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Times

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Volume 7, Issue 7



The World According to Seth

It's made up of Miami memories, mementos, and a million other things — literally

By Margaret Griffis
Photos by Silvia Ros

Beyond the seashore, beyond Ocean Drive, and even beyond the cabaret district there's a Miami Beach that's very different from the one usually portrayed in the media. Sure, the beautiful beach

bunnies and wild club kids are part of the mystique, but for thousands of natives, those who worked on as well as played on the million dollar sandbar, there's another story that rarely gets told — or at least told well.

Enter Seth H. Bramson, a colorful character who lived and breathed that Miami Beach during what may have been its golden era. Now a Miami Shores resident, Bramson just published his 16th

history book, *Sunshine, Stone Crabs and Cheesecake: The Story of Miami Beach*, which covers the city's history from 1870

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Continued on page 14

it's alive



89.7

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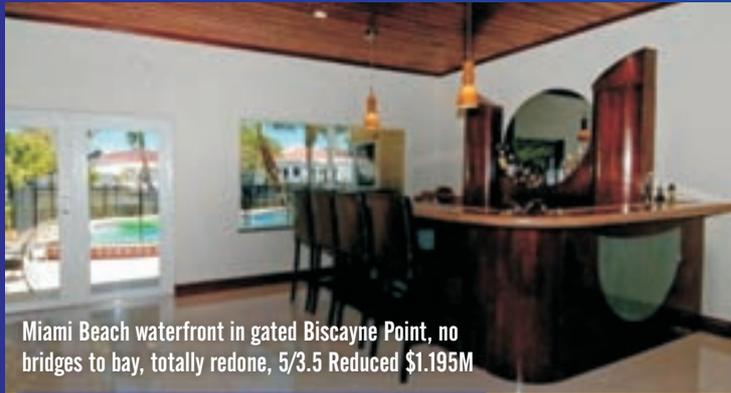
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				3 The Harder They Come 8PM Z A hard-driving irresistible musical celebration, featuring classic songs including "By the Rivers of Babylon" and the global phenomenon "You Can Get It If You Really Want!"	4 The Harder They Come 8PM Z "A superb production that captures not just the movie's music and characters, but also, its soul!" — <i>Evening Standard</i>	5 The Harder They Come 2 & 8PM Z "An astonishment in every way; an exhilarating bleeding at-the-edges slice of Jamaican life." — <i>The Guardian</i> FREE Arsht Center Tour 12PM Z	
6 The Harder They Come 2 & 8PM Z "Stuffed with raucous life and a raft of reggae classics!" — <i>The Guardian</i>				10 The Harder They Come 8PM Z "Hard to beat as a night out for reggae lovers." — <i>TheLondonpaper.com</i>	11 The Harder They Come 8PM Z President Obama's United We Serve Volunteer Fair 10 AM - 6PM P Keynote speaker Mayor Carlos Alvarez, seminars, giveaways, and live performances!	12 The Harder They Come 2 & 8PM Z SEASON KICKOFF BOX OFFICE EVENT 11AM - 1PM Z First opportunity to purchase tickets for Tony Bennett, Jazz, and more!	
13 The Harder They Come 2 & 8PM Z "A top-notch band and an indecently talented cast!" — <i>What's On Stage</i>				<p>ONE DAY ONLY!</p> <p>SEASON KICKOFF BOX OFFICE EVENT!</p> <p>SEPTEMBER 12 • 11AM - 1PM Ziff Ballet Opera House Lobby</p> <p>First opportunity to purchase tickets for Tony Bennett, Emeril Lagasse, <i>The Color Purple</i>, and MORE! PLUS a chance to earn FREE PARKING to one of your shows!*</p> <p><small>*visit arshtcenter.org for details.</small></p>			19 FREE Arsht Center Tour 12PM Z
20							26 FREE Arsht Center Tour 12PM Z

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BISCAYNE Times

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FEATURING DEBBIE FORD, DEEPAK CHOPRA,
MARIANNE WILLIAMSON & JAMES VAN PRAAGH.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2009

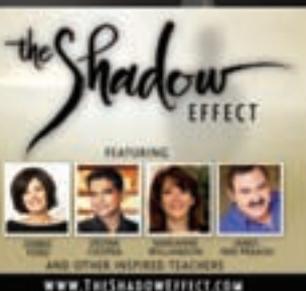
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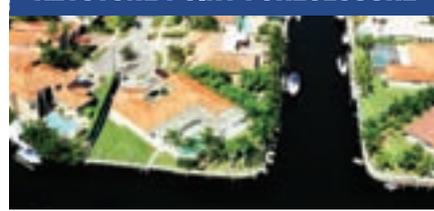
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"SHORT SALE" World Famous Street

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COMMENTARY: FEEDBACK

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Dance to Romance

Karen-Janine Cohen's article "A Chance to Dance" (August 2009) opened a floodgate of memories. During my college days, I was an Arthur Murray instructor, and I've always enjoyed an evening of social dancing. I discovered Dancemasters soon after its opening.

In the late 1970s everyone wanted to "do the hustle," including a client of mine, the late Marion Danziger, and her daughter. I told them to check out Dancemasters for private lessons, group lessons, and dance parties.

They did, and as it so happened, my client's daughter turned out to be a "natural," filled with grace, an excellent sense of rhythm, and a high energy level. Sari and Derek's disco exhibitions were electrifying, and it wasn't long before Sari became Mrs. Derek Mellman.

*George H. Fox
Miami Shores*

Earth to Harper... Earth to Harper... Do You Copy? Over...

I read Jim W. Harper's article about Eaton Park ("Lots of Potential, All of It Unrealized," August 2009) and I really have to laugh. His thoughts about the park and its usage are somewhat far from reality. I suspect that he did his research for this article in the summer. Had he checked out the park during the school year, he would see that it is in fact extremely active.

My daughter has attended the nearby Cushman School for six years. This school uses the park for a variety of activities. The field is in constant use, whether it be for regular P.E. classes, fundraising jog-a-thons, soccer practices, football practices, or actual games. Cushman pays any fees required by the city.

Up until last year, when Cushman built its own courts, students used the basketball courts for practices and games. And up until last year, when the Little Haiti Soccer Park was created, all of Cushman's soccer matches were held at Eaton Park. After school hours, I have seen kids using the playground and boys on the field — and girls too!

In case Jim Harper hasn't noticed, Miami is a city. There are many diverse

groups, divided economically and ethnically, all over the place, right next to one another. For him to mock this fact ("The residents north and west of the park are, by and large, poor and Haitian. Not far to the east, both north and south, the prosperous residents of Morningside enjoy the security of guard gates and barricaded streets as they sip cocktails poolside....") — well, what's his point? Does this proximity of diverse groups living together threaten him?

And what was his point in relating the tuition for preschoolers at Cushman? Does anyone care? Or was this supposed to be shocking? How did that relate to the "potential" of the park? Or was he just trying to write his article in a provocative, undercover, Geraldo style?

*Melinda Cowen
Miami*

My Boss Is Great! And I Mean It!

I read Frank Rollason's wonderful article about Jesse Diner with great interest ("Local Legal Eagle Makes Good," August 2009). I must say, it truly captured much of who Jesse is, has been, and always will be. He is head and shoulders above most of the men I have worked for in my many years working with attorneys.

*Jocelyn D. Smith
Atkinson, Diner, Stone,
Mankuta & Ploucha
Fort Lauderdale*

Let's See, How About a Garden Here, and a Gourmet Market Over There, and...

I just wanted to say that Christian Cipriani's cover story "Dirt & Dreams" (July 2009) was one of the most well-written and thoughtful articles I've read in a while. I agree with all his visions for the Edgewater neighborhood!

My boyfriend currently lives in Edgewater, on Biscayne Boulevard at 22nd Street, and we are constantly dreaming about what should go here or there. It's nice to see someone bring awareness to the subject.

Keep on writing! And keep on asking!
*Nicole Valle
Coral Gables*

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101.9 WEST PALM BEACH

BizBuzz: September 2009

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

By Pamela Robin Brandt
BT Contributor

Downtown Miami may not set off your nightlife radar like South Beach, but some offers you don't refuse — like a night with *The Wiz*, final film in the **Flickin' Summer Series** at the Gusman Theatre (174 E. Flagler St.; 305-374-2444), on Thursday, September 3. Following Diana Ross easin' on down the road as Dorothy, patrons can ease onstage for a dance party with DJ Pauer. There are also raffle prizes and drink specials South Beach couldn't touch: \$3 beers, \$5 Captain Morgan cocktails. Ticket price? Just \$10.

It seems like shopping season for the December holidays starts earlier each year. But if you're shopping for personalized holiday cards, party invitations, photo cards, or business greetings, *September* always hosts the best sales — like the one at **LetterHeads** (600 NE 72nd Terr.; 305-751-4894). Order custom stationery items like the above by September 30, and *BT* readers get 20% off.

The Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus (1085 NE 79th St.; 305-754-8002) is another establishment where, to paraphrase an old proverb, the early bird gets the Warsteiner. The German eatery is getting a jump on Oktoberfest, commencing on September 19 to serve imported Pauliner and Warsteiner Oktoberfest draft brews in traditional one-liter "Mass Krug" beer boots. To accompany: special Oktoberfest skillet or BBQ.

Meanwhile, September's holidays include the Jewish High Holy Days, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. And nothing says Happy New Year better than a dozen fresh bagels — unless it's a *free second dozen* you'll get with purchase of the first 12, when you flash the *BT* ad coupon at **Bagels & Company** (11064 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-892-2435). Check out the ad

for other coupon specials, too. Owner David Cohen reminds readers that the eatery also does holiday catering — sumptuous platters of everything from deli meats and smoked fish to fresh-baked pastries.

Combining two of the world's most powerful antioxidant fruits, the newest froyo flavor at downtown Miami's **Yogen Früz** (100 S. Biscayne Blvd.; 305-371-5117), blueberry-açaís practically a miracle in a cup. Açai reportedly boosts energy, normalizes cholesterol, slows down aging, promotes healthier-looking skin — basically it makes you feel *and* look darn good. Açai's downside is that no one can pronounce it, but here it is: ah-sigh-ee. Now you can sound good ordering it, too.

Congratulations to Gregorio Reyes, lead mechanic at **Plaza Tire & Auto Center** (3005 NE 2nd Ave.; 305-573-3878). After rigorous study and testing by the Institute for Automotive Service Excellence, Reyes was awarded the coveted title of Master Automotive Technician — though that will be no surprise to Plaza's many justly loyal customers.

While new advertiser **Alan Beardslee of Keller Williams Realty** (305-218-7200) does handle properties in Miami Beach (who doesn't?), he specializes in homes in our hipper Biscayne Corridor communities, from the Design District and Palm Grove up through Morningside, Belle Meade, and North Miami. And his Website (www.alanbeardslee.com) is a virtual encyclopedia of info about market conditions, buyer/seller tips, figuring a home's value, and much more.

Earlier this summer, veteran artist/hair stylist Hannah Lasky and her uniquely eclectic salon, **Hannah & Her Scissors** (611 NE 86th St.; 305-772-8426), moved to a festive new home in an actual house. But instead of expecting house-warming gifts, Hannah is offering them. Through September, get a free

sample of her own Hannapoo hair products (many specifically designed to deal with Miami's extreme weather conditions) and a 25% discount off your hair appointment when you mention *Biscayne Times*.

Are you among the hordes of homeowners behind on their mortgage payments, or in foreclosure, and don't know what to do about it? **Attorney Jake Miller** does, and is offering a free seminar on foreclosure avoidance via loan modification relief on September 9, from 7:00-8:00 p.m., at the Wachovia Bank Building (12550 Biscayne Blvd., 8th floor). Among the vital questions answered: Do you qualify? Must you continue paying your loan? Will your credit be damaged? And is there free parking? We'll answer that last query right now: Yes, there's complimentary valet for attendees who say the magic words: *Biscayne Times*. Register at www.helpmemodifynow.com/FREESEMINARS.html.

At new advertiser **Village Café** (9540 NE 2nd Ave.; 305-759-2211), the frozen pizza dough, deli-like dessert counters, and outdoor fridge are gone, along with the horrendous road construction that plagued the eatery for so long. With the new yet old owner/executive chef team of Massimo DeLuca and Adam Holm, original chef Curtis Whitticar's maître d' and sous chef, the café now sports spruced-up décor plus many equally appealing menu adds — like Massimo's mom's meatballs and linguine.

Whether you're an artist who needs art supplies or a collector who needs artwork framed, both locations of **I.D. Art Supplies** (1470 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-375-0787 and 800 Lincoln Rd. #104, Miami Beach; 786-228-9200) as well as **I.D. Art Frame Shop** (678 NW 23rd St.; 786-263-3855) have a deal for *BT* readers this month: 20% off supplies and 25% off custom framing, if you mention you read about the shops' special offer here.

Before **Classical South Florida** began broadcasting in 2007, we had the embarrassing distinction of being, for six years, the USA's largest urban area without an all-classical-music radio station. So we're particularly pleased to help spread the good word about this new advertiser. Tune in to 89.7 FM in Miami-Dade and Broward counties, or 101.9 FM in Palm Beach, and hear why this nonprofit, member-supported station deserves a listen — and a donation.

On September 12 at 6:30 p.m., **Unity on the Bay** (411 NE 21st St.; 305-573-9191, x216) invites Miamians to "take a journey from your darkest thought to your greatest dream" with Debbie Ford, best-selling author of *The Dark Side of the Light Chasers* and *Why Good People Do Bad Things*. The evening (\$25 advance, \$30 at the door) includes a screening of Ford's documentary *The Shadow Effect* as well as a personal-discovery workshop. The event caps a full-day "Transformational Journey," beginning at 8:00 a.m. and featuring seminars (free but donations requested) on a wide range of healing-related subjects: chanting, tai chi, massage, vegetarianism, and more.

At new advertiser **AlexB Shoes** (3252 NE 1st Ave.) in the Shops at Midtown, the varied opening collection — around 250 models from three of Brazil's most important footwear designers: Dumond, Capodarte, and Melissa — includes not just Miami's classic five-inch stiletto ankle-twisters, but strikingly sexy low-heeled dress-up shoes for women who'd rather break hearts than bones. There are also numerous striking casual models, plus handbags. But walk, don't run, ladies. The shop doesn't open till October. Stay tuned for further news on the launch.

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The Politics of Musical Chairs

Sen. Mel Martinez set in motion a goofy game in which no one really wins

By Jack King
BT Contributor

Somewhere in my heart I feel sorry for U.S. Sen. Mel Martinez. He is a good man and was never a true right-wing, nut-case Republican. My guess is that's why he is resigning his Senate seat more than a year before the end of his first term. Martinez won the seat in 2004 by a very narrow margin, defeating Betty Castor. He didn't get 50 percent of the vote, but most Floridians hoped that either Martinez or Castor would represent all of Florida and not just some ideological sliver.

From the beginning it didn't work out that way. In what turned out to be Martinez's first national television appearance, the right-wing Christian nutcases poured into Florida to fight against pulling the plug on Terri Schiavo, the brain-dead but mechanically alive woman who became a cause célèbre for the right wing.

A Republican operative came up to Martinez, slipped a card into his pocket, and told him to read the prepared text to the media. Martinez, being the newest foot soldier in the Republican army, dutifully read a statement supporting and endorsing all the right-wing diatribes. Halfway through his comments, you could see his face change, and by the end he was running for cover. I think he had just realized that he'd become the newest Republican Party cabana boy.

It didn't get any better. The Republican Party, unsure of where he stood, didn't trust him. The Democrats didn't really know him. So over the next five years, he suffered with very bad committee appointments and almost no national exposure.

Possibly the lowlight of that time was in 2007, when he was appointed the general chairman of the Republican Party for the 2007-08 election cycle. The party was in disarray and fundraising was tanking. It's a pretty safe bet they gave him the position because they didn't like him and he had no chance for success. He resigned the post after a year.

You might see a pattern here with the Republican Party. They take their minority members and give them jobs that can't be done because they won't lend any support. Can you say "Michael Steele," the current chairman of the Republican Party?

So Martinez's cabana boy job didn't work out. I just wish he would have been

The Republican Party, unsure of where Martinez stood, didn't trust him. Over the next five years, he suffered bad committees and almost no national exposure.

more of a fighter within his own party and for Florida, but Washington eats people alive and I can hardly blame him for wanting to come back home.

Unfortunately for Florida, that leaves us in quite a mess for the short term. Our completely incompetent governor, Charlie Crist, has advised us that he will run for Martinez's seat in the U.S. Senate. In the meantime, however, he is the one who gets to select someone who will replace Martinez until 2011. Crist's first inclination was to appoint himself (perfectly legal under Florida law), but his handlers convinced him that it might be bad form.

