

# BISCAYNE

# Times

**NEW THIS MONTH**  
14 New Advertisers p. 8  
226 Restaurants p. 59  
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[www.BiscayneTimes.com](http://www.BiscayneTimes.com)

May 2010

Volume 8, Issue 3

# As the Market Turns

## How our search for a first home in post-housing-bubble Miami became a soap opera

By Gaspar González  
Inside Photos by Silvia Ros



It began with a knock on the door. It was around ten o'clock on a typical weekday evening and my wife, Lane, and I were sprawled out on the couch in our Miami Shores apartment, watching TV. Curious that anyone would be

coming around at that time of night, I made my way to the door. I had barely opened it before a woman thrust a thick packet of paperwork at me and informed us that Bank of America would soon be bringing foreclosure proceedings against

our landlord. I thanked her for coming out, took the packet, and closed the door.

The news was surprising only insofar as Lane and I had always made our monthly rent payment, which we assumed was being used to cover the

mortgage on our apartment. In every other way, it made perfect sense. This was June 2009 and the housing bubble had begun to implode a year and a half

Continued on page 14



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# MAY

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SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY



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**APRIL 29 – MAY 9**

**1** BroadSword  
7:00 & 10:00PM **C**  
"BroadSword is  
must-see theater!"  
-The Miami Herald

**2** Florida Grand Opera:  
Carmen  
2:00PM **Z**  
BroadSword  
7:00PM **C**  
Get ready for the  
reunion of the year,  
featuring some of Mad  
Cat Theatre's hottest  
actors!

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for  
ONE**

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**4** Florida Grand Opera:  
Carmen  
8:00PM **Z**  
The seductive gypsy  
captures the heart of  
a young soldier.

**FOLLOW  
US ON  
twitter**  
**FOR THE  
SECRET  
BROADSWORD  
BACK STORY!**

**6** BroadSword  
8:00PM **C**  
Nominated for 5  
Carbonell Awards,  
BroadSword boasts  
"Insightful, beautifully  
modulated writing  
coupled with great  
acting and design!"  
-The Miami Herald

**7** BroadSword  
8:00PM **C**  
Featuring Paul Tei,  
best known for  
playing Barry on  
TV's hit show  
"Burn Notice."

**8** Family Fest  
11:30AM **P**  
Rock Odyssey  
2:00PM **K**  
BroadSword  
7:00 & 10:00PM **C**  
Florida Grand Opera:  
Carmen  
8:00PM **Z**

**9** BroadSword  
7:00PM **C**  
"Balls to the  
wall theater!"  
-Miami New Times

**11** Spring Awakening  
8:00PM **Z**  
With rock 'n' roll  
music by Duncan  
Sheik, *Spring Awaken-*  
*ing* celebrates the  
unforgettable journey  
from youth to adult-  
hood.

**12** Piano Slam  
Volume 2  
7:30PM **K**  
Spring Awakening  
8:00PM **Z**  
Broadway's most  
talked about  
new musical!

**13** Spring Awakening  
8:00PM **Z**  
Winner of 8 Tony  
Awards, including  
Best Musical!

**14** Spring Awakening  
8:00PM **Z**  
"Broadway may never  
be the same again!"  
-New York Times

**15** Spring Awakening  
2:00 & 8:00PM **Z**  
Lucrecia  
8:00PM **K**  
The golden age  
of Cuban songs is  
lovingly recreated  
in "Album de Cuba."

**16** Spring Awakening  
2:00 & 7:30PM **Z**  
"Beautiful,  
exhilarating and vital,  
*Spring Awakening*  
is a transcendent  
new musical!"  
-USA Today



**20** Alvin Ailey American  
Dance Theater  
8:00PM **Z**  
Featuring Ailey's  
classic *Revelations* on  
every program!

**21** Alvin Ailey American  
Dance Theater  
8:00PM **Z**  
"Every American owes  
it to him or herself  
to see the Ailey  
[company] perform  
*Revelations*."  
-Oprah Winfrey

**22** Alvin Ailey American  
Dance Theater  
2:00 & 8:00PM **Z**  
Celebrating Judith  
Jamison's 20<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary as  
artistic director!

**23** Alvin Ailey American  
Dance Theater  
2:00PM **Z**  
One of the most  
popular dance  
companies in  
America!

**ALVIN AILEY**  
AMERICAN DANCE THEATER



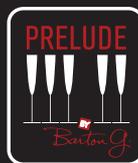
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"With its top notch original programming, WLRN is a window into South Florida's past and present. Bravo to documentaries *Muhammad Ali: Made In Miami* and *All Shook Up: Miami's Glory Days of Music*. They captured the real spirit of our city. The films *Discover South Florida* and *Saving Our Reefs* showed the biodiversity of our state."

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- Les Standiford, loyal viewer of WLRN Channel 17



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Offered at \$1,290,000

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Features Custom Island, Resort Style Deck.  
Built by world-renowned architect for WINDJAMMER CRUISE LINE.  
100' Dockage with Power. \$1.49M

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**OWNER WILL FINANCE!**

Price Includes Business & 1/2 Acre of Land. Located in South Ft. Lauderdale on US1, 4COP Lic. Included. Great Location  
Priced at Land value. Only \$1.9M  
Only 20% down @ 6% fixed int.!!!

## SANS SOUCI ESTATES • WIDE BAY VIEWS



6BR/4BA, POOL, JACUZZI, DOCK, 20,000 LB BOATLIFT + JETSKI LIFTS APPROXIMATELY 4000 SF. REMODELED: 24" Saturnia marble floors, huge maple & granite eat-in kitchen w/ cooking island. All Marble Baths. All bedrooms have great wide bay views.  
Offered For Sale \$1,490,000

**SANS SOUCI ESTATES NON WATER**  
2009 CONSTRUCTION



**OWNER WILL FINANCE W/ 30% DN**

4 BR/ 3.5, POOL, 2-CAR GARAGE, 25KW GENERATOR \$899K  
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## Keystone Point Vacant Lot



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Oversized 80 X 150!! NonWaterfrt Parcel Located in a 24 Hr GuardGated Comm at the end of a Desirable "Cul De Sac" Street!! Beautiful perimeter landscaping already in place. Come build your dream home or one for spec. 399K

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## KEYSTONE POINT FORECLOSURE 185' ON THE WATER



**OWNER WILL FINANCE**

Desirable 1/2 Acre 20,000 Sq Ft Point Lot 4 Bdr 3 Bth Pool 2 Car Garage 3400 Sq Ft Direct Ocean Access No Bridges to Bay! Priced at Land Value!  
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## Keystone Point 2 Story Waterfront



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6 BDR 4 BTH 1 Car Garage 3931 Sq Ft ONLY 789K  
Large Home with a Great Floorplan. All Formal Rooms; Living,Dining, & Family Rm. Master Bdr Downstairs. Plenty of Room for a Pool.  
75' of Dockage, Direct Ocean Access, No Fixed Bridges to Bay, Lowest Price per Sq. Ft. In Subdivision, Brand New Schools K thru 12 just Opened

## Sans Souci NonWater "Divorce Sale"



**SHORT SALE**

4 Bdr 3 Bth 1 Car Garage NonWater 2900 Sq Ft with New Barrel Tile Roof, 24 hour Guard Gated Community. This is a Divorce "Short Sale" \$449K

**WIDE BAY VIEW POINT LOT**  
SANS SOUCI ESTATES



LOCATED 1 LOT OFF THE WIDE BAY ON CUL DE SAC  
LOT SIZE 112 X 125 APPROX 14,000 SQ FT NEW SEAWALL 90' OF DOCK (112' ON WATER) 25,000 LB BOATLIFT PARK YOUR YACHT WHILE YOU BUILD YOUR DREAM HOME!  
Owner will finance with 30% down \$1.49M

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1/3 Acre, 15,000 Sf., 103 Ft. On The Bay You Can See Forever, Wide Open Views!  
"OWNER WILL FINANCE"  
Only 25% down @ 6% fixed int.!!!  
Try \$1.9M w/terms or \$1.7M cash

## SANS SOUCI ESTATES • ANGLE WIDE BAY VIEW



**2nd LOT FROM BAY APPROVED SHORT SALE**

4BR / 3BA, POOL, APPROX. 3000 SQ FT, NEW BARREL TILE ROOF  
Great Floor Plan. All Formal Rooms. Separate Living, Dining, Family Room & Media Room. Room For 2 Car Garage. Lowest Price In Subdivision! Try 671K

## WIDE BAY !!! KEYSTONE POINT 185' ON THE WATER 1/2 ACRE



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## KEYSTONE POINT WATERFRONT



**OVERSIZED LOT! HUGE**  
20 x 50 ft. Pool

4 Bdr 3 Bath Pool 2 Car Garage 3000 Sq. Ft. New Granite Kitchen  
OverSized 1/3 Acre Lot Only \$625,000.

Letters to the Editor

The View from My Desk

Many thanks for Erik Bojnansky's excellent article on the decay of the Little Farm Trailer Park ("From Lovely to Lousy to Lost," April 2009). I am living next to the trailer park in an apartment building. I agree with the author's main arguments on why the trailer park suffers. However, one point is not sufficiently emphasized.

With my German perspective, I have to say that the primary reason for problems in the trailer park is anti-social behavior by — importantly — very few residents of that community. Every day I am bombarded by a barrage of incredibly vulgar, obscene, and aggressive noise. The atmosphere this creates within that community can only be one of insecurity.

What surprises me as a European is how apathetically the community accepts its fate. So many neighbors are immensely disturbed in their peace, yet do nothing. The police, who according to the article patrol the area regularly, do nothing either.

What's necessary is a community leader to step in and pull the neighborhood together, against the anti-social elements. If this unlikely event should not occur, it is up to the police to call the few culprits to order. Otherwise the community will further spiral downward, with effects that will reach far outside the trailer park.

Murat Altuglu  
Miami

We Once Had Burglar Bars in Belle Meade, but No Longer

Although Brandon Dane's article on crime in Belle Meade makes some very good points ("Living With Crime — Eternally," April 2009), I strongly disagree with the perception that Belle Meade has become increasingly dangerous.

Having lived in Belle Meade for 20 years, I feel perfectly comfortable and safe on my corner (except for the fear of being run over by the speeding Belle Meade Islanders, who refuse to stop at the four-way stops on NE 76th Street).

When we bought our house in 1989, it was covered in bars, but over the years we installed a security system and gradually removed them. I've experienced some petty theft such as someone riding

off on a bicycle that was left outdoors, and having a few things stolen out of my car when I forgot to lock it. But those crimes occur in every neighborhood, and quite frankly, they were my own fault.

Frank Rollason's need to be armed when doing yard work seems quite extreme to me, but his home is much closer to Biscayne Boulevard than mine. Maybe he only sees dog-walkers around his home, but further east there are people out walking, bicycling, jogging, and pushing strollers all the time.

Wade Hallock claims he's never even seen a police car patrolling his street, NE 6th Court. Could that be because an eight-foot hedge surrounds his entire yard, with the exception of his driveway — and even that has no view of the street?

Deborah Gray Mitchell  
Belle Meade

Reporter As Skateboard Expert? No. Editor As Skateboard Expert? No. Resulting Story Dumb As Dirt?

Before *Biscayne Times* published Erik Bojnansky's article "Skateboards and Synagogues Are Like Oil and Water" (January 2010), did anyone with any actual knowledge of skateboarding look it over?

Someone with knowledge would know about Miami being one of the premier cities for skateboarding in the U.S., and yet it remains the only major city without a public skatepark.

Will Erik face the reality that Miami is an urban environment, and one thing that is consistent with all urban environments is the use of concrete. Sorry, Erik. If you want fields of green and swaying trees, move to the country.

Please take the time to research other cities with a thriving skateboard community, places like Seattle, Portland, or Philadelphia. Each of those cities has space for skateboarders to practice their beloved sport. Miami is far behind. Sure, we can go play volleyball on South Beach, or a pickup game of baseball at any of the large city parks. But where is a person supposed to go and skateboard?

Jeff Suarez  
Miami

Continued on page 58



**Cooking with the Stars**  
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*Michy's, Sra. Martinez*

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*World recognized authority on  
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**Sunday, May 16, 2010**

**Temple Israel of Greater Miami**  
137 NE 19 Street  
5:00 p.m. | VIP Reception with Chefs in Attendance  
6:00 p.m. | Cooking Event & Silent Auction

For information, please contact Lori Solomon  
305-573-5900 Ext. 404 | [www.cookingwithstars.org](http://www.cookingwithstars.org)  
or purchase your tickets at:  
[www.brownpapertickets.com/event/106000](http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/106000)

Evening will benefit Temple Israel and its community projects such as the Feed the Homeless program and Community Garden to support Lotus House Homeless Shelter, as well as Save Our Strength, Common Threads and Feeding South Florida.

The Miami Herald

# UVA 69 PLAZA

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# BizBuzz: May 2010

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

By Pamela Robin Brandt  
BT Contributor

At the **Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus** (1085 NE 79th St.), chef/owner Alex Richter goes all out for special occasions — including Mother’s Day, when an extravagant brunch, served indoors or in the outdoor biergarten, will be offered from noon on. For reservations call 305-754-8002.

“Mother’s Day is *every* day” at **Herval USA’s** two locations (2666 NE 189th St., 305-466-2626; 1730 Biscayne Blvd., 305-377-1221). To prove it, the renowned contemporary furniture showrooms (and new *BT* advertisers) are offering a 10% discount to customers who utter that magic phrase, *any* day in May.

April was certainly an unforgettable opening month for Amado Mesa and Anthony Kylor of **A&A Village Treasures** (9702 NE 2nd Ave., 305-759-1612), starting when one of our nationally notorious motorists drove through their new Miami Shores shop’s front window. But no worries. The new *BT* advertiser’s stock of unique vintage home furnishings and accessories is unharmed and ready for gifting mom — or yourself.

By the way, if you haven’t visited Miami Shores lately, you may be surprised at the sleepy enclave’s recent revitalization. NE 2nd Avenue from 94th to 101st Street is now christened “Village Place at Miami Shores.” On May 29, the newly formed **Village Place Merchants Association** will host a street fair to draw in crowds and celebrate fashion, art, healthy lifestyles, and good food. The fun starts at 4:00 p.m.

As a special welcome to *BT* readers, new advertiser **Budget Blinds** (9101 NW 7th Ave., 305-772-5660), which offers the ultimate in personalized window treatments, has a very generous offer: 30% off all treatments purchased during May.

Great décor deals are also available this month at the annual yard sale of **Ascot Furniture** (12951 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2131). One-of-a-kind plus scratch-and-dent teak benches, table, chairs, and more will be on sale Saturday and Sunday only, May 22 and 23.

Since 1953, new advertiser **John Stembridge Furniture** (545 NE 125th St.; 305-893-0800) has been selling both contemporary and traditional/antique

A&A Village Treasures



Budget Blinds



Dancewear



Ascot Teak



Appliance MD

reproduction furniture. Now Mr. Stembridge is *really* selling it. All prices have been reduced up to 70%.

Naturally it helps to have a home for that new furniture. Lawyer **Jake Miller** (12550 Biscayne Blvd., 8th floor), whose free “save your home” seminars continue on May 6 and May 11, has good news for financially troubled homeowners: “*Finally* both the banks and government announced in April they’ll be forgiving mortgage principal for some underwater homeowners who qualify.” To find out if you qualify, reserve seats at 305-758-2020.

That calls for a celebration! Fortunately **Anise Waterfront Taverna** (620 NE 78th St., 305-758-2929) is now open every day from noon to 11:00 p.m. New special festivities include a weekend brunch with 2-4-1 mimosas and selected wines, and Friday’s “Taverna Night,” featuring live bouzouki music, Greek dancing, and plate smashing. (Really!)

Actually, the greater Biscayne Corridor continues to grow as a whole-globe dining route, if new advertisers like **Acquolina** (124 S. Federal Hwy., Hallandale; 954-454-2410) are any indication. Right. That’s in the wild north, Broward County. But no need to bring survival gear to this family-style Italian hot spot. Just a huge appetite will do.

Welcome, too, to **Fuji Hana** (2775 NE 187th St.; 305-932-8080), new to the *BT* as an advertiser but a longtime “best kept secret” Thai/sushi spot for Aventura residents.

Remember the new **Yogen Früz** outlet opening (14881 Biscayne Blvd.) scheduled for last month? April fool! It’s now rescheduled for May 8. Expect free giveaways, and yogurt specials.

To marshal the strength needed to even read about the numerous great coupon deals offered through August by **Bagels & Company** (11064 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2435), you might need to fortify yourself with a dozen bagels. Or for eat-in customers, the free entrées (with purchase of same). Please, just consult the ad. We’re exhausted.

Farther south along the Corridor, the MiMo Historic District continues to grow. Perennially popular **UVA 69 Restaurant & Lounge** (6900 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-754-9022) is now part of the new UVA Plaza, a bustling complex also housing lingerie/clothing shop La Boudoir Miami, Hugo Mijares Architect & Suzanne Lawson Design, Dinin Partners Law Firm, and Leiter Art Gallery.

Since new advertiser Gloribel Gonzalez took over **GG Salon and Spa** (9063 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-9710), she see regulars who are returning every week. Why? See for yourself any Tuesday through Thursday this month, when Gonzalez offers 20% off any service to new clients who mention the *BT*.

Bathing suit weather is approaching fast. But all is not lost. Just the excess flab will be if you shape up at **Moti Horenstein’s Mixed Martial Arts and Universal Dance Studios** (18425 NE 19th Ave., 305-935-1855), which is offering a free introductory class of any kind, for all ages. Additionally, two-week dance or martial arts intro programs are just \$29.95.

Searching for a summer camp for sixth through ninth graders who aren’t the average purely outdoorsy types? Try the **Archbishop Curley Notre Dame High School Summer Academy** (305-751-8367), which offers not only a preview high school sports program but enrichment activities ranging from performing arts to chess.

An historic 18-hole championship golf course and driving range. Nine tennis courts. A clubhouse and a lounge/grill with a new bistro menu. Happy hour with two-buck beers. A fabulous Sunday brunch. Even a camp for the kids. If that sounds like perfect summer fun, you need to visit the **Miami Shores Country Club** (10000 Biscayne Blvd., 305-795-2360). It’s now open to the public.

For stay-at-home vacationers, **All Florida Pool & Spa Center** (11720 Biscayne Blvd., 305-893-4036) carries the very best brands to make your relaxation dreams come true. They provide maintenance too.

Attention, MDs: You will understand the high-tech products offered by new advertiser **Techno-Derm** (1071 NE 79th St., 305-392-0697) better than we do. But we couldn’t help noticing on the website (techno-derm.com) infrared devices that “burn calories at the speed of light.” Sounds like just what the doctor ordered — or should.

On the beach, Joseph Ribkoff outfits blow all competitors outta the water. Problem: This Canadian company’s fashions aren’t so easy to find. Problem solved by new advertiser **Statements** (2118 NE 123rd St., 305-893-7559), where the fine ladies’ line is a specialty.

Looking hot is a good thing. Feeling hot because your A/C isn’t up to par: not so good. Warm beer is a bummer, too. So **Appliance MD** (954-921-2306) has two pre-summer special offers. For your hard-working A/C unit, a coil and maintenance overhaul cleaning, plus condenser check and lubricant, for \$195. And for your refrigerator, a condenser coil cleaning and maintenance cooling check for only \$69.95. At that price you can afford to invite the whole *BT* crew over for icy-cold brewskis. (Thanks! Don’t mind if we do.)

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

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# For Sale: One U.S. Senate Seat, Best Offer!

*Thanks to the Tanned One, we can expect an invasion of white guys with cash*

By Jack King  
BT Contributor

The Silly Season is upon us again, and this year it has arrived several months early. For those of you who don't remember my earlier rants about the Silly Season, here's a quick recap. It's the season in which local politicians boast about all the good things they're doing for your benefit, and then quickly leave town for North Carolina until September.

People running for office in the fall often do the same thing, only they make promises they know they can never keep — if you'll just vote for them — and then leave town for North Carolina. What they all do up there is beyond me. I've never been invited to the party.

Normally the Silly Season doesn't start this early. It usually begins in June, soon after schools let out for the summer. This year, though, the action has begun more than a month early. It's going fast and furious — and for good reason. Locally both the county and the City of Miami are flat broke. The less our commissioners stick around, the less chance they'll catch blame for the mess. Moreover, just about everything political is in play, and a whole bunch of out-of-towners are very keen on being here to rig the game.

Traditionally Florida has been a donor state in politics, meaning that the people of Florida, many of whom hail from other states and nations, have political interests in those places. They spend money back home to support candidates they like. For some it's been a nice deal. The locals sent their money out of town, and out-of-towners never bothered with

Florida, not giving a damn about local politics.

In 2004 all that changed. The presidential election was hanging in the balance and the Republicans flooded Florida with every political operative they could find, twisting the election in their direction.

For many years the state had been run by conservatives from northern Florida, but over time they began to lose influence to South Florida as our power base shifted from middle-of-the-road Democrats to the burgeoning population of Cuban exiles. The Cubans knew all about politics, and took advantage of their numbers.

It was a costly change. The Cuban political machine sold its exile votes to the Republican Party in exchange for a hard line against Fidel Castro. The Republicans were happy to oblige, but Florida gained nothing in the deal. It has solidly been that way for more than a decade.

This symbiotic relationship emboldened conservative Republicans to treat Florida not only as a piggy bank, but as their own personal vote-generator. This year will be a litmus test to see if the arrangement still holds. And it *should* still hold, but Charlie Crist has thrown a monkey wrench into the works.

Crist was a shoo-in for the U.S. Senate seat left vacant by the resignation of Republican Mel Martinez, but somehow over the past two years, he managed to piss off all the conservatives, and now



**If Charlie Crist runs as an independent, the carpetbaggers will descend on us.**

they're leaving him in droves.

The more they leave him, the more he finds ways to aggravate them. His last great move was to veto a Republican-sponsored bill that tied teachers' pay to student performance without regard to where the teachers were working or under what circumstances. Crist lost so much conservative support that he's been considering a run for the senate seat as an independent. (As the *BT* was going to press, Crist made his decision. He'll run as an independent.)

Crist as an independent would throw another monkey wrench into the

gears. Early polling showed that such a move would make the race a three-way dead heat with Democrat Kendrick Meek and ultra conservative poster boy Marco Rubio. Leader of a new generation of Cuban politicians, Rubio has shown he will do anything for money and power.

All this is bringing out the Republican glitterati. They fear they might lose this senate seat (which they now hold) and Republicans can ill afford to let that happen. So this fall you can expect to see more Republican carpetbaggers invade Florida than at any time since 1875. The list is long and not varied — they're all wealthy white guys who talk alike. The list looks like this: South Carolina Sen. Jim DeMint, Virginia Rep. Eric Cantor, former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney; former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, and former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani. Then we have the Tea Party Express and FreedomWorks, off-the-wall groups with more money than members. Both are based in Washington, D.C., and both have endorsed Rubio. Believe me, the list will get longer, especially if the senate race stays close.

My question is this: As Floridians, do we want to turn the leadership of our state over to a mob of carpetbaggers?

Of course, every election has outside influences, but this year may really get crazy, particularly if the out-of-towners think they can swoop in and just buy everything. It's happened before and it could happen again — if you let it.

Feedback: [letters@biscaynetimes.com](mailto:letters@biscaynetimes.com)

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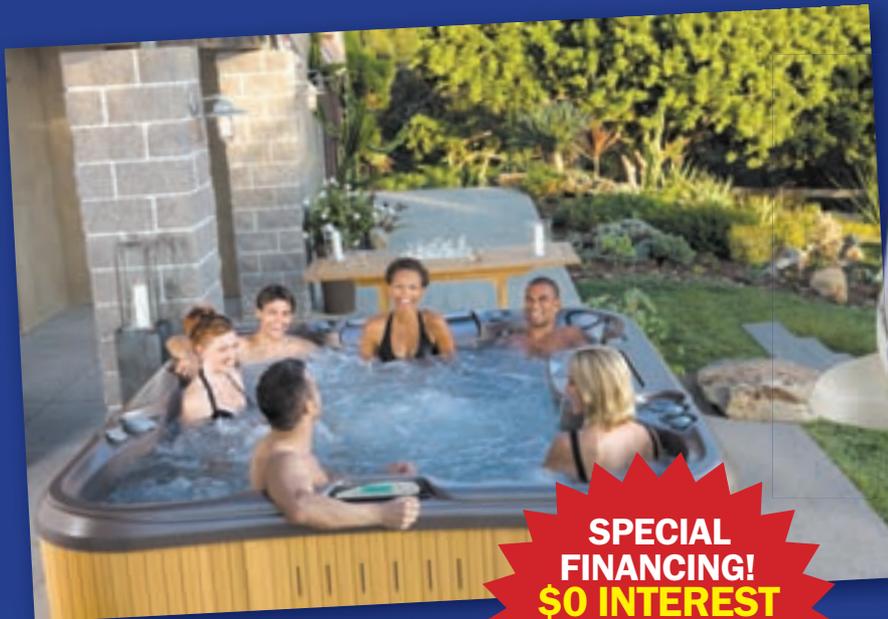


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# What do you want to be when you grow up?

Compiled by Cathi Marro – BT Contributor



**Julissa Palma**  
Marketing Director  
Downtown

I personally want to be a mom. This may not seem like a big dream career-wise, but it's my goal. I grew up with a wonderful mom and I kind of always wanted to be her. The main thing for me has always been family: Be a mom, a good wife, and all that good stuff. I am engaged to be married this year, so I'm on my way, but I don't want to have kids too soon!



**Jahfari Parris**  
Street Salesman/Student  
North Miami Beach

I want to be a lot of things. Artist. Entrepreneur. Ball player. I'm multitalented and my talents shape my career. As a kid I wanted to be involved in sports. I played ball in high school and I'm good enough to play overseas if I get that opportunity. Right now I've got to get things organized financially, then hopefully my art will open doors to all these dreams I have.



**Iris Cirinese**  
Manager  
Miami Shores

At peace. I had a son in Iraq. Thank God he's alive and back home, but he's got a lot of recovering to do. I'd like to stop seeing our kids get killed. A lot of this has to do with video games they play. I see it in my own grandchildren. We're afraid to let them outside to play anymore without total supervision. We used to go out and ride our bikes and be safe.



**Julio C.**  
Sales  
North Miami

A better human being. This is not related to some material possession. It's more about working internally. I think I'm on the right path. When I was younger, I wanted to be a soccer player. I did that for a while but then I changed careers. This life is too short to reach my goal. There are a lot of things to do. We have to change individually.



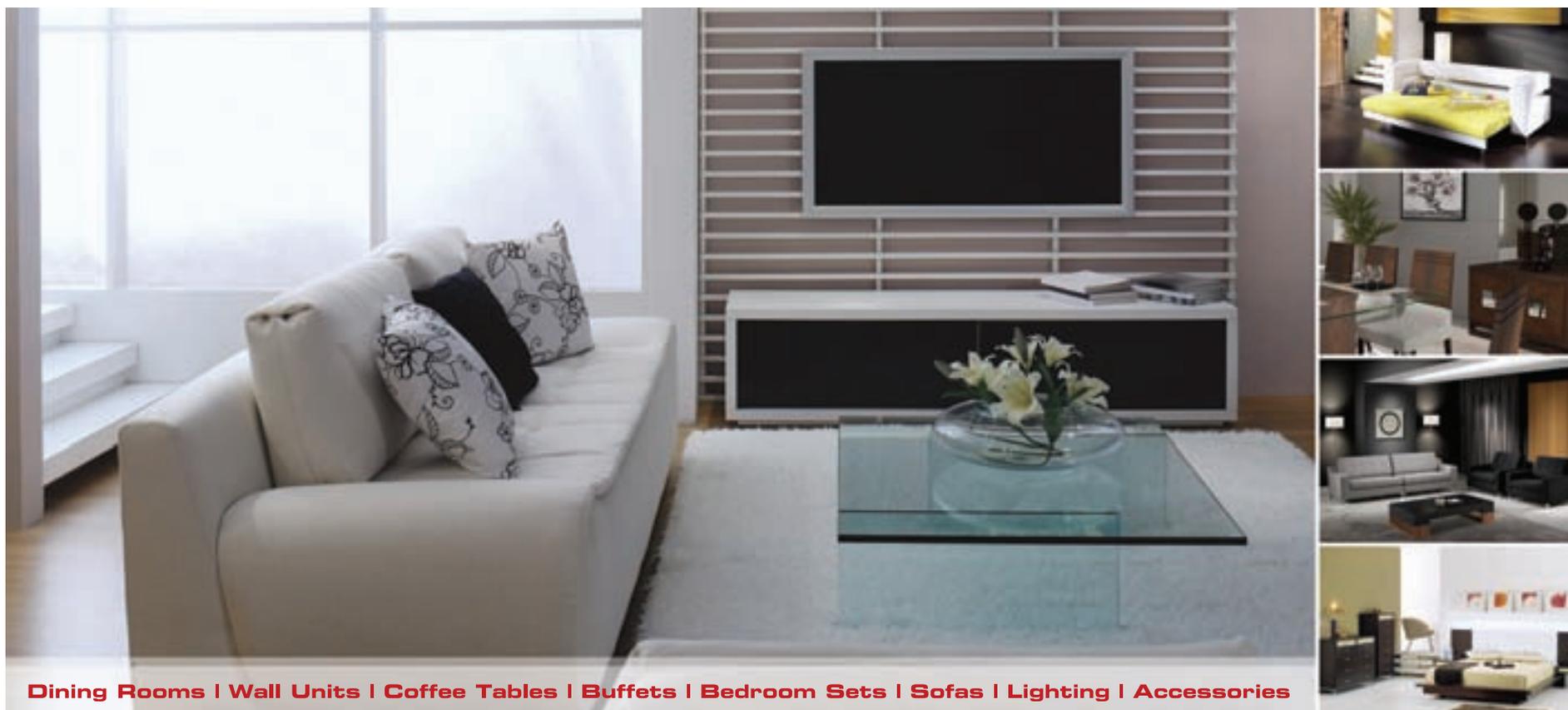
**Marion Dollar**  
DJ/Fashion Consultant  
Morningside

I've been working in the music industry on and off for 15 years. Music is my passion. I wish I could make a 100-percent living at it, but for now I am also working in fashion until my DJ career takes off. I'm working toward getting more gigs and touring. You never know! I want to be more involved in the music industry and fulfill my dreams.



