

BISCAYNE

Times

NEW THIS ISSUE
Dining Guide p. 59
6 New Local Restaurants
233 Total!

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www.BiscayneTimes.com

July 2010

Volume 8, Issue 5

5 Things FISHING Has Taught Me About Life

Lessons learned from decades of dropping hook and line into Biscayne Bay — and five places to do just that

By Arnold Markowitz
Photos by Silvia Ros

So long ago that Google never heard of him, a man named Charlie Pujols had a bait store at the north end of the Port of Miami, which was being moved from the mainland to Dodge Island. A few of the old port's

cargo warehouses still stood, tottering, between the bait store and Miami Bayfront Park. That's where I met a new friend, Biscayne Bay. The bay didn't speak aloud — though I thought I heard it whisper, "Shut up and fish" — but

it had a welcoming manner and let me hang out with it whenever I had time.

I went to Charlie's late at night, after work at a place a lot of local people still called the *Miama Hurler*. The city was changing fast in the late 1960s but it

wasn't unusual to meet people who spoke the Y'all dialect.

At 1:00 a.m. we could walk across the street from the *Herald* to Charlie's, where Bicentennial Park is now, and

Continued on page 14



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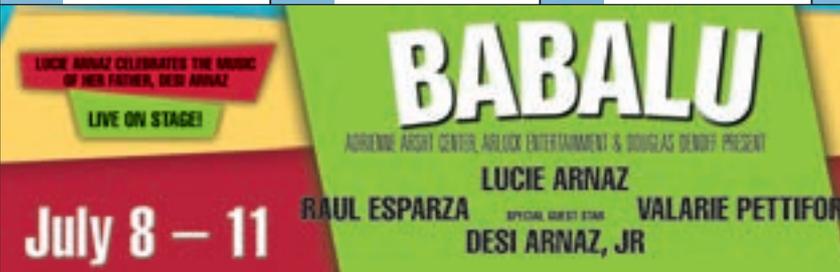
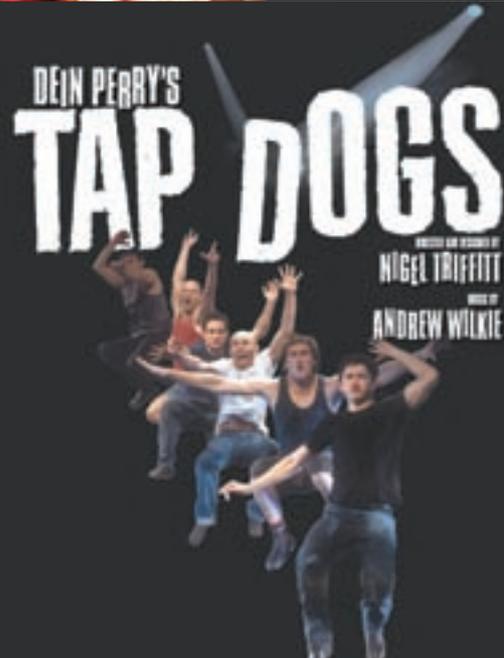
TURNBERRY
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1021 Kane Concourse, Bay Harbor Island, FL

JULY

Adrienne Arsht Center FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

K KNIGHT CONCERT HALL **C** CARNIVAL STUDIO THEATER **Z** ZIFF BALLETT OPERA HOUSE **P** PARKER AND VANN THOMSON PLAZA

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
 <p>BABALU ADRIENNE ARSHT CENTER, ARLUCK ENTERTAINMENT & DOUGLAS DENOFF PRESENT LUCIE ARNAZ RAUL ESPARZA SPECIAL GUEST STAR VALARIE PETTIFORD DESI ARNAZ, JR</p> <p>July 8 – 11</p>			<p>1 Tap Dogs 7:30PM Z Tap Dogs have taken the world by storm with a fast and fabulous theater-dance spectacle!</p>	<p>2 Tap Dogs 8PM Z "Exciting, athletically feisty, fun-loving, and hilarious!" <i>The Chicago Tribune</i></p>	<p>3 Tap Dogs 2PM & 8PM Z "Spectacular! Triumphant! An Amazing Achievement!" <i>The Los Angeles Times</i></p>		
 <p>XXV International Hispanic Theatre Festival July 7 – August 1, 2010</p>			<p>6 Tap Dogs 7:30PM Z "A sexy, fast, and fabulous hit!" <i>San Francisco Chronicle</i></p>	<p>7 Tap Dogs 7:30PM Z International Hispanic Theatre Festival (IHTF) - Amarillo 8:30PM C A play that explores the concept of national identity.</p>	<p>8 Tap Dogs 7:30PM Z Babalú 7:30PM K Lucie Arnaz celebrates the music of her father, Desi Arnaz! IHTF - Amarillo C 8:30PM</p>	<p>9 Tap Dogs 7:30PM & 10PM Z "Tap dancing will never be the same!" <i>The London Times</i> Babalú 8PM K IHTF - Amarillo 8:30PM C</p>	<p>10 Tap Dogs 2PM & 8PM Z Babalú 2PM & 8PM K Straight from a sold out New York engagement! IHTF - Divinas Palabras 8:30PM C</p>
<p>11 IHTF - Divinas Palabras 5PM C Babalú 7:30PM K "Raúl Esparza infuses the songs with a fiery theatrical intensity and nostril-flaring passion!" <i>The New York Times</i></p>	 <p>DEIN PERRY'S TAP DOGS DIRECTED AND STAGED BY NIGEL THRIFFITT MUSIC BY ANDREW WILKIE</p> <p>"EXCITING, ATHLETICALLY FEISTY, FUN-LOVING, AND HILARIOUS!" <i>The Chicago Tribune</i></p> <p>JUNE 30-JULY 10</p>			<p>14 IHTF - Os Sonhos De Segismundo 8:30PM C Six characters set out on a mythical journey into their dreams!</p>	<p>15 IHTF - Os Sonhos De Segismundo 8:30PM C IHTF celebrates its 25th anniversary season by presenting the best in Hispanic theater companies!</p>	<p>16 IHTF - Os Sonhos De Segismundo 8:30PM C "The quality attests to the vibrancy and talent of theatre being produced in the Spanish-speaking world!" <i>The New York Times</i></p>	<p>17 IHTF - Flores Arrancadas A La Niebla 8:30PM C Two women fleeing the aftermath of an unspecified war.</p>
<p>18 IHTF - Flores Arrancadas A La Niebla 5PM C International Hispanic Theater Festival is the only festival of its kind!</p>				<p>21 IHTF - Gatomaquia 8:30PM C "IHTF is considered one of South Florida's best-kept cultural secrets!" <i>Miami New Times</i></p>	<p>22 IHTF - Gatomaquia 8:30PM C "This is a festival that should return every year and stay longer!" <i>The New York Times</i></p>	<p>23 IHTF - Gatomaquia 8:30PM C "It is a reminder of the deep traditions and long history of Latin American drama." <i>The New York Times</i></p>	<p>24 IHTF - Pedro De Valdivia 8:30PM C Three actor-musicians retell the story of the conquest of Chile!</p>
<p>25 IHTF - Pedro De Valdivia 5PM C Through a lively combination of music and humor, the work prompts serious reflection on Spain's colonization of the Americas.</p>				<p>28 IHTF - Por Las Tierras De Colon 8:30PM C "Latin-American theater constructs its symbolism from movement, physicality, and gesture." <i>The New York Times</i></p>	<p>29 IHTF - Por Las Tierras De Colon 8:30PM C Recipient of the University of Miami's 1987 Golden Letters Award.</p>	<p>30 IHTF - Por Las Tierras De Colon 8:30PM C "IHTF continues to offer thought-provoking, aesthetically diverse, first-rate theater from around the world." <i>The Miami Herald</i></p>	<p>31 IHTF - Por Las Tierras De Colon 8:30PM C This award-winning festival raises the curtain on Hispanic culture!</p>