So Crist has been running around the state interviewing every Republican who promises he or she won't run for the office in 2010. Then he caught a lot of grief from the Cuban contingent because he was not seriously considering a Hispanic for the seat. Somehow that group sees Martinez's seat as a "Hispanic seat." And the Hispanic-seat issue became so important that current U.S. Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart put his name in the hat and then pulled it out soon after. There was never any explanation as to how the mechanics for this would work.

At one point Crist had ten people under consideration. I don't understand why just ten. Obviously he has been kissing the butts of every senior Republican politician in the State of Florida, and every right-wing fringe character in the hopes they will support his run for the Senate.

So Crist's job was to select an interim U.S. Senator who wouldn't interfere with his own campaign for that very same position. In mid-August I put my money on George LeMieux, Crist's former chief of staff and a diehard loyalist. My thinking was that LeMieux, an attorney, would follow orders and stay out of the spotlight, thus allowing Crist to continue running around Florida, slapping all his Republican pals on the back, telling them he was happy to consider them for the Senate seat, and now please send money so Crist can actually win the seat himself.

On August 28, Crist announced his pick. None other than 40-year-old LeMieux, who'll now have 17 months to

enjoy life as a United States Senator. So much for the Hispanic seat.

♦♦♦

As I write this, it's the end of August and neither the county nor the city have had budgets submitted by their respective mayors to their respective commissions. Now, legally they don't have to be in until September (which is also the same month they have to be approved), but you'd think the county's Mayor Carlos Alvarez and the city's Mayor Manny Diaz would have put together some preliminary numbers for the commissions to review.

From Alvarez we have heard how bad things are and how the county is going to have lay off some 1700 workers. That's very nice when you consider that his own staff has risen to 62 over the past four years, and his office budget has climbed to \$9 million. Then factor in the news that he secretly gave his top aides substantial raises over the past months. No surprise he took some serious heat. So he promised that three members of his staff will be laid off, including his personal photographer. Gosh, Carlos, can you live without a personal photographer?

And it's no better over at the city. Nobody can find Mayor Manny, and his mouthpiece, city manager Pete Hernandez, has been babbling on incoherently. What a team! They're becoming quite a pair, so bad even mayoral candidate Joe Sanchez has been distancing himself from the mayor and his buddy.

Is it possible we just might elect some people who don't overspend their budgets and don't lie to us?

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

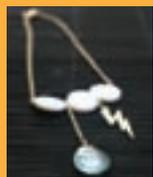
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What must be done to improve healthcare in this country?

Compiled by Victor Barrenechea — BT Contributor



Charles Moore
International Business
Development
Downtown

The problem is that the whole thing needs to be fixed and you can't just fix part of it, including tort reform, which is currently off the table. Obama is on the right track because he's at least initiating discussion. Whether you like Obama or not, you have to credit him for having the gumption to address this problem. I think most people agree it needs to be addressed.



Joshua Sigman
Unemployed
Edgewater

The first thing is, we won't be able to get the cost down because healthcare professionals need to be paid, so we need to maintain insurance, not in a complete structure but operated more like a trust, where the beneficiaries are the patients rather than the insurance companies. I guess that means the government would have to operate the trust. But there are even more problems with that, because then you're taking away vested property interests of the current wealthy insurance companies.



Ronnie Rivera
Graphic Designer
North Miami

I think what needs to be fixed is the amount of influence healthcare companies have over legislation. I think their interests are at odds with what's best for the general public. They lobbied to drop people with pre-existing conditions from their potential coverage. I support a government option devoid of influence from the healthcare industry.



Ania Schmidt
Jewelry Designer/
Purchaser
Upper Eastside

I think everyone should have access to healthcare, which is really important for early diagnostics. If healthcare were more affordable and available, people would be able to have routine checkups and catch illness early. I have a lot of friends from Europe, and socialized medicine is much better. And I have a lot of friends who have no health insurance, myself included. I've been barred myself because of a pre-existing condition.



Shawn Temple
Graduate Student
Downtown

I think there needs to be more oversight of the insurance companies. And tort reform. I'm not opposed to some government intervention, although I think a totally government-run healthcare system is not the answer. I think a government plan could be an option, but not the only option.



Nicky Bowe
Bartender
El Portal

I'm from Ireland. The healthcare system in Ireland and England is the way Obama's trying to go, and it works in England and it works in Ireland. If it didn't, the English and Irish people would be protesting, and they're not. All this stuff on Fox News is bullshit. This thing works in Europe. It would work if they let Obama do it. It just needs time. It's the best idea ever.



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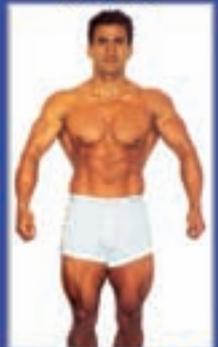
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Seth

Continued from page 1

to the present — as seen from a native’s point of view, an angle he believes gives his book an edge over comparable surveys.

Bramson’s personal Miami Beach story began in 1946, when his family moved down from New York just as Seth was getting out of diapers. Soon thereafter his father cultivated a growing obsession with all things railroad by frequently taking him to the Buena Vista railway yards to watch the trains. (The site is now occupied by the Midtown Miami development.)

This early fascination led to Bramson’s lifelong desire to collect the history and mementos of the Florida East Coast Railway. From there he expanded into general Floridiana. “Expanded” is an understatement. The Bramson collection, which continues to grow at an almost alarming rate, is estimated to now top 1,000,000 items, and takes up enough space inside his Shores home to fill a one-bedroom apartment, floor to ceiling. In 1996 the historical value of this personal quest was acknowledged by officials at the railway. Then-FEC president Carl Zellers named Bramson the FEC’s official “company historian.”

Along the way, the 65-year-old author has worked in management positions at Beach hotels, the Playboy Club on Biscayne Boulevard at 77th Street, and the Miami Shores Country Club. He has also earned degrees from St. Thomas University, Florida International University, and Cornell. Currently he is an adjunct professor of history and historian in residence at Barry University, adjunct professor of history at FIU, and historian in residence at FIU’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. He’s also a proud member of Miami Beach High’s Class of 1962.

For some people, history is a straightforward collection of events interpreted neutrally. For others like Bramson, history at its best creates an intimate connection between the past and present. While reading Bramson’s 2005 *Miami Beach (Images of America Series)*, I noticed a credit given to Joy Van Wye Malakoff, an acquaintance whose mother is mentioned in the book. Malakoff recounts that her mom found her way into the book after Bramson rummaged through a box of family photographs.

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Seth Bramson with wife Myrna, who persuaded him to move to Miami Shores.



A plate from Henry Flagler’s Royal Palm Hotel, one of many such decorative plates.



Heart of the Bramson Collection: The garage is stuffed with hundreds of thousands of objects, each one easily located — by Bramson alone.



FEC railroad lanterns are among the countless objects and documents Bramson has collected from the company's past.

Seth

Continued from page 14

She was delighted to work with Bramson, whom she counts on to help her recall anything historical, but what she most likes is his approach: "People usually publish pictures of buildings, but not pictures of families sitting around the

pool, or playing cards, at parties wearing their mink stoles. You just don't usually find that in a history book. It personalizes the history more."

I'd been warned that Bramson is "intense," "abrasive," and even "profane," so I really didn't know what to expect when I arrived at the "museum" for a tour. He charmingly answers the door

wearing his "WE BUY MIAMI MEMORABILIA & FLORIDIANA" badge. We quickly trade stories and play six-degrees of separation over our Miami Beach upbringings. Although Bramson and I are a generation apart, there are plenty of touchstones. Who else around here remembers the Governor Cafeteria, the old dog track, or the Boom Boom Room? Bramson does — and then some.

He's polite, even affable. A hospitality degree from Cornell seems to have paid off, but he also reminds me a bit of Barbara Baer Capitman, the feisty preservationist widely credited with saving Miami Beach's Art Deco buildings from the wrecking ball. In the mid-1970s, she helped found the Miami Design Preservation League. Through their lobbying, the Art Deco District in 1979 was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. But according to Capitman's 1990 *New York Times* obituary, "her outspoken, unorthodox manner later led to her ouster from the group."

Likewise, Bramson is an equally passionate individual, guided by his desire to preserve the past. He may simply rub some people the wrong way, but I like him.

The Bramson collection is ensconced in a modest 1953 home located in the heart of Miami Shores. At nearly 2500

square feet, the house would be more than enough for Bramson, his wife of 33 years Myrna, and their three cats — if not for the obsession lurking around every corner. The airy living room belies the cramped clutter hiding on the other side of the walls, but it is also where the tour begins.

A cabinet containing a set of dinner china and sundry tchotchkes is the first stop. Bramson pulls out a plate from downtown Miami's Royal Palm Hotel — the area's first luxury hostelry. It was torn down in 1930, but it is ground zero for the story of Greater Miami. Then Bramson presents another dish, then another. There are so many that the chances must be fairly high Henry Flagler himself ate from at least one of them.

An office off the living room is filled with files and boxes. Among the relics is a gorgeous 1948 4x5 color positive (a type of large photographic slide) of red-and-yellow Florida East Coast Railway locomotives parked next to the Miami-Dade County Courthouse on Flagler Street. There's also a copy of Mary Lily Kenan Flagler Bingham's (the Widow Flagler) last will and Henry's actual letter to railroad officials stating, "I am extending the railroad to Biscayne Bay."

Bramson has transformed a breakfast nook into a small library. On display is a large and very early photograph of the dock at Miami Beach's Biscayne Street, where a ferry once dropped off the island's first tourists. Even the kitchen holds a few gems from places such as Royal Castle and Pumpnick's.

Like all good hosts, Bramson saves the dessert for last. What should be a garage housing two or three cars instead holds the bulk of his collection. It smells like an old library — a little dusty, a lot of aging paper. It's so crammed together that a loose shoelace could inflict damage on a priceless memento. Large pictures fill the aisles, and tiny photographic negatives are stuffed into various cabinets. There are so many treasures here — railroad uniforms, ancient tax rolls, on and on and on until Bramson stumbles across an empty drawer and briefly considers finding something to stuff in it. Only his smile lets on that he's joking.

His boast of possessing the largest private collection of Floridiana, however, appears to be true. He says the Historical Museum of Southern Florida once sent a couple of researchers over to confirm his claim (or more likely to refute it). With a

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Seth

Continued from page 15

sparkle in his eye, Bramson recounts how they forfeited the challenge, unable to complete the count in the few hours they allotted themselves.

So where did it all come from? Much of it was purchased from dealers, estate sales, and shops, but a considerable amount of the treasure has been donated to him. In the late 1970s, when Miami Beach closed its old city hall on Washington Avenue for renovations, he took home a priceless collection of photographs and paperwork the city simply threw away. Many railroad items came from the Florida East Coast Railway itself. Lucky for them, too. He says they once sheepishly called to see if he happened to have their original corporate charter. He did!

The personal stories and family photos come from a broad network of friends and acquaintances. For *Sunshine and Stone Crabs* he found Jim Allison's great grand-niece and learned how crucial Allison Island's namesake was to the creation of Miami Beach. It's the first time this story has been told in print. Isadore Cohen's descendants (the first permanent Jewish family in Miami) gave Bramson their collection specifically because they felt he would be most apt to share it with the public. They feared a traditional museum would hide the items in a basement, where only the occasional scholar would see it.

Some may dismiss his collecting as a mere obsession, not a clearly defined scholarly pursuit. But his diligence has been rewarded. In addition to lending details and innumerable photographs to his books, the collection benefits researchers Bramson occasionally invites to his home, as well as other individuals and organizations who inquire about a railroad or historical topic. He also loans out materials upon request.

But shouldn't a collection of objects this vast, and of such historical value, be housed more professionally and securely? In an adequately sized, temperature-controlled, fire-proof environment? Bramson laments that no one yet has come forward with such a gracious offer. And while the collection seems haphazardly clumped together and is certainly unwieldy, it appears to be fairly well organized — at least Bramson himself knows where everything is located. Uncharacteristically he clamors up when asked how much he's spent or the monetary value of his collection. If there is an insurance bill, he refuses to discuss



Inquiring minds want to know: Is Bramson a scholarly collector of historically significant material, or is he just a pack rat?

it as well. As for its final resting place when Bramson himself becomes a part of history? That is known only to him and his family members, who have confidential instructions as to its disposition.

During a break from the archives, though, Bramson mentions being kept at arm's length by the degreed historians in town. "Degreed" as opposed to "professional." He considers himself more than just an amateur at this point, and rightly so. A quick scan of his résumé proves it. But it's the lack of a formal history degree that he believes relegates him to second-class status. Of course he refuses to utter any names, but he does refer to a couple of the suspects as the "Fountain of Misinformation" and the "Queen Bee."

Paul George, historian at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, seems a good candidate for the role of "Fountain of Misinformation." (Is Arva Moore Parks perhaps the "Queen Bee"?) He's well known locally for his guided tours and holds a Ph.D. in history from Florida State University. During a phone interview, George is too polite to say there is any bad blood, though he admits knowing that Bramson has "that feeling



Where did it all come from? Dealers, estate sales, shops, and families who donated heirlooms to Bramson for safekeeping.

that he's kind of put down and all, but there are other avocational historians who are embraced by [the museum] and have been great contributors." He does mention without prompting that Bramson is a "self-taught" historian, so it could be that Bramson has a point. But who wants to be merely a "contributor" when you can control the materials instead?

George continues: "There's so much room for many historians in the area. There's a lot of history down here and it's a great, layered history. I would welcome him into the loop." George then offers to sit down to a cup of coffee with Bramson just to clear the air, and even says that Bramson

Continued on page 17



Bramson displays a sampling of his 16 books, all of which are heavily illustrated, some of which account for respectable sales figures.



Painted postcard showing NE 2nd Avenue in Miami Shores, looking north toward 96th Street. Circa 1945?

Seth

Continued from page 16

“obviously loves the city and has poured a lot into the railroad, which is important. [Bramson’s] done these pictorials lately that are just wonderful. The proverbial picture really is worth a thousand words.”

Regardless of how his peers may treat him, Bramson’s devotion has given him the opportunity to pen 16 books and more than 70 articles. (Two more books, on North Miami Beach and Hallandale Beach, are on their way.) There are countless requests for information, lectures, and tours. The 160-page *Sunshine and Stone Crabs* (\$19.99 from History Press) itself has already presold 1000 copies, which makes it an authentic hit in industry circles. About 90 percent of the 199 images have never been published before, so it is bound to sell even more

when locals get their hands on it.

Why did he leave the Beach, though? Wife Myrna pushed him, and he’s grateful for that. “Living here has been good for us and exposed me, through the country club, to a lot of very nice people,” he says. However, he also feels he’s a “prophet without honor in his own country.” When his *Boulevard of Dreams: A Pictorial History of El Portal, Biscayne Park, Miami Shores and North Miami* was published in 2007, Bramson hoped the Miami Shores Chamber of Commerce would help him promote the book. Instead, Bramson says, the chamber claimed its events schedule was booked a year in advance. Several neighboring towns he has chronicled welcomed him with open arms immediately, but not his adopted hometown.

Perhaps there are a few more cups of coffee to be had in Bramson’s future.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Musical Notes in a Time of Austerity

If 2000 flutists can make history, 200 Shores residents can write their own

By Jen Karetnick
BT Contributor

As a kid, I never aspired to play the flute like the great Sir James Galway. Actually, I never wanted to play flute at all. I wanted to rock out on the guitar, write and sing my own music. But my sister, older by 20 months, had already claimed the guitar as *her* instrument. My mother didn't believe in fostering competition, so I was allowed to pick from a limited range of band instruments when I turned ten.

Thus the flute, to which I immediately showed an almost wedded affinity, despite the bulky braces that would soon be applied. You can imagine the geek I quickly turned into: I acquired serious flute training, braces, and glasses within a year of double-digit life.

Back then I was alternately proud of and painfully embarrassed by playing the flute, from the way my budding breasts were enhanced while taking a



breath to the way my nose was stretched into little-piggy shape by my embouchure. Being good at it opened a lot of doors for me, including a summer music camp in Maine where I made a group of friends who got me through a ton of awkward teen moments (and are still getting me through some awkward adult ones).

But it also meant I had to perform more often and more publicly, including

in the dreaded marching band if I wanted to continue to qualify for sitting in statewide bands and orchestras. (A marching band helmet is the ultimate in post-adolescent humiliation.)

I shelved the flute was I was 18, swapping it for voice lessons in college. Later on I picked up guitar. But when I moved to Miami Shores, my friend Tabitha spotted my flute and convinced

me that because she played the same model of instrument, a 30-year-old Gemeinhardt, I should duet with her at her church. She introduced me to Cathi Marro, who was teaching flute at Miami Country Day, and we formed a group.