**Armando Tate Palacio**  
Student  
Miami

An astronaut. You can't give them shit because they are smarter than everybody and more courageous than anybody except firemen — they are pretty courageous too. I've only wanted to be an astronaut for about five minutes. Before that I wanted to be a pirate. But after seeing *Pirates of the Caribbean 3* (that movie was just awful), I don't want to be that anymore.



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**NORTH MIAMI BEACH**

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**NORTH MIAMI BEACH**

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Renovated unit with garage located on private island across from the beach. 24HR Guard-Gated community. Walk to the beach. Large Pets OK. Boat dock included behind unit.



## Market

Continued from page 1

earlier. We suspected our landlord, a young woman who had been inspired by rising home values to acquire a real estate license and begin collecting “investment properties,” was probably feeling the pinch. Now we knew just how much.

The foreclosure notice came at a bad time for Lane and me, as we were three months pregnant with our first child. Nevertheless we’d already been thinking about venturing out into the real estate market. Our lease was going to be up in January, and it seemed like a good idea to get out there and start looking for a more permanent place. We knew we would soon need more room, house prices had already come down significantly, and then there was that \$8000 tax credit for first-time homebuyers that our new president had championed.

This wouldn’t be our virgin voyage into the market. Lane and I had looked at houses in late 2006. Given the overheated state of things then, and the fact that neither one of us is a trust-funder, we considered houses in what most of

our friends, and most *BT* readers, would consider edge neighborhoods — mostly safe, fairly quiet, but a little ragged, and certainly short of the middle-class story-book ideal.

One house we went to see was in unincorporated Miami-Dade, directly across the street from Barry University. That was about the only thing it had going for it. The house was a two bedroom, one bath about the size of a shoebox, but not as charming. And it needed a considerable amount of work. The asking price was \$280,000, or about what my in-laws would soon be getting for their five bedroom, three bath colonial on an acre of land at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia.

The agent who showed us the house, a veteran area Realtor named Everett Russell (the identities of all Realtors have

been altered for this article), encouraged us to jump on it, as who knew how much it would be worth, oh, five minutes from now! The best part, though, was when he asked what we intended to do with it.

“Do with it?” I said. “You know, the usual: Hire a truck to bring our belongings over, decide where our bedroom is going to go, plug in the coffeemaker, that sort of thing.”

He looked at me incredulously. “You’re going to *live* in it?” he asked.

I assured him we were. He didn’t believe me.

That was an eye-opener. The market was so out of whack that people couldn’t imagine anyone actually moving in. Every house was a stucco flapjack, waiting to be flipped. That’s when we opted to sit out what was left of the bubble. (The house that Everett showed us sold for around \$250,000. Last

I looked, it was being offered at short sale for \$130,000.)

For our latest adventure in home-buying, we decided to work through a Realtor again. Lane suggested Chelsea Marker. She had met Chelsea at one of those street fairs the Shores holds once a year or so. Chelsea, smartly dressed, had been at a booth, handing out business cards and telling everyone what a great time it was to buy. She was confident, chipper, and, as she was quick to say, knew the area better than anyone. Lane liked her. I had no opinion either way. We decided to go with Chelsea. It was the first plot point in what would become our house-hunting soap opera.

We began to suspect we might be in over our heads with Chelsea almost immediately. For our initial expedition, she picked us up and drove over to El Portal, one of the three areas we told her we liked and thought we could afford — Miami Shores and Biscayne Park being the other two. Turning on 88th Street, Chelsea began gesturing to houses she had previously sold, some as many as two or three times. “I remember the first time I sold that one,” she’d say. “They

Continued on page 15

**The agent encouraged us to jump on it, as who knew how much the house would be worth, oh, five minutes from now!**



## Market

Continued from page 14

were a nice couple. Last year I sold it to an architect.”

It was hard to escape the observation that Chelsea, like most Realtors, had made a killing on the bubble, selling the same houses over and over again, each time for more and more money. Now a lot of those homes sat empty. A lot of others were teetering on the edge of foreclosure. But Chelsea was still out there, making her commissions, like nothing had changed. (The only constant in Miami’s topsy-turvy real estate market, it would become apparent, is that Realtors always come out ahead, like former Soviet officials turned ruling-class capitalists.)

That first outing, Chelsea showed us five or six homes around El Portal and Miami Shores. Each was roughly what we had said we wanted — an older house, nothing fancy, two bedrooms, maybe two baths, and an extra room we could use as an office. The only problem was that every house we saw was, in our estimation, overpriced by \$25,000 to \$30,000.

Owners simply couldn’t accept that the modest homes they had paid \$450,000 for (or more) only a few years earlier were now worth maybe half that much — and dropping. Not that owners hadn’t done their best to trick them out. No matter how small the house, marble countertops and stainless-steel appliances in the kitchen were de rigueur. Bathrooms looked like they had come straight from IKEA. And there were strategic flourishes — the swing on the porch, the koi pond in the back yard. All very charming, but not as useful as an extra closet, and certainly not worth an extra \$30,000.

As we discovered, these faux dollhouses were at one end of the spectrum. On the other end were the “pink elephants,” as I dubbed them: sprawling fixer-uppers with leaky roofs, creaky floors, and cracked windows. These were the true avatars of the bubble. You got the feeling they had been flipped three or four times without anybody ever coming out to look at them. Size was their only asset, but even that was deceiving, as they had been expanded in ways that didn’t always make sense. One house required that you walk through the garage to get to a third bedroom.

In our price range — around \$230,000 — we could either overpay for a too-small house with fancy frills or buy a larger home into which we would have to sink more money just to render it habitable. It was hardly an appealing choice. Where was this “buyer’s market” we’d heard so much about?

We kept looking for several more weeks, with little success. Finally Chelsea showed us a house in Biscayne Park that was pretty close to what we had envisioned. It was a 1940s two bedroom, two bath with a Florida room and a converted garage, perfect for a library or home office. It had hardwood floors and lots of windows. The bathrooms were close to original, but they were in good shape. And the house, as is common in Biscayne Park, sat on a big lot. The kids would have room to run.

The asking price was \$248,000. That was too much, we thought, but a reasonable offer at least might get the conversation started. We went to Chelsea and told her we wanted to offer \$212,000. She blanched. “That’s not enough,” she said. “You want them to take you seriously.” (This, I later found out, was Chelsea’s variation on the stock “You don’t want to insult them.”) She talked us

into offering \$216,000.

The seller and his Realtor came back with a counteroffer of \$218,000. They were looking to do business. Chelsea encouraged us to sign the contract.

At this point I should probably stress that my wife and I are not unsophisticated people. We both have Ph.D.s. We read *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. We watch the nightly news. What we had never done is try to buy a house. And as we discovered, nothing prepares you for buying a house except buying a house.

We’d always heard that the contract between a buyer and seller was essentially a baseline agreement. Once a contract was signed, there would be a period of discovery. A home inspection would reveal more information about the house — a leak in the roof, a problem with the plumbing — allowing the potential buyer to either walk away from the deal or go back to the seller and ask for the repair (or renegotiate the price).

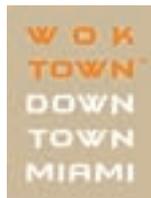
In this instance, however, the seller had insisted on an “As Is” contract, meaning the condition of the house was what it was; he wasn’t willing to make repairs. To

Continued on page 16

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## COVER STORY



### Market

Continued from page 15

us, the very idea of an "As Is" contract for a home seemed odd. For a used car, okay, maybe. But for a *house*? Chelsea assured us this was standard, or at least standard enough that we shouldn't be dissuaded from pursuing the deal. And it didn't mean, she reminded us, that the house wouldn't be subject to a home inspection. To us, though, it sounded like we were already playing defense. Buyer beware, indeed.

In anticipation of the all-important next step, Chelsea offered us a list of inspectors she had used in the past. Our antennae went up again. We were newbies at house-buying, but letting our Realtor choose our home inspector didn't seem like the way to go. Realtors make money by selling houses. It stands to reason that they gravitate toward those home inspectors who generally make it easier for them to sell those houses. Lane and I told Chelsea we'd get our own inspector.

A friend referred us to a guy who had done thousands of home inspections in South Florida, and had a reputation for being exceedingly thorough. He was also refreshingly candid. "I'm not too popular with real estate agents," he told us, "because I tend to throw a wrench into the deal." Then he laughed, adding, "But you know what? When real estate agents are looking to buy a house for *themselves*, I'm the guy they call."

My inspector would uncover quite a few worrisome areas. He wasn't crazy about the central A/C unit. There was termite damage to the attic. The storm awnings didn't function properly and would need to be replaced.

Some windows were defective. There was water intrusion in the utility room. These weren't deal-breakers, but all would require money to fix.

Lane and I still wanted the house. We just wanted to get it for less. We made a date to meet with Chelsea at the Starbucks on NE 2nd Avenue to discuss

**We had never tried to buy a house. And as we discovered, nothing prepares you for buying a house except buying a house.**

Continued on page 17

Market

Continued from page 16

our options. Over a cup of coffee, I slid a copy of the inspector's report across the table to her. She flipped through it, barely bothering to read it. "Okay, so there are some issues. When *aren't* there issues?" she asked.

"Yes," I told her, "but given that it's going to take quite a bit of money to remedy these things, aren't we in a position to go back to the seller and ask for a slightly better deal, especially in *this* market?"

Chelsea shook her head. She had bought and renovated *lots* of houses, she told us, and these repairs wouldn't come to much money at all. For the next 20 minutes, she proceeded to go through our list and explain, essentially, that everything could be done for a song — and in virtually no time. *You need a new door? I know where you can get one for 20 bucks. Takes five minutes to hang. You need a new window? They give those away.* Frankly, I think if I had told Chelsea that the house was missing its roof,

she would have looked at me and said, "You need a new roof? I know a guy who can do that for \$100. It takes him maybe 20 minutes."

Ever since we had signed the offer sheet, Lane and I felt like a twister had scooped us up and would soon deposit us on the doorstep of a house we had only walked through a few times, with a laundry list of repairs in hand and a 30-year mortgage to our names. Part of our anxiety was due to the fact that we had never before bought property.

**We weren't interested, but the Realtor pressed: "In this price range, things are getting crazy. Buyers are pulling up with bags of money."**

Dealing with Chelsea didn't make things any better. Over and over again, we got the distinct impression that her loyalty wasn't to us so much as to the sale — and her three-percent commission.

(Each Realtor in a transaction typically receives three percent of the sale price. Where one Realtor represents both sides, he or she gets six percent.)

To Chelsea, we were the unreasonable ones. Lane and I decided to walk away from the contract. We didn't think we should be making all the concessions

Continued on page 18



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**COVER STORY**

**Market**

Continued from page 17

when house prices were continuing to drop, and by this point we'd had enough of Chelsea. We'd go out and look at houses on our own, without a Realtor.

The next Saturday, we hit a couple of places in the Shores. One of them was a mess of a pink elephant — dark and labyrinthine, with leaks galore. The elderly woman who owned it had used it as an ATM machine, taking out home equity loans for many times the value of the house. Now she was looking for someone to bail her out. The asking price was a lot more than anybody in his or her right mind would pay.

Outside the house, we encountered the listing agent, Drake Leonard, another prominent member of the Upper Eastside Realtor brigade. "Are you interested?" he asked. Not at all, we told him. "Why not?" he pressed. "In this price range, things are getting crazy. Buyers are pulling up with bags of money." To hear Drake tell it, it was the cocaine 1980s all over again.

And it was all hype. We had already heard though the grapevine that Drake

was known to do things like re-list the same house, to make it appear that it had just hit the market. Stories of big spenders snapping up homes like so many Monopoly properties seemed to come naturally to Drake.

Leaving Drake in front of his elephant, we drove to another house for sale, this one in Biscayne Park, on the railroad tracks. The place, low-ceilinged and cramped, wasn't much to begin with, and there was the matter of the train rumbling through the backyard five or six times a day. "You'll get used to it," the Realtor assured us. "Yeah," I told him, "that's what they say about prison." He smiled. (They all smile.)

In our attempt at solo house hunting, we did come across one home we liked, a well-maintained, architecturally enhanced two bedroom, two bath on the far western edge of Miami Shores. The list price was \$249,000. The agent was a stylish woman named Tiffany Safire.

We called on Tiffany at her office and explained the difficulties we'd been having. We were careful not to mention Chelsea by name. Tiffany smiled and

Continued on page 19

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Market

Continued from page 18

leaned back in her chair. “Do you know the difference between a real estate license and a voter registration card?” she asked, in a way that suggested she had posed the question before. No, we told her. Her eyes lit up. “Not everybody has a voter registration card,” she said, crinkling her nose like a cat.

There was already an offer on the house, but she’d help us find another one. All we had to do was agree to deal exclusively through her. Otherwise, she said, she would just be wasting her time on us. She didn’t put a client contract in front of us — for that matter, neither had Chelsea — but the message was becoming increasingly clear: If you’re looking for a house in a particular neighborhood, especially one in a lower price range, you have to do business with the Realtors who control that territory.

The cards are stacked in their favor. In post-bubble Miami, it’s hard to find traditional sales, in which the owner bought the house at a reasonable price once upon a time, lived in it, built up

equity, and is now looking to maybe retire to a condo. Certainly we never saw many. Foreclosures and short sales give the illusion of an inventory of available homes, but those houses are in limbo; make an offer and wait six months to see if the bank will take it.

In this fractured landscape, Realtors wield a lot of power. They know what houses are for sale before anybody else does, they decide who’s going to see them, and they have a disproportionate say in setting prices (not to mention a vested interest in keeping them high). For Realtors, in more ways than one, every day is a “home game.”

Exhausted from our dealings with Chelsea, Drake, and Tiffany — and close to disgusted with the whole enterprise of trying to buy anything at all — we decided to revisit the house we had recently had under contract in Biscayne Park. It was a good house on a quiet street, our inspector had given it solid marks overall, and truth be told, we hadn’t seen anything better in our price range. Surprise: It was still available. (Hell, nearly every house we’d looked at was still available.)

Continued on page 20

# Danny Gokey

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## Market

Continued from page 19

Out of a sense of fairness — or maybe it was Stockholm Syndrome — we called Chelsea. She was, after all, the one who had shown us the house. She and the seller's Realtor drew up a new agreement for \$230,000 (the previously agreed-upon sale price of \$218,000 plus an extra \$12,000 folded into the deal to cover our closing costs and prepaids.)

Of course, there would be one last twist to our soap opera. Our lender, which previously had received an appraisal for the house of \$230,000 — meaning the sale could go forward — now wanted another appraisal. The lender wasn't worried about our credit; Lane and I had been preapproved for a much higher mortgage. No, the concern was the value of the house. After years of practically throwing loans at people so they could buy homes that weren't worth anything like what they were paying for them, lenders were suddenly skittish about the housing market. Go figure. To everyone's surprise, the second appraisal, completed barely three weeks after

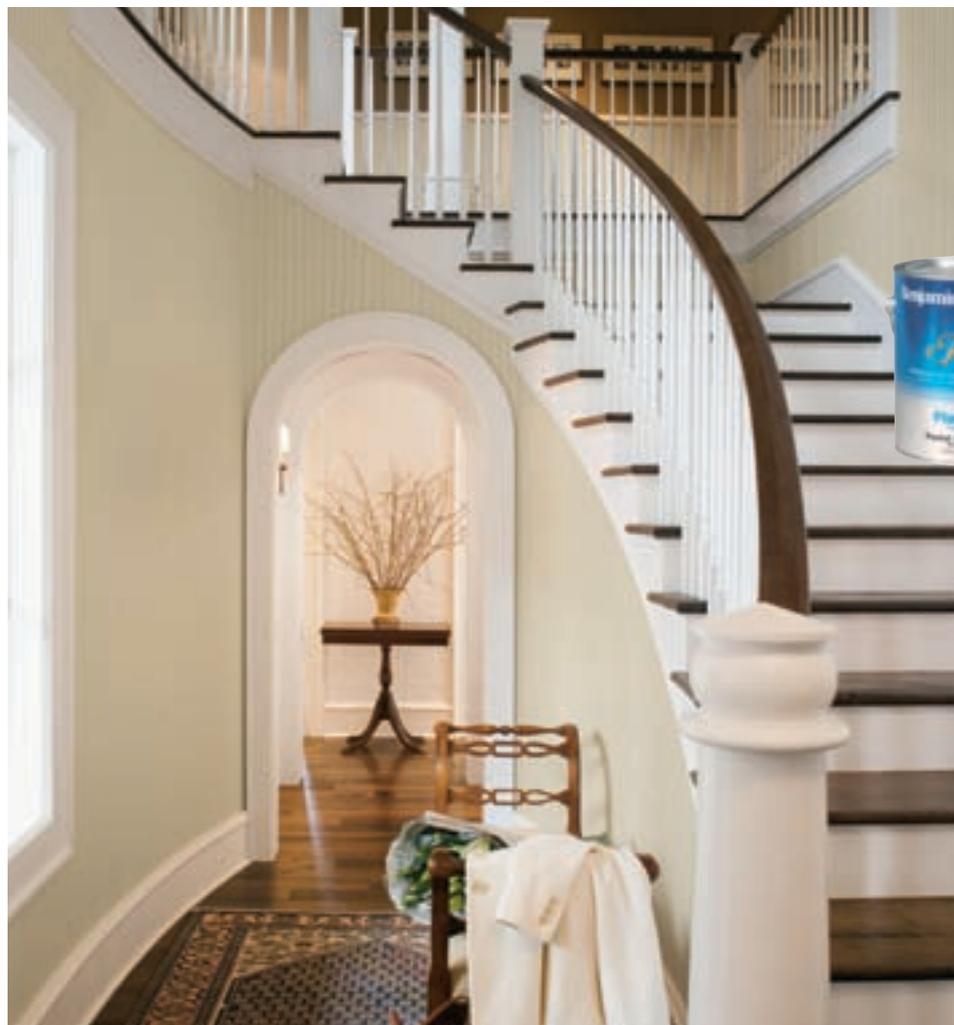


the first one, came back at \$210,000.

Appraisals are based on comparable sales (comps) made within a certain time period in the same neighborhood as the house in question. So in this instance, the appraiser was looking at similar homes that had sold recently in Biscayne Park. But that's what he had done the first time, so why the \$20,000 difference in appraised value? The answer: Enough time had passed that the appraiser had to discard a couple of older comps, which had been in the \$225,000 to \$230,000 range, and replace them with more recent ones. Unlike the older comps, the newer ones were short sales. The banks had let the houses go for less than they were worth, thereby suppressing the value of the surrounding properties.

I know what you're thinking, because initially we thought the same thing: The invisible hand of the market had finally dealt us an ace. The seller would have to lower his asking price — either that or find buyers who didn't mind paying more than the appraised value of the home, and had enough cash

Continued on page 22



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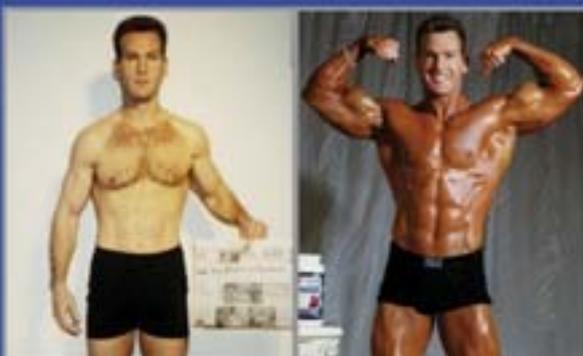
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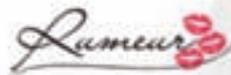
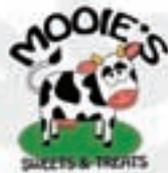
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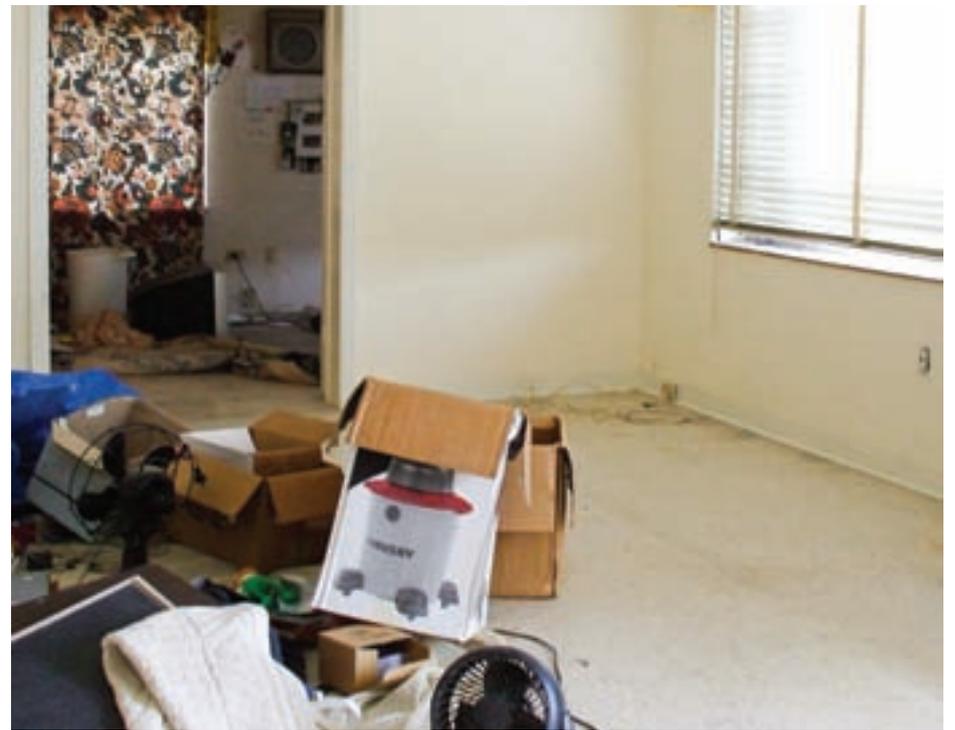
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## Market

Continued from page 20

on hand that they wouldn't need to take out a mortgage to do it. Not likely.

Lane and I were going to be able to purchase our home for less than we had anticipated. Sure, the seller was pissed — I would be too, if short sales down the street were depressing the value of the house I was trying to sell — but his loss was our gain, right?

Not exactly. The new appraisal might force the seller to lower his price, but it also signaled trouble for Lane and me, since we had planned to cover some of our purchase-related expenses by folding them into our mortgage. The too-close-to-the-bone appraisal meant we would have to cover those costs out of pocket. And our pockets weren't exactly loaded down with an extra \$12,000.

The sale was falling apart again. The seller wouldn't take a penny less than \$210,000 for the house. There was no way Lane and I could front all of our closing costs. It was a stalemate. About the only one who seemed primed to get on with things was our unborn son, who would soon be making his appearance in the

world and was letting my wife know it.

Just when things were looking bleak, the seller, who was trying to unload his house but who also turned out to be a pretty good guy, made a counteroffer. He'd settle for a little less than \$210,000 as long as the Realtors took reduced commissions.

Because they were probably as tired of this merry-go-round as we were — and because two-and-a-half percent of \$210,000 is better than three percent of nothing — Chelsea and the seller's Realtor agreed. The compromise allowed us to cover enough of our costs to make the deal work. We closed the week before Thanksgiving.

Almost six months later, Lane and I are still recovering from our experience. It was harrowing from beginning to end. Then again, maybe buying a house in Miami always is.

The good news is we really like living in Biscayne Park. We're on a great street, the neighbors are friendly, and our house is coming along nicely. In fact, we can't imagine ever moving again.

**Almost six months later, Lane and I are still recovering from our experience. It was harrowing from beginning to end.**

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# Teachers in the Crosshairs

*In Florida, public education is under attack — relentlessly*

By Jen Karetnick  
BT Contributor

As usual, I've been doing a lot of educating lately, but for once the subject hasn't been creative writing. This time I've been lecturing family, friends — anyone unfortunate enough to ask, really — about the recently vetoed Senate Bill 6, or as teachers like to call it, SB 666.

If you missed the brouhaha over this bill, passed by the Florida Legislature but eventually, after tens of thousands of e-mails and phone calls, vetoed by Gov. Charlie Crist, allow me to briefly fill you in.

SB 6 proposed that newly hired public school teachers be contracted to a base salary, and then earn the rest of their wage — I'm sorry, incentive pay — based on their students' test scores. Needless to say these state-approved exams would have to be created for every single subject in every school, from physical education to all the foreign



languages offered.

It also stipulated that new hires be screened without thought or care for advanced degrees (who needs those pretentious masters of arts anyway?) and that salary increases for existing teachers

shouldn't take those into account either (so don't bother completing that longed-for science doctorate). They call this "leveling the playing field," and claim it will stop teachers from getting masters degrees just to keep their salaries on the upswing.

I call it manipulation. Politicians would like the public to believe that higher education comes for free. Those of us who paid good money to earn degrees, and are still repaying loans, don't deserve the same starting salary as someone who didn't? If we were looking for jobs in big business — the model on which the government is trying to run the school system — those with an MBA would start at a higher salaries than those without one.

But we aren't in big business, and it's our interests in our fields that lead us to advanced degrees. Frankly, I shudder to think of a Bachelor of Arts version of myself teaching my classes. I learn something new about writing every day. Twenty years and two masters degrees ago, I knew little more than my students.

In SB 6, tenure would also be abolished, and principals would have the ability to basically fire at will, based

Continued on page 25

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### Crosshairs

Continued from page 24

not only on observations but also, again, on those test scores. No gains for Mr. Jones's world geography students, no job for Mr. Jones.

The goal, of course, was to get bad teachers out of the school system, especially those who've been protected for too long. Admittedly there are a few in each school, hunched over their computers playing solitaire or logged into Facebook when they should be challenging their students with interesting coursework. I'm all for getting rid of tenure, which is one of the reasons I never went down the college academic road that most poets travel in the first place. That type of job security is obsolete, a lazy dinosaur that has somehow bred sloths. Let's open up the field to new talent in the good ol' capitalist American way — that is, if we haven't scared it all away yet.

It also might seem, initially, a good idea to reward teachers who do, on the surface, an excellent job. Let's put that to the proverbial test, using

some imaginary teachers from Miami Shores' own Doctors Charter School — because, yes, that's a public school, though it's run like a private one. So Mrs. Smith's honors class does well on the state biology exam? Bonus! And she celebrates at a happy hour. Bad, bad Mrs. Smith. She's nabbed leaving Churchill's and blew a .09. According to state law, once she's been booked as a DUI, she must be terminated.

Let's also consider Mrs. Pink. She teaches right next door to Mrs. Smith. Her algebra students are not as gifted, and they collectively fail. Like Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Pink is a beloved and dedicated teacher. So much so that in the past she spent roughly \$2000 of her own money on supplies, given the limited school budget. Now, because so much money — \$900 million! — went into enacting SB 666 (never mind the enforcing), she invests about twice the amount just so she can have the necessary supplies. But Mrs. Pink, we're happy to say, has a very astute principal who recognizes that her student population is not going to get her any gains. He saves her job. But Mrs. Pink's morale is so low she

becomes clinically depressed and leaves the field.

