing)

Laurenzo's Market Café

16385 W. Dixie Hwy.

305-945-6381

www.laurenzomarket.com

It's just a small area between the wines and the fridge counters – no potted palms, and next-to-no service in this cafeteria-style space. But when negotiating this international gourmet market's packed shelves and crowds has depleted your energies, it's a handy place to refuel with eggplant parmesan and similar Italian-American classics, housemade from old family recipes. Just a few spoonfuls of Wednesday's hearty pasta fagiolo, one of the daily soup specials, could keep a person shopping for hours. And now that pizza master Carlo is manning the wood-fired oven, you can sample the thinnest, crispiest pies outside Napoli. \$\$\$

Little Saigon

16752 N. Miami Ave.

305-653-3377

This is Miami's oldest traditional Vietnamese restaurant, but it's still packed most weekend nights. So even the place's biggest negative – its hole-in-the-wall atmosphere, not encouraging of lingering visits – becomes a plus since it ensures fast turnover. Chef/owner Lily Tao is typically in the kitchen, crafting green papaya salad, flavorful beef noodle

pho (served with greens, herbs, and condiments that make it not just a soup but a whole ceremony), and many other Vietnamese classics. The menu is humongous. \$\$\$

Mary Ann Bakery

1284 NE 163rd St.

305-945-0333

Don't be unduly alarmed by the American birthday cakes in the window. At this small Chinese bakery the real finds are the Chinatown-style baked buns and other savory pastries, filled with roast pork, bean sauce, and curried ground beef. Prices are under a buck, making them an exotic alternative to fast-food dollar meals. There's one table for eat-in snackers. \$

The Melting Pot

15700 Biscayne Blvd.

305-947-2228; www.meltingpot.com

For 1950s and 1960s college students, fondue pots were standard dorm accessories. These days, however, branches of this chain are generally the only places to go for this eating experience. Start with a wine-enriched four-cheese fondue; proceed to an entrée with meat or seafood, plus choice of cooking potion (herbed wine, bouillon, or oil); finish with fruits and cakes dipped in melted chocolate. Fondue etiquette dictates that diners who drop a skewer in the pot must kiss all other table companions, so go with those you love. \$\$\$

Oishi Thai

14841 Biscayne Blvd.

305-947-4338

www.oishithai.com

At this stylish Thai/sushi spot, try the menu of specials, many of which clearly reflect the young chef's fanatical devotion to fresh fish, as well as the time he spent in the kitchen of Knob: broiled miso-marinated black cod; rock shrimp tempura with creamy sauce; even Nobu Matsuhisa's "new style sashimi" (slightly surface-seared by drizzles of hot olive and sesame oil). The specials menu includes some Thai-inspired creations, too, such as veal massaman curry, Chilean sea bass curry, and sizzling filet mignon with basil sauce. \$\$\$

Panya Thai

520 NE 167th St., 305-945-8566

Unlike authentic Chinese cuisine, there's no shortage of genuine Thai food in and around Miami. But Panya's chef/owner, a Bangkok native, offers numerous regional and/or rare dishes not found elsewhere. Plus he doesn't automatically curtail the heat or sweetness levels to please Americans. Among the most intriguing: moo khem phad wan (chewy deep-fried seasoned pork strips with fiery tamarind dip, accompanied by crisp green papaya salad); broad rice noodles stir-fried with eye-opening chili/garlic sauce and fresh Thai basil; and chili-topped Diamond Duck in tangy tamarind sauce. \$\$\$

Paquito's

16265 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-5027

From the outside, this strip-mall Mexican eatery couldn't be easier to overlook. Inside, however, its festivity is impossible to resist. Every inch of wall space seems to be covered with South of the Border knickknacks. And if the kitschy décor alone doesn't cheer you, the quickly arriving basket of fresh (not packaged) taco chips, or the mariachi band, or the knockout margaritas will. Food ranges from Tex-Mex burritos and a party-size fajita platter to authentic Mexican moles and harder-to-find traditional preparations like albóndigas – spicy, ultra-savory meatballs. \$\$\$

Pasha's

14871 Biscayne Blvd.

786-923-2323

www.pashas.com

(See Miami: Brickell / Downtown listing)