And gradually I've come to enjoy playing flute, though it had very little to do with the fact that I now wear contact lenses, my teeth are relatively straight, and being called a "geek" these days generally means you have a job doing something you love. I've enjoyed it so much that when Cathi, who attends the National Flute Association Convention annually, told me about the attempt to break the Guinness world record for the Largest Flute Ensemble, I jumped on a plane to New York City.

Led by Sir James Galway, in honor of his 70th birthday, and held in a ballroom at the Marriott Marquis in Times Square, the challenge began with an hour of rehearsal

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Musical Notes

Continued from page 18

conducted by his wife, Lady Jeanne. We were closely packed together, which meant that amateurs like me rubbed shoulders, literally, with symphonic first chairs. Over and over, we played a ten-minute, four-part piece called *Galway Fantasie*, arranged by David Overton, that included excerpts from notable melodies like “Danny Boy.” To spectators, the flutes of all quality — the woman next to me was playing a \$15,000 Sankyo, while I was using my Gemeinhardt, which is practically worthless now — must have sounded like a giant flock of birds, of all the same species but with individual differences, everyone questing to be the brightest, the loudest, and best.

Everyone except me, that is. I was trying *not* to be heard. I am no longer better or even equal to my peer group; I’m strictly a dilettante now. Worse, I was sight-reading my part, having signed up on the premises rather than prior to the event. Fingering-wise, the music wasn’t difficult, but it was tricky, with enough time and key changes that I

needed to pay close attention. I could have used a couple of days’ practice to get it right.

Still I found the experience thrilling. Sir James arrived, cracked a few jokes, and set about conducting an orchestra that would have set dogs howling had we been tooting outside. We officially registered as 1989 flutists, breaking the recently set Chinese record of 1975, though there were no doubts that a few unconfirmed flutists joined in as well. You can see and hear the whole event at www.jamesgalway.com.

While at the flute convention, I attended a concert by Flutes Ad Libitum, a choir complete with piccolo, C, alto, and tenor flutes from Dijon, France. The group visited Miami Shores in 2006, and performed at Barry University’s Cor Jesu Chapel. At the time, my friend Cathi coerced — I mean *asked* — me to house one of the members. As a result I got to know the group, directed by the dynamic Martine Charlot, went to dinner with them, and watched them perform to a shamefully small crowd. To comment on how stellar they are, I only have to mention that they received a standing ovation after their

very first piece at the convention. In the audience? Composers for flute choirs and world-renowned masters.

The Metropolitan Flute Orchestra and Cathi’s flute choir, the Florida Flute Orchestra (for links to both visit www.contraflute.com), also performed during the same session. This was an extra treat because they played arrangements that included the huge contrabass and sub contrabass flutes, and the lone double contrabass flute (which is owned by the FFC and is unique to any orchestra in Florida, and likely the United States). Taller than the musicians playing them, they looked like giant, tubular paper clips.

Though you’ve missed a golden flute (pun intended) opportunity with Flutes Ad Libitum, you can catch Miami’s Grammy-winning flutist Nestor Torres this December at St. Martha Catholic Church in the Shores (305-982-5535). This is just one of the varied opportunities for musical enlightenment at St. Martha and at Barry University’s performing arts center. Last year, at the Miami Shores Community Center, we also had free shows featuring artists

such as singer-songwriter Cosy Sheridan.

There’s a caveat, however, as there always is. Funding for the arts in Miami-Dade County is at grave risk, so programs like St. Martha’s likely won’t be receiving grants to entice renowned international acts to their stage. In Miami Shores, because of reduced property values and a decrease in tax revenue, the operating budget for the fiscal year beginning October 1 has been greatly reduced. The village’s recreation programs — specifically the tennis center, which will be effectively eliminated following the layoff of tennis pro Ben Hanks and his three clerks — are among those in peril under the currently crafted budget, which you can read for yourself at www.miamishoresvillage.com.

Music lovers, don’t expect free concerts to continue unless you make yourself heard at the upcoming September 8 meeting of the village council, where changes to the budget are still possible. If nearly 2000 flutists can show up for a gimmick on a Friday morning, at least 200 residents should be able to make it to a civic meeting on a Tuesday evening.

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The Beast That Cannot Be Tamed

When it comes to fierce debate, healthcare reform has nothing on Miami 21

By Frank Rollason
BT Contributor

The hot topic of the past few weeks has been the future of Miami's proposed new zoning code, known as Miami 21. Back on August 6, the Miami City Commission held a special meeting, called by Mayor Manny Diaz, to vote on the measure after four years of planning and debate. It was a long afternoon that stretched into the evening. My wife and I tried to keep up via the city's Website while down in the Keys on vacation.

With the usual suspects presenting the same positions that have been hashed and rehashed over the past several years, the meeting had a familiar feel to it. Many individuals I respect spoke on



A single-family home under current zoning (left) and how it might look under Miami 21 (right).

both sides of the issue, all making cogent and sensible points about a very daunting and complex plan. With Miami 21, it's not a matter of one side being right and the other being wrong, but rather what compromises are attainable in order to get this thing off the dime.

From the beginning, opposition from those representing Miami's neighborhoods,

primarily Miami Neighborhoods United (MNU), has concentrated on several specifics — height, setbacks, notice to residents, and nonconforming structures. These four items have been hammered into the ground until, as my daddy would say, "This horse is glue!"

Still these issues have not been adequately addressed to satisfy those in

opposition. The city manager, the planning department, and the city's design consultant, Miami firm DPZ, have said on the record umpteen times that they don't have a problem resolving these concerns, yet here we sit, continuing to argue about core issues. This is *not* about not wanting to be eco-friendly, not wanting to share the road with bicycles (although if it goes through as currently drafted, good luck finding space for bike lanes!), or not wanting to be "green," which is now akin to motherhood and apple pie.

This is about revamping a zoning code in a way that creates an environment in which residents and business owners can thrive and prosper. Isn't this what it's all about — fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion, a place where people want to raise their families, a place where breadwinners can make a decent living, a place where those later in life can remain and enjoy the fruits of their labor?

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Miami 21

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But it so often seems those goals are cast aside as those in power decide what is best for the masses. You know the ones I speak of, the elected officials who supposedly represent the will of the people by building new baseball stadiums or digging tunnels that end up costing billions of dollars over time, the ones who say, "You people need to think not just of your future but of the generations to come, which is why we're saddling those future generations with tons of debt, because it's good for them and will make them grow strong!"

In a column of this length, it would be foolish to try arguing the specifics of Miami 21. It would be impossible to give adequate space to the pros and the cons, plus it would be *boring*. Suffice to say the details of Miami 21 will continue to be debated until the very moment it returns to the city commission for a fresh vote. (Only four of five commissioners were present for the August 6 vote, which resulted in a 2-2 tie, temporarily killing the proposal. A new hearing is set for September 4.) Then the stage will

be set for whatever actions will be taken by various individuals who feel they've been adversely affected by the outcome, whether Miami 21 is adopted or rejected.

Details aside, I was very disturbed by one thing that occurred at the August 6 meeting — namely, the unexpected changes to the plan proffered by Commissioner Marc Sarnoff. It was extremely disappointing to see a candidate I ultimately endorsed in his first bid for office fall into the same crap he fought so hard against when he was the activist candidate. This is a matter of transparency and abuse of power.

How did height limits suddenly get raised in the Edgewater neighborhood? According to DPZ, not by them but rather by direction from Commissioner Sarnoff, a fact that was only subtly disclosed, with virtually no discussion or claimed ownership of the change. Then there was Commissioner Sarnoff's last-minute amendment to limit building heights in the MiMo Historic District to 35 feet. Where the hell did that come from? Was he attempting to make good on some campaign promise to Morningside activist Elvis Cruz, a proponent of such limits?

And how was it that these late items, tacked on by a lone commissioner, were not introduced much earlier in the long meeting — say, during the six hours or so when the public had a chance make comments and ask questions? Why did they only surface after the public-discussion period had ended? Surely something as important as a height limit in the MiMo District didn't arise spontaneously, so why didn't Commissioner Sarnoff give advance notice to affected property owners in order that they might attend the meeting and offer input? And what about the new map he wanted to include? What map? It was a pretty sad display of political power, the type of thing that breeds voter distrust of elected officials.

All residents of Miami's Upper East-side need to keep in mind that the future of their neighborhoods is tied to the fate of Boulevard businesses. Think back just a few short years and recall the boarded-up shops, the rampant prostitution, the open drug-dealing, the cesspool of crime that oozed from the Boulevard into our neighborhoods. The last thing we need is for the Boulevard to take a nosedive. This is why the MiMo Biscayne Association supports

the city's façade grant program, along with greater height in certain areas — at least to 53 feet and perhaps up to 70 feet, but *only* if general parking is included. (You only have to look at the residential parking problems in Coconut Grove, created by Mayfair and CocoWalk, to realize that as Boulevard businesses and restaurants become successful, overflow parking will end up on the swales in front of our homes. This is already happening in Palm Grove, west of the Boulevard.)

Life is a balancing act made up of compromises, and Miami's leaders must recognize that when the pendulum swings too far to one side, the other side can suffer irreparable harm. Who wins when that happens? Certainly not business owners trying to survive and make a living for their families. Certainly not residents who will bear the consequences of a business district gone belly-up. And certainly not the city itself, which designated our area an historic district but which now appears to be abandoning those it committed to support.

Come on, gang. I know you can do better than this. We're all counting on you.

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The Grass Is Greener, the Mowers Are Louder

Two short months of good weather means lawncare obsession

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

It's September in the MUFT (Merciless Urban Frozen Tundra), a.k.a. Binghamton, New York, and that means I have a new regional enemy: the lawnmower. Ah, I can hear one now: Whiiiiirrrrrwhiiiiirrrrrrr. No surprise there. They are always going. Morning, noon, night. Death, taxes, and the ever-present, ever-loud, ever-annoying lawnmower.

Last month marked my one-year anniversary living in the MUFT or MFT (Merciless Frozen Tundra), as it is from October to May. As a displaced Miamian, it has not been fun times, so allow me to take this moment to congratulate myself on surviving the ten-month winter. Now on to summer and mowing.

Of course, Miamians also mow. Somehow, though, it isn't as irritating as it is up here in the MUFT. But as much as may I complain about MUFTers, they complain



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

about Miami and Florida in general. What's right up there at the top of their list? Alligators. Seems some folks in our stretch of upstate New York think that living in South Florida means being eaten by a gator. This "Gator Gonna Git Ya" mania I find puzzling. The only explanation I've come up with is that some MUFTers have

read too many stories about the one that got away and ended up in the toilet or the pool or the Girl Scout troop's campsite beside a lake.

Back to mowing. In the MUFT, these lawnmowers and the people who use them are on my nerves. Let's call them the Lawnatics, or in less polite

company, Grasssholes. The constant din is not only far from soothing, it reminds me that the MUFT has it in for me in yet another way: summer allergies. I just got poked by the allergist, so I know. With September comes grasses and weeds, all the things that want me dead. And with every whiiiiirrr! I'm reminded that the outside is dangerous for me here, even when the sun is shining.

The Lawnatics really get into this summer ritual. They have tools beyond the mower. They have edgers. They have precision trimmers. They have teeth-rattling leaf blowers. All this to get that lawn done just right, lest they suffer the rebukes of surly neighbors. And apparently *no one* wants that. So that means constant upkeep, especially since it's been a rainy summer. Part of it is getting the mower lines as close to perfect as possible. See, there is a trick to mowing. You can't just simply mow.

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Mowers

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You must mow in a way that creates a pleasing pattern of lines. It's the opposite of what a painter strives for on a canvas, which is to blend the lines. Lawnatics want to show theirs. And don't you dare get sloppy with an edger. That'll cost you Lawnatic points as well, as nobody wants to cast their gaze upon sloppy turf edges. No, sir.

The Lawnatics particularly annoyed me a few times recently. One was when I was trying to eavesdrop on an argument my husband was having with his brother. I strained from the upstairs window, but only caught every other word. Whiiiiiiiiirrr! Grrrrrr.

Another time was when I was acting as Pet Detective and trying to find a lost shi-tzu. I thought I heard errant barking, but a nearby Lawnatic was determined to get that last bit of lawn manicured just so — over and over again, it seemed, until it was shorter than the buzz cut on a Marine Corps recruit.

The only things that can possibly compete with the incessant Lawnatics'

whiiiiirrrrrbuzzzzzwhiiiiirrrrrrr are the MUFT's bugs. Like all New Yorkers, these creatures have their own distinct vocalizations, the bug buzz being more a baseline bizzzzz than an aggressive whiiiiirrrrr! As in, "Whiiiiirrrrr here!"

Bug noises actually do not bother me. However, the bugs' inability to respect personal space is a bit much. Once you've spent a summer in the MUFT, chomping down on a few gnats or trying to extract them from your eyelids, you begin to wonder: Where *is* the respect?

But upstate New York bugs, like all other bugs, have limitations. That is, they have very small brains. So I excuse them. Humans, on the other hand — well, they're another story. I realize that most people have small brains too, but I find it more difficult to extend the same courtesies to them that I afford to bugs. Go figure.

But back to the mowing and it's noisy kin.

Maybe it is because I have an aversion to sudden loud noises that the MUFT presents another September Situation: bikers. They, like the Lawnatics, are loud. On purpose. And there are a *lot*

of them in the MUFT.

I realize all these things — the Lawnatics, the bugs, the bikers — are summer things. Unlike Miamians, who enjoy sunshine and pavement devoid of ice and salt all year, MUFTers get a measly couple of months of acceptable weather. And with that comes yet another issue: You must make do. You had *better* make do. You must appreciate the good weather while it lasts. This is a serious point of contention for me, the Miamian.

It's a constant and nagging feeling, like a scolding parent who wants you to do your homework before supper. Or the pressure you feel on New Year's Eve to *have the time of your life!* Or the Friday-night sense that "This is your weekend. Use it wisely. Or *else.*" If you understand this, you understand the pressure to "Go Forth, Young MUFTer, and Enjoy the Summer!" That's an order.

Well, I never have taken well to being bossed around.

So if the sun is shining, you best get out in it before Mother MUFTer tsk-tsks you and takes it away. As a Miamian who until last year had always

been blessed with constant sunshine, I find this annoying. I do not like my sun strung out on a timeline. Sun's out, so you have to work, clean the house, or just want to take a nap, better fugheddabout it! In fact, the sun is out right now and I am panicking as I write this. I know the unspoken rule: All ye arrogants who defy Mother MUFTer shall live in eternal darkness.

Thus it is understandable that MUFTers decide to dust off their vrooming! bikes and classic cars and take a ride. That's fine by me, as long as they stay away from my ear space. As I said, I've never been a fan of excessive noise. They call this affliction being "hyper startled," and while I consider myself a nonviolent person, when a biker accelerates by me, I find myself slapping my own hand away from picking up the nearest rock and hurling it at that two-wheeled menace.

Ah ha! There goes another one, roaring down our street. Time for me to stop. My hand is getting itchy. Where's a rock when you need one?

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King Mango Strut Strife: Not Funny

A bitter feud between two Strut principals threatens to rain on this year's parade

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Contributor

The irreverent King Mango Strut draws hundreds of participants and thousands of spectators to Coconut Grove each year. And no wonder it's so popular. Where else are you going to see a parade with such memorable acts as the razor-sharp Bobbit Brigade, the Booger King tribute to Dave Barry, county Commissioner Joe Gersten fleeing to New Zealand, or the Dick Cheney School of Marksmanship?

Those creative hijinks and countless others have given the Strut staying power. It's even survived the event it originally sought to spoof, the strait-laced Orange Bowl Parade, which shut down in 2002 after 62 years.

But after nearly three decades of satirizing the irony, corruption, and plain old wackiness parading across the local, national, and world stages, the Strut's own wacky future is in jeopardy. A behind-the-scenes feud involving the Strut's only surviving original founder, Glenn Terry, and longtime participant and fundraiser, Antoinette Baldwin, has come to a head as planning deadlines loom for this year's December 27 parade. And because the two Groveites are the sole surviving corporate officers of the nonprofit King Mango Strut, Inc., which runs the event, their disagreement has stalled preparations and funding.

Both say they'd like nothing more than to concentrate on skewering this year's target-rich field of outlandishness: the Octomom, South Carolina Governor Sanford's conquest of the Appalachian Trail, Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin's abrupt



Glenn Terry in his annual role as emcee, 2007.



Honoring the nation's Vice President, 2006.

resignation. Terry muses that ex-Manson Family member Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, just released from prison, would make an outstanding grand marshal.