Because SB 666 was vetoed, you might think it's pointless to write about its flaws, and its one or two good points. But we'd be naive if we thought another bill won't surface soon. The attack on public education will continue. And yes, it is an attack. The national trend seems to be to blame teachers for everything, and not just failing grades.

Here's an example from my own life. When I see someone fooling around with a phone in my class, I take it away for the day. Recently I did that to a student whose mother just happened to e-mail me complaining about his grades. I informed her that maybe he'd have more success if he listened in class instead of texting. She replied, "I really think the teachers should take away all the cell phones at the beginning of class." I didn't confiscate his phone, so it's my fault he's using it?

How about just teaching your kid some manners and responsibility? Oh, I forgot. *I'm* his teacher. That means I have to persuade him not just to write a sonnet and turn it in on time, a difficult enough

task on the best of days, but practice good etiquette, too. I wonder if there'll be a test on *that*?

Teacher complaints, protests, and the virtual but eventual nonexistent threat of a sick-out are what managed to get SB 666 vetoed, and everyone who wants to know where the state was going to find that \$900 million to enact it should thank us.

But Crist's most loaded comment was that he barely heard any feedback from parents, either in support or defense of the bill. Parents who want to put their kids in Miami Shores Elementary School should start paying attention. He will likely consider passing the very next bill that comes up, good or bad, to appease those constituents he offended. Don't support a bill that makes us do *your* job on top of what is one of the emotionally toughest, stressful, and least monetarily rewarding professions in Florida. Do help us create a better system, in Miami Shores, greater Miami-Dade, and the rest of Florida.

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# We Can Trust Our County Commissioners

— That's right — we can trust them to do anything and everything to preserve their grip on power —

By Frank Rollason  
BT Contributor

Our county commission is feeling pretty feisty these days, trying to build support for a couple of initiatives that could be placed on our upcoming August ballot — at a time when many people will be out of town on vacation. (These strategically scheduled items make the argument for signing up for the absentee-ballot program that ensures you will receive a ballot at your home instead of having to be in town and trek to the polls.)

Here are the two issues: A long-sought salary increase for commissioners, and a move to strip away some of the powers of the county mayor and return them to the commission. Let's look at them one at a time.

**Salary Increase for Commissioners.** The premise here is simple: Elected officials, Miami-Dade County Commissioners in particular, deserve



to be paid a full-time salary for a full-time job. Presently they receive \$6000 annually along with various financial perks: car and cell phone allowances, health insurance, and of course their seemingly bottomless reservoir of “discretionary re-election funds.” Oops! I mean “discretionary funds for the welfare of their constituents.”

So what do the commissioners consider a full-time salary? They're talking about something between \$75,000 and \$90,000, depending upon which commissioner's plan is being considered. There should be no question that the position of county commissioner — presiding over a \$7.4 billion operating budget and a sprawling bureaucracy

— is a full-time job and should be compensated accordingly.

The fact that commissioners are performing a “public service” should not detract from the electorate's obligation to fairly compensate those who perform the public's work. Certainly policy-making is every bit as important as administratively carrying out those policies, a task performed by the county's vast labor force. Those employees are adequately compensated, and so should be the elected officials.

If commissioners' jobs are full time, then it's only fair that we should expect them to give us *all* their time — meaning no outside employment (or self-employment) of any sort while they're in office. I don't want to hear the hogwash that such a restriction would infringe on their rights. If they don't like the requirements of the job, then they shouldn't seek the position. An ironclad prohibition on outside

Continued on page 27

The advertisement for Miami Beach Pebbles, Inc. features a top banner with a blue background and white text. The text includes the company name, website, and address. Below the banner are two images: one showing a close-up of a pebble mosaic in shades of white and grey, and another showing a pebble mosaic in shades of blue and grey. At the bottom, there is a dark blue banner with white text and a decorative border of pebbles.

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### Trust

Continued from page 26

employment would go a long way toward giving voters the confidence they would need to get onboard with a big salary increase. It would also help eliminate many of those dastardly conflict-of-interest issues that arise from time to time and cause a commissioner to squirm in his chair, trying to explain how an obvious conflict is actually not a conflict.

The next hurdle to overcome will not likely be on a ballot any time soon. That is term limits. This is the issue that will not die, right? The sitting commissioners argue that if the citizenry wants one of them off the dais, they simply run a new candidate and they are voted off, and that is that. I think we all know this is just not the case. When was the last time an incumbent was unseated? The year was 1994, when newcomer Katy Sorenson ousted Larry Hawkins. That was 16 years ago!

So we are left with a system in which new faces are seen only when a seat becomes vacant and incumbent county commissioners *never* lose. Then we're led to believe that the incumbent

commissioner will — until hell freezes over — continue to be all-knowing on all subjects — always in the best interests of all residents. Get a grip, commissioners. You are no smarter than those you serve, and the time comes for all in elective office to step down and allow others to pick up the baton.

The term-limits proposal by Commissioner Bruno Barreiro for no more than four consecutive terms of four years each (16 years!) suggests that he and his proposal's supporters have completely lost touch with reality. Here's the reality check: Voters are more than just discontent with the local political process. They are disgusted by it.

You can be sure that if Barreiro's plan ends up before voters, the language will be such that the new term limits will only begin *after* the election. So if a commissioner already has 8 years on the dais, he or she would be eligible for another 16 — for a grand total of 24 years spent "servicing" the public. Hell, even a prize bull on a stud farm is retired before 24 years of service!

#### Stripping Power from the Mayor.

This is nothing more than a power grab

by the commission to gain back control of in-house administrative matters that are best left to the mayor. Commissioner Barbara Jordan is behind this latest attempt to weaken the strong-mayor form of government approved by the county voters in 2007.

It makes no sense to have a county manager who is appointed by the mayor and approved by the commission, but who reports directly to commissioners. For one thing, who is the manager's boss? Is it the commission or is it the mayor? This move would transfer back to the commission countless meddling opportunities concerning day-to-day operations, from enormously lucrative construction contracts to influence over who is appointed director of this or that county department.

The commission is the policy-making body of the county, not the operations center for the delivery of services. Commissioners steer the boat. They do not *row* the boat. This effort to reduce the mayor's power is about meddling, plain and simple.

When Mayor Carlos Alvarez threw his support behind the strong-mayor

form of government, he said voters should have one person to point to when services are not going right, and that person should be the mayor. A majority of us bought into that concept and approved the change. The fault I find in the current system is that Alvarez did not eliminate the position of county manager. Instead he kept the manager and just had him report to the mayor instead of the commission.

In my opinion, the manager's work should have been divided among assistants hired by Alvarez (maybe deputy mayors?), which would have placed responsibility for the county's daily operations exactly where it belongs — in the lap of the *strong* mayor.

If the voters are not happy with the mayor, they can vote him out of office. But assuming that wouldn't happen to an incumbent mayor until hell freezes over again, at least the strong-mayor position is term-limited — two four-year terms.

And there we are — full circle back to term limits.

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# Working Girls

*Evidence of Miami's economic recovery: Escort services are booming*

By Wendy Doscher-Smith  
BT Contributor

So there I was, crouched in front of the trash room directly in front of my apartment (smelly yet convenient!), straining to hear the conversation between two rather unlikely characters. They were nearby, inside another apartment, and their door was ajar. What I heard sounded like a job interview. Could it be? A high-class-hooker job interview?

True story: The other day, as I stood waiting in a hoodie and jeans, with my borrowed-from-friend-so-I-don't-die-of-loneliness dog Sasha, one of the elevator doors in the Brickell cotel (condo/hotel) I currently call home went Bing! and rolled open. Out sauntered quite a sight, even by Miami standards.

Before I even saw her, I heard the words "Miami is a weird place..." float out of the elevator.

Then a six-foot two-inch blonde, pig-tailed woman wearing khaki shorts,

four-inch platform sandals, and a George Hamilton tan swooshed past us, she towering over a bushy-haired 20-year-old (I'm guessing) white guy, who half-skipped to keep up with her.

Both Sasha and I whipped our heads around to watch them proceed down the hall.

Bushy Boy: "Yeah, Miami is different. You're not from here, right?"

Blonde Behemoth: "Oh, no. I'm from the Midwest. From Ohio."

Little girl meets big city. The movie cliché: Manhattan street corner. Blonde, blue-eyed Midwesterner stumbles out of a bus with cheap suitcase and big dreams.

Except not quite.



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

Wrong!

I dropped off Sasha at the groomer and, on my walk back to the cotel, considered the sight I'd just witnessed. My only conclusion: high-class hooker!

I returned to the cotel. There was, as usual, a fuss in the lobby. This time there was another very tall woman in very high heels. No shorts here, but a very tight skirt hugged her rear, holding on for dear life. She was shrieking at the concierge in both English and Spanish. Apparently, there was a missing cell phone. Yawn. I thought: This woman reminds me of Blonde Behemoth. I entertained the thought that they might be together or at least on similar missions. Nah. This one seemed like another self-proclaimed entitled tourist.

As I walked down the hall to my apartment, I heard voices — *their* voices. Bushy Boy and Blonde Behemoth. I heard them clearly because Bushy Boy

Continued on page 29



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## NEIGHBORHOOD CORRESPONDENTS: MIAMI AT LARGE

### Girls

Continued from page 28

failed to shut the door. Ah ha! The doors on my floor of the cotel don't always click closed.

Now I could hear all the banter. I entertained the idea of listening outside the door. But, no. That's so crass. So beneath me. I continued walking, heard giggling, and then this: "When men think I'm going to do *that*..."

Wait a minute! I'm not beneath *this*. No, sir.

Which brings us back to my crouched position in front of the trash room, intently listening, and having an experience something like passing a car accident on the highway. You don't want to look. You cringe as the carnage comes into view. But you can't help yourself.

Here is what I heard: "People in Miami are always talking about how much they have, that they have this and they have all that. And I'm like, 'No you don't!'"

Then: "I don't consider myself to be like the typical Miami girl. I mean, I do yoga for two hours a day."

Ah, yes. That is so atypical, after all. I roll my eyes and hope it gets better. Then I realize: Oh, Christ. This is an interview!

At this point I'm trying to decide if I should curse the fact that the wind is howling in the hallway (a common occurrence on the 28th floor) and that a maid is noisily pushing a cart, thus drowning out the audio on my "Operation Know-a-Ho" spy mission.

The maid banged on their door. "Servicio?"

The door opened and the phrase, "I consider myself *smart*," wafted out, followed by a giggle.

"No thanks!" Bushy Boy told the maid.

He shut the door completely. Just as well. I was beginning to get a little nauseous. I unfolded myself and returned to my room.

Then, a few minutes later, I heard a door swing open, and this: "Well, when I'm with someone and they think that I don't know that their girlfriend or wife is at the next table or outside, and I *do* know, and I'm like, 'I know what's going on here!'"

Was that the *What don't you like about the job?* question?

Peeking out my peephole, I could see it wasn't the Blonde Behemoth but rather another oversize ditz departing with Bushy Boy. Huh? How did they switch so fast? In just minutes! Now I was *really* interested. So I waited until they walked down the hallway, and I followed.

As we waited for the elevator, I smiled at them. The woman looked right through me, obviously contemptuous, and maybe confused. Overall, the look said: "Oh, I'm better than you, you poor, short thing."

Meanwhile Bushy Boy was busy making out with his iPhone.

The conversation on the long ride down was disappointing. Bushy Boy attempted to get a date. Contemptuous complained. Her job was hard. Hmmm. I'll bet.

Then things got even weirder. The elevator doors opened, exposing swarms of skyscraper women flooding the lobby. The screeching cell phone woman was one of them. I knew it! There was much squealing. Long legs and hair extensions were everywhere. A pink Lamborghini

was sunning itself in the valet. Wow! I just walked into the eye of the Call Girl Convention storm.

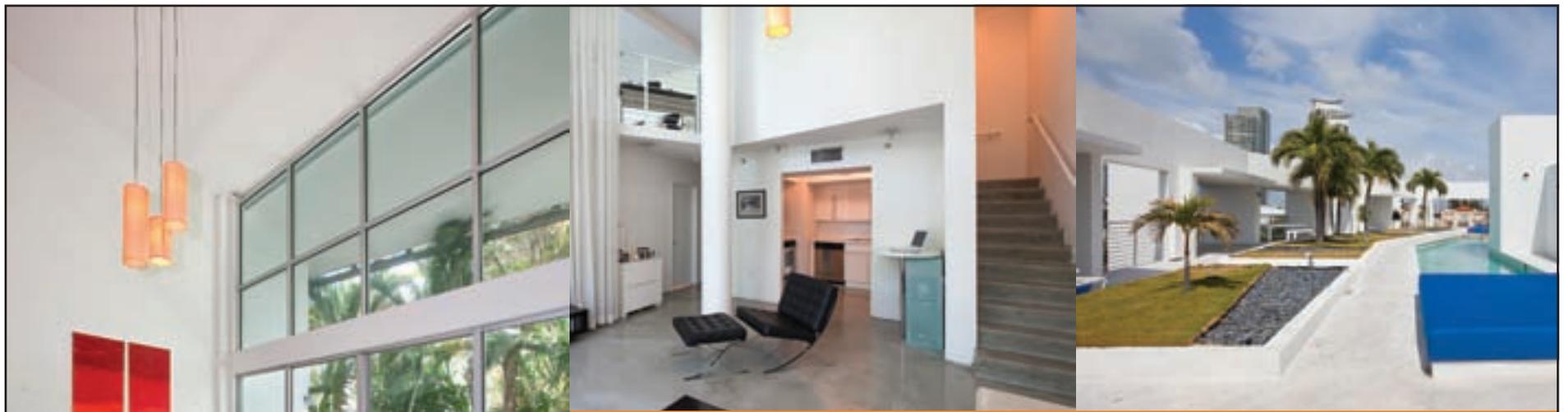
A quick glance around the lobby revealed that the cotel staff was not pleased. The security guard looked pissed. The concierge woman was counting money by slapping bills on the counter and muttering under her breath.

I took a seat and exchanged raised eyebrows with an amused nanny who was pretending to push a stroller, oblivious to the drooling child. A few adult males in the lobby needed a nanny to stop their own drooling.

Three more blondes and two more brunettes strutted in. What struck me was how interchangeable they were. Fake boobs. Huge designer handbags. Long, toned legs. High, high heels. Lotsa hair. More high-pitched squealing.

I'd seen enough. I entered the elevator just as Bushy Boy was exiting. Now he was with an older woman. As they passed me, and right before elevator doors closed, I hear her say, "You *must* consider my daughter!"

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# Uncivil War

In their fight to approve the FPL franchise agreement, some Biscayne Park commissioners went too far

By Gaspar González  
BT Contributor

The quip about laws being like sausages — the less we know about how they're made, the better we'll sleep at night — is generally attributed to Bismarck, which raises a question: Did Bismarck ever venture to Biscayne Park? Because it would be hard to imagine an uglier process than the one that gave us our new 30-year franchise agreement with FPL.

For the record, I was against the agreement. I didn't want a 30-year pact with a company that seems to have no problem planting 80-foot-tall transmission lines at the edge of people's yards (take a look at NE 135th Street) and whose sole interest is in keeping us energy-dependent on them for another generation. The only argument anybody really had for signing the agreement was that it would keep roughly \$120,000 in annual franchise fees — it's our own



money, collected through our electric bills — flowing to Biscayne Park. To me, that wasn't a good enough reason.

In the end, a majority of our commission thought otherwise. Mayor Roxanna Ross, Vice Mayor Al Childress, and Commissioner Bob Anderson voted for the agreement. Commissioners Steve Bernard and Bryan Cooper, against it.

I understand that votes don't always go your way. What I have a hard time

accepting is *how* we got to that final 3-2 tally. I'd like to be able to say that the commission's decision, especially on something as significant as an irrevocable 30-year contract, was the product of extensive research, thoughtful discussion, and putting the concerns of Biscayne Park residents ahead of personal resentments. If only.

While I'm certain that members of the commission tried very hard to grasp

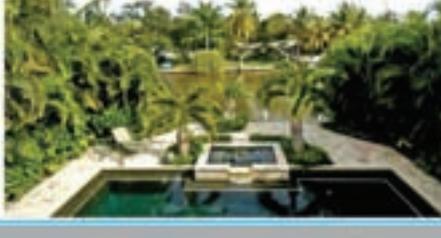
all aspects of the proposed contract, it was evident that, right up to the time they voted, there was some fundamental confusion regarding the significance of what they would be signing. To take one example: Commissioners who favored the agreement had long argued that it would have no impact either way on FPL's right to bring massive power lines through our village if it so chose. They pointed to the Transmission Line Siting Act, a state law that they believed already gives FPL all the authority it needs to put power lines anywhere it likes. Their position essentially was: Let's sign this thing because we're already screwed.

Yet on the evening of the final vote, attorney (and Biscayne Park resident) Margaret Foldes pointed out that just the opposite is true. Far from screwing us, the Siting Act is designed to protect communities by regulating large-scale transmission-line projects. Furthermore, she offered the legal

Continued on page 31

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### Uncivil War

Continued from page 30

opinion that signing the franchise agreement would put us at a distinct disadvantage if and when it came time to fight FPL on transmission lines through the village. (The question of whether FPL can put transmission lines wherever it wants — in the absence of a franchise agreement — has never been settled in a court of law. It remains very much a matter of conjecture. All the more reason, some would say, to not sign the agreement.)

This is complicated stuff, to be sure. It requires experienced utility lawyers who know their business inside out. FPL has experts like that. Biscayne Park doesn't, and didn't bother to hire one. This was largely a do-it-yourself operation on the village's part and, by the end, it showed.

More dispiriting was the fact that those on the commission who favored signing the agreement tended to compensate for their lack of expertise with surefire certainty, as if being absolutely committed to something were the same as being right. They often treated those with a differing viewpoint — both on the

dais and in the community — dismissively and, in some cases, with disdain.

Prior to the second reading of the ordinance, village resident Mike Gruener spearheaded a petition drive asking commissioners to postpone the final vote and instead sponsor a workshop to which municipal law experts could be invited, in hopes of uncovering viable alternatives for replacing the franchise fee (which, again, was the only reason for signing the agreement).

Gruener and a handful of other residents — I was one of them — collected approximately 220 signatures in the day and a half leading up to the April 6 commission meeting. That's an impressive number of signed petitions in a very short time. Residents were speaking clearly: They wanted their representatives to find a way around the FPL deal.

When the petitions were presented to the commission at the meeting, Mayor Ross's reaction was nothing short of astounding. She moved to hold a workshop right then and there. With no time to prepare, no experts in the room, and almost no new information, what exactly was going to come out of it? It was a cynical

maneuver designed to throw a bone to the residents who signed the petition, without actually giving the workshop idea a chance to succeed. (After much hand-wringing, the commission did vote 4-1 to have the workshop, with Commissioner Anderson opposed.)

A second petition, asking residents if they would be willing to raise the village tax rate to replace the franchise fee — another direct indication to the commission that many in the community didn't want the FPL agreement — garnered about 150 signatures, also in less than a day. Those petitions were brought to the special commission meeting on April 27, where the FPL issue was to be decided.

This time it was Vice Mayor Childress who found the voice of the people irksome. During commissioner comments, he spoke first, moving that a vote on the agreement be taken immediately — that is, without giving commissioners Bernard and Cooper one last opportunity to articulate their opposition to the measure. (Commissioner Anderson seconded the motion.) It was a graceless bully tactic.

When Commissioner Bernard finally was given a chance to speak — because it

would have required the vote of four commissioners to silence him — Mayor Ross continually interrupted him with admonitions to wrap up his comments. At the end, the mayor was unwilling even to listen to a compromise that could have had the village joining the Miami-Dade County franchise agreement, instead of signing our own. (The county's agreement expires in only ten years and contains greater protections from FPL transmission lines.)

Commissioner Anderson said it was too late to hear new ideas. The mayor banged her gavel and called for the vote. The whole thing played like a bad remake of *Mean Girls*. (But don't take my word for it — tune in to Comcast channel 77 any evening and see for yourself.)

Apparently, for Mayor Ross, Vice Mayor Childress, and Commissioner Anderson, it wasn't enough to be in the majority. For some reason, it also became necessary to demean those who didn't agree with them.

And that's how we voted to sign our 30-year FPL franchise agreement. You want mustard on that sausage, folks?

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# One Big House, Many Different Lives

Once a condemned architectural gem with a storied past, The Beauty Temple is now a storybook oasis

By Terence Cantarella  
BT Contributor

It was a water-pumping station, a house of music, a private residence, maybe a church, a chop shop, flop house, meeting place for mystics, and finally a beauty salon. For decades the grotto-like structure at 5808 NE 4th Ct. in Miami's Upper Eastside was known simply as the Lemon City Pump House. Named for the citrus-rich agricultural community that once flourished nearby, the coral-rock building looked, to most locals, like a stone chapel. But beyond its sweeping entryway arches and heavy wooden doors sprung a once-rich supply of pure drinking water.

Built in 1923 by developer James H. Nunnally, the pump house originally concealed a 38-horsepower engine and pump that drew water from two wells sunk deep into the Biscayne Aquifer. An 8000-gallon storage tank created enough pressure to pipe the water across Biscayne Boulevard to residents of the newly constructed development of Bay Shore (later renamed Morningside).

The Water Plant at Bay Shore, as it was called in a 1920s sales brochure, provided fresh tap water at a time when many U.S. homes still had none. Yet despite its functionality and modern trap-pings, the pump house soon grew idle.

Two years after its construction, the area of Bay Shore was annexed by the City of Miami and, according to Miami-Dade College history professor Paul George, the house became redundant: "When Bay Shore was a development outside of city limits, the developer had to assure people he could provide water.



The old pump house has been fully restored in its new life as a salon.



A very large backyard is dominated by water features.

Photos courtesy of Sabrina D'eca

But once it joined the City of Miami, the city picked up the task."

Defunct and seemingly forgotten, the pump house's historical record grows dark for the next half a century. Hobos are said to have used the place as a crash pad during the 1930s. Local pianist Marvin Maher converted the building into a private home at some point and gave music lessons there for many years. But other than vague recollections and old title deeds, information on the period from 1925 to 1975 is hard to come by. Historical photos, too, seem to have been lost to time.

In the spring of 1976, the story picks up on a much darker note when accused murderer Robert Brent Bowman moved from Ohio to Miami and mortgaged the place for \$50,000. The charismatic, 40-year-old handbag manufacturer brought with him his wife, young

daughter, and a terrible secret.

According to published reports, Bowman allegedly had abducted a 14-year-old schoolgirl in Toledo nine years earlier. He shackled her to a wall in his basement, sexually assaulted her, and strangled her to death. Police found her body in a field several days later.

It would take 40 years and new DNA technology to link Bowman to the killing and finally make an arrest. He's currently awaiting trial in an Ohio jail. His days at the pump house, however, have left some unanswered questions.

Shortly after moving into the home, Bowman began to go through profound spiritual changes. He used LSD, slept inside a glass pyramid, and talked about being spiritually connected to John the Baptist. Around the same time, ads began to appear in local newspapers announcing meetings at the pump house, hosted

by an outfit called Cornucopia Centers. The meetings explored things like "multi-sense awakening" and "cosmic rites."

Veteran South Florida journalist Dan Christensen, writing for the *Miami News* in 1988, reported that police finally questioned Bowman in 1982 about the Toledo killing. Bowman didn't admit to the murder, but hinted that *another* girl's body was buried somewhere on the pump house grounds. Skepticism, money, and departmental restructuring, according to Christensen's article, kept Miami police from conducting a search.

Whatever the case, ownership of the pump house passed to the Veterans' Administration in 1978 after Bowman, who was a military vet, defaulted on his VA-backed mortgage. A doctor snapped up the place for just \$10,000 in 1980 and

Continued on page 37

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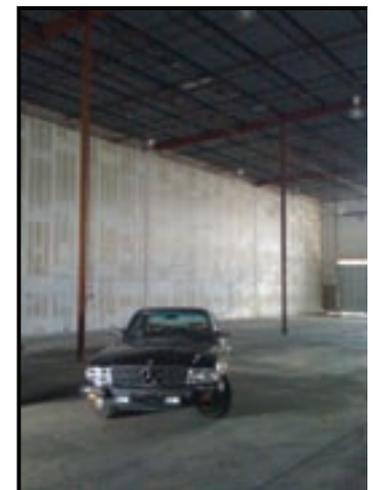
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# Surging Supermarkets

Publix will build a big one in Edgewater while Whole Foods scouts locations in North Miami

By Brandon Dane  
Special to BT

For residents, foodies, and amateur as well as professional chefs along the Biscayne Corridor, there is good news and there is bad news. The good news: Publix is proposing to build a new, ultra-modern mega store at 1776 Biscayne Blvd., and Whole Foods Market is negotiating to purchase a large parcel of vacant land for a new store on NE 123rd Street just east of the Boulevard.

Bad news: The Publix is not expected to open for at least 18 months, and the Whole Foods, according to knowledgeable sources, would not be welcoming customers until approximately 2014.

Of the two projects, the Publix in the Edgewater neighborhood is the most concrete. Miami Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, in whose district the new market will be located, confirms that the company has applied for a building permit. A staffer in Sarnoff's office says that, as far as he knows, "nothing has changed" and that Publix is simply "going through the permitting process." Officials at the city's building department say that process should take less than six months; Sarnoff tacked on another 18 months for construction.

However, no one can say with *certainty* that a new Publix will open in two years. Case in point: The new Miami Beach Publix at 5th Street and Alton Road took roughly five years to complete. Furthermore, Kimberly Jaeger, a Publix spokeswoman, says she cannot comment on the proposed store because "we do not have any official signed agreements." The Houston-based development company that owns the 83,000-square-foot parcel



Photo illustration by Marcy Mock

**Imagine this: Publix is coming to Edgewater, so why not have something really cool, like they did in Miami Beach?**

did not respond to requests for comment. (In his July 2009 *BT* cover story "Dirt & Dreams," contributor Christian Cipriani identified the vacant land as ideally suited for a supermarket, adding that "a neighborhood that eats well lives well.")

Publix operates about 1000 stores in five Southeastern states, with about 70 percent of those located in Florida. The closest one to the Edgewater neighborhood is at 48th Street and Biscayne Boulevard. Its reputation is less than stellar, with residents complaining the store is overcrowded, often dirty, and offers a limited selection of meat, seafood, and produce. The next-closest Publix is in Miami Shores at 90th Street and Biscayne Boulevard. By most accounts, it is the preferred choice for residents at the southern end of the Biscayne Corridor. As with most mass retailers, Publix markets vary in size and amenities, and neither of those two is a mega Publix.

The real buzz, however, has been created by persistent rumors that Whole Foods Market — the upscale organic grocer — will be opening a store in North Miami at 1850 NE 123rd St., on the vacant lot directly behind Walgreens in the RK Causeway Plaza. A regional spokesman for Whole Foods says that while the company is always looking for locations in Florida, "at this time, we have no Miami store openings to announce." Likewise Jacqueline Gonzalez, director of the department of building and zoning in the City of North Miami, says there are not currently "any applications for development of this property." The owner of that property, developer Irwin Tauber of Taubco, did not return phone calls. (Incidentally, Taubco owns the new Causeway Square development, featuring an L.A. Fitness franchise, directly across the street.)

Real estate broker Jeff Tomlinson, who specializes in the area, says he has

it on good authority that Whole Foods is indeed coming. "The word on the street is that it won't be tomorrow, but it *is* going to happen," he says. "It's common knowledge. Right now it's a problem with the economy, but by 2013-2014, it'll be here." Tomlinson adds that if Whole Foods ends up not building on the 123rd Street property, the company will most likely make a deal for a large lot across the street from the Jockey Club at 11111 Biscayne Blvd.

Currently the two closest Whole Foods Markets are located in South Beach and Aventura, both of which present traffic problems. Biscayne Park resident Michaela Bittner says her family "would love, love, *love* to have a Whole Foods" closer to home. As it stands, "the current trek to Aventura is a nightmare," leaving her with two options for convenient grocery shopping: the Publix in Miami Shores or the larger Publix in North Miami Beach at Biscayne Commons. "Our first choice [for a Whole Foods Market] would be 123rd Street, but we'd gladly accept 111th Street," she says. "What a treat it would be to have one in our own neighborhood."