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BISCAYNE Times

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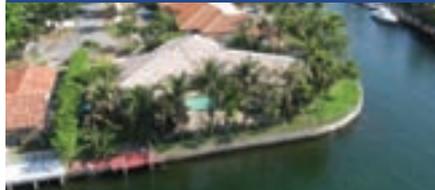
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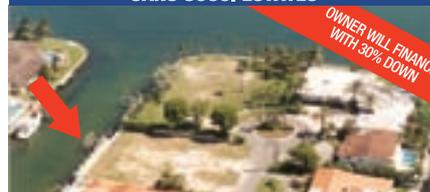
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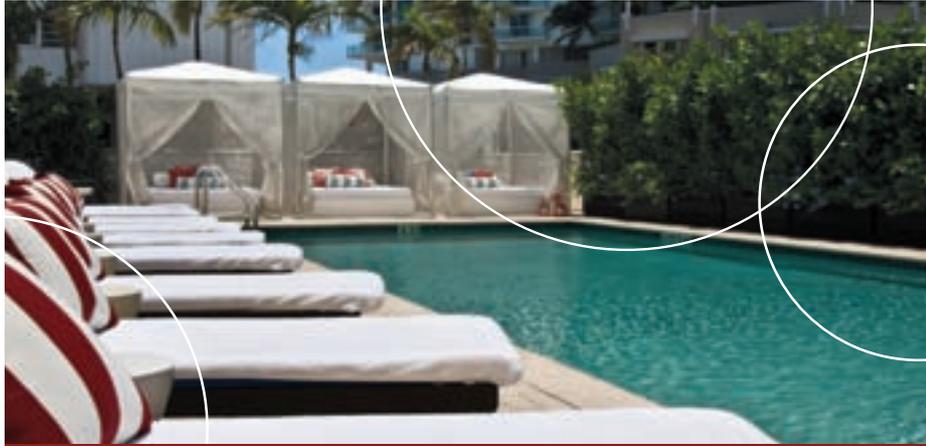


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COMMENTARY: FEEDBACK

Letters to the Editor

How About It, Kids? Let's Make a Garden!

Erik Bojnansky's story about World Gardens at Midtown Miami ("How Does Your Garden Grow?" June 2010) highlights a commendable concept and ambitious undertaking. Citizen-generated garden creations offer unique opportunities and challenges for community activism and citizen involvement. Unfortunately, as is so often the case with such undertakings, the results often seem to pale when measured against the initial objectives. Notwithstanding such realities, the initiative of Harry Nelson and his cohorts in this egalitarian undertaking speaks well of their intentions and objectives in making our community a greener and more beautiful place.

However, a few disconcerting issues reflected in the article require clarification.

- The State of Florida's Department of Business and Professional Regulation licenses the practice of landscape architecture. The current records of DBPR do not list "landscape designer" Harry Nelson as a licensed landscape architect in Florida.

- The issue of poor soil conditions on the site would likely have been revealed to an experienced South Florida landscape architect or to a competent, qualified horticulturist.

- Mr. Bojnansky appears to have attributed an inaccurate term, "parched water table," to the noted local horticulturist Jeff Shimonski, who likely observed the possibility of a *perched* water table in his assessment of plantings at World Gardens at Midtown Miami. A perched water table occurs when an impermeable layer of material (rock, clay, compressed soil, etc.) exists below the surface, but above the primary aquifer of a geographic region. Depending on its position within the substrate, such impermeable layers may "trap" and retain excessive quantities of water, generally within the root zones of plants. This will result in soil saturation and the subsequent exclusion of appropriate levels of oxygen within the root zone, leading to root rot and declining plant vigor, and ultimately plant failure.

*Ted Baker, fellow
American Society of Landscape
Architects
Miami*

Driving Aimlessly, Letters in Hand

Like Gaspar González, I'm very annoyed at the lack of postal boxes where I live, in North Miami ("Return to Sender," June 2010). There used to be three boxes behind the CVS next to the Publix at NE 6th Avenue and 127th Street, but now there are none.

I too drive around hoping to see a letter carrier or get to a post office. This is ridiculous. I can't put out my mail because I live on a street in North Miami where children walk to and from elementary school. I've found my mail on the lawn or ripped up. So it's a problem everywhere.

Thanks for letting me vent.

*Susan Bogusky
North Miami*

Driving to the Shores: What Could Be Worse?

I agree with Gaspar González. I work from home and have a small business that requires mailing out monthly invoices.

Without a mailbox, I now have to take my invoices to the Miami Shores post office, which means driving there just to mail them!

*Jovita Nalepa
Biscayne Park*

Not Just a Thank You, a Huge Thank You

I enjoyed the story by Margaret Griffis about Morningside Elementary School ("Two Communities, One School," June 2010) but want to point out that the article neglected to mention the hard work Sandy Moise has done with us to make this school a better place. It was she who put us in contact with the University of Miami to work on a garden plan at the school in the first place. We owe her a huge thank you.

*Michael Loveland
Morningside*

So It Is True: Getting a Voter Registration Card Is Harder

Gaspar González's cover story "As the Market Turns" (May 2010) was wonderful. Not only did I enjoy it immensely, I

.....
Continued on page 8

Bryan T. Halda, P.A.

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Golden Beach-Direct Ocean Front
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north bay island
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COMMENTARY: FEEDBACK

Letters

Continued from page 6

laughed out loud at some points.

I wish I'd read something like that *before* we bought our house two and a half years ago. It seems to me that around these parts, anybody can get a Realtor's license. Some of those traps the Gonzálezes avoided, we fell for.

Please continue such wonderful articles, and maybe do a follow-up on the same subject.

Franco V. Arias
Jacques E. Christin
North Bay Village

How to Buy a House Like a Millionaire

Here is a little-known secret about how to reply to a real estate agent who asks for "exclusivity." Simply reply, "Okay, but I want *you* to sign an agreement that you are *my* exclusive agent, meaning you cannot conspire with the sellers and their agent, and you will do your best to get us the best price and total deal."

Do not sign a realtor-buyer form. It's not in your interest.

Also \$12,000 for closing costs and "extras" seems suspect on the \$200,000 house Gaspar González and his wife bought. Always get an itemization of closing costs, and then compare them competitively. For more information about all this, go to homebuyerbeware.org.

By the way, this is the way millionaires have bought houses for years.

Jim Anderson
Miami

A Good Writer in Search of a Story

I write this with some trepidation. By his own description, Gaspar González, *Biscayne Times's* "Neighborhood Correspondent," is new to Biscayne Park, having moved here in December 2009, and I welcome him. There's no doubt that wherever there are gatherings — in larger municipalities or "burgs" like ours — there are different types of people. Our neighborhood, the Village, is a bit more heterogeneous than some this size, and we have our distinct and sometimes differing types, too.

At the moment we are more polarized than usual. For whatever reasons, over the past couple of years a vocal faction has emerged. This faction consists of people

who could be called, for simplicity's sake, whiners, complainers, and naysayers. They present themselves as something of a fringe and are notable for identifying evil forces in the universe, powerful entities, and crusading against them.

These entities have variously been the City of North Miami, FPL; and more recently, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). Sometimes this faction has even identified the Village itself as an aggressor against the residents.

Don't ask. I can't explain it myself.

All the accused are portrayed as having muscled and misused the humble citizenry of Biscayne Park, and all have been considered worthy of confrontation and crusade. To listen to the complaints, one can hear a distinct "rise up against the tyrant" theme.

I don't know Mr. González. I introduced myself to him at a meeting a few weeks ago, but I think he was otherwise engaged. So I don't know how he got where he did, but it's clear he has joined the crusades. It is clear, at least, that he has a special fondness and empathy for the crusaders.

Or maybe he just likes telling their story. In the absence of anything more substantial, it's a pretty colorful and engaging story to tell.

I don't know, for example, if he personally agrees that FPL ("Uncivil War," May 2010) and the USPS ("Return to Sender," June 2010) are out to mistreat the residents of Biscayne Park. Maybe he just takes these rhetorical positions because they make better copy.

If USPS victimizes and deprives a small and seemingly powerless community of its one mailbox, while giving the rich and powerful of Miami Shores whatever they want, there's an interesting story to tell.

If USPS just pulled some boxes because they weren't much used, Mr. González has to look for something else. I see he relied heavily on, and made his case around, the impressionistic report of the letter carrier, to the effect that the box was significantly used. I don't know that a lot of reporters would consider that an adequate source, especially considering the allegation.

Anyway, I welcome Mr. González to Biscayne Park, and I do think he is a very good writer. May he keep up the great storytelling and find some good and meaningful stories to tell.

Fred Jonas
Biscayne Park

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BizBuzz: July 2010

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

By Pamela Robin Brandt
BT Contributor

After spending the past month working in NYC, BizBuzz wants to assure *Biscayne Times* readers this: It's just as hot and humid up there, and they don't have their A/C as together as we do. Nor do they have Miami's uniquely relaxed, locals-oriented summer party scene.

Which brings us to July's offer from **GG Salon and Spa** (9063

Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-9719): Organize a spa party of at least six people, purchasing \$40 or more of services each, and the host gets his/her services free. Partiers can bring their own eats and music; owner Gloria Gonzalez will arrange for drinks appropriate to all ages and occasions.