Instead they are skewering each other in e-mails and legal maneuvering.

"We have a disagreement over who should be putting on the parade, and she is holding up the funding of it this year,"



Antoinette Baldwin as Gov. Sarah Palin, 2008.



Washington policy debate, Strut-style, 2005.

complains Terry, who recently formed a new group, the Coconut Grove Players, to run the parade without Baldwin. He feels that Baldwin's actions may force him to move the Strut to another city, or cancel it altogether.

Baldwin, a "Mangohead" for 18 years, counters that Terry is trying to take sole ownership of an organization that has been

kept alive by a cadre of volunteers, including herself. She accuses him of tricking her into co-signing two checks from the corporation's account (about \$900) that covered the cost of Terry trademarking the name "King Mango Strut" for himself personally, as an individual, in the State of Florida. "He used corporate money and he made it personally his, so he can lease it, he can sell it, or he can give it to his family," asserts Baldwin, who works as an administrator for her husband's architecture firm. "So why should I volunteer raising money for an event owned by somebody personally? It doesn't make sense to me. I don't think it's right."

"I own it, I created it," answers Terry, a licensed attorney who for years has worked as an art teacher in the public school system. He says the \$900 was his "license fee" for granting permission to use the King Mango Strut name all these years.

Since November 2008, Terry has also sought, with his own money, to acquire a federal trademark on the King Mango Strut name and logo design. He even notarized a "license agreement" he made between Glenn Terry the individual and Glenn Terry the president of King Mango Strut, Inc., retroactive to 1982, granting him ownership and control of the name, the logo, and the event itself.

Baldwin says such actions represent a conflict of interest for a board member of a nonprofit, since they allow Terry to profit from the corporation. But Terry insists he's only trying to protect the integrity of the Strut. "I have never [profited] in 28 years. I have a job that pays the rent," says Terry, who acknowledges he formed the Coconut Grove

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By Terence Cantarella
BT Contributor

Miami art collectors Carlos and Rosa de la Cruz are well along in the construction of their expansive new Design District museum that will showcase their world-renowned collection of contemporary art. It is scheduled to open in time for Art Basel Miami Beach in December. And although their art may be new, across the street from their building, where they're planning a parking lot, they are dealing with something much, much older: oak trees.

Two 80-foot-tall Southern Live Oaks, estimated to be nearly 100 years old, rise from the soil like living monuments at the rear of the vacant lot at 28 NE 41st St., their wide evergreen canopies casting precious shadows over this corner of a sun-blasted city. Miami, in fact, is ranked among the worst in the nation for tree canopy. "Born" in the early part of the last century, the twin oaks have matured with the neighborhood as it went from agricultural seclusion to mid-century ritz to drug-ravaged slum and finally to its present incarnation as the Design District, one of Miami's most vibrant commercial areas.

Those two stately oaks, however, may soon fall to the chainsaw.

On August 26, Miami's Code Enforcement Department approved an application to remove and destroy the long-standing trees, thus making room for several more vehicles in the de la Cruzes' soon-to-be-built museum parking lot.

Before permission was granted, the de la Cruzes "mitigated" with the city — mitigation being the process by which property owners make amends with Mother Nature



George Perez and the 41st Street oaks: "Somebody's got to do something."

by either paying money into Miami's Tree Trust Fund or by planting replacement trees on their land. And if replacement trees cannot reasonably be placed on the property, the owner must hire a landscaping contractor to have them planted on a public right-of-way or in a public park.

The number of replacement trees required is determined by a formula based on the diameter of the trees being removed. In the case of the 41st Street oaks, the city provided the *BT* with conflicting information — the formula was either 26 trees that are 12 feet tall, or 19 trees that are 14 feet tall. It is also unclear whether those "mitigation trees" have already been planted several miles away at Miami's Curtis Park. Either way, the cost to the de la Cruzes could easily exceed \$10,000.

Under the city's Master Tree Plan, an initiative that aims to restore Miami's

denuded tree canopy, the expensive and burdensome mitigation process is meant to act as a deterrent to would-be tree-fellers, encouraging property owners to let thriving trees stand. But among developers for whom money is not an issue, mitigation is just a small obstacle to tree removal.

Bob Brennan, a well-known Miami tree expert and chief arborist at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, thinks the 41st Street oak trees can and should be saved. "They're fantastic!" he says during a visit to the site. "They're part of Miami's history. The size of them is just spectacular. You don't find them like this very often because they're being cut down so people can put houses in. We've lost hundreds of them over the past five years."

Brennan also believes it would be cheaper for the de la Cruzes to keep the trees and build their parking lot around them. "There are so many ways

to accommodate the trees," he explains. "You can put in gravel, a layer of construction sand above that, and then a permeable membrane so water will go through. You want to disperse the weight of the vehicles as they go by. You just build up with aggregate stone and make sure you allow the trees to breathe. You're losing maybe six to eight parking spots and you're protecting 100 years of history."

Jeff Shimonski, director of horticulture at Jungle Island and longtime "Your Garden" contributor to the *BT*, says that saving the oaks, and ensuring they thrive in the middle of a parking lot, will take some effort. "If the trees are saved, they'll have to be properly protected, and that's a difficult thing to do on any construction project," he says after inspecting the trees. "I *am* for saving them, but not if it's a superficial attempt that ultimately condemns those beautiful trees to a slow, painful death."

Ted Baker, a landscape architect with the City of Miami, explains in an e-mail to the *BT* that the Code Enforcement Department "is quite diligent in protecting the city's tree canopy." Indeed the city has the authority to deny tree-removal applications — if, for example, the tree is not in the footprint of a planned new building, if it is not sick or dead, or if its removal would be detrimental to the "life, safety, or the welfare" of the city. Apparently the age or size of a tree is not a consideration. Fines for heavily trimming or removing a tree without a permit can be steep, sometimes reaching as high as \$15,000. But tree expert Brennan says he has "never seen the City of Miami deny a permit to take out a tree."

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Strut Strife

Continued from page 24

Players with eight other Strut volunteers in order to solidify his trademark. “She [Baldwin] keeps saying, ‘Well, you could make money.’ Maybe I could. I *did* create it. Maybe I have that right, but I’m not interested in that.”

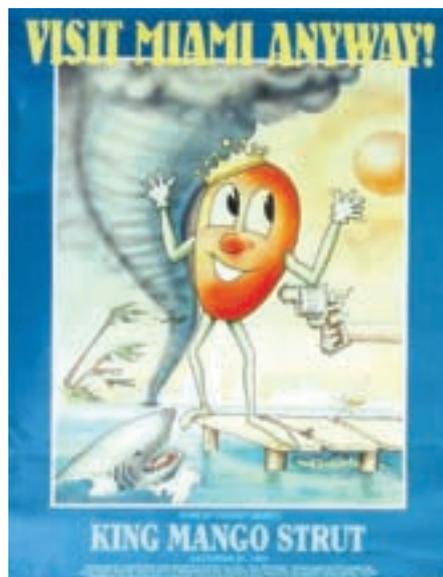
Terry also complains that Baldwin has launched a “coup” and is refusing to “unfreeze” the Strut’s \$7000 bank account, deposit a \$15,000 check received last year from the Coconut Grove Business Improvement District, and persuade the Grove BID to contribute again this year.

Simultaneously, Baldwin is challenging Terry’s federal trademark application and the Coconut Grove Players’ city application to run this year’s King Mango Strut. She vows to file her own application with the City of Miami, on behalf of King Mango Strut, Inc., to operate the 2009 parade.

The city’s unofficial position, as described by a staffer in Miami’s special-events office, is that Baldwin and Terry should patch things up and just get on with it. Officially, says the staffer, the matter has been referred to the city attorney’s office for clarification.

A desire for Terry and Baldwin to make nice was expressed by nearly everyone the *BT* contacted. Even Keith Root, president of Terry’s newly formed Coconut Grove Players, wishes the two would stop arguing. “There has been a disagreement between Glenn and Antoinette, and the two of them need to resolve it. The rest of us can’t resolve it for them,” says Root, who has been involved with the Strut since its inception. “All of us just want to have fun and put on a good parade.”

The birth of the King Mango Strut was conceived 28 years ago with the



King Mango poster, 1987.

coupling of its co-founders’ love of parades and Terry’s fascination with actual mangos, which were the subject of some experimental films he made in the 1970s, with such titles as *Mango Madness* and *Last Mango in Paris*.

By 1977 Terry had formed a group called the Mango Marching Band, in which the participants wore “big cardboard mangos on our heads” and played conch shells and kazoos. The band wanted to march in the landmark Orange Bowl Parade, and sent a tape to the event’s organizers in the fall of 1981. It was summarily rejected.

Undaunted, Terry joined forces with local jeweler Wayne Brehm and county-government computer specialist Bill Dobson. Together they unveiled their own parade in December 1982 — the King Mango Strut. To fund the parade’s meager budget, Brehm and Dobson gathered donations while Terry made and sold T-shirts featuring his King Mango character. “King Mango is the coolest thing I have ever done as an artist,” Terry says proudly.



Financial crisis explained, 2008.

“I do not want to see it messed up.”

Baldwin points out that Brehm and Dobson played crucial roles in organizing the annual parade until almost literally the day they died. Brehm, who owned OM Jewelry, succumbed to lung cancer in December 2000, though he told the *Miami Herald’s* Joan Fleishchman weeks before his death that he hoped to break out of Mercy Hospital to march in the Strut. “There are important things in life, like King Mango Strut. Then there are the unimportant things — like dying,” he quipped.

Dobson, who eventually became an aide to county Commissioner Katy Sorenson, died in October 2004. Baldwin remembers that Dobson, just before his death, sent her a list of essential things that had to be done to prepare for the Strut. Thanks to Dobson’s dedication and his list, she says, “the transition was smooth.”

Baldwin says she became involved with the Strut in 1991: “I thought, ‘There are people on earth just like me!’” Within a few years, she was one of the key organizers. After Brehm died, organizing and raising money for the Strut fell to Baldwin and Dobson. “He and I did the whole thing for the last five years of his life,”

she says, adding that Terry was primarily tasked with creating the King Mango Strut posters and T-shirts, and acting as master of ceremonies at the event.

Terry allows that he was content to sit “quietly in the background and keep this monarchy going.” And he appreciates Baldwin’s efforts. “I’d like to give Antoinette her due,” he says. “For ten years she had been our hardest-working Mangohead. I often told her she did more than was required, but she’d say, ‘That’s how I do things.’”

Other Mangoheads, however, contend that Terry and Baldwin never really got along, and that by last year the friction between them had heated to the boiling point. That’s when Terry took over as leader for the first time in decades. The 2008 parade ended with an after-party funded by the grant money from the Coconut Grove BID. Terry disapproved of the expense and had police literally pull the plug as the Will Thomas Band was playing and Baldwin, dressed as Sarah Palin, was dancing on the stage.

The two also clashed over Terry’s decision to veto certain groups who wanted to join the parade, particularly a Harley-Davidson contingent headed by CPA Barry Rubin. After telling Rubin there would be no vehicles that year, Terry took a swipe at the bikers in a column he writes for the *Miami Herald*. “Only one was rejected this year,” he wrote, “a group of men riding Harley-Davidsons. Do old guys riding loud motorcycles make you laugh? Their rude, obnoxious noise makes me cringe.”

Baldwin complains that Terry, instead of working with Rubin to make his group “funnier,” instead decided to reject him publicly. “What he did hurt us and hurt the event,” she says. “It made him feel good

Continued on page 27

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Strut Strife

Continued from page 26

but it hurt us. We lost at least 50 people.” Terry believes that Baldwin won’t be satisfied until she takes full control of the Strut. Baldwin dismisses the notion. “You won’t hear *me* saying, ‘It’s mine,’” she retorts. In an April e-mail to Terry, she even offered to resign from the nonprofit corporation and end her involvement with the Strut if Terry would agree to relinquish his private ownership of the trademark. “The Strut belongs to no one and everyone,” she wrote. “It belongs to all who have volunteered and participated throughout its 27 years of history.”

Her offer went unanswered until August 22, when Terry e-mailed her an 11-point “peace plan.” Highlights: She deposit the checks and unfreeze the Strut bank account; she consent to dissolving King Mango Strut, Inc.; they hold each other “harmless” for past actions; he keeps the trademark but licenses Coconut Grove Players to use it for three years; and if all goes well, he’ll “consider” giving the Players a permanent license.

Baldwin’s one word e-mail reply: “Nuts.”

Len Scinto, an FIU professor who has helped organize the Strut since 2004, is frustrated by the Terry-Baldwin feud. “None of this stuff should be important,” he says. “There is nothing more important than the laughter of people watching the parade and those *in* the parade. It’s about fun and community and irreverence and all that stuff — at least to me.” And should the dispute end up in court, with Mangoheads called as witnesses, he’ll be ready. “I’ll probably show up in an OJ mask,” he says. “And I hope someone would come as Judge Judy.”

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



The twin oaks are estimated to be 80 feet tall and nearly 100 years old.

Oak Tree

Continued from page 25

Property owner Rosa de la Cruz, in an initial telephone interview, would not comment on the fate of the trees. Subsequent efforts to reach her, or to arrange a meeting with Brennan and her construction team, CDC Builders, were unsuccessful.

But George Perez, a local photographer and lover of trees, isn’t willing to wait around and watch the oaks fall. Less than 48 hours after a public notice was posted on the de la Cruzes’ property, announcing approval of the tree-removal application, he began researching the process by which the city’s decision can be appealed. Because several city departments are involved (code enforcement, planning, parks, NET offices), and because no clear instructions were readily available, Perez called Miami’s historic preservation officer, Ellen Uguccioni. She told him to put his objections in writing and bring them to her office, along with a check for \$150, the hefty fee prescribed by the city. Perez was set to do that on Monday, August 31.

Eventually his appeal will be heard by the city’s Historic and Environmental



Arborist Bob Brennan says there are many ways to build a parking lot around the “fantastic” trees.

Preservation Board, likely at its October meeting. In the meantime, the trees are supposed to be protected.

With some luck, the 41st Street oaks could live for another 200 years, surviving several more generations of intrusive humans. That thought inspires Perez. “Somebody’s got to do something,” he says, “otherwise they’re going to kill those two trees.”

Staring up into the wide oak canopies during a recent visit to the site, he puzzles over the de la Cruzes’ plans to destroy them.

“I don’t get it,” he says. “They’re building a museum. Do they love art and hate trees?”

Objections to the removal of the 41st Street oak trees must be filed within ten calendar days of the posted notice, meaning no later than Saturday, September 5. For more information, contact Miami’s historic preservation officer, Ellen Uguccioni, at 305-416-1447 or Euguccioni@miamigov.com

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Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Puppy Snatcher at Large

400 block of NE 64th Street

Here's why you see dog owners taking their pets to pooch-friendly joints like Andiamo. This animal lover had left her precious little ones outside in her backyard. She claimed she had secured the area, but when she returned home, she found her gate bent and one of her puppies missing. Unfortunately the puppy did not have any paperwork or tags, so the little critter can't be tracked. If neighbors have information, please contact Crime Beat so we can return the puppy and contact police. Friends, take your animals with you — have one of Frankie's Philly Cheese Steaks while you're at it.



went for the window, first removing the screen. The victim had no idea this was happening. (Hard of hearing?) But she did hear his familiar, snarling voice, and was horrified to find the perpetrator's head sticking through the window. She screamed at the pulsating cranium, which seemed to be stuck in the window. Startled, the intruder yanked himself loose and went running. To make matters worse, the victim later received several threatening phone calls from the perp. The head has a name — Carlos — but the victim didn't know his last name.

More Condo Board Hell

500 Block of NE 30th Street

Think your condo board sucks? This victim's apartment was burglarized twice in the past two months. Then one night she saw the building's maintenance

man leaving her place, uninvited and heading downstairs. She complained to the condo president, who later claimed to police that this tenant has been harassing her and other tenants for several months. (Well, if you were repeatedly robbed, you'd be a pain too.) So the condo board filed a lawsuit against the victim.

Man Sticks Head in Other People's Business

400 NE 28th Street

An irate man, who was once a comrade of the victim, tried banging down the victim's door on a sleepy Sunday afternoon. When that didn't work, he

The Prattler's Punishment

6700 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Mother always told us not to talk about others because it's just not nice, and bad things can happen. This busybody ran into some serious trouble. Two men came to her abode, a Boulevard dive, and broke down her door. She

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Crime Beat

Continued from page 28

had apparently been spreading vicious rumors about them. They punched her in the head several times, inflicting lacerations. Then they left. The rumor-monger had spoken to a friend, who, being a gossip herself, in turn relayed the chatter to the men. Thus Crime Beat suggests Boulevard residents keep their mouths shut, walk fast, and read the *BT* for further instructions.