Paul Bakery Café

14861 Biscayne Blvd.

305-940-4443

www.paulusa.com

From one rural shop in 1889, the French bakery known simply as Paul has grown to a worldwide chain, which fortunately chose to open its first U.S. outlet in our town. One bite of the crusty peasant loaf, the olive-studded fougasse, or another of the signature artisan breads transports you right back to France. As authentic as the boulangerie breads are, the patisserie items like flan normande are just as evocative. For eat-in diners, quite continental soups, salads, and sandwiches are equally and dependably French. \$\$

Pizza Fusion

14815 Biscayne Blvd., 305-405-6700

www.pizzafusion.com

"Saving the earth one pizza at a time" is the motto at this franchise of the only pizza chain to require third-party organic restaurant certification at all locations. Their gluten-free crusts make it mighty friendly to pizza fanatics with food allergies. Starters, salads, desserts, and organic wines/beers are also served. And delivery is available – in hybrid cars, of course. Specials unique to this NMB franchise include Sunday-Thursday happy hours, a free Kids Organic Club class on Saturdays, 10:00-11:00 a.m., and varied Monday-Wednesday freebies. \$\$\$

PK Oriental Mart

255 NE 167th St., 305-654-9646

Unlike other Asian markets on this strip between I-95 and Biscayne Boulevard, PK has a prepared-food counter, serving authentic Chinatown barbecue, with appropriate dipping sauces included. Weekends bring the biggest selection, including barbecued ribs and pa pei duck (roasted, then deep-fried till extra crisp and nearly free of subcutaneous fat). Available every day are juicy, soy-marinated roast chickens, roast pork strips, crispy pork, and whole roast ducks – hanging, beaks and all. But no worries; a counterperson will chop your purchase into bite-size, beakless pieces. \$

Roasters & Toasters

18515 NE 18th Ave., 305-830-3354

Attention ex-New Yorkers: Is your idea of food porn one of the Carnegie Deli's mile-high pastrami sandwiches? Well, Roasters will dwarf them. Consider the "Carnegie-style" monster containing, according to the menu, a full pound of succulent meat (really 1.4 pounds; we weighed it), for a mere 15 bucks. All the other Jewish deli classics are here too, including perfectly sour pickles, silky hand-sliced nova or lox, truly red-rare roast beef, and the cutest two-bite mini-potato pancakes ever – eight per order, served with sour cream and applesauce. \$\$

Sang's Chinese Restaurant

1925 NE 163rd St., 305-947-7076

Sang's has three menus. The pink menu is Americanized Chinese food, from chop suey to honey garlic chicken. The

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Restaurant Listings

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white menu permits the chef to show off his authentic Chinese fare: salt and pepper prawns, rich beef/turnip casserole, tender salt-baked chicken, even esoterica like abalone with sea cucumber. The extensive third menu offers dim sum, served until 4:00 p.m. A live tank allows seasonal seafood dishes like lobster with ginger and scallion. Recently installed: a Chinese barbecue case, displaying savory items like crispy pork with crackling attached. \$\$\$

Shing Wang Vegetarian, Icee & Tea House 237 NE 167th St. 305-654-4008

www.shingwangrestaurant.com

At this unique Taiwanese eatery, run by a trio of Taipei-trained female chefs, all seafood, poultry, and meats in the budget-priced entrées (\$6.95) are mock – imitations made from wheat gluten, tofu, and vegetables. But don't mock it till you try the quite beefy pepper steak, or smokin' duck, with slices that mimic the charcuterie item down to convincing faux fat. Other main dishes feature recognizable veggies or noodles. As for the rest of the name: icee is shaved ice, an over-the-top dessert that's a sort of a slurpee sundae, with toppings that vary from the familiar (fresh fruits) to the weird (grass jelly, sweet corn, kidney beans, rice balls, chocolate pudding). And the bubble tea is a must-not-miss. Using housemade syrup, the cold, refreshing boba comes in numerous flavors (mango, taro, even actual tea), all supplemented with signature black tapioca balls that, slurped through large-diameter straws, are a guaranteed giggle. \$