"Pasta & Music" is definitely our idea of a party, and also Flaminia Morin's. The owner of **Yes Pasta!** (14871 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-1006) is offering a free chef's choice appetizer with any pasta order on the night of the event: July 23, starting at 6:00 p.m. Call ahead for more details.

Let's say you have some visiting friends who are seeking an affordable vacation hotel, or maybe you'd like to try the trend toward staycations — mini breaks in your own area. If so, then **Circa 39 Hotel** (3900 Collins Ave., 305-538-4900, www.circa39.com) fits the bill. From the family that owns the gorgeous Palms Hotel up the block, this chic, full-service boutique hotel has everything required for R&R&R (rest and relaxation, plus romance): cool and comfortable rooms, tranquil pool deck, courtyard dining, beach privileges, a bar/lounge, an intimate in-house bistro, and all manner of Internet access, if you must work a bit. Rates? Unbelievably low, and lower still with Circa 39's summer special, running through September: Pay for three nights, get the fourth free.

It's the first anniversary for **Hannah and Her Scissors** in its new location (611 NE 86th St., 305-772-8426). And as

A & A Village Treasures



Master printer Koko Jourbadjian

GG Salon and Spa



Circa 39 Hotel



Hannah and Her Scissors



usual, when celebrity hair artist Hannah Lasky celebrates, *BT* readers get the gifts. For the whole month of July patrons purchasing a Keratin treatment (the deep conditioning straightening/smoothing process that gets rid of summer frizz-monster hair) also receive a free haircut. Congrats, Hannah!

Need some serious smile improvement too? **Dental Options** (11645 Biscayne Blvd., suite 204, 305-892-2960) has just expanded, with a new state-of-the-art Aventura office at 2991 NE 191st St., suite 804 (305-466-2960). And no worries. The dental work is not just high-tech and high quality, but gentle. Mention the *BT* for a new patient special: \$59 for an exam, digital X-rays, and cleaning.

For serious shoppers, **Herval USA's** famed furniture showrooms (2666 NE 189th St., 305-466-2606 and 1730 Biscayne Blvd., 305-377-1221) offer a Fourth of July special: 10% off all purchases. Just say, "Happy Independence."

This month at **A & A Village Treasures** in Miami Shores (9702 NE 2nd Ave.), new items include a 12-photo "Impressions of Cuba" exhibit by local artist Vanessa Vallejo. And for those who like wearing their art, there are additions to the stock of Rava Designs' one-of-a-kind, semi-precious jewelry (featuring chunky beads of chalk turquoise, purple-dyed agate, white marble, etc.), which the treasure chest's owners Amado Mesa and Anthony Kylor, describe as "very *Sex in the City II*."

The printing business has certainly changed since new advertiser **Alko Printing** (3208 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-3634) opened its doors in 1981. Owner Koko Jourbadjian would say the same of his Midtown neighborhood, where he has operated continuously for all those years. From dicey to pricey. Alko is a primo choice for jobs that go way beyond your home inkjet, from all manner of large-format work (including complete car wraps that transform your auto into a promo tool) to high quality (yet affordable) stationery, postcards, and business cards that truly impress. Koko also specializes in graphic design that makes your business's corporate identity pop.

Worried about debt? Join the extremely long line. Fortunately new advertiser **Bankruptcy Law Clinic** (10800 Biscayne Blvd., suite 925, 305-663-3281) can stop harassing creditor phone calls, wage garnishment, repossession, and other financial problems no matter how deep. And the initial consultation is free, with no obligation.

Those with impressive real estate portfolios face different issues than the masses — and need a lot of specialized expertise to manage them. So welcome to new advertiser **Lincoln Esq., PA** (46 NE 6th St., 305-755-9295). Directed by attorney Timothy C. Lincoln, the micro-niche practice assists affluent families with property management, estate planning, trusts, asset protection — basically that whole range of confusing stuff

people haven't the time or knowledge to handle themselves.

Meanwhile, attorney **Jake Miller** (12550 Biscayne Blvd., suite 800, 305-758-2020) continues his very popular, free "What's Best for You" seminar series, for homeowners in mortgage distress. This month's programs, on July 14 and 20 at 6:00 p.m., focus on principal

reduction — very important, he explains, "because everyone is upside-down — that is, owes more money on their mortgage than their house is worth."

For prospective homeowners seeking the security

of a super-private community like Bay Point, Realtor **Kathryn Taxman** (305-772-7545, www.KathrynTaxman.com) is the *BT*'s newest specialist — a "Chairman's Club" top producer (which means the top half of 1% in sales) for Esslinger-Wooten-Maxwell.

Encouraging news, and an invitation, from new advertiser **Barclay's Real Estate** (555 NE 15th St., suite 200): The company has grown 167% in 2010's first semester. For those wanting to be part of the excitement, call 305-377-3000 or e-mail info at barclaysrealestate.com.

There's fun for the whole family on Saturday, July 7, from noon to 3:00 p.m., at **Design District Family Day**. As with the district's monthly nighttime gallery walks, there are stores and showrooms for grown-ups to enjoy. But there'll be lots of supervised creative activities for kids, too. Consult miamidesign.net for details. Oh, and it is all free!

Finally, don't forget Fido. If your dog is less than 25 pounds and sports some social graces, he or she may be eligible for Doggie Summer Day Camp, a project of the **Doggie Bag Café and Smiling Pets Animal Clinic**. Among the full range of activities: Arfs and Crafts, and Yappy Hours (with muttinis, of course). For info: 305-710-7266 or summercamp@doggiebagcafe.com.

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

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The Assault on Obama & Company

Nouveau idiots, many of them in Florida, are leading the charge

By Jack King
BT Contributor

When Barack Obama broke onto the national political scene two years ago, I wondered if his campaign would be nothing more than an anomaly. After all, few minority candidates for national office had made it past simply getting into the race, and never had one gone to win a national election. Whether you like it or not, a majority of the people in this country are still pretty racist. It may not be like it was in the 1920s, but it's racist just the same.

It wasn't long into the campaign that I heard people saying Obama was different and had a real chance to be elected. Turns out they were right.

Before long, the nonbelievers started the scare campaigns: He's a communist, he's a socialist, he's a fascist, he's a Muslim, he's not an American. It was started by conservative Republicans who were really mad that they had taken such a shellacking in two consecutive elections. They began calling Obama names and laying on labels, many of which they really didn't understand. They just sounded bad and that's what they wanted.

The Republicans would argue that the Democrats called George Bush lots of names, and they're somewhat right. However, the fodder for name-calling came straight from Bush himself. Does anyone remember "mission accomplished," "I am the war president," and "misunderestimated," just to name a few. Add these to his glaring policy blunders like Iraq and Katrina and you don't need to call him names. He does it to himself.



And one last thing about name-calling and the blame game. George Bush and his cronies started the war in Afghanistan. They started the war in Iraq. They gave us the policies that led to the collapse of the economy. Now Republican leaders and right-wing talking heads are saying that these wars and the economy belong to Obama. Certainly he has inherited them, but they will forever belong to Bush, and Bush should be forever grateful to Obama for finding ways to end the wars and rebuild the economy.

Of course name-calling in politics is nothing new, but this time it has emboldened a group of older, white Americans who were none too pleased to have a black president who had some solid but different ideas for improving the nation. This group eventually came to be known as the Tea Party. The movement gained momentum with platitudes like "lower taxes" and "less government," along with "keep your governmental hands off my Social Security."

More recently Tea Party zealots have been marginalizing themselves at a national level, and their name-calling is just not sticking. Florida's Marco Rubio, an early darling of the Tea Party set, was well ahead in the U.S. Senate race, but now trails Gov. Charlie Crist badly, with other candidates nipping at his heels, and for good reason.

Rubio, while professing political conservatism, has been living a pretty opulent lifestyle on his Republican Party credit card, all while not paying his own bills. Add to that the fact that his entire platform is cutting taxes and reducing the size of government, but he has no plans for how to do it. To say that he is shallow would be an understatement.

With the Tea Party losing steam nationally, two new and bizarre political phenomena have arisen. The first is a sizable group of very wealthy people who are willing to put their own money into major campaigns to get themselves

elected. Florida's two are Jeff Greene, running for the U.S. Senate, and Rick Scott, running for governor. Both have zillions of dollars and could conceivably put as much as \$100 million each into their campaigns. And they both come with lots of baggage. Greene made most of his money betting that the housing market would collapse. Nothing like betting against America and then telling the electorate you're the one who can fix all the problems.

Rick Scott is not much better. He ran a healthcare company in such a wonderful way that he (and many others) bears responsibility for the mess that healthcare is in now. Oh yeah, his company paid \$1.6 billion in penalties.