Stuffing It in All the Wrong Places

8300 Block NE 1st Avenue

Yet another Miami genius decided to forgo the security of a bank (those minimum balances can be a hassle) and used his furniture as a safe-deposit box. To be precise, one recent day he stuffed \$300 into a black leather sofa. Problem: The sofa was not his. It belonged to the landlord, who by chance came by later that day to "retrieve" his property. When the victim saw the sofa missing, he contacted the landlord

and sure enough, the dough was gone. Landlord denied responsibility.

The Cursed Life of Cab Drivers

600 Block NE 36th Street

A cabbie picked up three people from Miami Beach and drove them to their destination. When they arrived, all three left the cab and said they were going to get money to pay him. As a precaution, the driver took down their cell phone numbers, which he called after a reasonable amount of time had passed. The response: "Meet us downtown to get your \$50." The cabbie called police, but no arrests have been made. If high gas prices don't rob you blind, your customers will.

Ladies, Watch Your Purse!

2600 Block of S. Bayshore Drive

This type of crime appears so frequently in the monthly police blotters that it bears repeating — again and again. On this occasion, a woman sat down to lunch and placed her purse on the chair next to her. However, her eyes were not on it at all times. And then it was too late.

The purse went missing, right next to her! Crime Beat implores you: Either get a wallet or tie the purse around your leg. Pepper spray wouldn't hurt, either.

What's a Little Gunplay Among Friends?

7500 Block NE 6th Court

A man answered his door to let two friends in, but to his horror, they pointed guns at his head and demanded his money. They then said, "We're just playing." He let them in for a chat (guns in tow) and after they left, he discovered that his wallet and both of his cell phones were missing. The victim told police that at no point was he in fear for his life. Playing with guns? No big deal. Swiping cell phones? That's going too far.

Got a Rolex? Consider Leaving It Home

1700 Block of N. Bayshore Drive

Victim was fooling around with a young woman at a "gentleman's club," but she repeatedly reached for his Rolex watch. He told her to stop and

finally pushed off of him. Then he noticed the watch was in fact missing. He got up and chased the woman across the club but was stopped by police. Perhaps he was a little excited from their encounter and it showed? The watch was never recovered. Miami's striving parvenus would do well to check their egos at the strip-joint door and wear a Timex.

Caught Sitting in the Act

100 Block NE 19th Terrace

This victim witnessed a man near his carport carrying his microwave oven. He screamed for him to stop, but the man would not listen, jumping his wooden backyard fence while still holding the microwave. Police were in the area and saw the man on the corner — he only made it one block — sitting on the microwave. He was arrested on the spot after the microwave, now damaged, was identified by the victim. No Hot Pockets tonight.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Coming Features: Upper Eastside Cinema

Thanks to a Knight Foundation grant, a new movie theater is on the way

By Victor Barrenechea
BT Contributor

One of the biggest gripes up and down the Biscayne Corridor is that there is no conveniently located movie theater. For a night at the movies you either have to drive up north to the Intracoastal Mall in North Miami Beach or to Aventura, or cross the causeway to South Beach. And if you want to see something that isn't mainstream Hollywood fare, your choices are even slimmer.

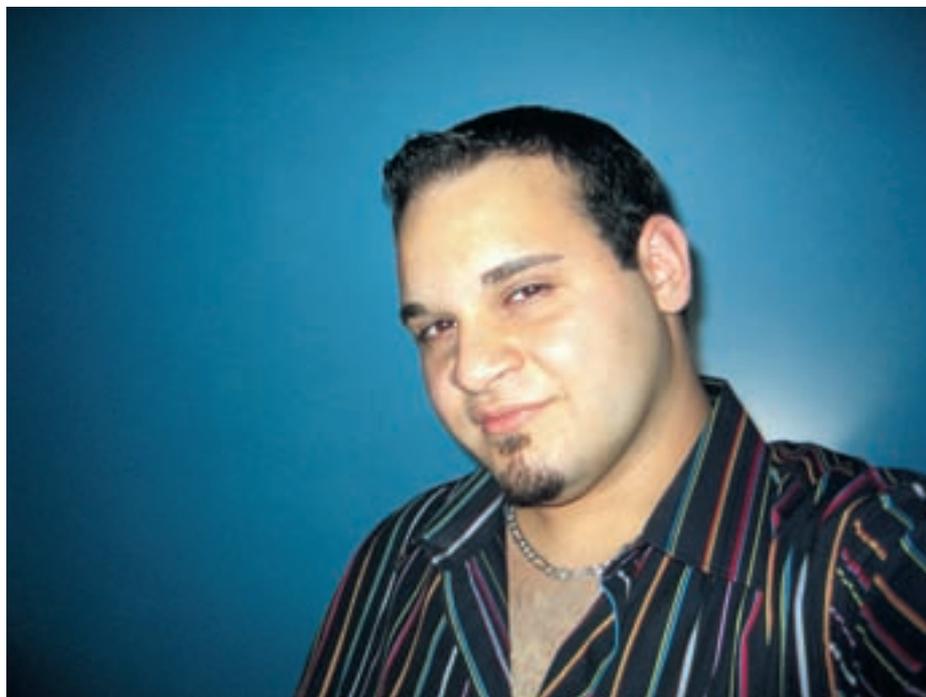
South Beach's Regal Cinema devotes at least one of its screens to independent features, but these usually have heavy distribution and commonly show in nearly every major city. There is no local theater truly devoted to cinematic obscurities and oddities, with the occasional exception of the Cosford Cinema at University of Miami and the Miami Beach Cinematheque.

Still, if a truly independent art-house theater were to exist in Miami, there'd be no better place for it than the Biscayne Corridor's own Upper Eastside neighborhood, where plans are already under way for a brand-new indie movie house named O Cinema.

"There's a palpable energy and a real drive to do more for this neighborhood," says Kareem Tabsch, who is working with Vivian Marthell on ambitious plans to open and operate O Cinema. "There are places to eat in this neighborhood," Tabsch notes, "places to get a drink, places to go shopping, but not really any places for entertainment."

Marthell has been involved with the visual and performing arts in Miami for years, including stints as co-director of the now-defunct Lab6 alternative art space and project manager for Tigertail Productions. Tabsch has served as program director of the Miami Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, of which Marthell was hospitality and program coordinator for a brief period. It was around that time, a couple of years ago, as the two screened films for inclusion in the festival, that they began talking about the need for something like O Cinema.

"We got to see so many films and not everything makes it to the screen," remembers Marthell. Indeed the arc of an indie film's life commonly involves



Kareem Tabsch: "There's a palpable energy and a real drive to do more for this neighborhood."

screenings on the film-festival circuit, with hopes for a distribution deal, but if no distributor picks it up, the film often never again is screened in a public setting.

Tabsch and Marthell argue, though, that many films with relatively wide distribution frequently don't make it to Miami because there are so few places to show them. In fact one of the biggest pitfalls the O Cinema founders say

they've encountered while helping to organize festivals is the dearth of venues to host them. "So many amazing film festivals come into town," says Marthell. "All these people are suffering for places to show films."

According to Tabsch, it was simply a matter of "putting two and two together," especially after he heard about the Knight Foundation's Arts Challenge. The Miami-based foundation launched

the Arts Challenge in early 2008, soliciting ideas for South Florida arts projects of all types. Recipients would receive grants with the expectation that they would match the grant money by private fundraising. A whopping 1643 individuals and organizations submitted applications that first year. Marthell and Tabsch's idea for an independent cinema was among them, and after a months-long judging process, they were among 31 winners announced this past December. The O Cinema project was awarded a hefty \$400,000, which will be disbursed over three years, as Tabsch and Marthell raise their matching funds.

Tabsch says there's really something for everyone in O Cinema's planned programming. Obviously they'll show independent films that already get widespread distribution outside Miami, but also they'll present one-off screenings for some films that never get picked up for distribution. They also plan to revisit classics, running restored versions of films that haven't been seen in a long time, such as the avant-garde films of Kenneth Anger.

O Cinema also hopes to be a home for movies from all over the world, with extensive screenings of foreign films as part of its programming. "There's just so much that never sees the light of day," says Tabsch. Niche films in every category — from gay and lesbian to Jewish to African-American to documentaries — will have a place.

Marthell and Tabsch intend for O Cinema to be a first-run movie theater, meaning 85 to 90 percent of the movies are going to be brand-new, never-before-seen works. They also want the theater to serve as a permanent place to host local film festivals, all year long.

Though the two have secured a warehouse space for O Cinema in the Upper Eastside, the property is still in lease negotiations. For that reason, Tabsch and Marthell are following the advice of an attorney who is helping them: Don't identify the precise location just yet. They will say, however, that if all goes according to plan, it will be a two-theater, two-floor operation that should accommodate somewhere between 300 and 350 people. An extra room will be

Continued on page 31

Cinema

Continued from page 30

set aside as a video art gallery to display a rotating array of video works. And of course there'll be a concession stand, but not your typical megaplex popcorn counter. O Cinema will have its "chill lounge," where moviegoers can purchase "film-centric" snacks and beverages, including beer and wine.

Many noble but ultimately doomed attempts have already been made in Miami to realize the vision of O Cinema — places like the late-lamented Absinthe House in Coral Gables, the Alliance Cinema on Lincoln Road, and the ill-fated Mercury Theater at 55th Street Station near Soyka restaurant, which closed its doors at the beginning of the decade after only two years of operation. An established culture that nurtures independent cinema exists in places like New York City, and major art-house cinemas like the Angelica operate successfully in places as seemingly conservative as Texas. So why not Miami?

Timing has played a key role, at least in the Upper Eastside. "The neighborhood was not the same as it is now," says



Vivian Marthell: "We've been able to elevate the arts. We've developed a landscape that can support this."

Tabach. The Mercury opened in January 2001, just as the area was beginning to undergo revitalization, spurred in large part by entrepreneur Mark Soyka and his namesake restaurant. Soyka, in fact, owned the Mercury property and helped

the cinema's three owners launch the project. In addition, the Mercury tried to find its footing before Art Basel Miami Beach and the Adrienne Arsht Center began to lend credence to the notion that Miami is a place that can foster culture. "We've been able to elevate the visual arts and performing arts," asserts Marthell. "We've developed a landscape that can support this." Cinema, she says, is just the last piece of the puzzle.

Development plans are reportedly running smoothly for O Cinema, but in this economic climate, raising \$400,000 is not easy, even over three years. Tabach and Marthell have been seeking donors and contributions nonstop. As part of that effort, O Cinema will hold a series of fundraising events beginning October 10, with "Monitoring Art" at the soon-to-open Inkub8 art space in Wynwood. There they will showcase the work of established video artists and emerging

local talent on multiple flat-screen monitors. "Monitoring Art" will be something of a prototype for the theater's own video art gallery.

With any luck, the two hope to have this year's matching funds in place and O Cinema up and running by winter.

"We're making some headway, but there have been some challenges," concedes Tabach. The challenges, however,

haven't shaken his conviction that something like O Cinema is vitally important for Miami. A lively cinema scene, he says, is essential if Miami wants to share the cultural stage with other major cities: "Miami opens itself to the world, but we have to bring the world to Miami, and cinema is a great way to do it."

For more information visit www.o-cinema.org

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Development plans are reportedly running smoothly for O Cinema, but in this economic climate, raising \$400,000 is not easy, even over three years.

Steven K. Baird, P.A. Attorney at Law

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ART LISTINGS

WYNWOOD GALLERY WALK & DESIGN DISTRICT
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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

101/EXHIBIT

101 NE 40th St., Miami
305-573-2101
www.101exhibit.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

ABBA FINE ART

233 NW 36th St., Miami
305-576-4278
www.abbafineart.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

ALEJANDRA VON HARTZ FINE ARTS

2630 NW 2nd Ave., 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
September 12 through October 31:
"The Sources of the Nile" by Manuel Ametzoy
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 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 RICART

3900 NE 1st Ave., Miami
305-576-5000
www.valerericartgallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

ART FUSION

1 NE 40th St., Miami
305-573-5730
www.artfusiongallery.com
Through September 23:
"Esoteric Illusions" with various artists
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

ART GALLERY AT GOVERNMENT CENTER

111 NW 1st St., Suite 625, Miami
305-375-4634
Call gallery for exhibition information.

ARTFORMZ

171 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, PJ Mills, Alette Simmons-Jimenez, Rosario Rivera-Bond, Rai Escale, Anja Marais, Ramón Williams, Guillermo Portieles, Donna Haynes, and Gisela Savdie
September 5 through October 3:
"Recent Work: Paintings of Ray Paul & Photographs of PJ" with PJ Mills and Ray Paul
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

BAKEHOUSE ART COMPLEX

561 NW 32nd St., Miami
305-576-2828
www.bacfl.org
September 11 through October 1:
"MDC Kendall Campus Faculty Show" with various artists
September 17 through October 1:
"Recently Acquired" with various artists
Reception September 11, 7 to 10 p.m.
"Recently Acquired" will be located at Miami Dade College Kendall Campus Main Gallery : 11011 S.W. 104th St., Miami
Reception September 17, 6 to 10 p.m.

BAS FISHER INVITATIONAL

180 NE 39th St., #210, Miami
By appointment: info@basfisherinvitational.com
www.basfisherinvitational.com
September 12: "BAD BRILLIANCE" by Andrew Strasser
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.



Gavin Perry, *Untitled (huey)*, resin on carpet, two-sided, suspended from the ceiling, 2009, at Charest-Weinberg Gallery.

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

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 COMMUNICATION

541 NW 27th St., Miami
305-571-1415
www.visual.org
Ongoing:
Solo show by Clarence Laughlin

CHAREST-WEINBERG GALLERY

250 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-292-0411
www.charest-weinberg.com
September 12 through October 5:
"Spit-Polishing a Starless Sky/Outer Space" with Bhakti Baxter, Nicolas Lobo, Gean Moreno, Daniel Newman, Ernesto Oroza, and Gavin Perry
Reception September 12, 6 to 9 p.m.

CHELSEA GALLERIA

2441 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-576-2950
www.chelseagalleria.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

CS GALLERY

787 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-308-6561
www.chirinossanchez.com
Through September 25:
"Open-Source Meme" by Roger Danilo Carmona

DAMIEN B. CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

282 NW 36th St., Miami
305-573-4949
www.damienb.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

DAVID CASTILLO GALLERY

2234 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-8110
www.castilloart.com
September 12 through October 3:
"You might sleep, but you will never dream" by Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova and "Flowers and Terrorists" by Amir Fallah
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

DELUXE ART GALLERY

2051 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
786-200-4971
Call gallery for exhibition information.

DIANA LOWENSTEIN FINE ARTS

2043 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-1804
www.dlfinearts.com
September 12 through October 1:
Horacio Sapere, Vickie Pierre, and Carlos De Villasante
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

DIASPORA VIBE GALLERY

3938 NE 39th St., Miami
305-573-4046
www.diasporavibe.net
Through September 24:
"Clay: New Works" by Caroline Holder and "Conversations with Clay" with Erman Gonzalez, Jean Chiang, Michael Layne, Rodney Jackson, Annemiek van Kerkhof-Posthuma

DORSCH GALLERY

151 NW 24th St., Miami
305-576-1278
www.dorschgallery.com
September 12 through October 3:
Solo shows by Peter Barrett, Amanda Burnham, and Michelle Hailey
Reception September 12, 5 to 10 p.m.

DOT FIFTYONE ART SPACE

51 NW 36th St., Miami
305-573-9994
www.dotfiftyone.com
September 12 through October 30:
"Girls With Guns" by Natalie Silva and "Fissure Postcard" with Patricio Gonzalez Bezanilla and Juan Cristobal Gonzalez Bezanilla
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

EDGAR ACE GALLERY

7520 NE 4th Ct., Miami
305-877-2401
Call gallery for exhibition information.

EDGE ZONES CONTEMPORARY ART

47 NE 25th St., Miami
305-303-8852
www.edgezones.org
Call gallery for exhibition information.

ELITE ART EDITIONS GALLERY

151 NW 36th St., Miami
305-403-5856
www.elitearteditions.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

ETRA FINE ART

10 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
Call gallery for exhibition information.

FREDRIC SNITZER GALLERY

2247 NW 1st Pl., Miami
305-448-8976
www.snitzer.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

GALLERY DIET

174 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-571-2288
www.gallerydiet.com
September 12 through October 3: "Steam" by Hills Snyder and "Dolos" by Miller & Shellabarger
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 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 SPACE

3326 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-1645
www.hardcoreartcontemporary.com
September 12 and ongoing:
"New Media festival '09 ,IV Edition" with various artists and "Anti-Art Man" by Mariano Costapeuser
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

HAROLD GOLEN GALLERY

2294 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-989-3359
www.haroldgolengallery.com
September 12 through October 3:
"Go Ape Shit" by Thorsten Hassenkamm
Reception September 12, 7 to 11 p.m.