Siam Square 54 NE 167th St. 305-944-9697

Open until 1:00 a.m. every day except Sunday (when it closes at midnight), this relatively new addition to North Miami Beach's "Chinatown" strip has become a popular late-night gathering spot for chefs from other Asian restaurants. And why not? The food is fresh, nicely presented, and reasonably priced. The kitchen staff is willing to customize dishes upon request, and the serving staff is reliably fast. Perhaps most important, karaoke equipment is in place when the mood strikes. \$-\$\$

Scorch Grillhouse and Wine Bar 13750 Biscayne Blvd. 305-949-5588 www.scorchgrillhouse.com

Though some food folks were initially exasperated when yet another Latin-influenced grill replaced one of our area's few Vietnamese restaurants, it's hard to bear a grudge at a friendly, casual neighborhood place that offers monster ten-ounce char-grilled burgers, with potatoes or salad, for \$8.50; steaks, plus a side and a sauce or veg topper, for nine bucks at lunch, \$15 to \$18.75 (the menu's top price) at night; and three-dollar glasses of decent house wine. \$\$\$

Sushi House 15911 Biscayne Blvd. 305-947-6002

In terms of décor drama, this sushi spot seems to have taken its cue from Philippe Starck: sheer floor-to-ceiling drapes, for starters. The sushi list, too, is over the top, featuring monster makis like the Cubbie Comfort: spicy tuna, soft-shell crab, shrimp and eel tempura, plus avocado, jalapeños, and cilantro, topped with not one but

three sauces: wasabi, teriyaki, and spicy mayo. Hawaiian King Crab contains unprecedented ingredients like tomatoes, green peppers, and pineapple. Boutique wines, artisan sakes, and cocktails are as exotic as the cuisine. \$\$\$\$

Tuna's Raw Bar and Grille 17850 W. Dixie Hwy. 305-932-0630 www.tunasrawbarandgrille.com

The reincarnated Tuna's has gained new owners, a new name, a dazzling outdoor bar and dining area, and a newly impressive selection of raw-bar specialties: cold-water oysters from the Northeast, plus Blue Points, Malpecs, Island Creeks, and more. Traditional house favorites remain, and the emphasis is still on fresh fish from local waters. Open daily till 2:00 a.m., the place can get rather festive after midnight, but since the kitchen is open till closing, Tuna's draws a serious late-night dining crowd, too. \$\$\$\$

AVENTURA / MIAMI GARDENS

Anthony's Coal-Fired Pizza 17901 Biscayne Blvd. 305-830-2625 www.anthonyscoalfiredpizza.com

Coal is what it's all about here – a coal-fired oven (like that at Lombardi's, Patsy's, John's, or Grimaldi's in New York) producing the intense 800-degree heat to turn out, in mere minutes, a pie with the classic thin, crisp-bottomed, beautifully char-bubbled crust that fans of the above legendary pizzerias crave. Expect neither bargain-chain prices, a huge selection of toppings, nor much else on the menu. Anthony's does just a few things, and does them right. \$\$

Bella Luna 19575 Biscayne Blvd. Aventura Mall, 305-792-9330 www.bellalunaaventura.com

If the menu here looks familiar, it should. It's nearly identical to that at the Upper Eastside's Luna Café and, with minor variations, at all the rest of Tom Billante's eateries (Rosalia, Villaggio, Carpaccio), right down to the typeface. But no argument from here. In a mall – a setting more accustomed to food court – dishes like carpaccio al salmone (crudo, with portobellos, capers, parmesan slices, and lemon/tomato dressing) and linguine carbonara (in creamy sauce with pancetta and shallots) are a breath of fresh, albeit familiar, air. \$\$\$\$

Bourbon Steak 19999 W. Country Club Dr. (Fairmont Hotel, Turnberry Resort) 786-279-0658 www.michaelmina.net