The second phenomenon is that the Florida Tea Party has been registering virtual unknowns to run in state legislative races. So far they have about 20, mostly in north and central Florida, which makes sense. The Florida Tea Party is based in Orlando and it seems that many of their candidates have come from Disney World.

Two people who we haven't heard from in Miami are Alex Sink, running for governor, and Kendrick Meek, running for the U.S. Senate. Sink has done little campaigning here and doesn't have much name recognition. Meek has done zero campaigning in South Florida. If he has a campaign strategy, it must be a deep dark secret.

What have we learned so far in this campaign season? The electorate doesn't want nouveau idiots who are all platitudes and no plans, nor long-time political hacks who are all platitudes and no plans.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Five Things

Continued from page 1

buy a package of frozen shrimp or squid or mullet, which I'm pretty sure cost less than two bucks each. We would sit on the concrete bulkhead, fishing until the sky grew light. If you sat right on the concrete, bugs would nip your rear end and crawl up your pants legs. I kept a cheap folding lawn chair in the trunk of my cheap car. If I got hungry or thirsty, I could put down my rod and reel (also cheap) without concern for theft while I walked a few yards to Charlie's store for a Cuban sandwich and a beer, both cheap.

Half a dozen to half a hundred people might be there, depending on whether the shrimp were running. When they were, we bait dunkers were joined on the bulkhead by family teams of shrimp-netters. They brought Coleman lanterns, big coolers half full of ice, and long-handled dip nets with fine mesh.

The shrimp always came with an entourage of predatory fish, most desirably the edible snook and snapper but also the inedible tarpon, and once in a while you could catch one. Usually we fished for mangrove snapper, seldom big but plentiful and good to eat. If you cut your bait into little pieces and stuck it on little hooks, you could catch moonfish, also known as lookdowns. Their sloping foreheads and the placement of their eyes made them seem to be searching for a lost contact lens.

On the first night at Charlie's I caught a cutlass, commonly called a ribbonfish, even though it resembles a shiny fighting sword more than a ribbon. With its great fangs, it looks so ferocious it could frighten you half to death when you pull it into the light. I cut the line at the hook and dropped them back in the water. Others left them for dead on the ground. I had never seen or heard of them before, and I've never caught one anywhere else.

It didn't matter much what I caught, or whether I caught anything to keep. If I spend half a day preparing and drive a long way, it matters only a little more. Fishing is supposed to be a contemplative sport. When the fish aren't biting, don't fuss. Contemplate. It's still better than almost anything else you could be doing.



Fishing Hole 1

The Oleta River is one of Biscayne Bay's best off-track places for exploration and discovery. Unless you're awfully intense about catching fish, it's a wonderful boat ride in case you're skunked. The two-mile north branch begins in Greynolds Park West. Use the entrance at 17530 W. Dixie Hwy., follow the road to the fork, bear right, pass the boathouse, and go another half mile. Just before the picnic pavilion on the right, pull over and look for a gap in the mangroves to launch your kayak or canoe. On weekends a paddle-boat concession operates there. Much of the mangrove-trimmed route up to 202nd Street feels more like the Everglades than North Miami Beach or Aventura. There are nine finger canals and three manmade lakes along the way. The waterway is a spawning nursery. Look for small barracuda, snook and jacks below Miami Gardens Drive. North of there, fish for butterfly peacock and largemouth bass. Snook may be in mangrove patches.

We caught a lot of hardhead catfish off that seawall near Charlie's, and handled them carefully. They keep a shot of poison under the skin that covers the spines of their fins. If one pokes you, it teaches a painful lesson.

With a small towel for traction, I learned to grip catfish tightly around the gills, pressing the pectoral fins against the body while I used pliers with the other hand to remove my hook.

It's like the way you hold a snake so it can't bite you. Snakes are squirmy but not slimy and are easier to grip than toothless catfish, which are

squirmy *and* slimy.

Over the years I unintentionally caught and deliberately released hundreds of hardhead catfish before one twisted loose and a pectoral fin jabbed me between the right thumb and forefinger. The hand reddened and swelled. At Jackson Memorial Hospital I took an agonizing injection directly into the wound. Then I was sent to a specialist in Hialeah.

Yes, a catfish-wound specialist. I forget his name but I remember what he told me. He developed the specialty during his training residency in Corpus Christi, where he treated hundreds of people who limped in from the Padre Island beaches. Catfish gathered there in enormous schools, waiting in the shallows for someone to step on them.

"Tell me again how this happened," the catfish specialist said after treating and bandaging my hand. I repeated: I was trying to get my hook back when the fish twisted and stabbed me.

"How much do you pay for fish hooks?"

Back then, in boxes of 50, they cost, let's see, a fraction less than three cents apiece.

"What did they charge you at the emergency

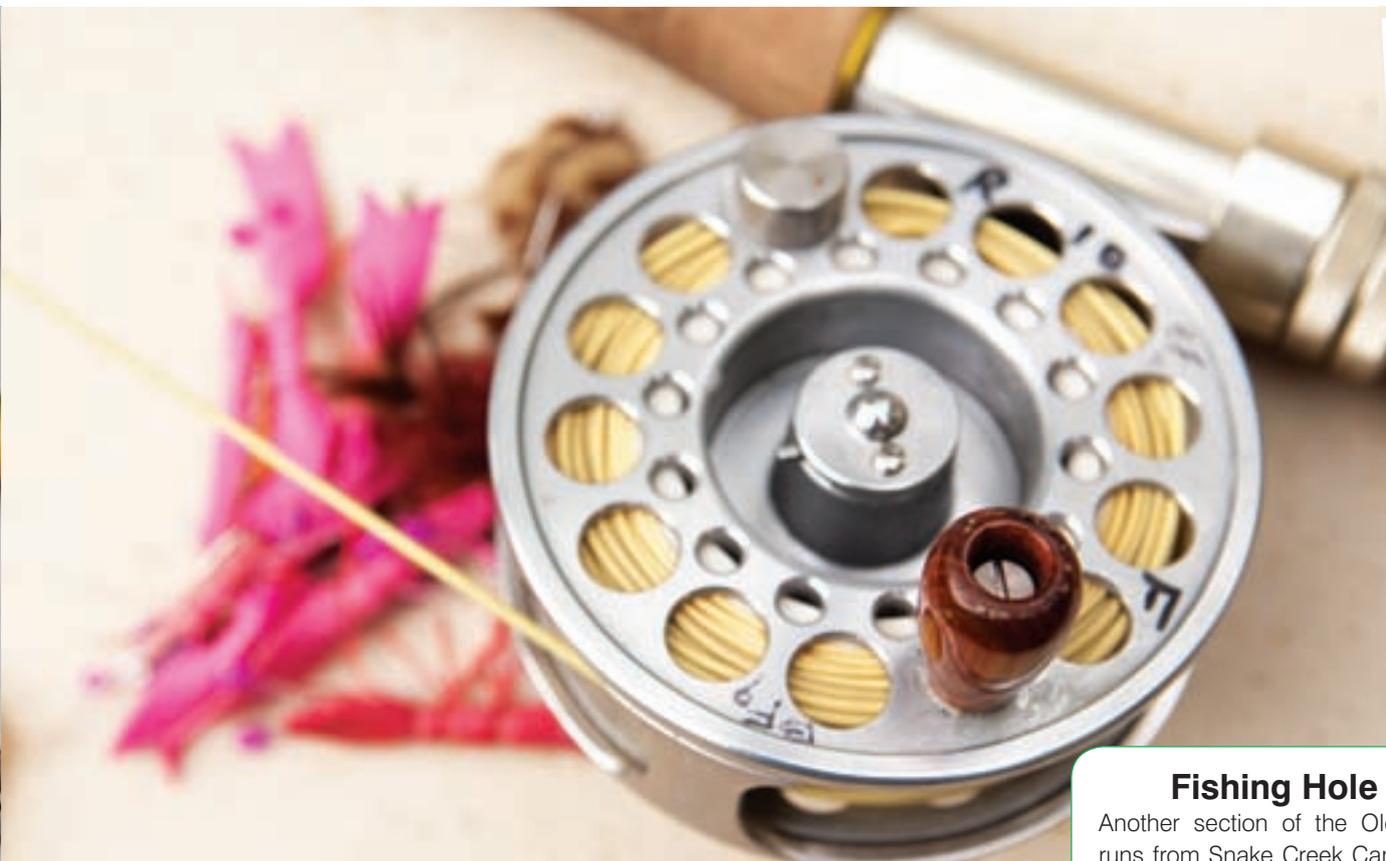
room?" Something like \$250.