ICON ART IMAGES GALLERY / STUDIO

147 NW 36th St., Miami
305-576-4266
www.cashappeal.com
September 5 through October 2:
"The Muhammad Ali Exhibition" with Bill Toma and Gary Longordo
Reception September 5, 6 to 8 p.m.

INTERFLIGHT STUDIO GALLERY

250 NW 23rd St., Loft 206, Miami
305-573-1673
www.flightstudiogallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

KELLEY ROY GALLERY

50 NE 29 St., Miami
305-447-3888
www.kelleyroygallery.com
Through September 30:
"Handmade Horizons and Songs" by Sebastian Spreng
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

KEVIN BRUK GALLERY

2249 NW 1st Pl., Miami
305-576-2000
www.kevinbrukgallery.com
September 12 through October 17:
"(IV) - 369 (Luna)" by Jesse Bransford
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

KUNSTHAUS MIAMI

3312 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-438-1333
www.kunsthhaus.org.mx
Call gallery for exhibition information.

LEITER GALLERY

6900 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
305-389-2616
Call gallery for exhibition information.

LOCUST PROJECTS

155 NE 38th St., Miami
305-576-8570
www.locustprojects.org
Through October 17:
"WHIRL CRASH GO!" by the TM Sisters

LUIS ADELANTADO GALLERY

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

Continued on page 33

Art Listings

Continued from page 32

LURIE — KAVACHNINA GALLERY

46 NW 36th St., Miami
305-448-3060
www.lurie-kavachnina.com
September 9 through September 24:
"Nine" by Adolfo Diaz, Venezuela
September 12 through October 8:
"Hispanic Heritage Exhibition" with Alonso Mateo, Joel Rojas, Ferran Escote, Carlos Quintana, and Rosario Giovanini
Reception September 9, 7 to 11 p.m.
Reception September 12, 6 to 11 p.m.

LYLE O. REITZEL GALLERY

2441 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-1333
www.artnet.com/reitzel.html
September 12 through October 12:
"Shuffle" Solo Show by Luciano Goizueta
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

MARIO FLORES GALLERY

12502 NE 8th Ave., North Miami
561-201-2053
www.mariofloresgallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

MIAMI CENTER FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS

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

MIAMI ART GROUP GALLERY

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



Oscar Muñoz, *Archivo poscontacto (Archive by Contact)*, multimedia installation video, archive photographs, Web interface, and publication, 2008, at Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation.

MIAMI ART SPACE

244 NW 35th St., Miami
305-438-9002
www.miamiartspace.com
September 12:
Solo show by AI Poster
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

MIAM-DADE COLLEGE, CENTER GALLERY

300 NE 2nd Ave.,
Bldg. 1, Room 1365, Miami

305-237-3696
www.mdc.edu
September 3 through November 7:
Solo show by Cundo Bermudez

MIAMI INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ART AND DESIGN

1501 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
305-428-5700
www.mymiu.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

MUSEO VAULT

346 NW 29th St., Miami
305-571-1175
www.museovault.com
September 5 through October 1:
"Deconstructing Pin-Ups" by Ahmed Gomez
Reception September 5, 6 to 10 p.m.

OUR HOUSE WEST OF WYNWOOD

3100 NW 7th Ave., Miami
305-490-2976
www.oh-wow.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

PANAMERICAN ART PROJECTS

2450 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-2400
www.panamericanart.com
September 5 through October 3:
Gustavo Acosta and Carlos Gonzalez
Reception September 12, 6 to 9 p.m.

PRAXIS INTERNATIONAL ART

2219 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-2900
www.praxis-art.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

PRESSITON ART GALLERY

4100 N. Miami Ave., Miami
786-925-2930
www.pressitonart.com
Through September 19:
New works by Laura DiNello, Elena Madden, Tobia Makover, Cedric Smith, Terry Strickland, and Jamie Baldrige
September 24 through October 17:
Solo show by Barry Gross
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

Continued on page 34

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Art Listings

Continued from page 33

PUZZLEMENT GALLERY

81 NW 24th St., Miami
917-929-8559
www.puzzlementart.com
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 September 26:
"What We Do Is Secret" by Manny Prieres
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

STASH GALLERY

162 NE 50 Terr., Miami
305-992-7652
www.myspace.com/stashgallery
Call gallery for exhibition information.

STEVE MARTIN STUDIO

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

SWAMPSPACE GALLERY

3821 NE 1st Ct., Miami
swampstyle
Through September 29:
"Hyper Culture" by Victor Muñiz

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
305-576-6960
www.wrpfineart.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

MUSEUM & COLLECTION EXHIBITS

CIFO (Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation)

1018 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-455-3380
www.cifo.org
September 13 through November 8:
"Shifting Constructs: CIFO 2009 Grants and Commissions Exhibition" with Miguel Amat, Gabriel Antolinez, Suwon Lee, Juan Carlos Leon, Ricardo Rendón, José Ruiz, Dora Longo Bahia, and Oscar Muñoz
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FROST ART MUSEUM

11200 SW 8th St., Miami
305-348-0496
http://thefrost.fiu.edu/
Through September 16:
"Genetic Portraits" by Nela Ochoa
Through September 20:
"What Comes After" by Nancy Friedemann
September 2 through October 4:
Geoffrey Olsen



Manuel Ameztoy, *The Sources of the Nile 1*, acrylic on Mylar, 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

MOCA AT GOLDMAN WAREHOUSE

404 NW 26th St., Miami
305-893-6211
www.mocanomi.org
Call for operating hours and exhibit information.

THE MARGULIES COLLECTION

591 NW 27th St., Miami
305-576-1051
www.margulieswarehouse.com
Call for operating hours and exhibit information.

THE RUBELL FAMILY COLLECTION

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

WORLD CLASS BOXING

Debra and Dennis Scholl Collection
170 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-438-9908
www.worldclassboxing.org/
September 12 through October 30
Solo show by Paul Pfeiffer
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

Compiled by Victor Barrenechea
Send listings, jpeg images, and events information to
art@biscaynetimes.com

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St. Martha-Yamaha
2009-2010 CONCERT SERIES
Paul Posnak, Founding Artistic Director

Saturday October 17, 2009, 7:30 p.m.
RED PREST - named for Steve Niles composer and album title - is the only early music group to have been compared to the Rolling Stones and Queen de Sade. The "innovative and fearless" ensemble from England with a "rock-like wildness and sense of humor" and a "break-all-rules, rock-and-roll concert approach" will perform their fabulous Halloween program, "Nightmare in Venice."

Sunday December 13, 2009, 3:00 p.m.
HELEN BIRDS AND HER POPPING Home for the holidays - classical gems and holiday favorites with a touch of Latin jazz in a St. Martha exclusive program featuring Grammy Award-winning Solo Popping Series, also special guest Paul Posnak and rhythmic accompaniment with the magic that results each time that Nestor and Paul collaborate. Sponsored in part by Miami Shores Mayor's Community Task Force.

Saturday January 24, 2010, 7:30 p.m.
Houston-born violinist **ALEXANDER HINCHY** is winner of the Rogers International Solo Competition featured in the film "The Art of Solo" about the world's great violinists, acclaimed as one of the "most brilliant and most of all-time." His performances combine modern, youthful energy with the emotional intensity of traditional masters. Performing with Paul Posnak, he is sure to leave his mark on South Florida.

Sunday February 21, 2010, 3:00 p.m.
New York's **TRIPOLIUM FLUTE** brings eclectic multicultural to Turkish musical genres from all over the world. Perhaps the best known group performing in the US today - its repertoire includes existing classics, folk tunes, traditional folk, popular melodies, Turkish jazz, tango, and bolero. Sponsored in part by Miami-Dade Commissioner Judy Heyman.

Saturday April 17, 2010, 7:30 p.m.
THE 5TH ANNUAL CHRYSLER FINANCIAL COMPETITION - selected in February 2010 - will play in honor of post-competition performance in South Florida field every five years, the competition features the best young classical artists in the country. St. Martha is proud to host the gold medalist, who will play the winning performance and personal favorites, joined by Paul Posnak on a second program. Presented in cooperation with the Chrysler Foundation of the United States.

TO PURCHASE TICKETS: Visit www.saintmartha.tix.com or Call 1-800-595-4849 or purchase at church office or at door St. Martha in the Shores • 9301 Biscayne Blvd., Miami Shores \$10 General Admission • \$20 Blue Circle • Artist Reception Included

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Culture Briefs

Will It Be New Appliances or a Backyard Spa?

Lots of new homeowners in the Biscayne Corridor. Sales of distressed properties have skyrocketed in the past few months. Lots of people who'd like to sell their homes but won't even try in this market. In both cases, owners may well be looking for ideas to spruce things up. No better place for that than the Miami Home Design and Remodeling Show **September 4-8** at the Miami Beach Convention Center (1901 Convention Center Dr.). Fine furniture and accessories from 12 countries, appliances, landscaping, spas, and more will be on display to feed your imagination. Bring photos of your house for *free* advice from dozens of interior-design experts. Attend free seminars on home improvement. Tickets are \$10. Friday 6:00-10:30 p.m., Saturday and Sunday 12:00-10:30 p.m., Monday (Labor Day) 12:00-7:30 p.m., Tuesday 6:00-10:30 p.m. Call 305-667-9299 or visit www.home-shows.com.

Hey, Kid — Go Play in the Street

If you grew up in a big city anywhere along the East Coast, you know stickball, the urban adaptation of baseball played on neighborhood streets. A broom handle was the bat. The ball was rubber. The plates were this fire hydrant, that manhole cover, the stop sign over there. Parked cars, Dumpsters, building walls — most everything was in-bounds. Stickball, it turns out, wasn't just for kids. Adult leagues flourish today, even amid South Florida's suburban sprawl. In fact the Stickball World Series is coming to town **September 5-7**, on NE 8th Avenue at NE 132nd Street, in front of the North Miami Public Library. Four "fields" have been carved out of the street (known as Stickball Boulevard for its history as a favored locale) to accommodate some 15 teams from New York, Puerto Rico, San Diego, and Florida (three from Miami). The teams start swinging at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday, and go all day. On Monday the best eight squads enter a single-elimination playoff, finishing with the championship. Call 305-895-9840 or visit www.florida-stickball.com.

Mind, Body, Spirit, and a Divine Massage

Consider it a kind of spiritual bazaar at which you're invited to explore a variety of paths to achieve your personal potential. Call it Transformational Journey, hosted by Unity on the Bay (411 NE 21st St., Miami) on **Saturday, September 12**. Workshops on yoga, tai chi, massage, vegetarian lifestyles, prosperity, and more begin at 8:00 a.m. There's no formal admission charge, but voluntary donations are encouraged. That evening best-selling author and spiritual teacher Debbie Ford appears for a screening of her documentary *The Shadow Effect* (6:30 p.m.), and a workshop that will follow. The Ford event is \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door. Call 305-573-9191 or visit www.unityonthebay.org.



Dig, Set, Spike, and a National Championship at Stake

When it comes to beach volleyball, America really is number one, most recently bringing home the gold for both men and women at last year's Summer Olympics. Now the Dig the Beach Volleyball Series heads to Miami Beach for its finals and the national championship (Ocean Drive at 8th Street) on **Saturday and Sunday, September 12-13**. One doubles team each from the men and women will be crowned national champions. Also at this *free* pro-am event, teams in five amateur divisions vie for first, second, and third on 30 courts in the sand. Play begins at 8:00 a.m. Call 561-241-3801 or visit www.digthebeach.com.

Racial Segregation in Miami: It Wasn't So Long Ago

Denied access to local beaches, vigilant and courageous black Mi-amians protested in 1945 until Dade

County authorities budged. Virginia Key Beach was created for "colored only," and for many years served as a kind of refuge for black families to gather and relax while kids rode the merry-go-round and miniature train. The black community again got involved in the past decade, when the beach, long closed and deteriorated, was set to be razed for development. Now fully restored, Virginia Key Beach Park reopened last year for everyone. In a *free* event, local activists recount their successful struggles in "Saving Our History: The Preservation of Black Historic Sites" **Thursday, September 17** at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida (101 W. Flagler St., downtown). A panel discussion begins at 6:30 p.m. Call 305-375-1492 or visit www.hmsf.org.

Canes vs. Georgia Tech: Sweet Revenge

Last year Georgia Tech bulldozed the Miami Hurricanes, rushing for 472 yards, making it the second-worst defensive showing in Canes history. On top of that, they've beaten Miami four consecutive years, one of only six teams ever to do that. Stop the bleeding! Take the sting out of these defeats and personally make Land Shark Stadium as deafening as it was when it we called it Dolphin Stadium. Go see the Hurricanes squish the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets like a bug on **Thursday, September 17**. Tickets are \$19-\$360. Game starts at 7:30 p.m. Call 800-GO-CANES or visit www.hurricanesports.com.

One Man's Trash, Another Man's Duty

You've heard of sea turtles swallowing plastic bags and dying, pelicans getting entangled in fishing line and strangling. It's tragic. And it's preventable. Do your part to help scrub our shorelines at the 2009 Miami-Dade Coastal Cleanup **Saturday, September 19**, part of a global effort on that day. Registration is required at specific cleanup sites, including Pelican Harbor Marina, Legion Park, FIU's Biscayne Bay campus, and Oleta River State Park. To sign up, go to www.miamidadecoastalcleanup.org or call 305-372-3300. After the trash is

gathered in the morning, volunteers are gratefully invited to a big party at the Miami Seaquarium for free food, music, and fantastic shows. Bring the kids for a lesson in good stewardship.

No, Not Ice Queen — Ice Princess, as in Disney

Take your little ones to fairy-tale lands of make-believe, where the Disney princesses take to the ice in *Disney On Ice: Princess Classics*, appearing at the American Airlines Arena (601 Biscayne Blvd.) **September 23-27**. Each story in this large-scale, live production has a princess skating with the Disney cast of characters from animated films. They will all be there: Cinderella, Jasmine of *Aladdin*, the *Little Mermaid's* Ariel, Sleeping Beauty, Mulan, *Beauty and the Beast's* Belle, and Snow White. Tickets are \$18-\$50. Shows at 7:30 p.m. For tickets call 786-777-1000 or visit either www.aaarena.com or www.disneyonice.com.



Dancers in Wheelchairs? Why Not?

For nearly 20 years, Karen Peterson has directed dancers for the stage, notably those with disabilities — and those without. The performances are expressed with unusual beauty and grace. On **Saturday, October 3**, Karen Peterson and Dancers bring this inclusive dance concert, featuring a new work, to the Byron Carlyle Theater (500 71st St., Miami Beach). For *Mano a Mano* Maria Lino directs live video upon which four dancers improvise, two of them remarkably in wheelchairs. Tickets are \$25. Students and seniors \$15 with ID. Shows at 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. Call 305-358-5885 or visit www.karenpetersondancers.org.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Looks Like a Job for Oscar the Grouch

Two neighboring and neighborly Shorecrest parks need a litter patrol

By Jim W. Harper
BT Contributor

Trash alert! Paging Oscar the Grouch! Trash alert! Oscar, the muppet who lives in a trash can, should report immediately to the tot lot in Shorecrest. There he will find a smorgasbord of trash overflowing from the park's cans. Oscar, this county park needs you to clean it up.

But wait, there's more, Oscar. Around the corner at the newly renovated Military Trail Park are similarly stuffed trash cans. At least that was the case during two visits, a few days apart, to these parks in mid-August. While cleaner, this second park still exhibited full cans and scattered litter, mostly plastic water bottles.

Shorecrest, why are your parks so trashy?

Military Trail Park, dedicated on July 11, should be spotless, and mostly it is. But visitors may feel compelled to bring bottled drinks owing to the lack of a water fountain, an oversight noted in the *Miami Herald* by Richard Laird, president of the Shorecrest Homeowners Association. The *Herald* article failed to note that the park, like most county parks, also lacks a recycling container for all those plastic bottles stuffed into the trash cans and spilling over onto the sidewalk.

The park's new entrance sign points out another major oversight. While claiming to be "a historic park," no explanation can be found to substantiate



BT photos by Jim W. Harper

It would be nice to know what exactly is historic about this newly renovated park.

this claim. The same claim and lack of interpretation exists in the tot lot around the corner, North Shorecrest Park.

Shorecrest, what makes your parks so historic? A little explanation would go a long way.