Miami Shores resident Dale LoSasso, wife of acclaimed chef Dewey LoSasso and herself general manager of Soleá restaurant at the W Hotel on South Beach, agrees with Bittner. "We would most definitely drive to 123rd or anywhere that close for Whole Foods. Aventura is such a hassle with traffic. So I usually hit the South Beach Whole Foods. It would be great to just jump in the car and be there in five minutes to pick up all the things that we buy only there."

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# In Miami Shores, It's Nix on Flicks

— The PlayGround Theatre wants to show movies and draw crowds to NE 2nd Avenue, but there's one little problem —

By Mark Sell  
Special to BT

You'd think movies and the old Shores Theater at 9806 NE 2nd Ave. would go together as naturally as buttered popcorn and Coke. But you would be wrong. Why? Because movie theaters are outlawed in Miami Shores.

Doesn't matter if the theater is called the Shores Theater or its successor, the PlayGround Theatre, a live venue for acclaimed children's theatrical productions, now in its sixth season. No cinemas. Period. (Also banned in the village: abortion clinics, adult novelty stores, amusement arcades, bingo halls, car washes, escort services, massage parlors, mechanical repair shops, modeling agencies, pawn shops, psychics, palm readers, and spiritualists.)

A growing number of merchants and civic activists are trying to change law, and village officials are starting to pay attention to the possibility of allowing



This photo, from the collection of historian Seth Bramson, was taken in June 1966 — well before multiplexes and the Internet.

independent, classic, or art-house films that never make it to multiplexes.

The Shores Theater opened for business on November 14, 1946, with a sold-out benefit premiere of *Blue Skies*, starring Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire. It ended its cinematic life some 40 years later as a 99-cent theater with a raffish crowd and reputation as a nuisance,

which prompted the ordinance.

Yet undoing the law is not as easy as it looks. The village enacted it more than 20 years ago to keep out dirty movies and the rough trade. Better to bar all movie theaters outright, lawyers counseled, than to fashion an ordinance that tried to filter out just naughty theater operators. In other cities, such efforts

Courtesy of Seth Bramson

to define content have resulted in First Amendment lawsuits.

Two decades on, and thanks largely to the Internet, 99-cent theaters and X-rated porn palaces are going the way of the buggy whip. And even in this Great Recession of empty purses and sleepless nights, crime and "encroachment" are not quite the concerns they once were. "There's no question times have changed," says Steve Lofredo, a lawyer and village council member both then and now, who was present at the law's creation. "It's probably time to take a fresh look at the ordinance."

Getting films into the theater, which still has a workable projection window in its upstairs office, is possible. In fact even today movies can be screened there, but only if the PlayGround Theatre receives permission in conjunction with an approved special event. That, however, can happen just once every six months.

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SINCE 1984

## Nix on Flicks

Continued from page 34

Liz Roldan, the new marketing director for the PlayGround Theatre and a former news executive at NBC 6, insists the theater's intentions are honorable and does not wish to push too hard. "We just want to draw people into the theater and neighborhood," Roldan says. "We're here to serve the community. We'd like to be able to show movies with some regularity."

The PlayGround Theatre will join other 2nd Avenue business owners at a street fair on Saturday, May 29, from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m., to lure people to the avenue. The newly minted Merchants of Village Place, as they call themselves, want to step it up.

Nearly 5000 people turned out for the Village Place inaugural street festival this past October, held to coincide the reopening of the street after 18 months of construction and economic collapse that killed many businesses. Inspired by the Village Place example, the merchants' group — operating independently from but in cooperation with the Miami Shores Chamber of Commerce — will throw NE 2nd Avenue open to art, food, wine and

cheese, antique cars and furniture, ice cream, and neighbors meeting neighbors (name tags for everyone). The merchants hope to do this every month, and the PlayGround Theatre wants movies to be a part of it.

The theater learned of the prohibitive ordinance some months back, when O Cinema, as recipient of a \$400,000 Knight Foundation grant, was seeking a venue to regularly screen foreign, independent, art films while building its own facility in Wynwood. Roldan and merchants have gathered such allies as Jim McCoy, a former mayor and chamber of commerce director, who has been active in nearly every civic effort of consequence over the past decade. He chaired the street festival and welcomes merchants and the theater taking the lead. "This is in the theater's court, and we're all working hard on this," McCoy says. "This has got to be a unified effort. We can craft an ordinance that could allow more movies with an art-house concept, and that can help foot traffic for merchants trying to make a living. The theater is one of the true jewels of the street that can be a tremendous source of traffic."

For decades the Shores Theater reigned as a leading uptown cinema

in the days when ushers in snappy red uniforms and flashlights guided patrons to their seats. The theater survived the Supreme Court breakup of studio-owned theaters in the late 1940s, the ascent of television in the 1950s, and even the first dawning of the enclosed shopping mall.

But as the 1970s progressed, rot set in, crowds dwindled, and traffic started to move elsewhere. The then-conservative and lily-white Miami Shores council, along with prominent civic and church leaders, gave the theater manager a hard time about suggestive, if critically acclaimed, movies of the era such as *Last Tango in Paris* and *Shampoo*. Malls and multiplexes sealed the theater's fate, and distributors took their movies elsewhere. Enter the 99-cent theater, which ended its life with a reputation as an unmentioned community annoyance.

Salvation and resurrection of a sort came in 1989, with the arrival of the Shores Performing Arts Center, followed by a sweat-equity restoration, occasional film showings (with special permitting), theatrical productions, great community pride, and hopelessly wobbly financing. The village council could not keep it afloat. The PlayGround Theatre, funded

heavily by the Ansin family WSVN-TV broadcast fortune and a growing array of grants, saved the day.

Alex Rodriguez opened the Flower Bar between 96th and 97th streets in 2007 — four months *before* construction started in early 2008 — and got clobbered as a result. But he's still standing and starting to see some pickup. He and Sean Saladino of Mooie's ice cream parlor and panini shop, on the corner of 96th, are the driving forces behind the Village Place Merchants Association.

Says Rodriguez: "We have had to rethink the game. We all have to work together and refer our customers to each other. We have beautiful sidewalks with beautiful trees. And movies are part of bringing people together."

With some market studies showing that properly positioned cinemas can drive substantial foot traffic to nearby merchants, Roldan believes it's time to give movies a fresh shot. "You'll never find out if there is a demand unless you're allowed to try," she says. "This is our neighborhood and we want to see it succeed."

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# Five Big Ideas for the MiMo District

Inspired Barry University students go nuts, reinvent Biscayne Boulevard

By Erik Bojnansky  
BT Contributor

Take a bunch of energetic and creative graduate students, task them with imagining a future for the MiMo Biscayne Boulevard Historic District, and what do you get? A tour featuring pimps and hookers!

Okay, that's not *all* you get. A tour on the seedy side is just one of five possibilities dreamed up by a group of Barry University students enrolled in the school's MBA program. Their ideas are contained in a 120-page report now being circulated among City of Miami officials and neighborhood activists. The report was commissioned by the MiMo district's Business Improvement Committee, a coalition of property owners and preservationists who want to create a self-taxing "business improvement district" for the area.

As part of their assignment, the 19 students formed five teams, each of which came up with a scenario that could help "create a unique and definitive new identity for the MiMo District," which lies between 50th and 77th streets along the Boulevard. Those scenarios include using Boulevard motels as architectural "anchors," turning the former INS building into a giant athletic center, utilizing local chefs and artists as ambassadors, as well as the pimp-and-hooker "red light" history tour.

"I'm glad these students weren't limited in their thinking," says Scott Timm, executive director of MiMo's Business Improvement Committee. "They've given us years' worth of development possibilities, and we're not throwing out any of their ideas as unfeasible or uninteresting."

Miami Modern architecture (MiMo) is at the heart of the **1950s Revival** scenario, which calls for designating 12 "anchor" motels along an 18-block stretch of the Boulevard. The design of these motels would be used as an architectural standard for future buildings. "In order to do this, the motels need to be unified or tied together through a string of new developments and façade upgrades in the style of Miami Modern/the 1950s," says the report. "Other communities have architectural continuity

— Miami Lakes' Main Street and South Beach, for example. MiMo does not."

The 1950s Revival scenario encourages MiMo-inspired "mixed-use buildings two to three stories in height with retail shops/restaurants on the bottom and apartments or offices on top," the report states. Historic motels could also be converted into "nightclubs, lounges, restaurants, or theaters," while "newer versions of each motel could possibly be built adjacent to the property as the modern-day hotel with the latest amenities."

MiMo-era motels that could serve as anchors for the historic district include (from south to north) the Seven Seas Motel, Carl's Motel El Padre, Sinbad Motel, Shalimar Motel, South Pacific Motel, Davis Motel, Biscayne Inn (formerly the Stardust), Saturn Motel, King



Photo illustration by Marcy Mock

## Sports Haven scenario: Recycle the ugliest building in town.

Motel, Vagabond Motel, Sunshine Motel, Royal Motel, and Motel Blu.

Instead of historic architecture, the **Red Light District** scenario embraces the Boulevard's criminal and sinful history. "While many communities try to bury social taboos in their past during a revitalization effort, the MiMo District could consider capitalizing on the events of its seedy past by turning the district into a living red-light history tour that will remind South Florida of its past," says the report.

The Red Light scenario would enlist the services of local historian Paul George, who teaches at Miami-Dade College and is affiliated with the Historical Museum of Southern Florida. According to the report, George would lead visitors on tours "recounting all that it once was — good, bad, and criminally ugly."

And he could "speak about the various architectural styles that dot the eastern and western sides of the Boulevard, as well as the crime and prostitution that plagued the corridor for decades... Those who are seeking thrills amid the grunge and seediness of the Boulevard can take another tour depicting the lives of many famous gangsters and hooligans who once inhabited this area."

"I would be pleased to do it," George tells the *BT*, adding that he could pattern it after his popular Miami River tours.

The Red Light scenario also borrows the "Walk of Fame" concept from Hollywood, California, but ours would be the "Walk of Shame." Instead of celebrities, the MiMo district's sidewalks would be adorned with "the names and faces of Biscayne Boulevard's most notorious inhabitants, such as gangsters, pimps, untouchables, and cultists who made their homes in South Florida at one time or another."

The **Sports Haven** scenario takes inspiration from the \$34 million Little Haiti Soccer Park, just a few blocks away on NE 2nd Avenue. "The soccer fields... expect to draw large crowds with stands that seat 850 spectators," the study notes. Such a soccer Mecca could be beneficial to the MiMo district: "Existing motels could become destination resorts for traveling fans, while area sports bars and sports-themed restaurants could become destination points for all sports fans."

To enhance this sporting potential, the Barry students would recycle the vacant former INS building at 79th Street, transforming it into a "large, multipurpose

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## Big Ideas

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sporting venue.” The Sports Haven scenario even includes a floor plan: a swimming pool on the roof, a VIP sports bar on the tenth floor, an indoor bowling alley with a café and bar on the ninth floor, indoor racquetball and tennis courts on the eighth floor, indoor soccer and football on the seventh floor, a gaming room with table tennis and air hockey on the sixth floor, a fitness center and gym with “basketball hoops” on the fifth floor, a lap pool on the fourth floor, locker rooms on the third floor, sporting goods stores on the second floor, and a giant sports bar with an “extensive food and drink menu” and “many TVs displaying international and national sports” on the ground floor.

Repurposing the INS building wouldn’t be necessary to lure fine-dining patrons. The MiMo Historic District is already home to popular and critically acclaimed restaurants such as Michy’s, Casa Toscana, Red Light, Soyka, Moonchine, Uva 69, Balans, and more. The **Culinary Row** scenario points out that the MiMo

area is “uniquely positioned to become a prime destination neighborhood for those looking for distinctive dining options.”

The report notes that special events sponsored by the nonprofit MiMo Biscayne Association already promote the district’s restaurants, but “more can be done” to attract more restaurants, food markets, and gourmet shops. One possibility: “development of a unique food mall” or “a two- to three-story restaurant center along the Boulevard that would house an array of ethnic restaurants and entertainment from around the world.” While encouraging more “trendy, high-end restaurants,” fast-food places would be discouraged.

Culinary Row also suggests that motels could offer gourmet food and wine, and “make a better usage of their bars and lounge areas by organizing weekly special parties and events.” The report imagines that “the MiMo District’s motels could also host ‘Taste & Toast’ events, where visitors pay for the drink and get the buffet access free. This same idea could be applied to business lunches for a flat fee.”

Artists can also be used to promote the MiMo Historic District. “The lower

costs of rent and ownership may attract artists, galleries, studios, and exhibits, which would all benefit the district,” the report states. Thus the **Art Hub** scenario, in which the district creates incentives for art galleries to open, asking local artists to “paint artistic walls and murals throughout the district,” attracting Art Basel in December, and organizing gallery walks that also showcase the district’s architecture. This scenario also proposes that the district partner with the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts and host local Haitian art and cultural events.

The five scenarios are just one aspect of the Barry report, completed this past December, which also includes opinion surveys, zoning analyses, comparisons to other Florida historic districts, and even suggestions for obtaining grant money.

Nancy Liebman, vice president of the MiMo Business Improvement Committee, says she wants city officials to be aware of the threats to the district cited in the report — in particular a 35-foot height limit that was enacted along the historic district as part of the Miami 21 zoning overhaul. “Having a 35-foot

height limit is not going to allow the district to grow into a real destination,” Liebman asserts. She advocates a 53-foot height limit that would allow strip malls and motels to build up and become mixed-use projects.

In fact the 35-foot rule is not yet law. Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado suspended the enactment of Miami 21 until more discussions are held. As a result, buildings in the MiMo Biscayne Boulevard Historic District are still allowed to reach 80 to 120 feet in height. “I guess it’s a good thing there’s a slowdown in development,” Liebman says.

Although the 35-foot height limit is in limbo, it will likely figure into additional studies. “Florida Atlantic University is doing a financial study, and they’re going to have a lot more to say about the 35 feet,” Liebman promises. The FAU study is due this summer. A streetscape report, which is being prepared by two University of Miami urban planning professors, will also look at a future district with and without a 35-foot height limit. That report is due in June.

Feedback: [letters@biscaynetimes.com](mailto:letters@biscaynetimes.com)

## Beauty Temple

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partitioned the interior into 11 separate rooms, creating cheap residential rental units exclusively for women. Three years later he sold it to retired art teacher Everett Gum — at a \$75,000 profit.

With the neighborhood newly awash in drugs, violence, and prostitution during the 1980s, however, Gum had trouble maintaining the place. According to his daughter, he bought the house as an investment, and it’s unclear whether he ever lived there. Court records show he evicted tenants twice during that period, and a news report from 1988

described the home as dilapidated and vacant.

By 1994 the pump house had become an encampment for vagrants. Hundreds of used tires accumulated on the property — possibly dumped there by the proprietors of an automobile service station across the street in the present-day Andiamo Pizza building. Cars, stripped to their frames, and mounds of debris also littered the large backyard.

A near death blow was struck that same year when a destructive fire tore through the place, collapsing the second floor and tall cathedral ceiling. Initial speculation was that homeless squatters had accidentally sparked the blaze. But

according to the *Sun Sentinel* (which described the place as an abandoned church), investigators found flammable liquid on the premises and concluded there was “no doubt the building was burned intentionally.” The perpetrator and motive remain a mystery.

Exposed, charred, and in ruins, the house drew the attention of Miami code inspectors, who gave Gum 90 days to clean and secure his property. But with \$100,000 in liens against it for accumulated code violations, Gum opted to have the pump house demolished instead.

*Miami Herald* reporter Geoffrey Tomb documented the pump house’s plight in an April 1995 article that

sparked an immediate public outcry. His story prompted Miami Mayor Steve Clark to order the demolition halted. Volunteers descended on the place to help with a clean-up effort. And most significantly, Gum agreed to donate his property to the preservation group Dade Heritage Trust, which persuaded the city to remove the hefty liens by promising to restore the pump house.

Habitual building-savior Sal Patronaggio paid just \$16,500 for the property a year later and tried to fulfill that promise. He hired a machete-wielding homeless man, still living amid the ruins,

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# Mr. Mayor, Can You Please Tell Them To Be Quiet?

*A town hall meeting, a huge turnout, a hodgepodge of issues — it's democracy in action*

By Margaret Griffis  
BT Contributor

What happens when you invite Miami's new mayor and police chief over for a little sex, liquor, and loud music? A super-charged town hall meeting, that's what. And a successful one at that.

Nearly 200 residents, politicians, community activists, and city police attended the first-ever town hall meeting for Miami's Upper Eastside, held on April 21 at Legion Park. It was organized by the City of Miami's Neighborhood Enhancement Team at the request of Shorecrest Homeowners Association president Jack Spirk and his counterpart at the Palm Grove Homeowners Association, Bob Powers. Representatives from Morningside, Belle Meade, and other Upper Eastside neighborhoods were also in attendance. As community meetings go, the turnout for this inaugural town hall session was exceptional.



BT photo by Margaret Griffis

**Now taking your questions: Bob Powers and Jack Spirk (left) with City of Miami helpful honchos.**

Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado, the featured guest, spoke about how difficult it was in the past to hold such meetings. He said he wants to bring government to the people and improve their quality of life. He then turned the discussion over to Miguel Exposito, the city's new police

chief. Exposito proudly noted that violent crime is down 28 percent in the city thanks to a crackdown on crimes against persons. He promised to concentrate on property crimes next.

What seemed like a very dry meet-and-greet changed dramatically when a

different issue came up: Sex offenders moving into the Upper Eastside from their encampments on the Julia Tuttle Causeway. Commissioner Marc Sarnoff explained that, owing to a change in law he helped to instigate, the colony living under the causeway bridge was dismantled and the sex offenders were sent to live elsewhere — mostly Homestead, Allapattah, and apparently Shorecrest.

Sergio Torres, administrator of Miami's Homeless Assistance Program, came forward to discuss the situation and acknowledged that 14 offenders had moved into the Upper Eastside and were being heavily monitored. One of them, however, had already committed another offense, though of what sort wasn't clear.

Chris Masciatti, co-chair of the Shorecrest United Association, exasperatedly questioned why the city moved so many into the neighborhood, where they could "reminisce about the old times when they were raping children." The simple answer

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Town Hall

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was that a lack of nearby schools and other protected facilities created a legal bubble for them to obtain residence. The simple answer didn't do much to placate residents who saw a complicated problem, and in their view, a dangerous one.

The meeting then addressed several noise complaints that ranged from incessant fire alarms at half-empty condominiums to late-night musical entertainment at several area clubs. A hip young woman, Sandra Gonzales, stood up to complain about how noise from the Brazilian hot spot Boteco, on NE 79th Street, was affecting her family. She tried to explain that her "parents are getting old — my dad is 60 and my mom just turned 50." But the crowd — mainly aging Boomers — drowned her out, roaring with laughter.

She went on to express her outrage at being held hostage by club noise, then stumbled onto something that interested a larger portion of the audience. Gonzales said, "I'd rather have a bunch of people that don't drink, gathering together —" Again

she was drowned out, but this time she was hailed for her clear support of the Alcoholics Anonymous franchise known as the Little River Club, also located on NE 79th Street.

An extraordinary number of people in the audience appeared to be members or supporters of the Little River Club, which is embroiled in a long-running dispute with its residential neighbors. One club supporter, Allan McDonald, fidgeted through much of the meeting, clearly wanting the organizers to hurry on to the next issue — *his* issue.

McDonald's hopes seemed to be dashed when the mayor prepared to leave the meeting without discussing the issue. "Everybody is here, and nobody addresses it.... I want to know why," McDonald appealed to the mayor, Sarnoff, and other city representatives.

He was cut off by a brief discussion about Biscayne Boulevard landscaping, before making a second attempt to focus on the Little River Club. "Nobody here cares about the trees," he said loudly. "We're all here about the gate." That was a reference to the controversy surrounding the club's rear parking area.

Then a grandmotherly figure, Victoria Peach, walked up to the stage at the front

of the meeting room and movingly extolled the virtues of the club. The mayor acknowledged their interest but deferred discussion to another time because of legal issues surrounding the matter.

The main dispute between the Little River Club and its neighbors is over their parking lot. Since the 1950s, access to the club's lot has been from NE 80th Street, which would be a quiet residential road if not for the extra club traffic. Some club members have allegedly driven recklessly and threatened residents when confronted. Neighbors want that gate closed and to have club members enter their parking lot from 79th Street, a busy commercial corridor. The club has appealed to the city to keep the current configuration.

Abbie Cuellar, who is a board member of the Shorecrest Homeowners Association, was surprised and delighted by the turnout: "People were very confused as to what their Shorecrest neighbors want. There's mistrust on both sides, but if we each could listen for just a minute, we could all be good neighbors, and hopefully they [Little River Club members] will come to understand that. The goal is to live in harmony."

Haydee Wheeler, director of the city's Neighborhood Enhancement Teams and the person behind the evening's agenda (with help from the homeowner associations), was also very pleased with the exceptionally big turnout, telling the *BT* she's willing to add the Little River Club to the next meeting's agenda, pending recommendations from the legal department. "We are not about providing lip service," says Wheeler. "We are definitely working closely with them to make a difference in their community."

Jack Spirk, who has long advocated for quarterly town hall meetings, was "blown away" by the attendance. "Only once in the past ten years have I ever seen a turnout like that," he says. "I believe that if residents get to hear from their elected officials and city service providers, they'll have a better understanding as to how their government works. And elected officials and service providers get to hear the concerns of the residents and what their needs are. It's a win-win situation. I think we proved that Wednesday night."

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# Another Neighborhood, Another Mutiny

*This time the rival faction has formed in Miami's historic Palm Grove district*

By Margaret Griffis  
BT Contributor

Political scientists have long debated whether the Domino Theory — in which small changes trigger a chain reaction across political borders — accurately described the realities of the Cold War. Maybe it did, maybe it didn't. In 2010, however, Miami's Upper Eastside could prove to be a new testing ground for the old hypothesis as homeowner groups compete for the ears of both residents and politicians.

Last month the *BT* reported on a faction of Shorecrest residents who broke away from the long-standing Shorecrest Homeowners Association (SHOA) to form a parallel group called Shorecrest United ("One Neighborhood, Two Personalities"). Troy Howard and Chris Masciatti, founders of the breakaway group, believed that a new organization, using different tactics, would allow them to better serve



BT photo by Margaret Griffis

**Democracy in action: President Bob Powers (left) and the board of the Palm Grove Neighborhood Association.**

their small neighborhood, which lies east of Biscayne Boulevard and north of NE 79th Street.

That upbeat view is not shared by current SHOA president Jack Spirk, who sees Howard's and Masciatti's methods as too aggressive for SHOA.

Spirk also believes that "the confusion of having two groups [will] impede progress" for the community. Although it's still too early to predict how the Shorecrest rivalry will pan out, the separatist sentiment has now spread across the Little River and into Palm

Grove, where residents have likewise broken away and formed a second neighborhood association.

Palm Grove is an officially designated City of Miami historic district, a distinction conferred on the neighborhood just last year. It is bordered on the north by the Little River, on the east by Biscayne Boulevard, on the south by NE 58th Street, and on the west by the FEC railroad tracks. The Palm Grove split, however, has taken a tack different from Shorecrest. Instead of having two groups covering the entire neighborhood simultaneously, the freshly minted North Palm Grove Community Organization (NPGCO) will concentrate on the upper half of the community, above NE 70th Street. But the older Palm Grove Neighborhood Association will not retreat to its southern flank. It will continue to work throughout the district.

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## Beauty Temple

Continued from page 37

to help him clean the grounds; used a pressure-washer to drive snakes out of the rock walls; and eventually installed a new roof. "It was junkyard back then," he says, "but I fell in love with it."

The pump house had another admirer as well. Former actor J.B. Kilpatrick had been eyeing the place for years. A decade earlier, despite facing ridicule from buddies, he had taken his sister's advice to attend beauty school while pursuing his movie career. Now, scouting a new location for his South Beach hair salon, he and his wife Sabrina D'eca decided to make Patronaggio an offer.

Shortly thereafter, in 1999, they bought the pump house for \$208,000. "It was like the Wild, Wild West back then," Kilpatrick recalls. "There was no fence in the back, so people were all over the property. They were even in the damn trees. One guy tried to hit me with a hammer. Another time, five guys kicked the door down when I was inside. I picked up my bow and arrow and fired a few shots. They ran out so fast you wouldn't believe it."

Such mayhem wouldn't last long. With developer Mark Soyka's burgeoning



**J.B. Kilpatrick spent three years chiseling out the lagoon.**

commercial complex next door, the growing focus of historic preservationists on nearby Biscayne Boulevard, and Kilpatrick's D.I.Y. talents, things finally started to turn around for the embattled pump house.

"Every day I would cut hair on the Beach until maybe 2:00 in the afternoon, then come here and work on the place until 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning," Kilpatrick recalls. "My vision kept getting bigger and bigger — until I ran out of money. And this is what I ended up with."

What he ended up with is a fully restored stone sanctuary with

a cathedral ceiling, glazed concrete floors, dark interior woodwork, and lush tropical landscaping. The crowning jewel: an elaborate, coral-rock water feature that took three years to chisel out of the ground. Spread halfway across the back garden, its water cascades from an upper pool into a larger lagoon, where hand-carved stone steps

descend like a Roman bath beneath the glimmering surface.

There was, however, one problem with his little Eden. The property carried a decades-old residential zoning restriction, which barred him from establishing his salon business. Kilpatrick grimaces as he describes the unexpectedly long process of having the property rezoned commercial (seven years by his count): "I almost lost everything waiting for the zoning change. Everyone at the city was onboard except Sarah Eaton [the city's former historic preservation officer]. I

put so much money into this property and spent so many years not making any money back from it."

He credits historian Paul George, who spoke on his behalf at a Historic and Environmental Preservation Board meeting, with finally persuading Eaton to approve the change. And if not for a generous investment by his late father-in-law, Alfonso D'eca, and mother-in-law Joyce, he insists the pump house project would have died long ago. He and wife Sabrina finally hung a sign outside in 2006, christening their building and business with a new name: The Beauty Temple.

Standing in front of their coral-rock masterpiece on a recent workday, Kilpatrick acknowledges a spiritual connection to the place after his protracted struggle: "This is where my heart is. This is my soul. If I sold this property now, my life journey would change completely. There's definitely some powerful energy in this place."

For more information about *The Beauty Temple*, visit [www.beautytemplesalon.com](http://www.beautytemplesalon.com) or call 305-751-5077.

Feedback: [letters@biscaynetimes.com](mailto:letters@biscaynetimes.com)

## Mutiny

Continued from page 40

Eileen Bottari, who is well known in political circles across the city, heads the new group, which officially incorporated last January. She tells the *BT* that “a group of us started a new organization to create better communication with the homeowners in the north part of the neighborhood, to address issues such as crime, services, police — all of that stuff.”

The life-long Miami resident adds that she has lived in the neighborhood 27 years: “When I moved here [to Palm Grove] in the 1980s it, was the wild, wild west. I’ve seen the transformation. We have a really beautiful neighborhood and we’d like to make sure it stays that way, and that it moves forward in a real positive way.”

Although the fledgling organization has yet to create a formal newsletter or website, Bottari says they have begun to circulate flyers and e-mails, held monthly meetings, and organized a Crime Watch program. They are also working with the city and Miami-Dade County to improve services.

When asked about the coincidence to two new neighborhood groups that

are, in effect, competing with established associations, Bottari says: “To do it right, it’s a lot of work. If somebody is willing to make the investment, the commitment, the time and energy to get involved to make a difference in their neighborhood, I support anyone who wants to do it. I think that is a good idea.”

Although Bottari declines to discuss the motivation behind the split from her former associates, Palm Grove Neighborhood Association president Bob Powers is quite willing to offer his impressions on the matter. “They don’t like me,” he says flatly. “It’s a personal thing. I think it is personal more than anything else. Here is somebody who actually came up with \$500 to create another thing to just be an annoyance. Really. It’s a shame.”

With a little more prodding, however, Powers gives up what may be the root of the dissatisfaction. He says for several

years there weren’t enough members to hold a formal election in the association, “so a lot of us sat on the board to fill those seats.” When a quorum was finally reached, the members re-elected him despite a three-year term limit called for in the bylaws. (The requirement has since been dropped and e-mail voting has been implemented.)

Bottari didn’t attend that meeting, says Powers, but he heard she went “apoplectic” when learning of his re-election.

“Believe me, if she wanted the presidency of the Palm Grove Neighborhood Association, she could have it. She *could* run for it, but she wouldn’t get elected,” says Powers, sounding a little agitated. “I have standing, but it isn’t like they couldn’t be involved. Were they precluded from being involved? Were they asked not to participate? No. They never bothered to show!”