"It's going to cost you another hundred here," the doc said. "Now, how much did you say a fish hook costs?"

See? Fishing teaches valuable lessons: dangerous wildlife, petty economics.

We caught a lot of hardhead catfish. They keep a shot of poison under the skin that covers the spines of their fins. If one pokes you, it teaches a painful lesson.

Continued on page 15



President Nixon likely would have fallen between the pad and the boat — dunked for sure, with a realistic chance of being squished when the boat bobbed back.

Five Things

Continued from page 14

One time on Biscayne Bay, I watched history almost being made. The Vietnam war might have ended sooner — or not. The Watergate scandal might never have happened. President Richard M. Nixon might have fallen into the bay and been squished between a houseboat and the concrete bulkhead of a helicopter pad.

To set the scene: Nixon had a friend, Charles G. Rebozo, who owned a bank on Key Biscayne and a waterfront house on Bay Lane. Nixon took over the place next door. The Coast Guard barricaded that side of the island south of the Key Biscayne Yacht Club channel, guarding it with two speedboats propelled by schmillion-horsepower Magnum Marine engines. A helicopter pad, still there today, was constructed over the shallows.

Fishermen weren't happy. The barricaded zone was one of the bay's best places to fish for spotted sea trout.

Incoming waves and boat wakes rebounded off the bulkhead of the helicopter pad, creating turbulence.

Early in 1972, Nixon made his mission to China, re-opening long-frozen diplomatic relations. It was a significant geopolitical achievement, yet one that failed to thrill the public. Someone thought that should be corrected.

Returning from China, the president went to Key Biscayne, where it was

arranged for two decorated houseboats full of Republicans shouting *Hooray!* to clear the security zone and pull up beside the helicopter pad.

Nixon was let out to greet them and we media were let in to watch. We were not made to stand behind a barricade. No Secret Service agents interfered as I approached the stern of the nearest boat. Rubber fenders hung over its rail, protecting the hull from scrapes while creating a gap of several inches between it and the helicopter pad.

Nixon, not the spontaneous type, looked unsure of what to do. An aide

Fishing Hole 2

Another section of the Oleta River runs from Snake Creek Canal to the Intracoastal Waterway, with its mouth opening on the south side of the Sunny Isles Causeway. Motorboat access is best from the Intracoastal. Snook and snapper swim here. Further upland, if your boat is low enough to get under the NE 163rd Street bridge, you can enter Maule Lake at its southeast corner. Tarpon may congregate in the middle. Follow the north shore of the lake eastward to another channel that can take you into Little Maule or back to the Intracoastal.

Maule Lake can also be reached by paddling south from the launch site inside Greynolds Park. You have to paddle under the bridges that span Biscayne Boulevard, W. Dixie Highway, and the railway. Incoming or outgoing, the tide often runs through that shallow, narrow inlet fast enough to overpower a solo paddler going the opposite way. It's a job for two.

spoke to him. He stepped to the edge of the pad to shake hands with people on the boat. They had to reach across the gap.

The water was choppy, the boat bobbing sideways as the captain tried to hold it against the helicopter pad. He was not invited to tie up. I started to shout, "Be careful!"

Nixon and an athletic-looking gent on the boat stretched toward each other.

As their hands touched, the boat bobbed away and Nixon was caught leaning over the water.

I've lost the name of the guy on the boat. I remember he owned a chain of dry-cleaning shops in Wheeling, West Virginia. He had muscular forearms, bigger hands than Nixon, and a stronger grip. He grabbed Nixon's hand firmly, stiffened his arm, leaned across the watery gap, and held tight until the boat bobbed back to the pad and the president recovered his balance.

If not for that effort, Nixon likely would have fallen between the pad and the boat — dunked for sure, with a realistic chance of being squished when the boat bobbed back.

Later someone said to me: Suppose you'd been that guy on the boat — what would you have done?

I think I have more conservative than liberal fishing friends. I don't know if they're ashamed of Nixon, but this I do know: Fishing is apolitical.

Fishing teaches you to value what you have. You learn not to fret much about the great fishing you can't afford because it's half a continent or half a world away.

Biscayne Bay is about 35 miles long, with most of its southern section in Biscayne National Park. Numerous scientific studies have documented the decline in the abundance and size of virtually every

Continued on page 16

Five Things

Continued from page 15

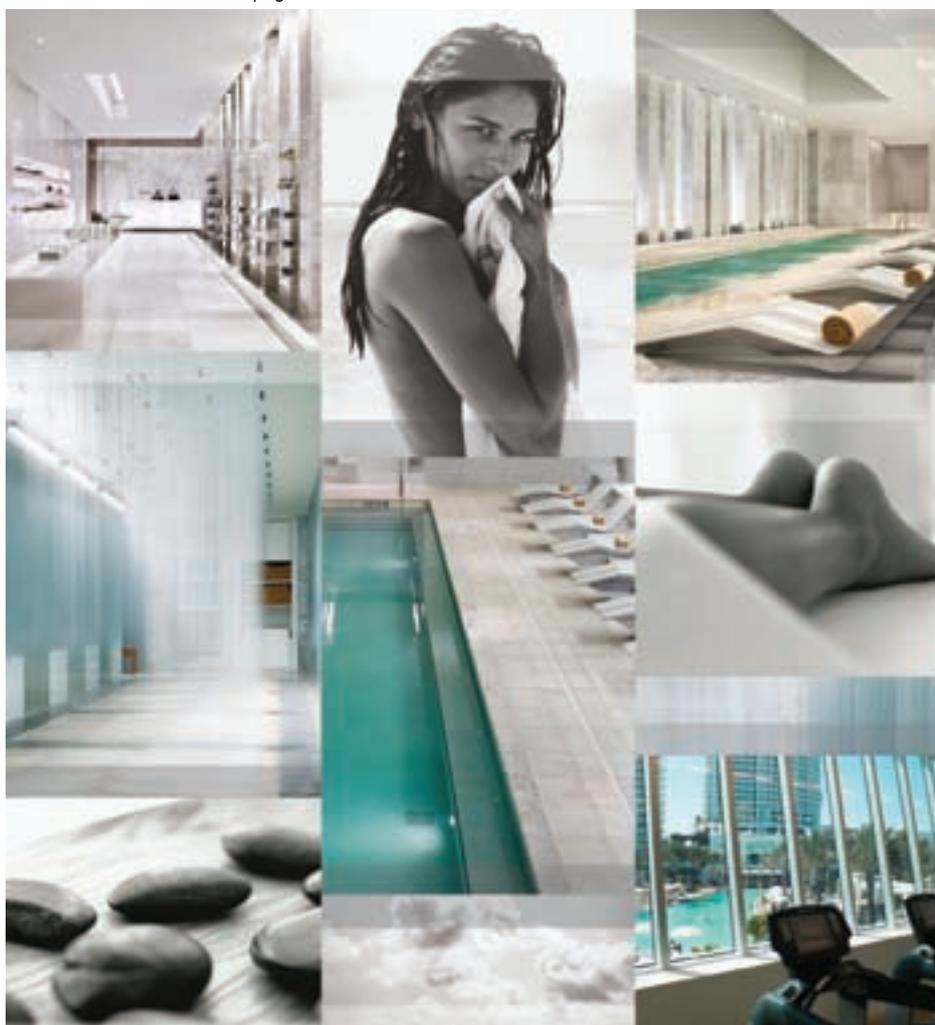
fish species, despite state size and bag limits.

The decline began earlier in the northern part of the bay. People who have fished it for a long time will say you should have been there 10 years ago. Others will say no, 20 years ago. Better yet 30, 40, or 50 years ago.

I know such a person: Alan Sherman of Miami Shores. He knows what the fishing was like in all five of those decades. Sherman grew up on the bay, had jobs in his youth running head boats offshore from Haulover and Castaways marinas. They're called head boats because they charge fishermen X dollars a head. Sherman makes his living by guiding fishing-doers on the bay. In ancient times he could stick to the north end with confidence that his clients always would succeed. Not any more.