At Bourbon Steak, a venture in the exploding restaurant empire of chef Michael Mina, a multiple James Beard award winner, steakhouse fare is just where the fare starts. There are also Mina's ingenious signature dishes, like an elegant deconstructed lobster/baby vegetable pot pie, a raw bar, and enough delectable vegetable/seafood starters and sides for noncarnivores to assemble a happy meal. But don't neglect the steak – flavorful dry-aged Angus, 100-percent Wagyu American "Kobe," swoonworthy grade A5 Japanese Kobe, and butter-poached prime rib, all cooked to perfection. \$\$\$\$

Chef Allen's 19088 NE 29th Ave; 305-935-2900 www.chefallens.com

After 20 years of success in the same location, many chefs would coast on their backlog of tried-and-true dishes. And it's doubtful that kindly Allen Susser would freak out his many regulars by eliminating from the menu the Bahamian lobster and crab cakes. But lobster-lovers will find that the 20th anniversary menus also offer new excitements like tandoori-spiced rock lobster, along with what might be the ultimate mac'n'cheese: lobster crab macaroni in a Fris vodka sauce with mushrooms, scallions, and parmesan. The famous dessert soufflé's flavor changes daily, but it always did. \$\$\$\$

Il Migliore 2576 NE Miami Gardens Dr. 305-792-2902

Chef Neal Cooper's attractive trattoria gets the food right, as well as the ambiance. As in Italy, dishes rely on impeccable ingredients and straightforward recipes that don't overcomplicate, cover up, or otherwise muck about with that perfection. Fresh fettuccine with white truffle oil and mixed wild mushrooms needs nothing else. Neither does the signature Pollo Al Mattone, marinated in herbs and cooked under a brick. And even low-carb dieters happily go to hell in a hand basket when faced with a mound of potatoes alla Toscana, herb-sprinkled French fries. \$-\$\$\$

Mahogany Grille 2190 NW 183rd St. 305-626-8100

Mahogany Grille has drawn critical raves and an international clientele since retired major league outfielder Andre Dawson and his brother transformed this place in 2007. Today it's white tablecloths and, naturally, mahogany. The menu is a sort of trendy yet traditional soul fusion of food from several African diaspora regions: Carolina Low Country (buttery cheese grits with shrimp, sausage, and cream gravy), the Caribbean (conch-packed fritters or salad), and the Old South (lightly buttermilk-battered fried chicken). The chicken is perhaps Miami's best. \$-\$\$\$

Pilar 20475 Biscayne Blvd. 305-937-2777, www.pillarrestaurant.com

Chef/owner Scott Fredel previously worked for Norman Van Aken and Mark Militello. He has been executive chef at Rumi, and cooked at NYC's James Beard House. Armed with those impressive credentials, Fredel and his wife launched Pilar (named for Hemingway's boat) aiming to prove that top restaurants can be affordable. Consider it proven. Floribbean-style seafood is the specialty: fresh hearts of palm slaw and Caribbean curry sauce, rock shrimp spring rolls with sweet soy glaze, yellowtail snapper with tomato-herb vinaigrette. Forget its strip-mall location. The restaurant itself is elegant. \$-\$\$\$

Pizza Roma 19090 NE 29th Ave. 305-937-4884

Despite its name, this homey hidden eatery serves not Rome's wood-cooked, crunchy-crust pizzas but New York-style pies with medium-thick crusts pliable enough to fold in half for neat street eating. Unlike chains, though, this indie is accommodating, so if you want your crust thin and crisp, just ask. Also featured are Italian-American entrées like baked manicotti (that's "mani-goat", for those not from NJ) big enough to share, and sub sandwiches, here called "bullets," to put you in a Sopranos frame of mind. \$\$

The Soup Man 20475 Biscayne Blvd. #G-8, 305-466-9033

The real soup man behind this franchise is Al Yeganeh, an antisocial Manhattan restaurant proprietor made notorious, on a Seinfeld episode, as "the soup Nazi." On the menu: ten different premium soups each day. The selection is carefully balanced among meat/poultry-based and vegetarian; clear and creamy (like the eatery's signature shellfish-packed lobster bisque); chilled and hot; familiar (chicken noodle) and exotic (mulligatawny). All soups come with gourmet bread, fruit, and imported chocolate. Also available are salads, sandwiches, and wraps. \$\$\$

Sushi Siam 19575 Biscayne Blvd. 305-932-8955 (See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)



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