Powers is also very concerned that the North Palm Grove Community Organization overlies about half of his group’s traditional

territory, and he wants residents to know that Palm Grove’s improvements have come thanks to the work of the original association (of which Bottari is a founding member), and more are expected soon. There is also the problem of duplicating or counteracting each other’s efforts.

It’s bad enough that two competing groups might confuse residents, but to confuse government officials would be even worse. At a recent meeting with city and county officials, which Bottari’s organization requested, Powers tells the *BT* that the new group was dressed down by Miami-Dade County Commissioner Audrey Edmonson, who was bewildered that they weren’t operating within the established association, which had long ago brought up the same issues.

Powers has one last shot to take at Bottari’s North Palm Grove Community Organization: “It’s a community organization, yet I’ve never received anything about it. There are members of our board who are living in *their* neighborhood and were never informed [of the new group]. That’s great, but how about informing everybody?”

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# Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

## The High Cost of Smelling Sweet

7500 Block of NE 6th Court

Victim arrived home after making a quick trip to the bank and found his back door open and a side window tampered with. Missing items included an X-box, DVD player, and a Movado watch valued at \$4000. However, the burglar left his mark: a mysterious perfume bottle was found on the floor. Police were smart enough to take prints, which they traced to a metrosexual hoodlum, who was arrested and hauled off to jail.

## The Axeman Cometh

8500 Block of NE 10th Avenue

In a scary incident, a man armed with a pickaxe gained entry to a home's sun room by breaking the sliding door and opening the inside lock. He ventured around the home and entered two bedrooms, which he ransacked, stealing several items. Fortunately, the family was

not home during the incident, but the suspect is still on the loose.

## The Great Gumball Heist

8400 Block of NE 2nd Avenue

Our victim was closing her restaurant when an unknown suspect and apparent candy aficionado managed to get inside the eatery. He grabbed a gum vending machine and bolted, running south on the avenue. It happened so quickly the owner did not have a chance to see what he looked like. That's a lot of gum. Dentists in the area are asked to report suspicious patients.

## Sense and Sensibility in Miami

3600 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Maybe it happens differently in 19th-century Romantic novels, but when a woman twists her ankle along the corridor, suitors still come — though for



different reasons. This hapless romantic injured her ankle and requested a ride from two Boulevard gentlemen, who agreed to drive her to her destination. As she carefully exited and thanked the young men for “being normal,” she reached into the car to retrieve her purse, only to have the twosome speed away. Inside the purse: \$2600 in cash. Penniless and in pain, the victim called police, only to find herself later starring in “Biscayne Crime Beat” and wondering if there are any good people left anywhere.

## Another Miami Samaritan

6th Street and N. Miami Avenue

A woman was struggling with her shopping bags when a kindly man and apparent knight in shining armor approached her on a yellow bike. He offered to assist her with her heavy and awkward burden. The future victim was relieved by his altruism and sensed his sincerity, so she placed one of her bags on the ground. Instantly the Good Samaritan grabbed the bag and raced off on his bike. Advice to distressed Miami-ans: If someone offers to help you, hold onto your purse, clutch your shopping bags tightly, and just say “No!”

## Only the Best Accommodations

3500 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

While staying at a Boulevard motel with a name fancier than it deserves, a guest complained to management that the door to his room would not lock properly.

Continued on page 43

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## Crime Beat

Continued from page 42

Then he inexplicably went on his way (to South Beach, we guess), and left it up to the manager to take care of his personal belongings. The trustworthy employees of the motel moved all his stuff into a locked room. Make that *almost* all his stuff. The victim's laptop computer mysteriously disappeared in the process of the security move. Efforts were made to locate it, but to no avail. Either we have a case of corrupt employees, or we have a clueless tourist who was just aching to file a police report.

## Home Invader Improvises Escape Plan

300 Block of NE 57th Street

These victims were sleeping in their bedroom when they heard a sharp noise. They got up to investigate and were disturbed to find an unknown man in their home. They screamed for him to leave — and he did. Being exceedingly brave, the victims followed the burglar outside. He had no real back-up plan — no waiting accomplice,

no getaway car. But being an industrious sort of crook, he did manage to steal a bike from next door and cycled away into the night. There have been no arrests.

## Grand Slam Stupidity

3600 Biscayne Blvd.

A man was dining at his local Denny's and got up to use the restroom. In a move that could charitably be called unwise, he left his wallet on the table next to his ham and eggs. When he returned, guess what? Yes, his wallet was gone. The question is this: Was he really that stupid or was he crazy like a fox? After all, he didn't have to pay for his meal. Either way, hard-working Miami police officers were going to take the time to file a report.

## Publix Pickpocket?

4870 Biscayne Blvd.

While shopping at Publix, a woman noticed someone hovering very close to her. Oh, well. This is Miami and we do have congestion. However, when she went to the register to pay for her groceries, her wallet was not to be found in her purse.

There is video surveillance and security is investigating.

## More Publix Silliness

4870 Biscayne Blvd.

The market's loss-prevention officer witnessed a shabbily dressed man placing multiple cases of beer in his shopping cart. Nothing wrong with that. We love our neighborhood lushes. But this drunk pushed his heavily laden cart right past all the cash registers — without paying. He went outside to the parking lot with his large stash of brew. The loss-prevention officer followed him outside and told him to stop. The inebriated man then mightily shoved the cart at the security guard, causing lacerations on his arm. The perp ran off and escaped. No arrests have been made.

## Okay, This Must Stop!

601 Biscayne Blvd.

A young woman was dancing the night away at Club Space but found her purse a bit cumbersome and wanted to place it somewhere so she could really cut loose. Of course, we know from numerous prior "Crime Beat" reports that this

is not a good idea. The woman noticed an assemblage of purses that had been placed next to a loudspeaker. Just what she was looking for! Apparently these tipsy dolts don't read the *BT*. Within minutes her purse disappeared.

## Furious Dog Owners Fight Back

6400 Block of NE 7th Avenue

Two signs were erected in a section of Legion Park designed to keep dogs and their owners away. (Another part of the park is fenced in so dogs can play off-leash.) According to Miami police, several of these neighborhood dog owners had threatened a park supervisor on multiple occasions, demanding open access for their little mutts. After all, are not parks specifically designed for dog excrement? One night a homeless man sleeping in the park heard a loud noise, woke up, and observed a "white man" tearing down the signs. Clean up after your dogs and we wouldn't have this problem, right? No arrests have been made.

Feedback: [letters@biscaynetimes.com](mailto:letters@biscaynetimes.com)

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# The Future Is Here

A recent student art show, featuring a special valedictorian, proves that Miami has talent

By Anne Tschida  
BT Contributor

The Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO) opened up in 2005, and in its run as an exhibition hall has delivered some amazing and groundbreaking art. So anyone visiting the downtown space in April would not have been surprised at the quality of work being shown: some beautiful painting, intriguing sculpture, powerful video, and quirky and smart installation.

But there was a surprise. This was not work from an international roster of professional artists, as is often the case at CIFO. It was the BFA (Bachelor of Fine Arts) exhibit of 22 soon-to-be graduates of the New World School of the Arts Visual Arts College. And it was really good.

Normally we're lenient in judging student shows; they are by definition amateur. In general Miami's art schools don't rate on a national level; and sprawling student shows are often more chaotic than navigable. Here, however, were some large paintings on the entrance wall by José Felix Perez that oozed skill and complexity. An installation of a room — complete with Spanish-baroque touches, a fish tank, and dark maroon wallpaper by Carolina Barros — included a hidden gem. At floor level, cut into the wall, was a tiny doorway. When you got on the ground and crouched to peek in, yet another living room was revealed, in miniature, with some fantastic, over-the-top décor and lighting. Yasmin Tolentino created a lovely and lonely painting-with-video projection, while Samuel Lopez de Victoria incorporated live pug dogs in his installation.

Those were just some of the highlights from a range of media that encompassed photography, sculpture, film, video, painting, design, and drawing. A quick look at the biographies of these young artists also reveals the multicultural nature of this new generation of Miami, with students hailing from all over the Western Hemisphere. In other words, this was a strong showing from



Valedictorian Sleeper with his sculpture, waiting to awake.

an unexpected quarter.

In the first decade of the 21st Century, we watched Miami's art scene grow and develop around Art Basel, and around the proliferation of new galleries and other art fairs. The latest output from the urban New World class of 2010 sprouts from another, noncommercial strain. It does Miami proud and should make us excited about what the future holds.

The valedictorian of the class is representative of this new wave on a number of levels, not least of which is his working name. Anthony Villasmil, whose sculptures were a centerpiece of the show and from whom the Bass Museum has already commissioned artwork, goes by the artistic nom de plume of Sleeper. One of his sculptures was a life-size, half-hidden sleeping figure, with the title *Bide*. Biding its time to rise, waiting for the appropriate moment to stand up. That's how Villasmil describes himself, why he works under the name Sleeper. He's his own cultural "sleeper cell."



Samuel Lopez de Victoria playing in his installation, feeling pug love.

"I was given that name at one of the places I was living," says the nomadic Miami native, who has moved from home to home, neighborhood to neighborhood. "And I liked it, I wanted to keep it. Like, at the right time I would wake up. There would be a right time to show yourself, reveal yourself."

Of Argentine and Venezuelan heri-

**The fact that art of such quality is being nourished here is a solid step toward a more rooted scene, one that can survive economic swings and art fair largess.**

tage, Villasmil roamed from Kendall to South Miami, searching for cheaper rent, eventually landing in Overtown, North Miami, Liberty City — and for the time being — downtown Miami. Along the way he was enrolled in art programs, from the third grade on. He went to New World's high school arts program, and then passing up scholarships in Chicago and San Francisco, he stayed in Miami for college.

Sculpture and performance increasingly fueled his passion, but an outgoing personality never came easy. "That's why Sleeper worked for me," he says. "I could live out another personality, I could have a theatrical impact with work under that name. It helped me let go of inhibitions."

Whether it was losing inhibitions or just letting talent flow, Sleeper would go on to earn a 4.0 GPA, and honors such as the New World School of the Arts Book Award 2006, the Sculpture Award 2006, and the Scholastics Gold Key Portfolio 2006.

Now, with his bicycle as transportation, Sleeper works as a nightclub manager by night and student and artist by day. Having entered New World's high school art program in 2002, he says he's benefited from an increasingly sophisticated art scene: "You can't help absorb the energy from what has happened here. Unlike the past, we know what art looks like now. We know how to hang

art, what a good show looks like."

On the other hand, he says, there are also high expectations. Maybe too high. And the art world can be a precarious place to live. He knows it has to be kept at arm's length in order to avoid being subsumed and consumed by it.

Sleeper's second sculpture in the BFA show is of two very tall, hooded, spectral figures (he calls them wizards) starring at an artwork. The piece is all blinged out with lights and a gold baroque frame. As Sleeper explains, it screams out "I am important, look at me!" The two figures themselves are important people, arbiters of what's worthy in the art world. "They get to decide what's important or not," Villasmil says. "You know, they're the big people standing there, making the ultimate decisions." He seems to be asking: Who is really in a dream? Who is sleep-walking in our consumer society?

In fact Sleeper is awakening to a pretty good morning in Miami. He's part of the pioneering NWSA Visual Arts Honors Program, only in its second year.

Continued on page 45



A painter's paintings, from the brush of José Felix Perez.

**Future**

Continued from page 44

It's a nine-month intensive tutoring program for ten students focused more on exchange and dialogue than on lectures, and is led by faculty member and gallery owner Fredric Snitzer.

The honors will culminate with a senior-class trip to one of the most exciting art centers today, Berlin, for the Berlin

Biennale in June. "We get to go see Germany's Art Basel," enthuses Villasmil. "We'll do studio visits and meet artists, the whole thing. And think — I've never even left the country!"

It's a terrific opportunity, the idea stemming from Snitzer, who in the past took the senior class to New York. To expand it overseas this year, during a recession, took some heavy-duty fundraising



The class of 2010 has reason to smile (aided by their dean, Maggy Cuesta, fourth from left, and instructor, Fredric Snitzer, center).

by both students and faculty, according to the dean of visual arts, Maggy Cuesta.

No doubt it'll be an inspiring excursion, though these students already are an inspiring breed. Regardless of whether they decide to stay in Miami or move elsewhere, the fact that work of such quality is being nourished here is a solid step toward a more rooted art scene, one that can survive economic

swings and art fair largess.

As for Villasmil, he'll be sticking around for a bit, as he's had to wake up to some everyday realities. "My puppy got into a fight, and you know, veterinarians are *way* expensive," he says. "So I have to keep working here. I'm going to have to get a credit card."

Feedback: [letters@biscaynetimes.com](mailto:letters@biscaynetimes.com)



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### BAKEHOUSE ART COMPLEX

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www.bacfl.org  
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www.chirinosanchez.com  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### DAVID CASTILLO GALLERY

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305-573-8110  
www.castilloart.com  
May 8 through July 3: Adler Guerrier, Aramis Gutierrez, Quisqueya Henriquez, Susan Lee-Chun, Pepe Mar, Glexis Novoa, Javier Piñón, Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, Frances Trombly, and Wendy Wischer  
Reception May 8, 7 to 10 p.m.



Jon Pylypchuk, (*fuck it I'm done*), mixed media on paper, 2009, at Fredric Snitzer Gallery.

### DIANA LOWENSTEIN FINE ARTS

2043 N. Miami Ave., Miami  
305-576-1804  
www.dfinearts.com  
May 8 through July 6:  
"The Inspired Dream: Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art" with various artists  
Reception May 8, 7:30 to 10 p.m.

### DIASPORA VIBE GALLERY

3938 NE 39th St., Miami  
305-573-4046  
www.diasporavibe.net  
Through May 20: "Objects of Desire" with Rodney Jackson and Caiphus Moore

### DIMENSIONS VARIABLE

171 NE 38th St., Miami  
dimensionsvariable.net  
May 8 through June 12:  
"The funny guy that sticks his hand in the paint can" by Carlos Rigau  
Reception May 8, 7 to 10 p.m.

### DINA MITRANI GALLERY

2620 NW 2nd Ave., Miami  
786-486-7248  
www.dinamitrani-gallery.com  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### DORSCH GALLERY

151 NW 24th St., Miami  
305-576-1278  
www.dorschgallery.com  
May 7 through June 5:  
"Drying Flowers in a Microwave" by Corin Hewitt and "Haptic" by Jacob Robichaux  
Reception May 7, 7 to 10 p.m.

### DOT FIFTYONE ART SPACE

51 NW 36th St., Miami  
305-573-9994  
www.dotfiftyone.com  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### DPM GALLERY

2441 NW 2nd Ave., Miami  
305-576-1777  
www.dpmgallery.com  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### EDGE ZONES CONTEMPORARY ART

47 NE 25th St., Miami  
305-303-8852  
www.edgezones.org  
May 8 through May 29:  
"Face to Face" with Lucas Blanco, Juan Carballo, Franklin Einspruch, Ernie Sandidge, and Claudia Scalise and "Just Friends" curated by Victor Payares with Orlando Robaina, Herman Felipe Kaizedo, Mauricio Gonzales, Alvaro Ilizarbe, and Luis Pinto  
Reception May 8, 7 to 10 p.m.

### 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  
May 8 through June 15:  
"Paper" with various artists  
Reception May 8, 7 to 9 p.m.

### FREEDOM TOWER

600 Biscayne Blvd., Miami  
305-237-7700  
Through May 29:  
"FACES: 100 Cuban Artists" photographs by Carlos Manuel Cardenes  
Through June 5:  
"Creatures" by Liliam Cuenca

### GALERIE HELENE LAMARQUE

125 NW 23 St., Miami  
305-576-6095  
www.galeriehelenelamarque.com  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### GALERIE SCHUSTER MIAMI

2085 NW 2nd Ave., Miami  
786-266-2445  
www.gallerieschuster.com  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### GALLERY DIET

174 NW 23rd St., Miami  
305-571-2288  
www.gallerydiet.com  
May 7 through June 5:  
"The Sunday Painter" by JJ PEET  
Reception May 7, 6 to 9 p.m.  
Reception May 8, 7 to 10 p.m.

### GALLERY I/D

2531 NW 2nd Ave., Miami  
305-778-4568  
www.galleryid.com  
Through May 8:  
"Upstate Girls — What Became of Collar City" by Brenda Ann Kenneally  
Reception May 8, 7:30 to 10 p.m.

### GIOVANNI ROSSI FINE ART

2628 NW 2nd Ave., Miami  
561-251-1375  
www.giovanrossifineart.com  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### GODONAMERICA

1 NE 40th St. #5, Miami  
786-362-5546  
www.godonamerica.com  
May 8 through June 8:  
"BildoReliefos" by Alain Godon  
Reception May 8, 7 to 10 p.m.

Continued on page 47

## Art Listings

Continued from page 46

### HARDCORE ARTS CONTEMPORARY SPACE

3326 N. Miami Ave., Miami  
305-576-1645  
www.hardcoreartcontemporary.com

May 8 through July 3:  
Sabrina Montiel-Soto and Lyndale Pettus  
**Reception May 8, 7 to 10 p.m.**

### HAROLD GOLEN GALLERY

2294 NW 2nd Ave., Miami  
305-989-3359  
www.haroldgolengallery.com

May 8 through June 1:  
"Spunk Plunk" by Mark Atomos Pilon  
**Reception May 8, 7 to 10 p.m.**

### ICON ART IMAGES GALLERY/STUDIO

147 NW 36th St., Miami  
305-606-5157  
www.cashappeal.com

Through May 31: "The Art of the NBA and Dwyane Wade Miami Heat" with Erika King, Gary Longordo, and Kirk Maggio

### INTERFLIGHT STUDIO

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

### KABE CONTEMPORARY

123 NW 23rd St., Miami  
305-573-8142, www.kabecontemporary.com  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### KELLEY ROY GALLERY

50 NE 29th St., Miami  
305-447-3888  
www.kelleyroygallery.com  
May 8 through July 31: Tom Seghi  
**Reception May 8, 7 to 10 p.m.**

### KUNSTHAUS MIAMI

3312 N. Miami Ave., Miami  
305-438-1333  
www.kunsthhaus.org.mx  
Through May 30:  
"homo nymos" by Iván Puig

### LILIENTHAL ART STUDIOS

96 NW 29th St., Miami  
305-573-2002  
www.ilanlilienthal.com  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### LOCUST PROJECTS

155 NE 38th St., Miami  
305-576-8570  
www.locustprojects.org  
May 6 through June 26: "How To Read A Book" curated by Michael Wilson with Becky Beasley, Guy Ben-Ner, Lorin Davies, Harrell Fletcher, Jeff Gabel, Anna Gray and Ryan Paulson, Graham Parker, Christina Pettersson, Leanne Shapton, Eve Tremblay and Matt Wiegler  
**Conversation/Preview May 6, 6:30 p.m.**  
**Reception May 8, 7 to 10 p.m.**

### LYLE O. REITZEL GALLERY

2441 NW 2nd Ave., Miami  
305-573-1333  
www.artnet.com/reitzel.html  
May 8 through June 10: "Open Mind" by Raul Recio  
**Reception May 8, 7 to 11 p.m.**

### MIAMI ART SPACE

244 NW 35th St., Miami  
305-438-9002  
www.miamiartspace.com  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### MIAM-DADE COLLEGE, CENTER GALLERY

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

**Jen Stark, *Sunken Sediment*, archival colored paper and foam core, light, 2010, at Carol Jazzar Gallery.**



### MYPAC

3324 N. Miami Ave., Miami  
305-981-6199  
Through May 29: "Yellow" with various artists

### OUR HOUSE WEST OF WYNWOOD

3100 NW 7th Ave., Miami  
305-490-2976  
www.oh-wow.com  
Through May 30:  
"If You Don't Belong, Don't Be Long" by Scott Campbell

### PANAMERICAN ART PROJECTS

2450 NW 2nd Ave., Miami  
305-573-2400  
www.panamericanart.com  
Through June 3: Gigi Leso and "Don't Call Me Pretty: Women in Arts" with Belkys Ayon, Tania Bruguera, C. Ryder Cooley, Nora Correias, Andrea Cote, Antonia Eiriz, Ana Fabry, Aimee Garcia, Cristina Lucas, Jane Martin, Elsa Mora, Marta Maria Perez Bravo, Sandra Ramos, Rosangela Renno, Graciela Sacco, Carolina Sardi, Vibeke Tandberg, Lucia Warck Meister, and Maysee Craddock

### PRAXIS INTERNATIONAL ART

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

### SAMMER GALLERY

82 NE 29th St., Miami  
305-441-2005, artnet.com/sammerglassery.html  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### SETH JASON BEITLEE FINE ARTS

250 NW 23rd St., #202, Miami  
305-438-0218  
www.sethjason.com  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### MIAMI INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ART AND DESIGN

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

### MIRIAM FERNANDES GALLERY

3618 NE 2nd Ave., Miami  
305-573-9531  
www.miriamfernandes.com  
May 8 through 27:  
"Ipanema Colors in Miami Beach" by Marco Figueiredo  
**Reception May 8, 7 to 10 p.m.**

### MUSEO VAULT

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

Continued on page 48

## MORNINGSIDE COMMERCE CENTER

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## Art Listings

Continued from page 47

### SPINELLO GALLERY

155 NE 38th St., Miami  
786-271-4223, [www.spinellogallery.com](http://www.spinellogallery.com)  
May 8 through June 1: "FEELS LIKE HOME" by Lee Materazzi  
Reception May 8, 7 to 10 p.m.

### STASH GALLERY

162 NE 50th Terr., Miami  
305-992-7652, [www.myspace.com/stashgallery](http://www.myspace.com/stashgallery)  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### STRUCTURES GALLERY

80 NE 29th St., Miami  
305-447-3888  
Through July 31: "Steel Redemption" by George Schroeder

### SWAMPSPACE GALLERY

3821 NE 1st Ct., Miami  
[swampstyle@gmail.com](mailto:swampstyle@gmail.com)  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI PROJECTS SPACE

2200 NW 2nd Ave., Miami  
305-284-2542  
May 8 through June 1: Bianca Londono MFA Exhibition  
Reception May 8, 5 to 9 p.m.

### WALLFLOWER GALLERY

10 NE 3rd St., Miami  
305-579-0069, [www.wallflowergallery.com](http://www.wallflowergallery.com)  
[myspace.com/wallflowergallery](http://myspace.com/wallflowergallery)  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### WHITE VINYL SPACE

3322 NW 2nd Ave., Miami  
305-776-1515  
[www.whitevinylspace.com](http://www.whitevinylspace.com)  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### WOLFGANG ROTH & PARTNERS FINE ART

201 NE 39th St., Miami  
305-576-6960  
[www.wrpfineart.com](http://www.wrpfineart.com)  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

### WYNWOOD CENTRAL GALLERY

2242 NW 1st Pl., Miami  
305-433-3441  
[www.wynwoodcentral.com](http://www.wynwoodcentral.com)  
Ongoing:  
Kito Mbiango

### YEELAN ART GALLERY

250 NW 23rd St., Unit 306, Miami  
954-235-4758  
[www.yeelenart.com](http://www.yeelenart.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](http://www.cifo.org)  
Call for exhibition information.

#### DE LA CRUZ COLLECTION CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

23 NE 41st St., Miami  
305-576-6112  
[www.delacruzcollection.org](http://www.delacruzcollection.org)  
Through May 8:  
"Tri" with Psychic Youth, Inc. featuring Aja Albertson, Ana Mendez, and Federico Nessi  
Performance May 8, 7:30 p.m.

#### FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FROST ART MUSEUM

10975 SW 17th St., Miami  
305-348-2890  
[thefrost.fiu.edu](http://thefrost.fiu.edu)  
Through May 16: "Taiwan Discovered: In Place and Time" with various artists

Through May 16: "In Body and Soul: The Performance Art of María Teresa Hincapié" by María Teresa Hincapié  
Through May 9: "Crome Yellow, Spring Bachelor of Fine Art Students' Exhibition" with various artists  
May 12 through May 23: "Creative Visions" with various artists

May 26 through August 1: "Mexico" by Paul Strand  
May 26 through August 29: "From MADI to the LUDIC revolution" by Volf Roitman  
May 26 through October 3: "Spiritual Healing — Shamans of the Northwest Coast: Art and the Cultural Approach to Healing" with various artists

#### LOWE ART MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

1301 Stanford Dr., Coral Gables  
305-284-3535  
[www.lowemuseum.org](http://www.lowemuseum.org)  
Through May 9: "Annual Juried Student Competition Exhibition" with various artists  
May 12 through June 6: "Annual Masters of Fine Arts Candidates Exhibition" with various artists

#### MIAMI ART MUSEUM

101 W. Flagler St., Miami  
305-375-3000  
[www.miamiartmuseum.org](http://www.miamiartmuseum.org)  
Through June 20: "The Embodied Experience of Color" by Carlos Cruz Diez

#### MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

770 NE 125th St., North Miami  
305-893-6211  
[www.mocanomi.org](http://www.mocanomi.org)  
Through May 9:  
"The Sharper Image" by Cory Arcangel and "Auto Focus" by Ceal Floyer  
Through May 30:  
Serge Jolimeau and Michée Ramil Remy

#### THE MARGULIES COLLECTION

591 NW 27th St., Miami  
305-576-1051  
[www.margulieswarehouse.com](http://www.margulieswarehouse.com)  
Call gallery for exhibition information.

#### THE RUBELL FAMILY COLLECTION

95 NW 29th St., Miami  
305-573-6090  
[www.rubellfamilycollection.com](http://www.rubellfamilycollection.com)  
Through May 29:  
"Beg Borrow and Steal" with Ai Weiwei, John Baldessari, Frank Benson, Amy Bessone, Matthew Brannon, Maurizio Cattelan, Peter Coffin, George Condo, Aaron Curry, John Dogg, Marcel Duchamp, Gardar Eide Einarsson, Elmgreen and Dragset, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Urs Fischer, Dan Flavin, Robert Gober, Aneta Grzeszykowska, Wade Guyton, Guyton \ Walker, Karl Haendel, Peter Halley, David Hammons, Mark Handforth, Keith Haring, Rachel Harrison, Richard Hawkins, Damien Hirst, Jenny Holzer, Jonathan Horowitz, Thomas Houseago, Rashid Johnson, William E. Jones, Deborah Kass, Mike Kelley, Jeff Koons, Barbara Kruger, Jim Lambie, Elad Lassry, Louise Lawler, Mark Leckey, Sherrie Levine, Li Zhanyang, Glenn Ligon, Robert Longo, Nate Lowman, Nathan Mabry, Kris Martin, Paul McCarthy, Allan McCollum, Adam McEwen, Takashi Murakami, Cady Noland, David Noonan, Richard Prince, Charles Ray, Jason Rhoades, Stephen G. Rhodes, Bert Rodriguez, Sterling Ruby, Thomas Ruff, David Salle, Steven Shearer, Cindy Sherman, Haim Steinbach, John Stezaker, Philip Taaffe, Hank Willis Thomas, Piotr Uklanski, Meyer Vaisman, Kelley Walker, Wang Zhiwei, Andy Warhol, Christopher Wool, and Zhang Huan

#### WORLD CLASS BOXING

Debra and Dennis Scholl Collection  
170 NW 23rd St., Miami  
305-438-9908  
[www.worldclassboxing.org/](http://www.worldclassboxing.org/)  
Through May 28:  
Anna Gaskell and Mariko Mori

Compiled by Victor Barrenechea  
Send listings, jpeg images, and events information to  
[art@biscaynetimes.com](mailto:art@biscaynetimes.com)

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# Events Calendar

## Slumdog Meets Snoop Dog

On **Thursday, May 6**, Momentum Dance Company presents **Miami/Mumbai Night**, a provocative juxtaposition of two wildly different dance styles: Bollywood extravagance from India and the premier performance of Miami's newest hip-hop crew, NeSh Dance. Geeta Diaz directs Momentum dance students in original choreography highlighting Mumbai's trademark flair. NeSh Dance promises a high-energy display of the latest in Miami's unique amalgam of international hip-hop influences. The event, part of the Miami Dance Festival, begins at 6:30 p.m. at the Miami Beach Botanical Gardens (2000 Convention Center Dr.). Admission is *free*. Cash bar. Call 305-673-7256 or go to [momentumdance.com](http://momentumdance.com).

## Morningside Elementary Lesson Plan: Eat, Drink, and Be Jolly

What do Mark Soyka, a PTA committee, and a school vegetable garden have in common? At Morningside Elementary School, just about everything. The school's inspired PTA committee will host the second annual **Morningside Elementary Community Dinner** on **Friday, May 7** from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m., uniting Miami's Upper Eastside community for a fundraiser that *truly* brings change. Restaurants like Soyka, Andiamo, Moonchine, Buena Vista Bistro, Mario the Baker, and more have signed on, so you know the food will be delicious. And at a donation minimum of a mere \$7, everyone can afford it. Good fun, a good cause, and great food. What's not to like? Call Amanda Fischer (PTA president) at 786-208-1689 for more details.