Perhaps more than anyone else, he has witnessed the decline of north bay fishing from fabulous to great to still pretty damned good if you know

Continued on page 18



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NORTH MIAMI BEACH

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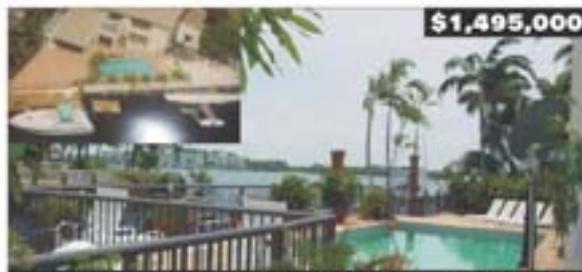


\$975,000

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Five Things

Continued from page 16

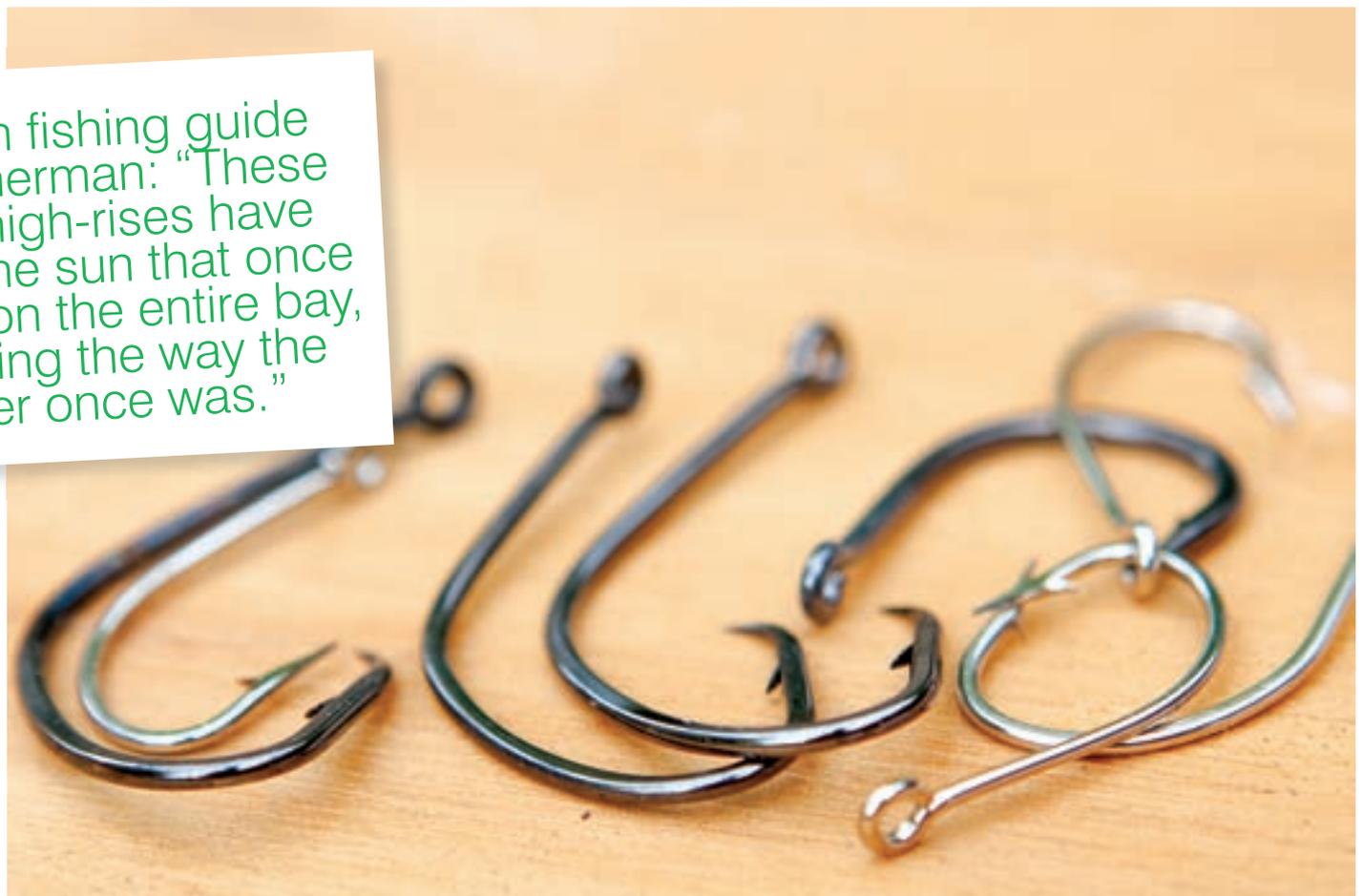
the place well and search for fish until you find them.

Says Sherman: "I don't really want to be negative about the bay. On the other hand, I miss the huge amounts of ladyfish that once were everywhere, especially in the Oleta River in the late '50s and into the '60s. These fish would feed on schools of small bait fish that no longer are there. The thousands of tarpon that would roll on the surface in Maule Lake near Eastern Shores are gone.

"Dumbfoundling Bay was loaded with fish and shallow mud flats that housed sawfish, large schools of snook, a few redfish, black drum, tarpon, sea trout, huge schools of mullet, large jack crevalle, sharks, ladyfish, and occasionally bluefish, mackerel, and kingfish.

Continued on page 20

Veteran fishing guide Alan Sherman: "These giant high-rises have cut off the sun that once shined on the entire bay, changing the way the water once was."



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Five Things

Continued from page 18

Today that portion of water has been dredged so that builders could put up giant high-rises that house thousands of people.

“These giant high-rises have cut off the sun that once shined on the entire bay, changing the way the water once was. The dredged areas, some as deep as 30 feet, have become stagnant, and only a few schools of tarpon that can breathe air from the atmosphere can live there.”

The scientific studies convert to data what Sherman and the bay have experienced daily for decades, although it took him a while to understand fully what he was seeing at close hand as it was going on. Sherman again: “In the '60s, I remember that the area known as Interama [now FIU and the Biscayne Landing development] was being used as a landfill. I didn't know at the time that hazardous materials were being dumped there, but around then I noticed the waters from the Oleta River south starting to

Continued on page 22



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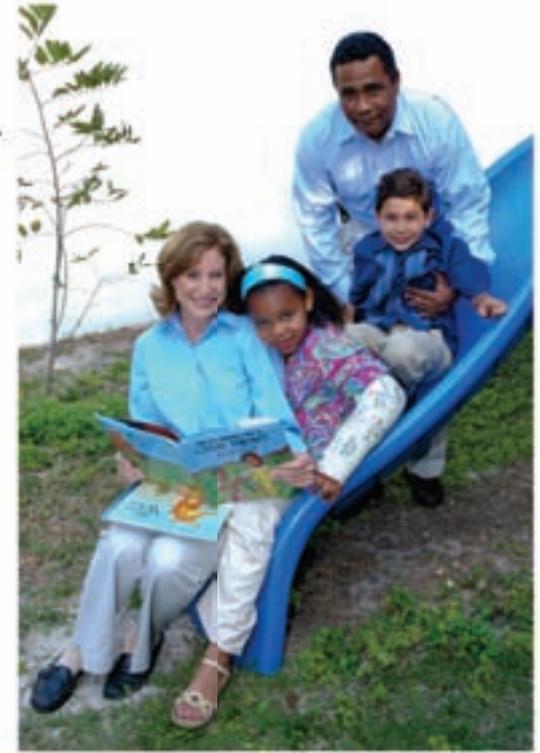
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Five Things

Continued from page 20

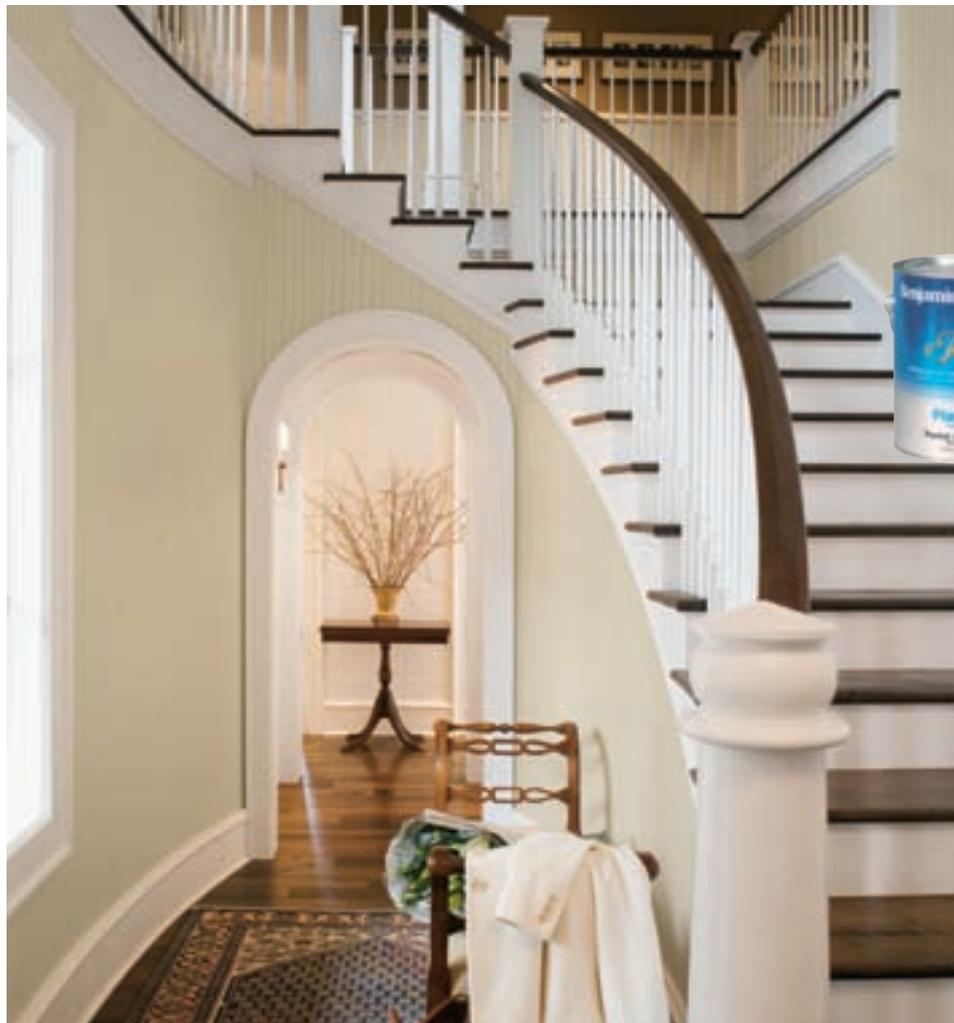
become less clear and the fish populations in these areas starting to diminish.