It sounds like these parks are a hot mess. Hot, yes, and desperately in need of water fountains and more shade. Messy, yes, if those trash cans remain full. But they are far from being a lost cause.

Putting aside my inner Oscar the Grouch, I especially like two things about these parks. They are located smack in the middle of residential lots, with walls separating them from private

soccer field. The mostly empty lot adjacent to the tot lot is a bit, well, messier. In one corner, a large pile of discarded tires (great breeding grounds for mosquitoes) leans against an abandoned house, and this unstable eyesore must be removed no matter what happens to the rest of the property.

Even if the Miami-Dade County parks department cannot afford to purchase these unused properties, they should at least try to lease and manage them so the neighbors can enjoy them legally for the time being. Doubling the space in these two parks could double the neighborhood's pleasure.

Visits to Military Trail Park should pick up as neighbors begin to discover its charms, and in particular its exercise course. The several sturdy exercise stations, with the trademark of HealthBeat,



Pulling a wagon loaded with kids, dad gets in some cardio at Military Trail Park.

homes. This type of setting makes them very cozy and neighborly. Secondly, both could easily double in size, as each borders a large empty lot.

Miami-Dade County has already sent an appraiser to review the foreclosure property next to Military Trail Park. Real estate agent Achikam Yogev lists the one-acre parcel at \$850,000. The lot is platted for five homes, but the open space is begging to be turned into a

seem to offer a more gymlike program than the typical Vita course available in other parks. One station functions like a StairMaster, and another offers a squat press.

The exercise stations sit alongside the park's main feature: a winding concrete path. During one visit, this path was circled repeatedly by a young man

Continued on page 37

MILITARY TRAIL PARK & NORTH SHORECREST PARK

Park Rating

Military Trail Park:
825 NE 89th St.

North Shorecrest: 801 NE 88th St.
305-945-3425

Hours: Sunrise to sunset

Picnic tables: Yes (M. Trail)

Barbecues: No

Picnic pavilions: No

Tennis courts: No

Athletic fields: No

Night lighting: No

Swimming pool: No

Playground: Yes (N. Shorecrest)

Oscar

Continued from page 36

pulling a red wagon stuffed with three children. How cute is that?

The park's landscaping features attractive settings of native plants, and a few mature trees provide welcoming shade. But the park's two picnic tables are fully exposed, rendering them useless in summertime, and there are no barbecue grills.

A Military Trail Park visitor who identified himself as Jean, observed sleeping on one of its benches, told me that the best time to visit is at night (official county park hours tend to run from sunrise to sunset, as listed online for North Shorecrest Park, although no similar information is provided for Military Trail Park). He points to the sky, where he observes shooting stars.

"The park is quiet, laid back. You get to see kids playing," says Jean. "But you have to walk to Biscayne to get a bottle of water." His only other complaint is that some dog owners do not clean up after their pooches.

Dog-walkers have no excuse, as



The North Shorecrest tot lot, part of another mysteriously historic park.

doggie bags and disposal bins are provided in two locations. Military Trail is one of very few designated "dog friendly" parks in the county system, meaning that dogs on leashes are allowed. Most parks ban pets in both the county and City of Miami systems.

The county spent \$352,000 to create the new Military Trail Park. Two diagonal blocks south is North Shorecrest



No recycle bins and apparently no trash pickup either.

Park, a designated county "tot lot" that opened in 2004.

Officially this playground park features a butterfly garden, but it is not obvious. The large firebushes in the corner will attract butterflies, but this clump hardly qualifies as a garden. Moreover, the litter underneath those bushes, and scattered around the benches they overhang, does not proclaim "garden."

The playground section over a sand pit seems functional, although the wall behind the swing set could be problematic during a reverse flying dismount. Splat! (Remember, send your complaints about this column to letters@biscaynetimes.com.)

Both Military Trail and North Shorecrest parks have attractive, low walls constructed of what appears to be local limestone rock. Instead of gates, stubby columns serve as entry points. The fact that this type of entrance is always open contributes to that essential, neighborly feeling that many locked parks lack.

Once Oscar the Grouch has cleaned these two parks of their litter and over-stuffed trash cans, this review will be much more positive. While not remarkable, Military Trail and North Shorecrest parks differentiate this neighborhood from the other surrounding areas that lack such open, public spaces. This distinction obviously raises the value of nearby properties.

Take care of your parks, Shorecrest, and they will take care of you.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



Roadwork Ahead!

**The Biscayne Boulevard
(S.R. 5 / U.S. 1)**

Reconstruction Project

From NE 15th Street to NE 35th Terrace

Project Identification Number: 414624-1-52-01



This August, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District Six, began improvements to Biscayne Boulevard / State Road (S.R.) 5 / U.S. 1 from NE 15th Street to NE 35th Terrace. Construction is scheduled to last approximately two years.

Project Improvements Include:

- Reconstructing the roadway;
- Replacing the drainage and water main systems;
- Reconstructing sidewalks, driveways and curb ramps to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards;
- Replacing curb and gutter at several locations;
- Upgrading lighting, traffic and pedestrian signs and signalization;
- Installing new landscaping and irrigation; and
- Repaving and re-stripping the roadway; including from NE 35th Street to NE 38th Street.

Tips to Guide You Safely Through the Work Zone:

- Anticipate delays – give yourself a little extra time to reach your destination;
- Seek alternate routes whenever possible;
- Drive the posted speed limit – reduced speed limits are strictly enforced;
- Obey all signs posted within the construction zone; and
- Watch for Variable Message Signs that provide timely information about upcoming detours and lane closures.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation as we strive to improve transportation in your community.

How to Reach Us:

For more information about the Biscayne Boulevard Reconstruction Project, please contact Public Information Specialist Maria Palacios at 305-345-9619, or by electronic mail at Maria@QCAusa.com. You may also visit our web site at www.fdotmiamidade.com.

Motorists are encouraged to call 511 before they drive, or log onto www.fl511.com to get real-time traffic and lane closure information. FDOT would like to remind motorists that wearing a safety belt is the single most effective way to protect people and reduce fatalities in motor vehicle crashes. Please drive cautiously in work zones.

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Strange Case of the Impudent Wordsmith

In which a horticultural affront leads to a discovery, and then Eureka!

By Jeff Shimonski
BT Contributor

One of my personal goals as a horticulturist is to learn how to grow plants sustainably and without pesticides. I was challenged a couple of years ago when I was showing a garden writer around Jungle Island while explaining how this garden was grown without chemical fertilizers or pesticides. The garden writer pointed out several yellowing cycads growing among a larger, healthier-looking group and said, "You have a problem here and you need to fertilize."

I replied that there must be a reason for the yellowing and I'd eventually figure out how to make the plants healthy, just like the identical ones surrounding them. The writer departed unimpressed, and I was left with a challenging puzzle.

The plants in question were *Encephalartos*, one of two endemic African cycad genera. Cycads are a relatively small and ancient group of palmlike plants with only 11 genera and around 250 species. The different genera have restricted geographical ranges in tropical and subtropical zones of Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Americas, including one species from Florida, *Zamia integrifolia*. There are about 65 species of *Encephalartos* scattered throughout the southern and central sections of Africa that grow in a variety of habitats.

Cycads are slow-growing and long-lived. Often mistaken for palms or tree ferns because of their large pinnate (featherlike) leaves, they are in fact very different in almost all aspects of their structure and

reproductive behavior. They are dioecious, with male and female reproductive structures (cones) produced on separate plants.

Another distinctive feature is the coralloid (coral-shaped) root system. These are secondary roots that, unlike roots on most other plants, are negatively geotropic — they tend to grow upward and laterally out of the ground. On older plants, coralloid masses are often visible around the base of the trunk. These roots contain cyanobacteria that capture atmospheric nitrogen and supply it to the plant. Indeed cycads tend to be found in harsh environments where there is a lack of available nitrogen. Without this symbiotic relationship — supplemental nitrogen provided by the cyanobacteria — the cycad may not be able to bear fruit and produce viable seeds. Under nitrogen-rich conditions or heavy fertilization, this association with cyanobacteria may never develop.

Not long after the writer commented on the yellow plants, I happened to walk by several of my employees removing weeds from around the bases of the same yellowed plants. They were using machetes to cut the roots of weeds so they could be easily extracted. When I took a closer look, they were also cutting off the coralloid roots! I compared the surface area around the yellow cycads



Two male cones on a *Cycas rumphii* photographed in Malaysia.

BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

with the other surrounding green plants and found an obvious difference. There were very few coralloid roots around the trunks of the yellow plants, and of course fewer weeds. Since the foliage on *Encephalartos* is rather stiff and spiny, only the easily accessible plants would get weeded regularly.

I immediately met with the entire grounds crew and established a no-weeding zone around all of the cycads in the park. This was almost two years ago. Within the past couple of months, we've seen three of the four yellow cycads flushing out with new green foliage, and they've been producing new coralloid roots. So there is a sustainable way to grow these cycads!

The production of new foliage on cycads is called flushing because, instead of continuously adding foliage throughout the growing season, mature cycads send out a flush about once a year

that may consist of 10 to 20 leaves. Also regarding foliage, as the leaves age they usually lose their green color and gradually become yellow or brown. It is a good practice not to cut off these leaves as cycads (and palms) withdraw metabolically valuable materials from them.

Propagation is by seed or trunk sucker. Years ago I used to easily propagate the common sago palm from suckers that would grow out of the trunk. Most other cycad species must be propagated by seed.

In the mid-1990s, a scale insect became established in South Florida that killed almost all the common *Cycas* species in our area. This cycad aulacaspis scale does not seem to attack other species of cycads like *Encephalartos*, *Dioon*, *Zamia*, or *Ceratozamia*. These are the species that we should be growing in South Florida.

Cycads will grow well in containers but they need plenty of room. Grow them in containers as large as possible. One of the most common causes of cycad death is from rotting stems and roots owing to overwatering, so be very careful with irrigation and make sure the soil has excellent drainage. All cycads are terrestrial with the exception of a single epiphytic species, *Zamia pseudo-parasitica*. This interesting plant is endemic to Panama and can be well-grown in a hanging basket.

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

Let's Get It On — When We Can

With kids at home, makin' whoopee ain't like it used to be

By Jenni Person
BT Contributor

We all do it. Most of us did it to become parents in the first place, after years of doing it while trying *not* to become parents. Funny that, isn't it? And then tragic when, after 20 years of using birth control, some people can't get pregnant when they want to. But I'm not writing about fertility. This month I'm writing about sex itself.

Let me start with one thing that really makes me cringe: when people joke about "married sex," and buy into the stereotype that sexuality goes out the window with long-term commitment. It's a boring cliché that seems to be believed by certain people — most of them stand-up comics with limited repertoire — who themselves are unwilling or unable to take on the risk and work of commitment. However, I have to admit there certainly is some truth to the fact that *frequency* is compromised once kids are involved.

And with kids, at first there is the overwhelming lack of sleep that complicates intimacy. Oh wait, what do I mean "at first"? That really hasn't changed. What starts as sleepless nights of feedings evolves into sleepless nights resulting from all the other reasons kids wake up: pee-pee accidents, bad dreams, falling out of bed, frisky cats, the occasional illness or injury. Add to that the nights you stay up working to compensate for the work time you swapped for family time, pediatrician visits, or school plays; as well as the hours you lie awake worrying about your family or household. It's a



cycle of sleep deprivation that looks like it'll last for the rest of our lives. Here's my theory about pregnant women repeatedly having to get up at night to pee — it's an innate biological training system to prepare us for what lies ahead.

So there you are exhausted. You work hard all day, career, kids, household. Who can stay awake for sex? But there's an even bigger problem: The kids live with you, so if you can't stay awake and get down to love business after they've gone to sleep (as if reading or singing to them doesn't put you to sleep to begin with), you're out of luck. It's like sneaking behind your parents' backs all over again, but now it's under your own roof.

Do you ever feel like you're insane as you relegate your kids to the most engaging DVD you can uncover, throw a child safety lock on your bedroom door-knob, and start timing all your moves? Perhaps our household is the only one

in which hoops are jumped through in order to find time to attend to grownup sports, but somehow I have a feeling we're not the only parents who stare at our calendars, trying to strategize the timing of ecstasy.

We are human, requiring touch. We are in love, requiring connection. And we are consenting adults, requiring our privileges in the nookie department. We've put all this time into our relationship, and we have the right to as much sex as we can fit in between work, school pick-up, our dentist visits, their dentist visits, after-school sports, recitals, work, feeding everyone, the vet, playground time, work, grocery shopping, getting the tire repaired, bedtime stories, and more work.

There's the date-night option. You have a romantic dinner, sipping and nibbling exquisite combinations of flavors and textures you rarely have time for in your own home. You drink

in intoxicating conversation with your beloved, all the sweeter for not being interrupted. You luxuriate in a darkened restaurant or theater, with no one shouting "Mom!" or "Dad!"

And when you finally, really, truly have a clear head, you and your partner do what? Talk about your kids! But that's okay. It's not like this is going to be a fluid evening of love anyway. After all, when you get home, before you can fall into bed, you have to chat with, pay, and see off the babysitter. If you're lucky, your kids will be asleep and you'll still be awake enough to focus on your partner.

Then there's the morning option. Ah ha! *That's* why morning cartoons were invented! In our case it's Noggin, Sprout, or one of the two local PBS channels. But truth be told, if we *really* want to make sure we have some uninterrupted morning time, the TV rules go out the window and our kids are watching *Spi-derman 3* on DVD!

And you thought long-term birth control options were about romantic spontaneity? Ha! It's about brevity of preparation! Who has time to insert a diaphragm or unroll a condom when at any moment there could be a knock on the childproofed door looking for a different DVD or complaining about sibling inequities.

I don't know, maybe some of you out there have a more idyllic experience mixing intimacy with parenthood. I imagine someone out there must. But for the rest of us, here's to lots of opportunities to sneak it in when we can!

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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The Sweetness of Pit Bulls

We don't have a bad-dog problem, we have a bad-owner problem

By Lisa Hartman
BT Contributor

Recently in the news was the story of a pit bull that attacked a female postal worker. An unspoken part of that story was the dog owner's grief when his best friend was taken away and destroyed. Then we had football star Michael Vick on *60 Minutes*, robotically claiming he felt remorse for beating, drowning, and everything else he did to the many canines in his dog-fighting ring. We also learned that Italy has made it illegal to own 92 breeds, including the pit bull, the Italian marenna, and the Neapolitan mastiff.

Just turn on the news. At least once a month you hear of a dog attacking a human. It is usually a pit bull.

For those who don't know me or the rescue work I've been involved with over many years, let me say that I oppose breed-specific legislation like Italy's and Miami-Dade County's, where pit bulls are prohibited. I also applaud the wonderful efforts of rescue volunteers who work tirelessly for the breeds they love. But one breed keeps coming up in the news doing horrible things — the pit bull.

The pit bull (as the name implies, these are dogs originally bred to fight other dogs in a "pit") encompasses a few terrier breeds: the American pit bull terrier, the American Staffordshire terrier, and the Staffordshire bull terrier. A pit bull with a normal temperament is highly affectionate with people, even strangers and children; obedient, with a great desire to please; and emotionally stable.

In England the dogs have become known as the "Nanny Dog" for their love of and desire to be with children. A member of my extended family had Petey, a white pit who grew up entertaining her five children. He was a great dog and played with the kids for hours each day, loving every minute of it. So if this is proper pit-bull behavior, what has gone wrong?

As I said, I am against breed-specific legislation, but I also don't like the way some groups fight bans on pit bulls — namely, by pushing the dogs in the public's face and bringing pits where they are not allowed. This, in my opinion, will only cause more fear and upset, another reason for someone to telephone the police regarding a pit bull, another police report with the term "pit bull" in it.

Clearly this is a dog with an *owner* problem. Even in Broward, where pit bulls are allowed, owners have empowered themselves to break the laws, trying to show how wonderful their breed is by letting them run freely off-leash anywhere. "They're friendly!" the owner calls out as his pair of pit bulls runs up to you and your on-leash dogs. You hold your breath while cursing him and trying to figure out what you'll do if his dogs don't get along with yours (they are *animals*, after all). And you



fume at him for not even considering how you or your pets would feel being accosted by strange dogs.

Approximately 1800 pit bulls have been euthanized over the past three years by Miami-Dade Animal Services. Many Miami pit bull owners, complaining in the press, refer to Sara Pizano, director of Animal Services, as the "Pit Bull Executioner." But it's highly unlikely that Pizano, a veterinarian by trade, wants to kill as many pit bulls as she can. Unfortunately animal agencies all around the nation are killing record numbers of all dog breeds because people don't want them anymore, they are found as strays, or they get into trouble doing something bad or living where they are not supposed to.