## Queen for a Day? Make that Every Day

On Mother's Day, **Sunday, May 9**, **Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden** will be offering two events fit for the queen in your life. (That would be your mom, of course!) Choose from either the brunch (10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.) or the afternoon tea that begins promptly at 3:00 p.m. — or indulge in both. Brunch will be the creation of star chefs Andrea Curto-Randazzo and Frank Randazzo (of Talula fame), so expect an ingenious menu. Afternoon

Stiltville



Spring Awakening



Morningside Elementary



tea on the veranda at the visitor's center will be accompanied by light guitar music and will offer traditional delicacies like scones and desserts. Prices vary. For reservations call 305-256-8399.

## Almost Famous and Free at Midtown

Is your mom absolutely obsessed with *American Idol*? Are you secretly obsessed with *American Idol*? The Shops at Midtown Miami has the perfect gift for your mom (and you), a present that both of you can enjoy while bonding. **Danny Gokey**, last season's *American Idol* finalist, will be performing his debut album live and outdoors at the Fountain Plaza on **Monday, May 10**. A self-proclaimed student of the world, Gokey's lyrics are soulful and inspirational. Show starts at 7:30 p.m. Admission is *free*. For more information call 305-573-3371 or visit [shopmidtownmiami.com](http://shopmidtownmiami.com).

## The Hottest Show with the Coolest Music

According to the *New York Times*, *Spring Awakening* is "the most important musical of the decade." No surprise it won eight Tony Awards. Now the foot-stomping, heart-pounding musical comes to Miami for a brief run at the Arsht Center **Tuesday, May 11 through Sunday, May 16**. A nontraditional coming-of-age story of three teenagers in oppressive 19th-century Germany, *Spring Awakening* is propelled by terrific indie-rock score. A sellout is likely. Visit [arshtcenter.org](http://arshtcenter.org) for more information and to purchase tickets.

## Haydn and Hip-Hop? Sure, Why Not

On **Wednesday, May 12**, the Dranoff International Two-Piano Foundation presents **Piano Slam Vol. 2**, a lively performance in

Carlos Varela



which classical music and hip-hop share the stage. Dranoff competition winners Susan and Sarah Wang will team up with some of Miami's best spoken-word artists, and young Miami poets inspired by live classical

music will compete onstage in a slam, with winners receiving laptop computers and cash prizes. The music and poetry mashup kicks off at 7:30 p.m. in the Knight Concert Hall at the Arsht Center. Admission is *free*, but tickets are required. Visit [arshtcenter.org](http://arshtcenter.org) or call 305-949-6722.

## Orchid Madness Strikes Again!

The **Redland International Orchid Show** is one of the largest in the nation, which is why fevered orchid-heads from all over descend on the county's Fruit & Spice Park each year. This edition takes place **Friday, May 14 through Sunday, May 16** from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (24801 SW 187th Ave.). A \$7 admission lets you browse more than 50 display booths (judging by the American Orchid Society) and enjoy fancy flowers, international food, and guided tours of the park. Call 305-247-5727 or visit [fruitandspicepark.org](http://fruitandspicepark.org).

## Cuba's Carlos Varela: One Night Only

Twelve years ago **Cuban singer/songwriter Carlos Varela** slipped into Miami and performed a couple of low-key concerts, one of them in the backyard of a private home. In those days, Miami's Cuban-exile community did not look kindly on musicians from Havana, just as Castro's government didn't look kindly on Varela himself. A daring poet of immense talent, Varela has since created space for his art in Cuba, despite a wary and skeptical regime. He also has taken advantage of a new U.S. policy of

increased cultural exchanges, despite today's poor relations between Havana and Washington. Varela brings his band to Miami for the last U.S. stop on his "No Es el Fin" tour ("It's Not the End"), a one-night-only performance at downtown's Gusman theater (174 E. Flagler St.) on **Saturday, May 15** at 8:00 p.m. Tickets at the Gusman box office or Ticketmaster. More info: 305-372-0925.

## Daddy, What's a Hippie?

Channel your inner Zappa and bust out the patchouli and peace signs for this year's **Love-In Festival** on **Sunday, May 16** at Greynolds Park (17530 W. Dixie Hwy., North Miami Beach) from 11:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. to celebrate the 1960s, the best decade in the history of recorded time. Period. Summon your lost flower child while grooving to the sounds of the Grass Roots (more than *five years* on *Billboard's* pop charts!). Also plugging in to play: Rewind, The Fit, Been There Done That, and Blackstar. There'll be plenty of far-out contests (hula hooping), vintage "paraphernalia," classic VW love bugs, tie-dyed apparel, and food — for when you get the munchies. Admission is, of course, *free*, but the park's normal parking fee will be collected. Want more info? Visit [miamidade.gov/greynoldslovein](http://miamidade.gov/greynoldslovein).

## Those Homes on Stilts in Biscayne Bay? Listen to This...

Want to show your mom you *really* love her? Treat her to something special a week *after* Mother's Day. We suggest getting out on the water in the company of the voluble Paul George for his popular **boat tour of Stiltville**, the Biscayne Bay colony of elevated homes with a most colorful past. Sponsored by the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, where George is resident historian and preeminent tour guide, the cruise will include lovely views of Key Biscayne and the Cape Florida lighthouse, plus tales of Miami's crooked past. The tour departs from Bayside Marketplace on **Sunday, May 16** at 10:00 a.m. and lasts approximately three hours. For reservations and advance payment (\$39 for museum members, \$44 for nonmembers) call 305-375-1621.

Compiled by BT intern Mandy Baca

# Courts, Cats, and the Creeps

Modern tennis center meets Medieval monastery

By Jim W. Harper  
BT Contributor

**C**at art. Crazy cat ladies. The Cat Man of Key West and his troupe of fearless felines. These are just some of the surest signs that we are barreling toward the Apocalypse.

Then there are the fat, park cats of North Miami Beach. These kitties don't take no for an answer. They demand what they want and get what they need — from plentiful water bowls to a kitty condo fit for the King of the NMB Jungle. These cats know where it's at.

The irony is that the place with the sweetest amenities for stray cats is located in the park closest to the Humane Society of Greater Miami. What's more, it's even closer to holy ground.

Just north of the animal adoption center on W. Dixie Highway stands the oldest European building in the Americas. Seriously. The Ancient Spanish Monastery is one of the area's most impressive and unique structures, and it's a place that every curious person should visit. Not a reproduction, the monastery was transplanted to Miami, brick by brick, from the original in Spain that dates to the 12th Century.

Sharing the property that used to belong to the monastery is a park and tennis center with a less impressive but noteworthy pedigree. The Daniel D. Diefenbach Bicentennial Park is named after a former mayor and city manager of North Miami Beach. The park's main



BT photos by Jim W. Harper

Some of the Laykold hard courts have been painted Sony Ericsson "Royal Purple."

feature, the Judge Arthur I. Snyder Tennis Center, honors a leading local jurist.

The tennis center is quite nice, actually, and improvements are under way. Construction crews are installing lighting that will extend coverage to all of the center's 18 tennis courts. This improvement is the first step of many that were requested by City of North Miami Beach in October 2009 as part of a planned expansion of the tennis center and its environs. The total cost, including the renovation of playing fields at another park, is \$4 million.

Costs for the Snyder Tennis Center alone, according to a proposal by firm

PBS&J, will be \$1,069,398 for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. More than half of this amount is designated for the main parking lot and "miscellaneous amenities," so it remains unclear what would be accomplished in the first year of renovations.

However, one area that really needs immediate attention and rehabilitation is the park's overgrown southern border with the monastery. This jungle has gone to the cats. Although you may not see any cats running about, the evidence is scattered around you: green plastic bowls and take-out trays placed side-by-side to serve as food and water bowls. Underneath one tree is a covered kitty coop with bowls tucked inside. The question now on everyone's mind: Who is feeding these darn cats?

The park's wooded area is a murder scene waiting to happen. Slogging through these woods would demand the use of a machete, and you would need to cut some trees, too! There are no official pathways, but there are plenty of empty beer bottles, dead ends, and *Deliverance*-style quagmires.

If the park's wetlands weren't so littered and cluttered, they could be an

attraction. Several lovely cypress trees are growing here, alongside ugly and invasive plants like Brazilian pepper. A little housekeeping would help, as would clearly marked signs, such as "You are about to get your shoes wet."

The best natural element of the park is the parking lot. Say what? The huge live oaks around it are clearly granddaddies, covered with pelts of ferns, and their arms throw ample shade. I'm sure the cats appreciate them.

Now that I've eviscerated the cat park, let's move on to more pleasant pastures. The tennis center is for real without being really pricey. Residents get a slight discount, but nonresidents can pony up for clay courts at \$7 per session plus \$1.50 per person for lighting at night.

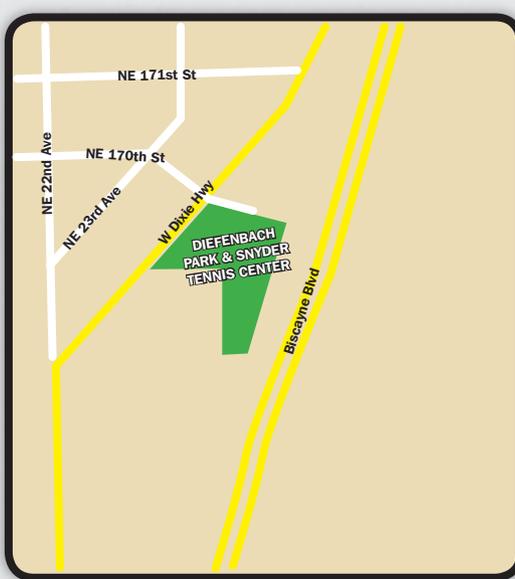


Grand old oak trees shade the parking areas.

For those who like it hard, the center has six newly painted purple courts. These Laykold flexible hard courts are the same style featured in the Sony-Ericsson Open at the Crandon Park Tennis Center. In between the hard and the clay courts is a fenced-in area with two paddleball courts and four racquetball courts, where loners can also practice their tennis game. Dehydrated? Water fountains are scattered throughout the center.

Although the hard courts are closer to the monastery and therefore more prone to divine intervention, the clay courts are the more attractive option. A walkway with two shady pavilions slices through the middle of the 12 Hydrogrid courts, which are steps away from the

Continued on page 51



**DIEFENBACH PARK & SNYDER TENNIS CENTER**

**Park Rating**




**16851 W. Dixie Highway**  
**North Miami Beach**  
**Pro shop: 305-919-0839**  
**Hours: 8:30 am-9 pm Mon-Thurs; 6 pm Fri; 5 pm Sat-Sun**  
**Picnic tables: No**  
**Barbecues: No**  
**Picnic pavilions: Yes**  
**Tennis courts: Yes**  
**Athletic fields: No**  
**Night lighting: Yes**  
**Swimming pool: No**

## Tennis center

Continued from page 50

pro shop and its vending machines. They are majestically framed by rows of mature Royal Palms.

The city's plans to renovate the tennis center call for a 19th, competition court and a new clubhouse/restaurant. While these would be nice additions — the current clubhouse does seem stuck in the 1970s — these two projects can be put on hold until the scrub brush gets weeded out.

Besides hosting all sorts of snow birds and local tennis teams, the tennis center has a real niche market that makes it unique. In April the center hosted the first Wheelchair Tennis Classic Championship. This builds upon the center's program of hosting wheelchair tennis every Saturday at noon.

For those of you who don't play the game of love, set, match, there is not much going on in the rest of the park. Even the cats seem to prefer the shelter of the monastery next door.

The whole scene, however, adds up to one of those "only in Miami" oddities that



**Wetlands and a spooky wooded area await the adventurous.**

juxtaposes the Old World with the newer, more messed-up one. Where else could you bring together the likes of the deferred dream of William Randolph Hearst (who shipped the monastery to America), the revolutionary railroad of Henry Flagler (whose tracks run along the park's



**Kitty caper: Someone is feeding a colony of feral cats.**

eastern edge), and the grotesque grab bag that is W. Dixie Highway?

Which leaves me with just one more question: How do I get to the beach in North Miami Beach?

I'm not trying to cause trouble, but the woods around this place give me the creeps, as well as a certain kind of

divine inspiration. It's one of the very few parks that has given me the heebie-jeebies, but it also gave me the strong urge to fall prostrate before a vision of Roger Federer. On this day, in this vision, the god of tennis was herding cats.

*Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com*

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# Mother's Little Helpers

*Anything that can save you time is precious, so here's a list*

By Jenni Person  
BT Contributor

An old college friend wrote this on her Facebook page: "Kids ruin your life. I mean, they're cute and I love them, but they totally ruin your life." The message was followed by the requisite thumbs-ups and pithy comments.

Sometimes you just gotta say it. And don't tell me you've never thought it. In this case, my friend was on her way to a fancy party when, moments later, covered in her kid's barf, she realized how much easier it's become to just stay home on a Saturday night.

And why are we home on Saturday nights? Because we're exhausted, we're broke, and truth be told, we're content. We actually *want* to hang out with our family. I know, that's hard to imagine for those around us who remember the old selves we used to be — busy with parties, performances, openings, fundraisers.

Now we look forward to the quintessential "Blockbuster Night," so aptly coined by corporate America, though in fact most of us these days probably subscribe to Netflix, making it even easier to juggle life and work when the flicks come right to your mailbox. Saturday night at home. It's the perfect antidote to a ridiculously hectic week — and weekends with the birthday parties and extracurriculars and errands that can't get done during the week.

Speaking of antidotes, how long after becoming a parent did you start thinking about the Rolling Stones' "Mother's Little Helper" and totally get it?

*What a drag it is getting old*



*Kids are different today  
I hear ev'ry mother say  
Mother needs something today to  
calm her down  
And though she's not really ill  
There's a little yellow pill  
She goes running for the shelter of a  
mother's little helper  
And it helps her on her way, gets her  
through her busy day.*

Of course, in the song, mother overdoses. We definitely don't want that. We just want mom to be able to breathe a little. So in honor of Mother's Day, here's my short list of narcotics-free mother's little helper alternatives for modern times.

**Smart phones** I think smart phones were invented for parents. They enable multi-tasking mamas to take care of business, coordinate kids, or run errands without worrying about missing an important communication. The ability to work from virtually anywhere often translates to more time with family.

**Netflix** All hail the mailbox movies! Starting at about \$5 per month and based on an uncanny relationship between a list you control from your computer and the U.S. Postal Service, this DVD rental business can keep everyone in the family happy, from vintage Pee Wee Herman to new releases.

**Online banking, auto-debit, and bill-pay services** Who has time to write a pile of checks? When certain bills are consistent amounts every time, why not just let them pay themselves? Being able to set up auto-debit payments and bill-pay services through online banking sites easily buys a nice chunk of time and peace of mind. The cable bill gets paid by the registered credit card, which gets paid by auto-debit from your checking account, which has funds electronically dumped into it by your employer — and you have time to sing with your kids that the foot bone's connected the leg bone.

**Greenwise sections and products** Thanks to the growing interest in and popularity of natural and organic products,

many things that were once obscure and only available at health-food stores are now right there on the shelves of your local supermarket. This makes for easy one-stop shopping, better choices, and competitive prices instead of the expense of something otherwise considered a luxury. More and more store brands come in natural/organic, too. Target sells quite a nice selection, and the Publix Greenwise label is expanding all the time. The Greenwise branding has also expanded organic produce departments nicely.

**Educational television** I know, I know, TV is evil and is causing the downfall of our society — yada yada yada (yes, that was an ironic TV reference). But you know, sometimes you just need the kind of time and space that *Max and Ruby* can provide. Sleep a few extra minutes on a weekend morning while your kids drink in *Jack's Big Music Show* cuddled (and quiet) next to you in your bed. Or while they enjoy Discovery Kids in the family room, grab your partner and rediscover why you did all this in the first place.

**IUDs and other forms of birth control you can forget about** Speaking of grown-up sports, you spend all your time struggling to not forget everyone's routines, shoe sizes, schedules, plus your own to-do lists for work and home, so earthly pleasure should be something that can be unfettered by accoutrements and added time requirements. While spontaneity has otherwise evaporated from your life (with a few exceptions), a great variety of modern birth-control regimens can now provide you with an invaluable gift: a delicious sense of freedom and unleashed passion.

*Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com*

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# After the Chill, a Colorful Thrill

Yes, our cold winter caused some damage, but most plants are coming back strong

By Jeff Shimonski  
BT Contributor

It's turning out to be a colorful spring after all, considering the extended cold temperatures we had this winter. I'm seeing lots of flowering bromeliads, with the red and pink cones of *Quesnelia* species leading the way. Some neat little *Aechmea* are also beginning to bloom, and the old standard *Hohenbergia stellata*, with its four-foot red inflorescences, is putting on a great show. Begonias are blooming well too. They definitely seem to like the cooler evenings. If no chemicals are used on them, taste the flowers. They can be quite tangy.

I've noticed some wonderful flowering shrubs. Orange jessamine (*Cestrum aurantiacum*), with its yellow flowers, and Panama rose (*Rondeletia leucophylla*), with its salmon-colored flowers, are showing their personalities, along with *Dombeya* "Seminole" and its prolific pink blooms.

Many of the flowering tree species are just spectacular. The large *Bombax ceiba*, with leathery red flowers, is blooming in many areas of Miami. Yellow *Tabebuia*, the multi-hued and wonderfully fragrant *Bauhinia* species, and the occasional *Triplaris*, with its bushy red inflorescences, are showing off to motorists sitting in traffic.

We do have lingering cold damage, though. Certain tree species seem to be losing some of their lower branches. *Clusia* and some species of *Tabebuia* are showing a bit of lower-branch die-back, while new foliage is being produced on the upper branches.

In the case of coconut palms, I've been getting many queries from folks

about cold damage. Many coconut palms are showing severely cold-burned older foliage. Will they recover?

There are many varieties of coconut palms, and some of the Malayan types always seem to yellow-up with cold temperatures each year. This winter was different, of course, and not necessarily because of low temperatures, but rather owing to the duration of the cold waves. I've been comparing stands of mixed coconut varieties throughout the city and have noticed the palms that were growing in the healthiest conditions with the least amount of stress generally have the least damage and are recovering much faster by producing new growth. Before this winter, many palms were infested with red palm mites, or were growing in very poor and restricted soil conditions, and often were not receiving supplemental irrigation. Palms in such situations seem to have suffered the most damage.

A friend of mine who manages a large estate called me to say that a landscaper was recommending applications of calcium to "bring" the cold-burned coconuts out of their unsightly condition. I asked if the landscaper had noted that a lush green lawn was growing up to the base of the coconut palms on the property. Before making his calcium



BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

**Justicia spicigera is a striking, orange-flowered plant that blooms throughout the year.**

recommendation, did the landscaper inquire as to the type of lawn fertilizer being used?

I mentioned the lawn because I know that many property owners fertilize their grass on a regular basis. To keep a lawn lush, dark green and growing so fast it must mowed weekly, they like fertilizer with a high percentage of nitrogen.

However, high-nitrogen fertilizer may not be good for palms and other trees, which very often have their roots underneath the lawn and must compete for nutrients and water. Mature trees should rarely be fertilized, and palms have specific nutrient needs that often don't match with the property owner's desire for a lush green lawn. The fertilizers used for lawns can cause a nutrient imbalance in palms that actually will show up as a nutrient deficiency.

I also don't know if the landscaper explained that cool soil temperatures can reduce root growth and the ability of roots to function in tropical palm species. Palm roots may not be able to absorb water and nutrients until the soil temperatures warm up and the roots begin to grow once again. Cool soil temperatures have been reported to be a primary cause of transient manganese deficiency in coconuts and to cause foliar necrosis (damage to the leaves) of some tropical palm species.

This brings me to a new state law taking effect in January 2014 that will require all commercial fertilizer applicators to be licensed by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Green industry workers will need to be trained in best management practices regarding tree, plant, and turf fertilizer needs, along with related subjects. Individuals completing the program will receive a certificate they can show their customers, and they'll know a bit more about what they're recommending.

The program has already begun. Courses in English and Spanish have been given, more are scheduled, and some people have completed them. It is voluntary at this point, but since many BT readers are paying a lot of money to chemically enhance their landscapes, it would be wise to ask the lawn guy if he's certified.

*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](mailto:jeff@tropicaldesigns.com).*

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# California's Deficits Are Your Benefits

*Red, white, and you: Agreeable wines for \$12 or less*

By Bill Citara  
BT Contributor

California has been taking it in the shorts lately. The state is broker than a compulsive gambler in a three-card-monte tournament. Its political system is so dysfunctional it almost makes the corrupt swine-weasels who run Florida look good. Housing prices are way down, while fees, surcharges, and the price of just about everything else are way up.

The California wine industry has been catching it in the tighty whities too. Reports have sales of wines costing more than \$30 a bottle down around 15 percent, while those \$100-plus "trophy wines" made in minuscule quantities are finding fewer and fewer takers. Wineries are sitting on thousands of bottles of good stuff going back several vintages, hoping they can unload when (or if) the Great Recession ends. Many observers are betting they can't, at least not at prices that will dig them out of their overleveraged financial hole.

The good news for vintners everywhere is that people are still drinking wine, albeit less expensive bottles. Sales of wines priced from \$10 to \$14, which just happens to be our sweet spot here at "Vino," rose seven percent last year. The bad news for California vintners is the growing perception that the biggest bang for your wine-drinking buck isn't found there but in wines from South America, Spain, Italy, even France.

It's not just a matter of price but one of character. Though inexpensive California wines are proliferating like mosquitoes after a summer thunderstorm,

too many are just shapeless fruit blobs that reveal nothing of their vineyard and climate and unique varietal character, what the French lump together under the heading *terroir*.

That sounded like a challenge: Find a few value-oriented California wines that were more than just cheap dates but someone you'd actually like to go home with. At the top of my list are a pair of hearty reds, both from the Central Coast region, where grapes can be grown for a lot less than in pricey areas like Napa and Sonoma.

#### Five Rivers' 2007

**Cabernet Sauvignon** delivers much of the stirring fruit intensity and complex underpinnings of Napa and Sonoma Cabs for an impressive \$12. Its deep, inky purple color suggests the bracing blueberry-blackberry flavors that are revealed in the glass, where hints of olives and cassis mingle with balancing tannins and toasty oak.

The **2007 Pacific Edge "Hell 'n' Back" Zinfandel** does much the same with the oft-abused Zinfandel grape. Zin's spicy, peppery nature is unrestrained in this big, bold wine, but just enough soft, approachable tannins and acidity combined with a modest 13.5 percent alcohol level make it as easy to sip on its own as it is to partner with a juicy burger or spaghetti 'n' meatballs.



California Merlots have taken a deserved bad rap over the years. But the **2006 Butterfield Station** may help change that. That extra year in the bottle helps add complexity and interest, as do nuances of coffee, leather, cloves, and toast that complement Merlot's typical ripe cherry-berry fruit. It starts off a little astringent but a few minutes in the glass mellows it out.

Cheap, good Pinot Noir is one of those oxy-type morons, and it fits the **2008 Harlow Ridge** like a glove. It does display a bit of Burgundian funk in the nose, but its candy fruit and tissue-thin mid-palate offer little beyond that. I'd have to have a second go-round with the **Rex Goliath 2008 Chardonnay**. The dirty, off aromas and flavors could have been the sign of a bad bottle, though I wouldn't be surprised if its troubles ran deeper.

On the other hand, the **2007 Liberty School Chardonnay** shows off much of the same rich, ripe, elegant character of more expensive Chardonnays without falling into the fat, happy, and stupid hole that swallows so many California Chards. Flavors of baked apple, pear, and citrus make it a lot more interesting than your average \$12 Chardonnay.

**Sterling's 2008 Sauvignon Blanc** gets props for not trying to be a poor man's Chardonnay but seems afraid to plunge into the grassy, herbal, citrusy waters of New Zealand Sauv Blancs, which I think deliver more for your money. I did like the **2008 Sea Ridge Chenin Blanc**, with its Vouvray aromas of flowers and stone fruit and a hint of tropical sweetness that would match up nicely with spicy seafood dishes.

Just because California is getting in the shorts doesn't mean you have to.

**The Pacific Edge "Hell 'n' Back" costs \$8.99 and Butterfield Merlot costs \$7.99 at the North Miami Beach Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270). The Biscayne Commons Publix (14641 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-2171) has the Rex Goliath Chardonnay for \$5.99 and Five Rivers Cabernet for \$11.99, while North Miami's Crown Wine and Spirits (12555 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-9463) has the Sea Ridge Chenin Blanc for \$5.95 and Harlow Ridge Pinot Noir for \$8.99. The Sterling Sauvignon Blanc is available for \$11.99 at the North Miami Beach ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525).**

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# If You Like Root Canals, You'll Love Offshore Oil

Florida moves closer to oil drilling just as the big slick moves closer to shore

By Jim W. Harper  
BT Contributor

Spill, baby, spill? The deaths and the continuing spillage caused by the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico on April 23 (the day after Earth Day) suddenly reframed the conversation about opening Florida's waters to drilling. It's not going to happen — this year.

But it almost did, and it probably will. On April 9, a report from a state House committee concluded that new offshore drilling was “unlikely to present a major risk to Florida.” Two state leaders intent on opening Florida's waters are Rep. Dean Cannon, set to become the next House speaker, and Sen. Mike Haridopolos, slated as the next president of the Senate. Of course, the biggest endorsement has come from President Obama himself.

The current spill might soon be forgotten, but there may be yet another tragedy waiting to happen. Think hurricanes. They are like the cavities in Florida's teeth. We know they're going to happen, but we never know if they will require a simple filling or a major root canal. To date Florida has been protected from the risky mixture of oil rigs and a major hurricane. We have been flossing.

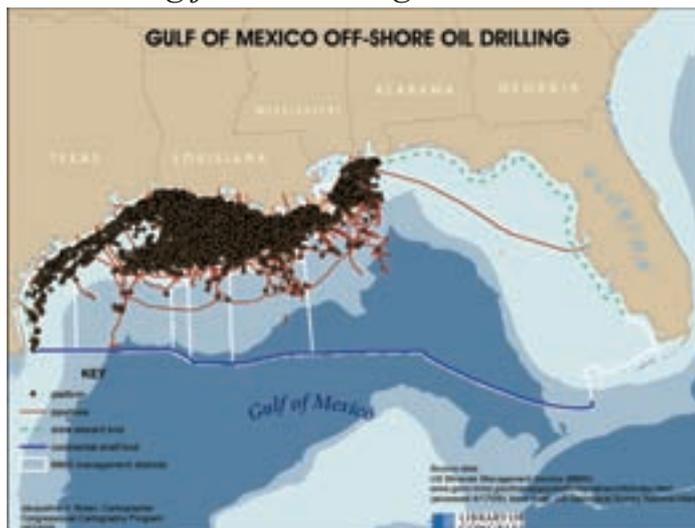
But the state legislature has been trying to tell us that brushing is optional while feeding us the candy of a petroleum-based economic stimulus. Last year a proposal to allow drilling within three miles of Florida's coastline passed in the House of Representatives. Hello dentures!

When this shift happens, when the rigs start popping up first in the Gulf of Mexico and then in other parts of Florida, we will have to amend our state's moniker to read “The Sunshine but with a 40 percent chance of afternoon oil slicks State.”

But it doesn't have to happen that way. Many people are speaking up for common decency and common sense: Florida didn't need oil drilling before, and we don't need it now.

Thousands of Floridians made this point by drawing a human line in the sand. On February 13 at beaches across the state, including in South Beach, protesters linked up in what was billed as “Hands Across the Sand.” The protest was organized statewide by Dave Rauschkolb and coordinated in Miami by my friend Mike Gibaldi, chairman of the Surfrider Foundation South Florida Chapter.

That Saturday afternoon on the sand in South Beach, I joined hands between a couple from Montreal and high school students from MAST Academy. Wearing dark colors to represent an oil slick, hundreds of us stood with our backs to the ocean on that cool, clear, oil-rig-free day. Dozens of surfers in black wetsuits



Gulf drilling stops at the Florida border, but not for long.

kept us entertained, bobbing like giant tar balls in the surf.

At the other end of the state, in Tallahassee, the oil industry had been laying it on thick. They even seduced the Florida Solar Energy Industries Association into their coalition of tar, and they seem very close to sealing the deal.