“It occurred to me that there might be a correlation between the discolored water and diminishing numbers of jacks, ladyfish, snappers, snook, and tarpon because of the landfill, but then again it could have been from the increase in chemicals that were being pumped into the bay from Greynolds Park dam or the one in the Biscayne Canal that many years later would come to light.

Continued on page 24

Fishing Hole 3

The area between the Intracoastal and Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami Beach, on the north side of the Julia Tuttle Causeway, may be too well known and too popular. Still, if you're there at the right time (a gamble), the fishing for sea trout can be splendid. Stay west of the boat channel that roughly parallels Alton Road. An artificial reef running parallel to the causeway is productive at times. The Tuttle's easternmost bridge can be good for tarpon and snook, but watch out for the current swirling through there. Work with wind and current to set up a drift across the flats, then circle around and take another drift.



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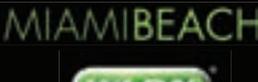
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COVER STORY

Five Things

Continued from page 22

“Also in that same time span, a lot of construction and dredging was taking place in the Eastern Shores area — an area that I always thought of as a gathering area for snook, mullet, jacks, and ladyfish. Today you see hardly any mullet, ladyfish, and snook in that area, and the huge schools of tarpon are almost gone in Maule Lake and Dumbfoundling Bay.”

after channel with scarcely a light lit. I have fished for snook under such conditions in other places where, local people swear, owners perversely keep their lights off on purpose. They consider the fish their private property.

If I ever return to night fishing, I will keep a gas lantern on my boat. I will slip into one of those channels, hang my light from one of those docks, and wait for the fish to find it. I will publish a story about it, and then people who think

Fishing Hole 4

Along the Venetian Causeway, east of the toll plaza, snook often lurk in the shadows of bridges that connect the causeway's six islands. Weave a boat among them slowly, casting baits as close as you can to seawalls, bulkheads, and docks. Some of those are lit at night, with prey and predators meeting for dinner. Stay outside the circle of light, casting baits into it. Often you can hear the loud splashes of fish attacking shrimp and other forage.

4

People who live alongside the bay don't often fish the obvious waters where they live. You seldom see anyone on the seawall of a waterfront home with a hook and line over the side. Once in a while there's a floating bait bucket tied to a post or a cleat, a clue that someone there fishes somewhere, sometimes.

Some of them have no docks, or docks that sag in ruins. Why spend extra money to live on the water they use so passively? I asked a dockless friend who lives on a finger channel in Keystone Point, and she said she lives there because she likes it.

At night, bright dock lights close to the water will attract forage fish, and the forage fish will attract game fish — especially my favorite, the common snook.

People who have dock lights often neglect to turn them on at night. Maybe their FPL bills are too high already, I don't know. It's frustrating to go into channel

they own those fish will sit out in the dark with shotguns, waiting for someone like me to come along.

Little by little by little — you're learning this here faster than I did there — I figured out that to catch snook you must look for them in snook habitat, such as mangroves or places where forage lures them, such as lighted docks. You have to present the right bait, natural or artificial, in just the right way, which varies with time, tide, and location.

Working all that out requires the patience that fishing is supposed to teach us.

5

Occasionally a snook is caught accidentally while fishing for something else, or just dunking bait for whatever fish may find it. I caught my first snook that way because the bay and I had developed a relationship. I believe it felt sorry for me.

Continued on page 26

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Photo courtesy of Arnold Markowitz

The author and his local catch — a sizable snook.

Five Things

Continued from page 24

I was in a wheelchair with a cast on my right leg, a trophy for reckless base-running during a softball game. My home was an efficiency on NE 25th Street in the second apartment building from the bay. It wasn't a good place to fish, but it was the best available.

I'd wheel the chair out there, carrying rod and reel across my lap with a package of bait in a bag dangling from the left handgrip, and a book in another bag dangling on the right.

That was not sport as much as therapy

Fishing Hole 5

Biscayne Bay's spoil islands, distributed more or less evenly along the Intracoastal, are the products of long-ago dredging. Several are maintained as parks by Miami-Dade County. Snapper, sea trout, ladyfish, and pompano can be caught along the edges.

None of these five fishing holes is a secret. All are known to supply good fishing, but not all the time. Successful anglers keep moving, seldom giving any spot more than half an hour to produce action. When the bite dwindles here, they move to there.

Occasionally a snook is caught accidentally. I caught my first snook that way because the bay and I had developed a relationship. I believe it felt sorry for me.

apartment I searched the fridge for substitutes. I had learned that if you run out of bait and you're nowhere near home, open your cooler and raid your lunch. Chicken (skin on) stays on the hook fairly well. Hard salami emits grease, an attractant. Prosciutto falls apart too easily. If you've caught a few fish, fillet one and

use the guts. Almost any fish's liver is good bait. Liverwurst is useless. This time, scavenging around the fridge, the best I could do was a stale drumstick from Colonel Sanders' store. "No fish would eat this," I told myself. "What else you got?" myself asked. I cut the chicken leg into strips, stuck one on a hook, flipped it into the bay, and got a bite. For dinner that night, I ate snook.

for cabin fever. Now and then I'd get a bite from a puffer or lizardfish, very scarcely a too-small snapper. Tides and currents brought to my bulkhead Styrofoam cups, empty cigarette packets, an impressive selection of tubular latex products. I was able to indict Salem and Newport smokers as the worst litterers. Second place: drinkers of canned Busch beer, the popular-priced kin of Budweiser.

On the day the bay felt sorry for me, I ran out of bait early. Back in the

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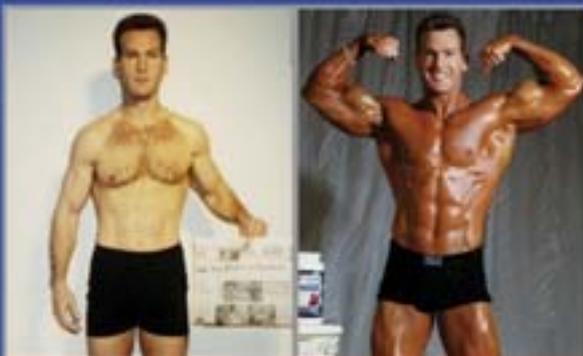
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No Español and No Beach

How can a person like me live in a place like this without Spanish?

By Jen Karetnick
BT Contributor

“Ah, so you speak Spanish?” This is the question I invariably get when I travel abroad and, when asked by various individuals where I am from, confess that it is Miami. Sometimes the query is in Spanish; other times in English. But no matter what language is spoken to me first, I always answer the same: “No.”

My negative response is followed by two reactions. Either I receive an incredulous look, usually accompanied by a shrug, or if the conversation has been in English, I hear: “Where exactly in Miami do you *live*?” As if there must be a part of Miami where only unilingual gringas reside, a section unknown to the world at large — particularly the Spanish-speaking world.

Of course, when I reply Miami Shores, I next hear: “Oh, how nice. You live near the beach.” Then my (dyed



blond hair is taken into account, my (preserved) figure is glanced over, and my (lingering) intelligence — along with my interest in my destination, the culture of wherever I am visiting — is visibly dismissed. I am just another arrogant

American who refuses to acknowledge that speaking English is not enough.