So how are some 600 of this breed ending up there annually if they've been

banned for years? The fact that pit bulls continue getting into trouble is nothing less than a mark of owner irresponsibility. They know that, in Miami-Dade, they're not allowed to own pit bulls, but they do so anyway. They bring their scrappy males to dog parks, where they almost get into a scuffle, giving people reason to say, "Pit bulls are truly bad dogs." Maybe the Miami owner hides the dog most of the day in an apartment, and walks it quickly at night, leaving it undersocialized and overly aggressive. And of course there are still people like Michael Vick, who cruelly train their pit bulls to fight, driven by a kind of macho "gladiator mentality," as the so-called Dog Whisperer (a pit bull owner himself) once put it.

So what's the solution? Now more than ever pit bulls and other maligned breeds need their owners to be goodwill ambassadors for them. In my opinion, pit bull owners should *go out of their way* to make their breed not just good canine citizens but stellar examples of well-behaved pets. And with the big personality and intelligence of these dogs, that isn't so hard to do. The owners must keep in mind what pit bulls were bred for (fighting), manage and supervise their dogs, train and socialize them, follow the rules, and spay and neuter their pets.

I would propose a compromise, phasing out the breed-specific ban and replacing it over time with an owner ban. It would go something like this: Pit bull ownership would slowly be reinstated but:

- Not to persons with criminal records.
- Not to minors (although the

Continued on page 41

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COLUMNISTS: PAWSITIVELY PETS

Pit Bulls

Continued from page 40

younger generation is usually better with animals).

- All pit bulls must be spayed or neutered.
- Pit bull puppies must attend with their owners positive-socialization classes.
- Owners and their young or adult dogs must also take classes to obtain their Canine Good Citizen certificate (CGC), which includes a vow to properly care for their pets and not let

them become a public nuisance.

- Perhaps a written exam that tests their knowledge of pit bulls and their behavior.
- And of course, owners must always obey dog laws under threat of having their pet confiscated.

Something like that. At the least, it would be a step toward responsible ownership.

My friend and colleague Marthina McClay is a trainer and pit bull rescuer.

(Among her rescues is Leo, a former Michael Vick dog now undergoing

Pit bull owners should go out of their way to make their breed not just good canine citizens but stellar examples of well-behaved pets.

canine therapy.) She has a wonderful and informative Website on pit bulls and

responsible ownership. You can visit it at www.ourpack.org.

I hope to see you and your law-abiding, friendly pit bull soon!

Lisa Hartman is head dog trainer for Pawsitively Pets. You can reach her at pawsitivelypetsonline@yahoo.com or www.pawsitivelypetsonline.com. You can also keep up with her and her dogs on Facebook at www.profile.to/dogtrainer.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Dining Guide

RESTAURANT LISTINGS

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 203.

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
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MIAMI

Brickell / Downtown

Abokado

900 S. Miami Ave.,

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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-crust tart filled with sinfully rich warm chocolate custard. \$\$\$

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. \$\$\$

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 pintos. 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-crust, brick-oven pizzas, whether a traditional margherita or inventive asparagi e granchi (with lump crab, lobster cream, mozzarella, and fresh asparagus). \$\$\$

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

From the stylish setting in Miami's historic Firehouse No. 4, one would expect a mighty pricy meal. But entrées, which range from Nuevo Latino-style ginger/orange-glazed pork tenderloin to a platter of Kobe mini-burgers, all cost either \$18 or \$23. And the price includes an appetizer – no low-rent crapola, either, but treats like Serrano ham croquetas, a spinach/leek tart with Portobello mushroom sauce, or the shrimp-topped eggplant timbales. The best seats are on the glam rooftop patio. \$\$\$

Ecco Pizzateca & Lounge

168 SE 1st St.

305-960-1900; www.eccomiami.com

Masterminded by Aramis Lorie (of PS14) and partner Brian Basti, this hip hangout was designed to entice downtown workers to linger after office hours. And even without the expansive, casual-chic space as bait, internationally award-winning Italian pizza chef Massimo Fabio Bruni's exquisitely airy, burn-blistered pies, made from homemade dough, could do the trick. The rest of the organically oriented menu may also great, but with pizzas like the cream/mushroom-topped Bianca beckoning, we'll never know. \$\$\$

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. \$\$\$

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-uptown 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. \$\$\$

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Le Boudoir Brickell

188 SE 12th Terr. 305-373-2333
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-macaron sandwich cookies with daily-changing fillings. \$\$\$

Miami's Chophouse

300 S. Biscayne Blvd.
305-938-9000
www.mannyssteakhouse.com

Formerly Manny's Steakhouse, Miami's Chophouse retains basically everything but the famed name (from the original Manny's in Minneapolis), and remains 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 fell a T-Rex. Not for the frail. \$\$\$\$

Novecento

1414 Brickell Ave., 305-403-0900
www.bistronevecento.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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 wal-nut 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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 chili, 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

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tostones), rich meal-in-a-bowl soups packed with seafood or meat and veggies, and more. \$

Bay View Grille 1633 N. Bayshore Dr. (Marriott Hotel) 305-536-6414

This expansive restaurant has no outdoor component, but floor-to-ceiling windows and a multi-level layout means every table has a Biscayne Bay view, which we find particularly enjoyable in the morning, over a fresh asparagus and Boursin cheese omelet or huevos à la cubana (fried eggs and cheese on black beans). Lunch and dinner menus are a "greatest hits" mix (steaks, pasta, Caesar salad), featuring appealing local accents like a hefty fried or blackened grouper sandwich on ciabatta roll, with remoulade sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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 fusion cuisine 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 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. 305-572-2904; 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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. \$

Joey's Italian Café 2590 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-crusted pizzas 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/yucafied ambience, encouraged by an expansive, rustic wooden deck. \$\$

Lemoni Café 4600 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-5080

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 homemade 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-crusted 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-crusted 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 celeriac, 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 hangout 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-crusted pizzas. Made-from-scratch specials like green bean and pamesan 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 hangout 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

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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 Pecky 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 restorlounge. 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 yuzo 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 homegrill

Michelle Bernstein has opened in the area. But it's 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 scallion, 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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. \$\$

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Buena Vista Bistro

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Boteco

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

This strip of 79th Street is rapidly becoming a cool alt-culture 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), poisson gros sel (local snapper in a spicy butter sauce), garlic or Creole crabs. The Miami branch has outdoor tiki-hut dining. \$-\$\$

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 Technon. 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. \$

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. \$-\$\$

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 multimeal 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

www.lunacafemidtown.com

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 focaccia. 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 résumé, 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.the55thstation.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. \$

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Restaurant Listings

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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 – preworkout, 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. \$-\$

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. \$-\$-\$

Revaes Italian Ristorante

8601 Biscayne Blvd.
305-758-1010

Owned by two couples (including former Village Café chef Marlon Reyes), this eclectic eatery occupies the former space of Frankie’s Big City Grill, and fulfills much the same purpose in the neighborhood as an all-day, family-friendly place with affordable prices. The menu includes wraps and elaborate salads of all nations. But simple yet sophisticated Italian specialties like spaghetti ai fume (with pancetta, tomato, garlic, basil, and a touch of cream) or yellowtail française (egg-battered, with lemon-caper-wine sauce) are the must-haves here. \$-\$-\$

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 focaccia). 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. \$

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 housemade 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 corn cake: the hefty Aura, stuffed with chorizo, chicharron, carne desmechada (shredded flank steak), plantains, rice, beans, and cheese. \$-\$

The Crab House

1551 79th St. Causeway
305-868-7085, www.crabhouseseafood.com

Established in 1975, this Miami fish house was acquired by Landry’s in 1996 and is now part of a chain. But the classic décor (knotty pine walls, tile floors, booths, outdoor waterfront deck) still evokes the good old days. Though the all-you-can-eat seafood/salad buffet (\$20 lunch, \$30 dinner) is a signature, freshness fanatics will be happiest sticking to à la carte favorites like the All-American fisherman’s platters, or global specials like Szechuan shrimp, that change seasonally. \$-\$-\$-\$

Edy’s Chicken & Steak

1624 79th St. Causeway; 305-864-9958

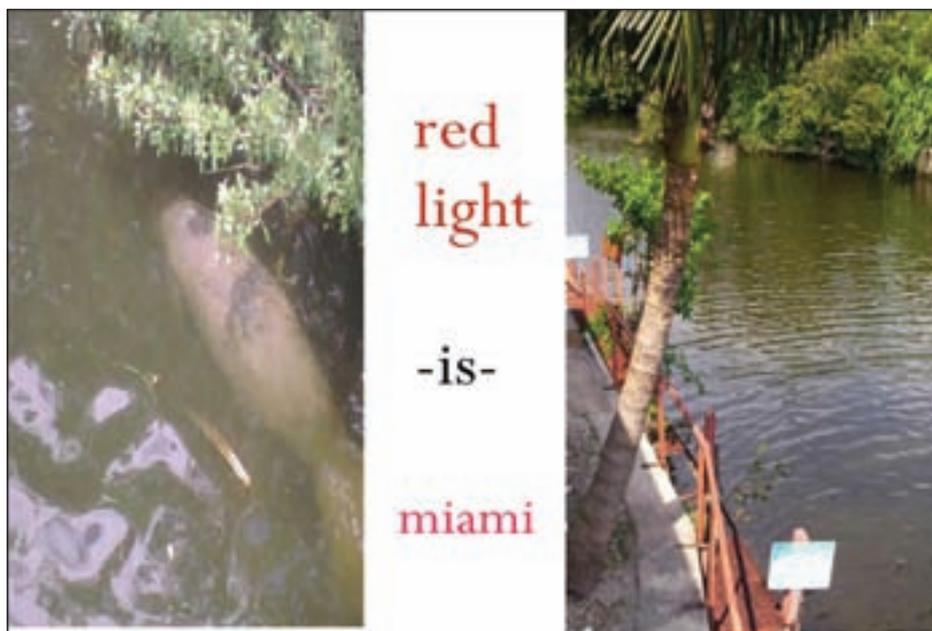
What differentiates Edy’s from other chicken joints is the signature Peruvian pollo a la brasa, char-broiled in a wood-fired rotisserie. The rotation makes the bird self-baste, keeping even the white meat juicy under its crispy, nearly fat-free skin. Spicing is also superior. Owner Edy Demovsek’s dozen-ingredient 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”

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Restaurant Listings

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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.oggicaffè.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, shiitakes, 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.iron sushi.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, 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. \$\$-\$\$

Village Café
9540 NE 2nd Ave.
305-759-2211
After closing for several months in early 2009, this café, spruced up to look like a bistro rather than a luncheonette (but with the same bargain prices), has been reopened by Shores resident Massimo DeLuca, original chef/owner Curtis Whitticar’s charismatic maitre d’. The kitchen has also been rejuvenated, with head honcho Adam Holm (Whitticar’s original sous chef) serving up new, globally influenced dishes like mint/pistachio-crust lamb or tuna tartare with sriracha aioli, plus reviving old favorites like pork tenderloin with ginger-caramel sauce. \$\$-\$\$\$

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 ajicó. Both are thick chicken soups, full meals in a bowl. For Colombian-cuisine novices, a bandeja paisa (sampler including rice, beans, carne asada, chicharrón, 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. \$\$

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. \$\$-\$\$\$

Bulldog Barbecue
15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-940-9655
www.bulldogbbq.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 studded 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. Homemade pastas are good enough that low-carb dieters should take a break, especially for the tender gnocchi 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 achote, 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. \$\$\$

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DINING GUIDE

Restaurant Listings

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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, wash 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Petit Rouge 12409 Biscayne Blvd. 305-892-7676

From the mid-1990s (with Neal's Restaurant and later with Il Migliore), local chef Neal Cooper's neighborhood-oriented Italian eateries have been crowd-pleasers. While this cute 32-seat charmer is French, it's no exception, avoiding pretense and winning fans with both classic and nouvelle bistrot fare: frisée salad with lardons, poached egg, and bacon vinaigrette; truite Grenobloise (trout with lemon/caper sauce); consommé with black truffles and foie gras, covered by a buttery puff pastry dome; perfect pommes frites, and equally perfect apple or lemon tarts for dessert. \$\$\$

Sara's 2214 NE 123rd St., 305-891-3312 www.sarakosherpizza.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/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, schmopperrrr — may cause queasiness. But the schmopperrrr 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

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Restaurant Listings

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"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. 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. 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 nik-kei (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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 neta – 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 Renaissa. 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 vindaloes 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

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Restaurant Listings

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(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. \$

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. \$\$

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 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, Isee & 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 is 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.anthonyscoal-firedpizza.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

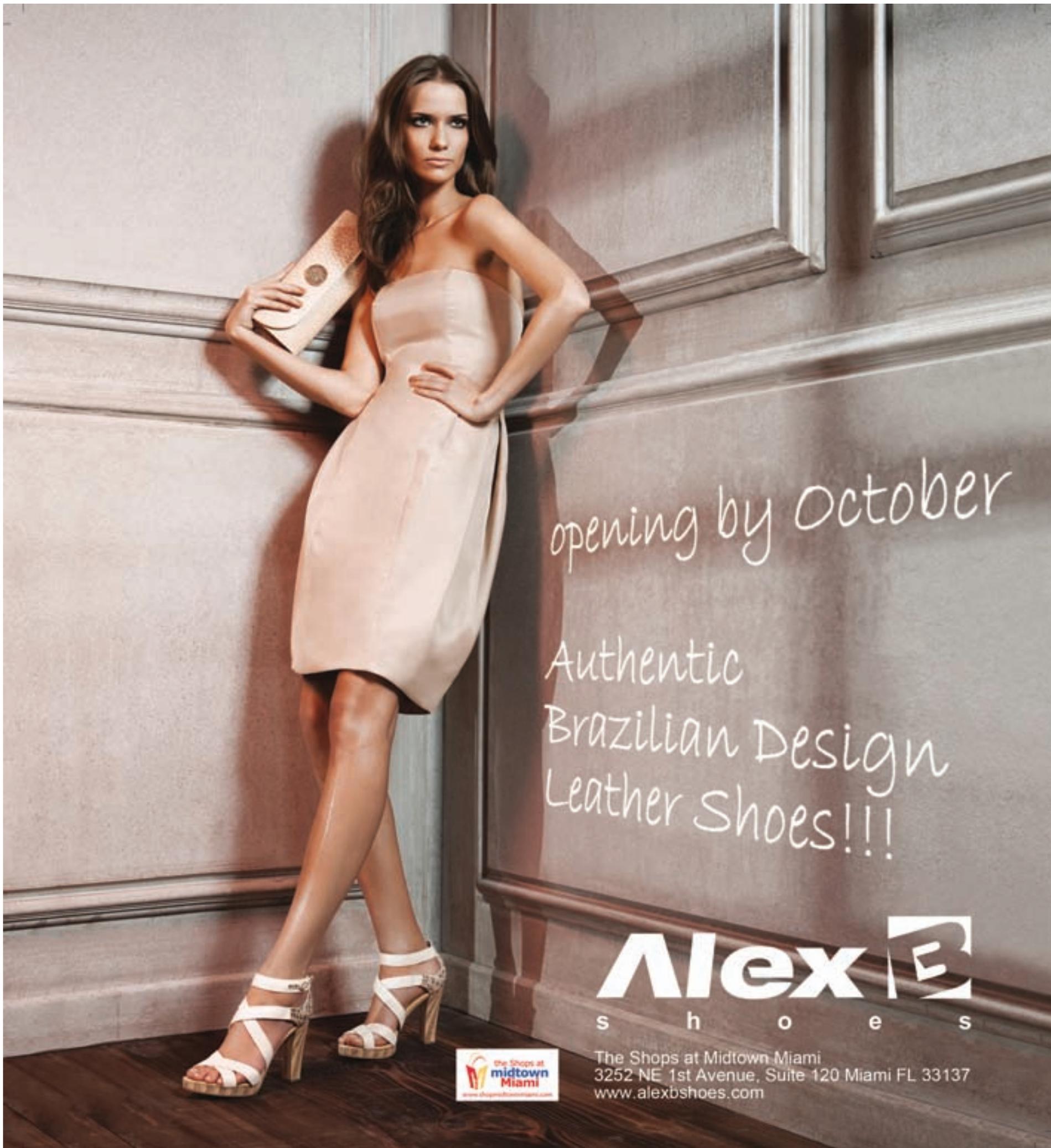
The real soup man behind this franchise is Al Yeganeh, an antisocial Manhattan restaurant proprietor made notorious, on a Seinfeld episode, as "the soup Nazi." On the menu: ten different premium soups each day. The selection is carefully balanced among meat/poultry-based and vegetarian; clear and creamy (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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