Spill, baby, spill!

The main argument for oil drilling is economic activity and job growth. But putting money into the oil industry takes it away from the faster-growing sector of alternative energy. Why not stimulate energy companies to create the power plants of the future? Why are we even *having* this discussion?

Take a look at the situation from above — from the Google Earth perspective. The Gulf of Mexico coastlines along Texas and bordering states are full of dots representing

thousands of offshore platforms. Dots, dots everywhere. Moving east, the dots simply vanish at Florida's coastline. It is protected.

The coastlines of those other states didn't fare so well during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. More than 100 rigs, platforms, and pipelines had spills.

Take a look at another recent and more severe situation in Australia, which experienced a major offshore oil spill in 2009 at the Montara platform. The technology used there would be the same as the technology proposed for offshore drilling in Florida.

By superimposing an image of this recent oil spill onto a map of Florida, as was created by SkyTruth.org, it looks like an oil slick has taken a giant bite out of Florida's west coast. The damage appears devastating even though the oil rig is placed 80 miles away from the coast.

Miami Beach is not going to stand for it, and neither are dozens of other coastal communities. They have passed resolutions to oppose offshore drilling. One of them cites the forecast of the U.S. Department of Energy that such “drilling would not have a significant impact on domestic crude oil and natural gas production or prices before the year 2030.”

In other words, gas prices at the pump are not going down when the oil rigs go up. Florida residents are not going to save money. Quite the contrary, they are going to lose their dignity. It's a lose-lose situation all around.

This is not Alaska, or Venezuela, or Saudi Arabia. Drilling for oil is not our history, and it shouldn't be our future.

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# Your Little Bundles of Joy

*They may be furry and have four legs, but they're still your kids*

By Lisa Hartman  
BT Contributor

“We have brunch every Sunday at Coconuts. I order an omelet and Dillon gets a bowl of scrambled eggs — no salt or pepper.”

“He’s such a good baby. He’s almost sleeping through the night.”

“Max did really great in class today. I’m taking him to McDonald’s to celebrate.”

“Chester likes to sleep with a light on.”

No, these quotes aren’t from parents talking about their children. They are actual dog owners talking about the furry animal “kids” that inhabit their lives.

It’s funny how, when we talk about our pets, it can sound exactly like we’re talking about little human people. How could it not? Pets have become so important to us and such an integral part of the family their lives practically mirror a child’s. Pets go to school, daycare, summer camp. They have play dates with friends in the park. We ponder their diets. We make them appointments to see the dentist. We shop for winter coats and clothing so they are warm enough in bad weather. We, their doting mommies and daddies, plan our vacations around them. We buy cars big enough to accommodate our growing furry family. We call their



“nanny” or a neighbor to look after them if we’re going to be home late from work.

And of course many owners have given their pets human names. In the past, Buster, Ranger, and Sparky were very common names. At the dog park today, you’re as likely to hear Max, Mark, Madison, or Grace.

For some of us, our pets really are like our children, whether you’re a single empty-nester type like me or still have human kids at home. There is something about having a warm furry body that needs you, *and* can’t talk. You can look at them and imagine they are saying the most wonderful things about you. “I’m so thankful you rescued me from the shelter!” “I love you so much — I’ll

always be there when you need me.”

Even better, most dogs don’t talk back. (Mine does, but that’s a Dalmatian for you!) As I write this, I’m listening to Dave Correale, a comedian on the Comedy Central network, in the background. He just started a bit on dogs, and someone asked him: “Wouldn’t it be great if our dogs could talk and we knew what they’re thinking?” His reply: “No! My whole wonderful relationship with my dog is based on the fact that he *can’t* talk!”

It’s probably true. The fact that they can’t talk keeps them out of a lot of trouble with us. Several of my friends and clients with human children have commented that no matter how much they do for their kids, they still talk back.

It can be detrimental to a pet’s well-being if you really believe they possess human reasoning. That’s called anthropomorphizing — assigning human behaviors, characteristics, and emotions to animals. It certainly doesn’t help in dog training to believe your dog “knows” something or does something out of spite. Nor is it wise to baby your pets and spoil them. But for normal day-to-day chitchat with our friends about how many Frisbees Billy caught today or who has a bellyache from the cake they ate off the counter, it can be lighthearted fun.

A few years ago a friend and her husband wanted a new dog. She told him that if they got a puppy, she would have to take a year off from work so she could properly raise and train the dog. She’d need to be a stay-at-home mom! I thought it was hilarious, though I did applaud her for making sure that her dog was well socialized.

You pet obsessives are not alone. I too talk about my dogs and their antics on the phone with friends and with anyone else who will listen. Their photographs and my boasts about them are always featured on my Facebook page. I blog about them more than I do my own life. Certainly my pets work for me and are trained while I have my dog-trainer hat on, but at home I am just “mom” to my furry kids Jay-J and Saffron Monsoon. A few favorites about my own dogs that make friends chuckle:

“Jay-J likes to spoon under the covers.”

“Jay-J goes to bed at 6:00 p.m.” (He really does, like clockwork! He sends

.....  
Continued on page 57



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## COLUMNISTS: PAWSITIVELY PETS

Joy

Continued from page 56

himself to bed.)

"I hope they are all right. I forgot to leave a light on!"

I and others rock our little dogs or cats in our arms like a baby. I carry Saffy on my hip sometimes while I am walking around the kitchen. She even falls asleep with her head on my shoulder. Right now it is 3:00 p.m. and Jay-J is doing a lot of silly things to alert me to the fact it is almost

time for dinner — time to rally the troops! He is standing with his head in my lap, giving me his best "woe is me" expression.

Next he picks up Saffy's sweater and wiggles around in front of me, moaning. If I get up, he will "herd" me — literally steer me to the kitchen. His personal favorite move is a kind of reprimand: If I don't move quickly enough, including getting out of bed in the morning to feed The Prince his breakfast, he will beat me with his wagging tail. He literally twists himself around to hit me with it!

And so it goes at Pawsitively Petsville. We talk about our pets' behaviors just as moms talk about their kids at the playground. A bit silly-sounding maybe. But in this age of electronic media, our pets are the "people" we see most often. We can only hope our animals won't be "texting" us their requests anytime soon.

I was talking to my cousin Jamie about this article as she was cooking salmon with green beans and lentils for her pug. Jamie said she was looking into ways to get to Florida other than flying so

the "whole family" could come. Sheesh!

It may not be smart to treat dogs like humans, but it sure can be fun!

*Lisa Hartman is head dog trainer and founder of Pawsitively Pets. You can reach her at [pawsitivelypetsonline@yahoo.com](mailto:pawsitivelypetsonline@yahoo.com) or [www.pawsitivelypetsonline.com](http://www.pawsitivelypetsonline.com). You can also keep up with her and her dogs on Facebook at [www.profile.to/dogtrainer](http://www.profile.to/dogtrainer).*

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Letters

Continued from page 6

**Hidden Economic Resource Laid Bare**

I read Jack King's column on how the sailing industry is helping tourism ("Sailors, Senators, and Slaves," April 2009). I would like to suggest another hidden area where tourism is flourishing with little publicity. Maybe worthy of another Jack King column?

That hidden area is the designated naturist beach at Haulover Beach Park. More than one million visitors each year. And growing each year.

See these websites: South Florida Free Beaches ([www.sffb.com](http://www.sffb.com)), and the Beaches Foundation ([www.beachesfoundation.org](http://www.beachesfoundation.org)).

*Richard Mason, president  
South Florida Free Beaches  
Miami Shores*

**Welcome to the Hood, Gaspar!**

Regarding Gaspar González's debut as the new *Biscayne Times* correspondent

for Biscayne Park ("Amped Up," April 2009), as residents of Biscayne Park for 45 years, we are so delighted and lucky to have a new resident like him take an active and informative role in our village.

*Audrey Ehrhardt  
Biscayne Park*

**Another Superlative for Wendy**

I recently started work on N. Bayshore Drive and picked up *Biscayne Times* the other day. I was amazed after reading an

article by Wendy Doscher-Smith called "My So-Called Cotel Life" (March 2009).

It was quite possibly *the worst article I've ever read*. No flow, no point, and at times it appeared to have whole parts missing from it. It seemed to have been thrown together quickly before a deadline. It was just plain bad.

I'm not a critic, and I don't claim to be able to do better, but that was crap, and quite frankly it shouldn't have been published. I would put that writer on probation.

*Jon Silkworth  
Miami*

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# Dining Guide

## RESTAURANT LISTINGS

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 226.

### MIAMI

#### Brickell / Downtown

##### Abokado

900 S. Miami Ave., 305-347-3700

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., 305-381-3190  
Four Seasons Hotel

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. \$\$\$\$\$

##### Area 31

270 Biscayne Boulevard Way, 305-524-5234

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. \$\$\$\$\$

##### Balans

901 S. Miami Ave., (Mary Brickell Village), 305-534-9191

Open until 4:00 a.m. on weekends, this London import (Miami's second Balans) offers a sleeker setting than its perennially popular Lincoln Road progenitor, but the same simple yet sophisticated global menu. The indoor space can get mighty loud, but lounging on the dog-friendly outdoor terrace, over a rich croque monsieur (which comes with an alluringly sweet/sour citrus-dressed side salad), a lobster club on onion toast, some surprisingly solid Asian fusion items, and a cocktail is one of Miami's more relaxing experiences. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

##### Bali Café

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

While Indonesian food isn't easy to find in Miami, downtown has secret stashes – small joints catering to cruise-ship and construction workers. This cute, exotically decorated café has survived and thrived for good reason. The homey cooking is delicious, and the friendly family feel encourages even the timid of palate to try something new. Novices will want Indonesia's signature rijsttafel, a mix-and-match collection of small dishes and condiments to be heaped on rice. Note: bring cash. No plastic accepted here. \$\$\$

##### The Bar at Level 25 (Conrad Hotel)

1395 Brickell Ave., 305-503-6500

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

##### Botequim Carioca

900 Biscayne Blvd., 305-675-1876

If Brazil's cuisine were defined by the USA's Brazilian restaurants, the conclusion would be that Brazilian people eat nothing but rodizio (all-you-can-eat meat), and weigh, on average, 400 pounds. This Brazilian pub broadens the picture, with a menu that offers entrées, especially at lunch, but highlights Brazilian tapas – mega-mini plates meant for sharing. Must-not-misses include pasteles filled with shrimp and creamy catupiry cheese, beautifully seasoned bolinho de bacalau (fried salt cod dumplings), and aipim frito (house-special yuca fries, the best in town). \$\$\$

##### Cafeina

297 NW 23rd St., 305-438-0792

This elegantly comfortable multi-room indoor/outdoor venue is described as an "art gallery/lounge," and some do come just for cocktails like the hefty café con leche martinis. But don't overlook chef Guily Booth's 12-item menu of very tasty tapas. The signature item is a truly jumbo-lump crab cake with no discernable binder. At one South Beach Wine & Food Festival, Martha Stewart proclaimed it the best she'd ever had. Our own prime pick: melt-in-your-mouth ginger sea bass anticuchos, so buttery-rich we nearly passed out with pleasure. \$\$

##### Café Sambal

500 Brickell Key Dr., 305-913-8358

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

##### The Democratic Republic of Beer

255 NE 14th St., 305-372-4161

The food here? Beer is food! The DRB serves 400 beers from 55 countries, ranging from \$2 Pabst Blue Ribbon to \$40 DeuS (an 11.5% alcohol Belgian *méthode Champenoise* brew). But for those favoring solid snacks, tasty global small-plate plates include fried fresh zucchini with dip (cheese recommended); chorizo with homemade cilantro mayo; or steak tacos, served Mexican-style with onions, cilantro, and spicy

### NEW THIS MONTH

#### MIAMI

#### BRICKELL / DOWNTOWN

##### Cvi.che 105

105 NE 3rd Ave., 305-577-3454

Fusion food – a modern invention? Not in Peru, where native and Euro-Asian influences have mixed for more than a century. But chef Juan Chipoco gives the ceviches and tiraditos served at this hot spot his own unique spin. Specialties include flash-marinated raw seafood creations, such as *tiradito a la crema de rocoto* (sliced fish in citrus-spiked chili/cream sauce). But traditional fusion dishes like Chinese-Peruvian Chaufa fried rice (packed with jumbo shrimp, mussels, and calamari) are also fun, as well as surprisingly affordable. \$\$

#### MIAMI

#### MIDTOWN / WYNWOOD / DESIGN DISTRICT

##### Buena Vista Deli

4590 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-3945

At this casual café/bakery, co-owned by Buena Vista Bistro's Claude Postel, the day starts in authentic French fashion, with fresh breakfast breads, chocolate almond croissants, and other delights. At lunch cornichon-garnished baguette sandwiches (containing homemade pâtés, sinfully rich pork rillettes, superb salami, and other charcuterie classics) are irresistible, and a buttery-crust, custardy quiche plus perfectly dressed salad costs little more than a fast-food combo meal. As for Postel's homemade French sweets, if you grab the last Paris-Brest, a praline butter-cream-filled puff pastry, we may have to kill you. \$\$\$

##### Mercadito Midtown

3252 NE 1st Ave., 786-369-0423

Some people frequent this fashionable restolounge, festooned with graffiti-style murals designed to evoke a bustling Mexican street market, just for the dangerously smooth margaritas. But the main must-haves here are tacos, encased in a rarity: genuinely made-from-scratch corn tortillas, small but faty-stuffed. Of 11 varieties, our favorite is the carnitas (juicy braised pork, spicy chili de arbol slaw, toasted peanuts). A close second: the

salsa. Sadly for breakfast-brew enthusiasts, the DRB isn't open that early. But it is open late – till 5:00 a.m. \$\$

##### Dolores, But You Can Call Me Lolita

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

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 shrimp-topped eggplant timbales. The best seats are on the glam rooftop patio. \$\$\$

hongos, intensely flavorful huitlacoche and wild mushrooms, with manchego and salsa verde – a reminder that vegetarian food need not be bland. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

#### NORTH MIAMI BEACH

##### G-Coffee

3507 NE 163rd St., 305-956-5556

When a cup of regular American joe is as complex and boldly flavored as a gourmet coffeehouse's priciest brews – but cheaper – the creator deserves support, especially when the coffee is organic and the company supports fair trade and sustainable production. To accompany the admirable coffees and teas, G serves paninis plus sweets ranging from guava-stuffed croissants to gelato. Service is speedy, but a relaxed ambience, comfortable contemporary décor, and free WiFi all encourage luxuriant lingering. \$

#### AVENTURA / MIAMI GARDENS

##### The Grill on the Alley

19501 Biscayne Blvd. (Aventura Mall), 305-466-7195

Ensnored in a leather booth, with dark hardwood everywhere and a massive bar dispensing two-fisted drinks, you'd never know you were dining in a shopping mall – or in the new millennium. This upscale mini chain salutes America's great grill restaurants of yesteryear, with prodigious portions of charbroiled meats and seafood, plus classics like creamy chicken pot pie. New retro dishes are added quarterly, but our favorite remains Sunday night's prime rib special: a \$32 hunk of juicy beef that'll take care of Monday's meals too. \$\$\$\$\$

##### Peppermill on the Waterway

3595 NE 207th St., 305-466-2016

Charming Alpine décor and elegant yet accessible traditional Continental comfort foods make this indoor/outdoor restaurant a perennially popular special-occasion place to take the parents. Definitely don't tell the folks' cardiologist about indulging in fine-dining fare from the precholesterol-obsession era: trout almondine with beurre blanc, salmon with hollandaise and creamed spinach, or for super-splurgers, lobster thermidor. While seafood is a specialty, butter-sautéed breaded schnitzels like the chicken Holsteiner (topped with capers, anchovies, and an egg) are a treat. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

##### Ecco Pizzateca & Lounge

168 SE 1st St  
305-960-1900

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 be great, but with pizzas like the cream/mushroom-topped Bianca beckoning, we'll never know. \$\$\$

Continued on page 60

## Restaurant Listings

Continued from page 59

### Eos

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

Unlike their Michelin-starred New Adriatic restaurant Anθος, 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

### Fratelli Milano

**213 S. Miami Ave., 305-373-2300**

Downtown isn't yet a 24/7 urban center, but it's experiencing a mini explosion of eateries open at night. That includes this family-owned ristorante, where even newcomers feel at home. At lunch it's almost impossible to resist panini, served on foccacia or crunchy ciabatta; even the vegetarian version bursts with complex and complementary flavors. During weekday dinners, try generous plates of risotto with shrimp and grilled asparagus; homemade pastas like seafood-packed fettuccine al scoglio; or delicate Vitello alla Milanese on arugula. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

### 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. \$\$\$

### Giovana Caffè

**154 SE 1st Ave., 305-374-1024**

If the menu at this charming downtown hideaway contained only one item – pear and gorgonzola ravioli dressed, not drowned, in sage-spiced cream sauce – we'd be happy. But the café, formerly lunch-only but now serving weekday dinners, is also justly famed for meal-size salads like grilled skirt steak atop sweetly balsamic-dressed spinach (with spinach, tomatoes, bacon, hard-boiled eggs, blue cheese, and almonds), or an especially lavish chicken salad with pine nuts, golden raisins, apples, and basil, an Italian twist. \$\$

### Grimpa Steakhouse

**901 Brickell Plaza, 305-455-4757**

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, non-traditional 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**

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

### Indochine

**638 S. Miami Ave., 305-379-1525**

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**

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. \$\$-\$

### La Provence

**1064 Brickell Ave., 786-425-9003**

Great baguettes in the bread basket, many believe, indicate a great meal to come. But when Miamians encounter such bread – crackling crust outside; moist, aromatic, aerated interior – it's likely not from a restaurant's own kitchen, but from La Provence. Buttery croissants and party-perfect pastries are legend too. Not so familiar is the bakery's café component, whose sandwich/salad menu reflects local eclectic tastes. But French items like pan bagnats (essentially salade Niçoise on artisan bread) will truly transport diners to co-owner David Thau's Provençal homeland. \$\$

### Le Boudoir Brickell

**188 SE 12th Terr., 305-372-233**

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. \$\$\$

### Martini 28

**146 SE 1st Ave., 305-577-4414**

This stylish little lunch-only spot, a labor of love from a husband-wife chef team, serves what might well be the most impressive meal deal in town. From an ambitious, daily-changing menu of fare that's geographically eclectic but prepared with solid classic technique, diners get a choice of about ten entrées (substantial stuff like steak au poivre with Madeira cream sauce and roasted potatoes, or pignolia-crusted salmon with Dijon mustard sauce, potatoes, and veggies), plus soup or salad and housemade dessert. For just \$9.99. Told ya. \$

### MIA at Biscayne

**20 Biscayne Blvd., 305-642-0032**

At this expansive, ultra-glam restorlounge, the eclectic, mostly small-plate menu ranges from the expected (grilled skirt steak with chimichurri; new-style ceviches, and luxe sushi rolls) to a small but tantalizing selection of chef Gerdy Rodriguez's signature creations. Lunch fare includes modernized "Minuta" fish sandwiches (avocado/habanero vinaigrette-dressed hamachi on nori Kaiser rolls), while dinner offers edgier inventions like confit pork belly with a panko-crusted egg yolk capsula, the yolk nitrogen-frozen before frying to achieve a crisp crust and delightfully improbable oozing interior. \$\$\$

### Miami's Chophouse

**300 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-938-9000**

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. \$\$\$

### 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 week-day 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. \$

### Morgans Restaurant

**28 NE 29th St., 305-573-9678**

Housed in a beautifully refurbished 1930s private home, Morgans serves eclectic, sometimes internationally influenced contemporary American cuisine compelling enough to attract hordes. Dishes are basically comfort food, but *ultimate* comfort food: the most custardy, fluffy French toast imaginable; shoestring frites that rival Belgium's best; mouthwatering maple-basted bacon; miraculously terrific tofu (crispy panko-crusted and apricot/soy-glazed); even a "voluptuous grilled cheese sandwich" – definitely a "don't ask, don't tell your cardiologist" item. \$\$-\$\$\$

### Novecento

**1414 Brickell Ave., 305-403-0900**

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**

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

### Pasha's

**1414 Brickell Ave., 305-416-5116**

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

### Peoples Bar-B-Que

**360 NW 8th St., 305-373-8080**

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**

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 fiocchi 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. \$\$

### Prelude

**Adrienne Arsht Center**

**1300 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-6722**

Though the opening of Barton G.'s elegant performing arts center eatery did feature a live giraffe, the food's actually more grown-up than at his original SoBe spot. The concept is prix fixe: Any three courses on the menu (meaning three entrées if you want) for \$39. Highlights include silky, tarra-gon-inflected corn/bacon chowder, beautifully plated beef carpaccio with horseradish/mustard and shallot olive oil dipping sauces; and over-the-top playhouse desserts, one with a luscious crème fraiche ice cream pop. \$\$\$

### Puntino Downtown

**353 SE 2nd Ave., 305-371-9661**

The first U.S. venture of a hotelier from Naples, this stylish little place is open Monday through Saturday for dinner as well as lunch. Ambiance is fashionably cool Milanese rather than effusively warm Neapolitan. The food too is mostly contemporary rather than traditional. But in true Italian style, the best stuff stays simple: an antipasto platter of imported cold cuts with crostini and homemade marinated veggies; crisp-fried calamari and shrimp; airy gnocchi with sprightly tomato sauce, pools of melted bufala mozzarella, and fresh basil. \$\$\$

### Q

**4029 N. Miami Ave., 305-227-2378**

Unlike most urban barbecue joints, this neo-rustic roadhouse uses a genuine wood/charcoal-fired Bewley pit from Texas to flavor its subtly smoky slow-cooked barbecue. And anyone with working taste buds will discern the difference in chef/owner Jonathan Eismann's vinegar-basted North Carolina-style pulled pork, his tender-firm (rather than inauthentically falling-off-the-bone) dry-rubbed spareribs, succulently fatty briskets, and juicy chickens. Tabletop housemade sauces (particularly a piquant mustard-cider St. Louis potion) are enhancers, not essentials. \$\$\$

### The River Oyster Bar

**650 S. Miami Ave., 305-530-1915**

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**

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-habanero-pepper cream sauce), or Rosa's signature guacamole en molcajete, made tableside. A few pomegranate margaritas ensure no worries. \$\$\$

### Solymar

**315 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-371-3421**

Housed in the stunning space with great water views originally occupied by Prime Blue Grille, Solymar similarly pursues the power lunch crowd with steaks and seafood, but with a stronger Latin accent. There's more emphasis on snacks, too, making happy hour a great time to sample \$2.50 tapas like conch fritters with spicy Argentine pink sauce and palmito salad, sparkling-fresh Amarillo chili-spiked Peruvian shrimp ceviche, or festive fish/lump crab sliders, along with half-off drinks. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

### 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

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## DINING GUIDE

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(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. \$-\$\$

#### Thai Angel

152 SE 1st Ave., 305-371-9748

Inside a colorful courtyard that rather resembles Munchkinland, this downtown "insider's secret" serves serious Thai food till 9:00 p.m. daily. Tasty classics like the four curries (red, green, panang, and massaman) come custom-spiced – mild to authentically brain-searing – and are so affordable there's no guilt in splurging on superb house specials like crisp-coated duck or fresh snapper (whole or filleted) in tamarind sauce. The young chef has a heavenly hand at tofu, too, so vegetarians are very well-served. \$\$

#### Tobacco Road

626 S. Miami Ave., 305-374-1198

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. \$\$

#### Tre Italian Bistro

270 E. Flagler St., 305-373-3303

"Bistro" actually sounds too Old World for this cool hangout, from the owners of downtown old-timer La Loggia, but "restolounge" sounds too glitzy. Think of it as a neighborhood "bistrolounge." The food is mostly modernized Italian, with Latin and Asian accents: a prosciutto-and-fig pizza with Brazilian catupiry cheese; gnocchi served either as finger food (fried, with calamata olive/truffle aioli), or plated with orange-ginger sauce. But there are tomato-sauced meatballs with ri'gawt for Grandpa Vinnie, too. \$\$-\$\$\$

#### Urbanite Bistro

62 NE 14th St., 305-374-0662

Ambitious but neither pretentious nor pricey, this multi-room, indoor/outdoor bistro is just the sort of friendly hangout the neighborhood needs. Chef Frank Imbarlina's menu features hip contemporary fare like natural boar chops with a savory-sweet soy/chopped pecan crust. Fish fans and vegetarians will find equally enjoyable large and small plates: potato-wrapped local pompano; beautifully seasoned veg siu mai; shrimp corndogs with mustard and mango dips. Other pluses include an imaginative late-night menu and free valet parking. \$\$-\$\$\$

#### Waxy O'Connor's

690 SW 1st Ct., 786-871-7660

While the menu of this casually *craic* (Gaelic for "fun") Irish pub will be familiar to fans of the South Beach Waxy's, the location is far superior – on the Miami River, with waterfront deck. And none of Miami's Irish eateries offers as much authentic traditional fare. Especially evocative: imported oak-smoked Irish salmon with housemade brown bread; puff-pastry-wrapped Irish sausage rolls; lunchtime's imported Irish bacon or banger "butty" sandwiches on crusty baguettes, served with hand-cut fries, the latter particularly terrific dipped in Waxy's curry sauce. \$\$

#### Wok Town

119 SE 1st Ave., 305-371-9993

Judging from the takeout window, the minimalist décor (with communal seating), and predominance of American veggies on the menu, this Asian fast-food eatery, owned by Shai Ben-Ami (a Miss Yip and Domo Japones veteran) may initially seem akin to those airport Oriental steam tables. Wrong. Custom-cooked by Chinese chefs, starters (like soy/garlic-coated edamame), salads, and have-it-your-way stir-fries, fried rice, or noodle bowls burst with bold, fresh flavor. The proof: a startlingly savory miso beef salad, with sesame/ginger/scallion dressing. Bubble tea, too! \$\$

### 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 unimpressive, but inside

it's bigger, better, and busier than it looks. Unlike many Latin American eateries, this one sticks close to the source and proves a crowd-pleaser. On weekends especially, the dining rooms are packed with families enjoying authentic fare like baleadas (thick corn tacos), tajadas (Honduras's take on tostones), rich meal-in-a-bowl soups packed with seafood or meat and veggies, and more. \$

#### 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 figciutto: 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 frites, salmon atop rata-touille, or many changing blackboard specials. Portions are plentiful. So is free parking. \$\$

#### The Cheese Course

3451 NE 1st Ave., 786-220-6681

Not so much a restaurant as an artisanal cheese shop with complimentary prepared foods, this place's self-service café component nevertheless became an instant hit. Impeccable ingredients and inspired combinations make even the simplest salads and sandwiches unique – like bacon and egg, elevated by hand-crafted cream cheese, roasted red peppers, avocado, and chipotle mayo. Cheese platters are exceptional, and customized for flavor preference from mild to bold, and accompanied by appropriate fruits, veggies, nuts, olives, prepared spreads, and breads. \$\$

#### Clive's Café

2818 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-0277

Some still come for the inexpensive, hearty American breakfasts and lunches that this homey hole-in-the-wall has served for more than 30 years. Since about 1990, though, when owner Pearlina Murray ("Ms. Pearl" to regulars) and cook Gloria Chin began emphasizing their native Jamaican specialties, the intensely spiced grilled jerk chicken has been the main item here. Other favorites: savory rice and pigeon peas; eye-opening onion/vinegar-flavored escovitch fish; sweet plantains; and cabbage that redefines the vegetable. \$

#### 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

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## La Provence

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## Restaurant Listings

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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

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

### Five Guys Famous Burger and Fries

Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Avenue, 305-571-8341

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., 305-572-2901

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 Grrrrlz of Sandwich

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

Riot Grrrrl 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-crust empanadas and sinful Ghirardelli chocolate cake) are all baked in-house. On Saturdays the grrrrls'll even deliver you an elegant (yet inexpensive) breakfast in bed. \$

### Joey's Italian Café

2506 NW 2nd Ave., 305-438-0488

The first new restaurant in the Wynwood Café District, this stylish indoor/outdoor Italian hangout is as casually cool as one would hope – and as affordable. There's a five-buck

half-serving of spaghetti al pomodoro and respectable vino for under \$30. And few can resist delicately thin, crunchy-crust 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. \$\$\$

### La Provence

2200 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-8002

(See Brickell / Downtown listing.)

### Latin Café 2000

2501 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-3838

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/lucafied 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

Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Avenue, 305-576-5463

Like its South Beach predecessor, this Lime was an instant hit, as much for being a hip new Midtown hangout as for its carefully crafted Tex-Mex food. The concept is "fast casual" rather than fast food – meaning nice enough for a night out. It also means ingredients are always fresh. Seafood tacos are about as exotic as the

menu gets, but the mahi mahi for fish tacos comes from a local supplier, and salsas are housemade daily. Niceties include low-carb tortillas and many Mexican beers. \$

### Lost & Found Saloon

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

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

### Maino Churrascaria

2201 Biscayne Blvd., 305-571-9044

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

### Maitardi

163 NE 39th St., 305-572-1400

Though we admired the ambitious approach of Oak Plaza's original tenant, Brosia, this more informal, inexpensive, and straightforwardly Italian concept of veteran Lincoln Road restaurateur Graziano Sbraggio seems a more universal lure for the Design District's central "town square." The mostly outdoor space remains unaltered save a wood-burning oven producing flavorfully char-bubbled pizza creations, plus a vintage meat slicer dispensing wild boar salami, bresaola (cured beef), and other artisan salumi. Other irresistible: fried artichokes with lemony aioli; seafood lasagna with heavenly dill-lobster sauce. \$\$\$

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- Grass-Fed Organic Beef
- Local Wild-Caught Fish
- Fresh Organic Produce
- Free-Range Meats
- Mouth-Watering Desserts
- Architecturally Acclaimed Design

# DINING GUIDE

## Restaurant Listings

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### Mandolin Aegean Bistro

4312 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-6066

Inside this converted 1940s home's blue-and-white dining room – or even more atmospherically, its tree-sheltered garden – diners feast on authentic rustic fare from both Greece and Turkey. Make a meal of multinational mezes: a Greek sampler of creamy tzatziki yogurt dip, smoky eggplant purée, and airy tarama caviar spread; and a Turkish sampler of hummus, fava purée, and rich tomato-walnut dip. The meze of mussels in lemony wine broth is, with Mandolin's fresh-baked flatbread, almost a full meal in itself. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

### 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

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

### Orange Café + Art

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

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

### Out of the Blue Café

2426 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-3800

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

Everyone knew Jonathan Eismann's original Pacific Time, for many years Lincoln Road's only serious restaurant. How different is its new incarnation? Very, and it's all good, starting with far superior acoustics, an admirably green ecological policy, and a neighborhood-friendly attitude. While the addition of Mediterranean influences to the Pacific Rim menu may sound confusing, trust us: A meal that includes a butter-grilled asparagus with prosciutto, soft-cooked egg Milanese, and preserved lemon; plus an Asian-accented creamy corn/leek soup with Peeky Toe crab dumplings, coriander, and mustard oil makes perfect sense on the tongue. \$\$-\$\$\$

### Pasha's

3801 N. Miami Ave., 305-573-0201

(See Brickell/Downtown listing)

### Pizzavolante

3918 N. Miami Ave., 305-573-5325

At this tiny pizza/mozzarella bar, Jonathan Eismann's inspired topping combos and astonishingly high-quality ingredients prove that star-chef skills are not wasted on humble fare. Carnivores must try the Cacciatorini, an ultra-thin and crispy crust with indescribably rich guanciale (cured, unsmoked pork cheek bacon), pungent artisan pepperoni, grana padano, locally made mozzarella, and Italian tomatoes. For meatless pies, we recommend the Bianca, a thyme-seasoned pizza whose plentiful cheeses are beautifully balanced by bitter arugula. Bring a crowd and taste half-a-dozen different mozzarellas. \$\$

### 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. \$\$

### Primo Pizza Miami

3451 NE 1st Ave., 305-535-2555

Just a few years ago, chain pizza joints were dominant most everywhere. Today many places now offer authentic Italian or delicate designer pizzas. But a satisfying Brooklyn-style street slice? Fuhgedit. Thankfully that's the speciality of this indoor/outdoor pizzeria: big slices with chewy crusts (made from imported NY tap water) that aren't ultra-thin and crisp, but flexible enough to fold lengthwise, and medium-thick – sturdy enough to support toppings applied with generous all-American abandon. Take-out warning: Picking up a whole pie? Better bring the SUV, not the Morris Mini.

### Sakaya Kitchen

Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Avenue, 305-576-8096

This chef-driven, fast-casual Asian eatery is more an izakaya (in Japan, a pub with food) than a sakaya (sake shop).

But why quibble about words with so many more intriguing things to wrap your mouth around? The concept takes on street-food favorites from all over Asia, housemade daily from quality fresh ingredients. French Culinary Institute-trained Richard Hales does change his menu, so we'd advise immediately grabbing some crispy Korean chicken wings and Chinese-inspired, open-faced roast pork buns with sweet chili sauce and homemade pickles. \$\$

### Sake Room

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

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

### Salsa Fiesta

2929 Biscayne Blvd., 305-400-8245

The first stateside offshoot of a popular Venezuelan mini chain, this "urban Mexican grill" serves health-conscious, made-fresh-daily fare similar in concept to some fast-casual competitors. But there are indeed differences here, notably pan-Latin options: black beans as well as red; thin, delightfully crunchy tostones (available as a side or as the base for a uniquely tasty take on normal nachos). Other pluses include weekday happy hours with two-for-one beers – and free parking. \$\$\$

### S & S Diner

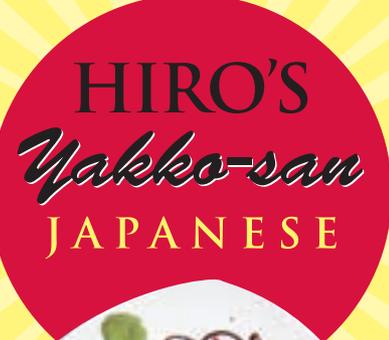
1757 NE 2nd Ave., 305-373-4291

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

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# DINING GUIDE

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suspects, but most regulars ignore the menu and go for the daily blackboard specials. \$\$\$

### Sra. Martinez

4000 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-5474

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

### Sugarcane Raw Bar Grill

3250 NE 1st Ave., 786-369-0353

This chic indoor/outdoor space is an offspring of Lincoln Road's SushiSamba Dromo and a sibling of Sugarcane lounges in NYC and Las Vegas, but more informal than the former and more food-oriented than the latter, as three kitchens – normal, raw bar, and robata charcoal grill – make clear. Chef Timon Balloo's LatAsian small plates range from subtle orange/fennel-marinated salmon crudo to intensely smoky-rich short ribs. At the daily happy hour, select dishes (like steamed pork buns with apple kimchi) are discounted. \$\$\$

### 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 crostons and a poached egg. At night there are tapas. \$\$\$

## Upper Eastside

### Andiamo

5600 Biscayne Blvd.

305-762-5751

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

The new owners of this river shack are banking on Greek food and festivity for success – a good bet, judging from their wildly popular previous eatery, Ouzo. The mainly mezze menu ranges from traditional Greek small plates to creative Mediterranean-inspired dishes like anise-scented fish croquettes with spicy aioli. But don't neglect large plates like

whole grilled Mediterranean fish (dorade or branzino), filleted tableside. The interior is charming, and the outdoor deck on the Little River is positively romantic. \$\$\$

### Boteco

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

This strip of 79th Street is rapidly becoming a cool alt-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. \$\$\$

### Casa Toscana

7001 Biscayne Blvd.

305-758-3353

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. \$\$\$

### 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. \$\$\$

### DeVita's

7251 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-8282

This 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). \$

### Dogma Grill

7030 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-3433

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

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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. \$

### La Q-Bana

8650 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-2550

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

### Europa Car Wash and Café

6075 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-2357

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

### Garden of Eatin'

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

Housed in a yellow building that's nearly invisible from the street, the Garden has the comfortable feel of a beach bar, and generous servings of inexpensive Afro-Caribbean vegan food. Large or small plates, with salad and fried

sweet plantains (plus free soup for eat-in lunchers), are served for five or seven bucks. Also available are snacks like vegetarian blue corn tacos, desserts like sweet potato pie, and a breakfast menu featuring organic blueberry waffles with soy sausage patties. \$

### Gourmet Station

7601 Biscayne Blvd., 305-762-7229

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

### Go To Sushi

5140 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-0914

This friendly, family-run Japanese fast-food eatery offers original surprises like the Caribbean roll (a festively green parsley-coated maki stuffed with crispy fried shrimp, avocado, sweet plantain, and spicy mayo), or a wonderfully healthful sesame-seasoned chicken soup with spinach, rice noodles, and sizable slices of poultry. Health ensured, you can the enjoy a guiltless pig-out on Fireballs: fried dumplings of chicken, cabbage, and egg, crusted with quills -- really a delectable crunchy noodle mix. \$

### Jimmy's East Side Diner

7201 Biscayne Blvd.

305-754-3692

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

### Kingdom

6708 Biscayne Blvd., 305-757-0074

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

### Luna Café

4770 Biscayne Blvd., 305-573-5862

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

### Luna Corner Pizza

6815 Biscayne Blvd., 305-507-9209

At this cheerful takeout/delivery place (masterminded by the Amatruda family, pizza-makers in Italy since 1968), the concept is fast but high-quality whole pies or single slices. Sauce is from flavorful San Marzano tomatoes, and toppings include imported salami picante, pleasantly spicier than American pepperoni. Proprietary electric ovens, designed to transform Luna's secret 24-flour formula into perfectly pliable/foldable crusts in under five minutes, ensure consistently street-neat eats despite the slices' massive size (big pies are 20-inchers). \$

### 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 restolounge, or like anything else in Miami. Forbidding from the outside, on the inside it's like a time-trip to a cabaret in pre-WWII Berlin: bordello-red décor, romantically dim lighting, show-tune live piano bar entertainment, and to match the

ambiance, elegantly updated retro food served with style and a smile. For those feeling flush, home-style fried chicken is just like mom used to make -- in her wildest dreams. \$\$\$

### Metro Organic Bistro

7010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-751-8756

Big changes have come to Karma the car wash, the first being a separate new name for the revamped restaurant: Metro Organic Bistro, an all-organic fine-dining restaurant where simple preparations reveal and enhance natural flavors. An entirely new menu places emphasis on grilled organic meat and fish dishes. Try the steak frites -- organic, grass-fed skirt steak with organic chimichurri and fresh-cut fries. Vegetarians will love the organic portabella foccacia. Dine either inside the architect-designed restaurant or outdoors on the patio. Beer and wine. \$-\$\$\$

### Michy's

6927 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-2001

Don't even ask why Michele Bernstein, with a top-chef 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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### 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

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

### Red Light

7700 Biscayne Blvd., 305-757-7773

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

### 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

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

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

### 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

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. \$\$\$

### Japanese Market and Sushi Deli

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

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

### Mario the Baker

1700 79th St. Causeway, 305-867-7882

(See North Miami listing)

### Oggi Caffè

1666 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1238

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

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 Westland Mall

*The froyo here is delicious  
 and the place is so cool.*

## Restaurant Listings

Continued from page 66

main draw for its large and loyal clientele. Choices range from homey, meaty lasagna to luxuriant crab ravioli with creamy lobster sauce, with occasional forays into creative exotica such as seaweed spaghetti, with sea scallops, shitakes, and fresh tomatoes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

### Shuckers Bar & Grill

1819 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1570

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

### Sushi Siam

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

(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

## NORTH BEACH

### Café Prima Pasta

414 71st St., 305-867-1066

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

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

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. 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-crusted 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 ajiaco. Both are thick chicken soups, full meals in a bowl. For Colombian-cuisine novices, a bandeja paisa (sampler including rice, beans, carne asada, chicharron, eggs, sautéed sweet plantains, and an arepa corn cake) is available every day, as are antojitos — "little whims," smaller snacks like chorizo con arepa (a corn cake with Colombian sausage). And for noncarnivores there are several hefty seafood platters, made to order. \$\$

### Bagels & Co.

11064 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2435

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

### Bocca Ristorante Italiano

1699 NE 123rd St., 305-891-4899

One word: Spaghetti chitarra alla carbonara. Okay, four words. But this one dish alone (housemade pasta whose square-cut, irregular texture perfectly traps maximum amounts of a luscious pancetta/egg yolk/cream sauce) is reason enough to return many times to this friendly little trattoria. Owing to a low-visibility location, Bocca is one of those "best kept secret" spots. But an \$18.95

three-course prix fixe menu should convince even the jaded that this easy-to-miss place is a must-not-miss. \$\$

### Bulldog Barbecue

15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-940-9655

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

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. \$\$

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## Restaurant Listings

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### Captain Jim's Seafood

12950 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-892-2812

This market/restaurant was garnering critical acclaim even when eat-in dining was confined to a few Formica tables in front of the fish counter, owing to the freshness of its seafood, much of it from Capt. Jim Hanson's own fishing boats, which supply many top restaurants. Now there's a casual but pleasantly nautical side dining room with booths. Whether it's garlicky scampi, smoked-fish dip, grilled yellowtail or hog or mutton snapper, perfectly tenderized cracked conch or conch fritters, everything is deftly prepared and bargain-priced. \$\$

### Casa Mia Trattoria

1950 NE 123rd St., 305-899-2770

Tucked away, off to the side on the approach to the Broad Causeway and the beaches, this charming indoor/outdoor trattoria seems to attract mostly neighborhood regulars. But even newcomers feel like regulars after a few minutes, thanks to the staff's Italian ebullience. Menu offerings are mostly classic comfort foods with some contemporary items as well. Housemade pastas are good enough that low-carb dieters should take a break, especially for the tender gnocchioni with pesto or better yet, delicate fagottini — "beggar's purses" stuffed with pears and cheese. \$\$

### Chéen-huyae

15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-956-2808

Diners can get some Tex-Mex dishes here, if they must. But the specialty is Mayan-rooted Yucatan cuisine. So why blow bucks on burritos when one can sample Caribbean Mexico's most typical dish: cochinita pibil? Chéen's authentically succulent version of the pickle-onion-topped marinated pork dish is earthily aromatic from achiote, tangy from bitter oranges, and meltingly tender from slow cooking in a banana leaf wrap. To accompany, try a lime/soy/chili-spiced michelada, also authentically Mexican, and possibly the best thing that ever happened to dark beer. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

### Chef Creole

13105 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-893-4246

(See Miami listing)

### D.J.'s Diner

12210 Biscayne Blvd., 305-893-5250

Located in a Best Western motel, this place, run by a Chinese-American family, serves mostly basic American diner fare — burgers, sandwiches, about a dozen dinner entrées, fresh-baked apple pie, and, oddly, a whole section of Caesar salad variations. But it's also a secret source for Chinese food, mostly chow mien/chop suey-type dishes, but also a few dishes such as eggplant with garlic sauce and ma po tofu that are a step up in authenticity. \$\$\$

### Here Comes the Sun

2188 NE 123rd St, 305-893-5711

At this friendly natural foods establishment, one of Miami's first, there's a full stock of vitamins and nutritional supplements. But the place's hearty soups, large variety of entrées (including fresh fish and chicken as well as vegetarian selections), lighter bites like miso burgers with secret "sun sauce" (which would probably make old sneakers taste good), and daily specials are a tastier way to get healthy. An under-ten-buck early-bird dinner is popular with the former long-hair, now blue-hair, crowd. Frozen yogurt, fresh juices, and smoothies complete the menu. \$\$\$

### Le Griot de Madame John

975 NE 125th St., 305-892-9333

When Madame moved her base of operations from her Little Haiti home to a real restaurant (though a very informal one, and still mostly take-out), she began offering numerous traditional Haitian dishes, including jerked beef or goat tassot and an impressive poisson gros sel (a whole fish rubbed with salt before poaching with various veggies and spices). But the dish that still packs the place is the griot: marinated pork chunks simmered and then fried till they're moistly tender inside, crisp and intensely flavored outside. \$

### Little Havana

12727 Biscayne Blvd., 305-899-9069

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. \$\$\$

### 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

13695 W. Dixie Highway, 305-891-7641

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 pizza; the top topping here is the savory housemade sausage. And no one leaves without garlic rolls, awash in warm parsley oil and smashed garlic. New branches are now open in Miami's Midtown neighborhood and in North Bay Village. \$

### 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 bistro 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

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, bergerbite, Cezarrrrr salad, hammm, meat-a-ball, schmopperrr — may cause queasiness. But the schmopperrr itself is one helluva high-octane veggie burger. \$\$\$

### Steve's Pizza

12101 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-0202

At the end of a debauched night of excess, some paper-thin designer pizza with wisps of smoked salmon (or similar fluff) doesn't do the trick. Open till 3:00 or 4:00 a.m., Steve's has, since 1974, been serving the kind of comforting, retro pizzas people crave at that hour. As in Brooklyn, tomato sauce is sweet, with strong oregano flavor. Mozzarella is applied with abandon. Toppings are stuff that give strength: pepperoni, sausage, meatballs, onions, and peppers. \$

### Tokyo Bowl

12295 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-9400

This fast-food drive-thru (unexpectedly serene inside) is named for its feature item, big budget-priced bowls of rice or noodles topped with cooked Japanese-style items like teriyaki fish (fresh fish sautéed with vegetables), curried chicken and veggies, spicy shrimp, or gyoza dumplings in tangy sauce. There's also an all-you-can-eat deal — sushi (individual nigiri or maki rolls) plus tempura, teriyaki, and other cooked items for \$14; three bucks more for sashimi instead of sushi. \$\$\$

### Venezia Pizza and Café

13452 Biscayne Blvd., 305-940-1808

No frozen pizza crusts or watery mozzarella here. No imported designer ingredients either. The pies are New York-style, but the dough is made fresh daily, and the cheese is Grande (from Wisconsin, considered America's finest pizza topper). Also on the menu are Italian-American pastas, a large selection of hot and cold subs, simple salads, and a few new protein adds — grilled chicken breast, fried fish, or a steak. \$\$\$

### Wong's Chinese Restaurant

12420 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-4313

The menu reads like a textbook on how to please everyone, with food ranging from traditional Chinese to Chinese-American to just plain American. Appetizers include honey garlic chicken wings or Buffalo wings. A crab-claw starter comes with choice of pork fried rice or French fries. Seafood lovers can get shrimp chop suey, or salty pepper shrimp (authentically shell-on). And New Yorkers will find a number of dishes that are mainstays of Manhattan Szechuan menus but not common in Miami: cold sesame noodles, Hunan chicken, twice-cooked pork. \$\$

### Woody's Famous Steak Sandwich

13105 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-1451

The grille has been fired up since 1954 at this indie fast-food joint, and new owners have done little to change the time-tested formula except to stretch operating hours into the night and expand its classic menu to include a few health-conscious touches like Caesar salad, plus a note proclaiming their oils are free of trans fats. Otherwise the famous steak sandwich is still a traditional Philly. Drippin' good burgers, too. And unlike MacChain addicts, patrons here can order a cold beer with the good grease. \$\$\$

## NORTH MIAMI BEACH

### Bamboo Garden

1232 NE 163rd St., 305-945-1722

Big enough for a banquet (up to 300 guests), this veteran

is many diners' favorite on the 163rd/167th Street "Chinatown" strip because of its superior décor. But the menu also offers well-prepared, authentic dishes like peppery black bean clams, sautéed mustard greens, and steamed whole fish with ginger and scallions, plus Chinese-American egg foo young. Default spicing is mild even in Szechuan dishes marked with red-chili icons, but don't worry; realizing some like it hot, the chefs will customize spiciness to heroic heat levels upon request. \$\$

### Blue Marlin Fish House

2500 NE 163rd St., 305-957-8822

Located inside Oleta River State Park, this casual outdoor eatery is a rare surprise for nature lovers. 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. \$

### Café Boogalu

14480 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-1900

This fast-casual Brazilian eatery is the first U.S. branch of a chain from Recife, where, legend has it, the food is unusually tasty owing to the magical influence of a sacred African rhinoceros named Boogalu, who escaped from a private zoo into the region's jungles some 150 years ago. Judge for yourself by sampling our more modern pick, the Boogalu salad (sesame-topped shrimp, mixed greens, sun-dried tomato, and mozzarella, with an unusual sweet peach dressing). For heavier eaters there are rhino-size steak, chicken, seafood, and pasta entrées for mouse-size prices. \$\$

### 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

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 Gouvella, originally from British Guyana, the wrapper is a far more substantial and tasty roti, a Caribbean mega-crepe 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

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# DINING GUIDE

## Restaurant Listings

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choose. Take-out packages of plain roti are also available; they transform myriad leftovers into tasty, portable lunches. \$

### Flamma Brazilian Steakhouse

3913 NE 163rd St., (Intracoastal Mall)  
305-957-9900

The rodizio formula is familiar: Pay one price (\$39.90 for dinner, \$29.90 at Sunday brunch), then eat till you drop from a groaning salad/appetizer bar and a massive selection of beef, pork, lamb, poultry, sausage, and fish (16 varieties at dinner; 5 at brunch) carved tableside by costumed waiters. What spectacularly differentiates Flamma: its setting on the Intracoastal Waterway. But also spectacular is a Monday-Thursday two-for-one dinner deal with a coupon available at Flamma. Unbelievable but true. \$\$\$

### El Gran Inka

3155 NE 163rd St., 305-940-4910

Though diners at this upscale Peruvian eatery will find ceviches, a hefty fried-seafood jalea, and Peru's other expected traditional specialties, all presented far more elegantly than most in town, the contemporary Peruvian fusion creations are unique. Especially recommended are two dishes adapted from recipes by Peru's influential nikkei (Japanese/Creole) chef Rosita Yimura: an exquisite, delicately sauced tiradito de corvina, and for those with no fear of cholesterol, pulpo de oliva (octopus topped with rich olive sauce). \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

### Hanna's Gourmet Diner

13951 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-2255

When Sia and Nicole Hemmati bought the Gourmet Diner from retiring original owner Jean-Pierre Lejeune in the late 1990s, they added "Hanna's" to the name, but changed little else about this retro-looking French/American diner, a north Miami-Dade institution since 1983. Customers can get a cheeseburger or garlicky escargots, meatloaf in tomato sauce or boeuf bourguignon in red wine sauce, iceberg lettuce and tomatoes, or a mushroom and squid salad with garlic dressing. For oysters Rockefeller/

tuna-melt couples from Venus and Mars, it remains the ideal dinner date destination. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

### 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

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 Renaiss. 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

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 unattractive 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

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 fagiole, 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,

Continued on page 70

# Sakaya Kitchen



Photo by Simon Hare

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# DINING GUIDE

## Restaurant Listings

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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

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

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

(See Miami: Brickell / Downtown listing)

### Paul Bakery Café

14861 Biscayne Blvd., 305-940-4443

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

"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 Kitchen

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. \$\$

### Salsa Fiesta

2929 Biscayne Blvd., 305-400-8245

The first stateside offshoot of a popular Venezuelan mini chain, this "urban Mexican grill" serves health-conscious, made-fresh-daily fare similar in concept to some fast-casual competitors. But there are indeed differences here, notably pan-Latin options: black beans as well as red; thin, delightfully crunchy tostones (available as a side or as the base for a uniquely tasty take on normal nachos). Other pluses include weekday happy hours with two-for-one beers – and free parking. \$\$-\$\$

### 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 esotérica like abalone with sea cucumber. The extensive third menu offers dim sum, served until 4:00 p.m. A live tank allows seasonal seafood dishes like lobster with ginger and scallion. Recently installed: a Chinese barbecue case, displaying savory items like crispy pork with crackling attached. \$\$\$

### Shing Wang Vegetarian, Icee & Tea House

237 NE 167th St., 305-654-4008

At this unique Taiwanese eatery, run by a trio of Taipei-trained female chefs, all seafood, poultry, and meats in the budget-priced entrées (\$6.95) are mock – imitations made from wheat gluten, tofu, and vegetables. But don't mock it till you try the quite beefy pepper steak, or smokin' duck, with slices that mimic the charcuterie item down to convincing faux fat. Other main dishes feature recognizable veggies or noodles. As for the rest of the name: icee is shaved ice, an over-the-top dessert that's a sort of a slurpee sundae, with toppings that vary from the familiar (fresh fruits) to the weird (grass jelly, sweet corn, kidney beans, rice balls, chocolate pudding). And the bubble tea is a must-not-miss. Using housemade syrup, the cold, refreshing boba comes in numerous flavors (mango, taro, even actual tea), all supplemented with signature black tapioca balls that, slurped through large-diameter straws, are a guaranteed giggle. \$

### Siam Square

54 NE 167th St., 305-944-9697

Open until 1:00 a.m. every day except Sunday (when it closes at midnight), this relatively new addition to North Miami Beach's "Chinatown" strip has become a popular late-night gathering spot for chefs from other Asian restaurants. And why not? The food is fresh, nicely presented, and reasonably priced. The kitchen staff is willing to customize dishes upon request, and the serving staff is reliably fast. Perhaps most important, karaoke equipment is in place when the mood strikes. \$\$-\$\$

### Scorch Grillhouse and Wine Bar

13750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-5588

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

### Sushi Sake

13551 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-4242

Chic Asian-accented décor, video screens, 99-cent drink deals, and late-night hours make this hip hangout not just a sushi bar but sort of a neighborhood bar, too. That said, the sushi is impressive, mainly because seafood is delivered daily and all except the shrimp is fresh, not frozen (as is customary at most Miami sushi places). Also notable: All sauces are housemade. Cooked makis like a crunch-topped Miami Heat are most popular, but it's as sashimi that the fish's freshness truly shines. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

### Tuna's Raw Bar and Grille

17850 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-932-0630

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

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. \$\$

### Bagel Cove Restaurant & Deli

19003 Biscayne Blvd., 305-935-4029

One word: flagels. And no, that's not a typo. Rather these crusty, flattened specimens (poppy seed or sesame seed) are the ultimate bagel/soft pretzel hybrid – and a specialty at this bustling Jewish bakery/deli, which, since 1988, opens at 6:30 a.m. – typically selling out of flagels in a couple of hours. Since you're up early anyway, sample elaborately garnished breakfast specials, including unusually flavorful homemade corned beef hash and eggs. For the rest of the day, multitudes of mavens devour every other delectable deli specialty known to humankind. \$

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# DINING GUIDE

## Restaurant Listings

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### Bella Luna

19575 Biscayne Blvd., Aventura Mall, 305-792-9330

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

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

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, scallops, 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

### Fuji Hana

2775 NE 187th St., Suite #1, 305-932-8080

A people-pleasing menu of typical Thai and Japanese dishes, plus some appealing contemporary creations (like the Spicy Crunchy Tuna Roll, an inside-out tuna/avocado/tempura maki, topped with more tuna and served with a luscious creamy cilantro sauce) has made this eatery a longtime favorite. But vegetarians – for whom seafood-based condiments can make Asian foods a minefield – might want to add the place to their "worth a special drive" list, thanks to chefs' winning ways with tofu and all-around accommodation to veg-only diets. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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

### Mo's Bagels & Deli

2780 NE 187th St., 305-936-8555

While the term "old school" is used a lot to describe this spacious (160-seat) establishment, it actually opened in 1995. It just so evokes the classic NY delis we left behind that it seems to have been here forever. Example: Lox and nova aren't pallid, prepackaged fish, but custom-sliced from whole slabs. And bagels are hand-rolled, chewy champions, not those machine-made puffy poseurs. As complimentary pastry bites suggest, and the massive size of the succulent, sufficiently fatty pastrami sandwiches confirm, generous Jewish Mo(m) spirit shines here. \$\$

### Pilar

20475 Biscayne Blvd., 305-937-2777

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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Irene Dakota   
305.972.8860  
idakota@metro1properties.com

**DESIGN DISTRICT**  
78 NE 47 ST  
Professionally Designed Loft Home  
Asking price: \$399,000

38/28 Bungalow in Buena Vista East available. Completely remodeled 1,850 sf interior with designer elements. Seller motivated!

Tony Cho   
305.571.9991  
tcho@metro1properties.com

**JOCKEY CLUB**  
11111 Biscayne Blvd  
Jockey Club I Unit 1904  
Asking price: \$274,999

1,800 sf apartment with 3 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms. Unit overlooks the Biscayne Bay from almost every room. Recently updated. Maintenance \$1,300.

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**UPPER EAST SIDE**  
8101 Biscayne Blvd # 307  
Hip 2-story Loft  
Asking price: \$1,500/Month

This property features polished concrete flooring, floor-to-ceiling picture windows with designer blinds. It is ideal for LIVE/WORK space.

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**JUST LISTED • The Historic Post Office Building • 100 NE 1st Ave**



National Historic Landmark - Built 1912. **Mixed Use Office and Retail.** Full Floor Plates Available 7,300 sf. Devisable.  
Miami's Original Federal Building: Post Office, Courthouse, Weather Bureau, and Immigration.  
Recently Restored Common Areas, Lobby, Elevator, Landings, Staircase, Bathrooms. **Build-to-Suit** potentially available.  
Unique and Powerful Address for your Business.