Recently, though, on a trip to Panama for a global food conference of Latin chefs called Panama Gastronómica — including our own Douglas Rodriguez

of OLA and D. Rodriguez — I was practically interrogated. A Venezuelan blogger, who spoke English as well as her mother tongue, was particularly vehement. “Why don’t you speak it?” she demanded. “Isn’t Spanish the official language of Miami? Don’t you have bilingual private schools? How can you represent Miami if you don’t speak Spanish? It’s not logical that you don’t know.”

She continued to badger me, and after a while, she refused to speak to me in English. Whenever our guides or colleagues would start a conversation that I could understand, she’d deliberately cut in with a Spanish comment and direct the flow of language to her liking. Thanks to her, I would have spent a great deal of time not comprehending the program, except that I speak the universal language: food.

In reality, I can obviously understand some Spanish words: cerveza, vino

Continued on page 29



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NEIGHBORHOOD CORRESPONDENTS: MIAMI SHORES

Español

Continued from page 28

blanco, pollo, cerdo. In other words, I am fluent in what I call “menu Spanish.” (In fact, I don’t discriminate. I can decipher menus in French, Italian, and Portuguese as well.) I also know how to get to a bathroom, find a bank, arrange for a taxi, and get to the airport. Simple phrases aren’t beyond me, though I might get the order of words incorrect. My accent is largely understood if muddled. And I can, thanks to heredity, roll my Rs. But I can’t tell people with honesty that “*hablo un poquito de español solamente*,” because I don’t. Wielding that kind of confidence opens a verbal floodgate that I have no hope of translating.

More to the point, Spanish is not the authorized language of Miami. Though I know it’s controversial, we still are part of the United States — at least last time I checked. When I encounter hostility such as the kind from the Venezuelan woman, I think of Montréal. No one is surprised to find out that you might be a native of that officially bilingual city but don’t speak French. Folks just figure your heritage is

Anglo-Saxon instead of Norman, or that your French-Canadian parents felt you should assimilate instead of being isolated, both geographically and socially, in the French part of the city.

Nor do I claim to represent the Magic City. My personal ancestry, unlike many who live in Miami now, is not Hispanic. All you need to do is look at my name to know that I come from Ukraine or, if you’re not that familiar with Russian surnames, Eastern European stock.

Or maybe I *do* represent Miami. After all, when you travel to other places, you *are* the country you come from, apparently. So you might as well be the city, too. In that case, I am the perfect face for it: I didn’t grow up here.

What I understand, but don’t appreciate, is that travelers the world over believe that only Hispanics live in Miami. This is largely the fault of the media, who put in the background not only native Miamians (I believe the appropriately sneering word is “Crackers”) but the largest immigrant community of Haitians in the nation — even after a devastating earthquake that could be used to change immigration and repatriation laws.

I don’t bother explaining to people like the Venezuelan, who talked insultingly about me in Spanish to other people right in front of my face (and yes, I know enough of the language to figure that out), that I took French in high school, and that we only needed two years of a foreign language to graduate.

Regrettable? Yes. Fortunately the United States school systems do a much better job these days, starting children in grade school on Spanish or French. There are also options for bilingual private schools, which in my days of secondary schooling were unheard of. I’m very proud to say that both my children are in the native Spanish classes at school, and that they already speak conversationally if not fluently. But that’s because they had an advantage I didn’t: I hired them a Honduran nanny who spoke only Spanish to them until they were five or so. Angela was a wonderful first teacher, and they will always have her to thank for their skills.

For me, hindsight wears glasses. Had I known I was going to wind up in Miami, I might have taken the Spanish curriculum instead. Then again, I might

have still followed my whim. And I can’t say my French classes were a waste of time. It does help me here — because whether the census agrees or not, we have almost as many Haitians as Hispanics. This is as true for the Village Beautiful as it is for the Magic City in general.

I also don’t clarify that my own ears seem to be deaf to foreign languages. I was born with some gifts for which I remain exceedingly grateful, but having a head for languages is not one of them. But then, I can’t paint. I can’t even conceive of the desire to paint. Should I bemoan this inability to communicate through art, too?

I like living in Miami precisely because of the fluid wash of multiple languages over my ears. I don’t feel it’s necessary to comprehend everyone all the time. Sometimes it’s okay not to understand and get by with a smile. It’s acceptable not to be logical — like naming a city Miami Shores when it really doesn’t have a beach. It certainly is more appealing than being criticized in a language you might share.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Big Guys and Little Government

The influence of unions may have declined nationally, but not within the City of Miami

By Frank Rollason
BT Contributor

This is the story of politicians and unions, an updated version of David and Goliath. In the City of Miami, politicians historically play the role of David, but with a twist: They don't always slay the Goliath unions. In fact they often have no desire to vanquish Goliath, particularly in periods of financial security, when a politician's primary concern is re-election. (Okay, politicians generally obsess over re-election *all* the time.)

Unions are powerful forces in Miami politics because they can heavily influence the outcome of local elections. They work hard to support their candidates by running phone banks, sending out direct-mail pieces, cajoling their families and friends into voting for favored candidates, campaigning outside the polls on election day. Needless to say, politicians covet such help. And as the unions have

said for years and years: "Politicians and managers will come and go, but the union is here forever!"

In good economic times, Miami politicians in the David role have no problem exercising their responsibilities — namely, ruling the city in any manner

they wish as long as it does not tread on the rights and benefits of the union Goliath. Well, we all know how the story finally played out. Goliath slew all his mighty enemies until he met the one adversary who was pure of heart, came with no intended malice, but didn't

hesitate in using lethal force to take care of business.

Today in the City of Miami, the Goliath unions appear to be on the verge of receiving the stone of death from the normally timid David politicians. Because it is not in the best interest of politicians to make a mortal enemy of the unions, make no mistake: If the stone is hurled, it will be because the unions have allowed for no other choice.

I love how it is the dastardly unions that have put the city in the fix it's in. Those darn union leaders do what union leaders do all over the country since the time of Samuel Gompers: Advocate for their members and negotiate for the highest wages and benefits management is willing to deliver. Never, and I repeat, *never* has management gone to the rank and file and said, "Hey, employees, the city is in pretty good financial shape this year, so how about we give you a raise or

Continued on page 31



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Unions

Continued from page 30

improve your pension or health benefits.” That just does not happen because that is not management’s role.

We have in the State of Florida what is called the Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC), which outlines how negotiations are to take place *in good faith*: honorably, morally, and legally. These are the principles upon which collective bargaining is based. The union leadership does what it does on behalf of its members and the administration does what it does on behalf of the city’s taxpayers in an effort to negotiate contracts that are fair, equitable, and not only result in a legally binding compact for both parties but which also allow for a level of service to the citizens that results in a safe, clean, efficient, and effectively run government.

The crux of the problem lies with the elected officials. They are the ones who control the reins on this runaway wagon, and they are the ones who have consistently abdicated their responsibility to say: *No*, we just cannot afford it. And why do

they fear saying no? Because they fear the power of the unions when it comes to elections. That is the bottom line.

When we have elected officials who are more concerned with being re-elected than doing the public’s business, and in a businesslike manner, the city only digs itself deeper into a financial hole. Oh, they talk the talk, but they will not walk the walk until the fire is so hot under their collective rear ends that they have no choice but to do the right thing, even if it injures them politically.

In the City of Miami, that time has come, and it will result in the implementation of Draconian cuts regardless of what measure or combination of measures is chosen. And when the proverbial dust settles and the city limps forward until the next fiscal crisis (and sadly, there will be a next), our municipal employees will continue to do what they do best — serve the citizens of our great city with pride and professionalism.

Our general employees will continue to provide professional service in myriad ways. Our solid-waste workers will continue to clean our city streets and collect our garbage, our police officers will

continue responding to life-threatening situations requiring split-second decisions on the use of deadly force, and our firefighters will continue to enter buildings engulfed in flames and in danger of collapse in order to save the lives of strangers they have never met and will probably never see again.

All this drama could have been avoided with a little bit of what I call “tincture of spine” in the elected officials, instead of the typical marshmallow syndrome that seems to be pervasive during election season. So all you residents and business owners who rail against tax increases, and rightly so, keep in mind that the purpose of a local government is to provide those services to its citizens which they cannot readily provide for themselves — and that takes lots of good employees.

It goes back to the days of kings and their kingdoms — protecting the serfs with their armies so the kingdom could survive. The services for health, safety, protection from evil, and from the ravages of fire are the essence of why local governments were formed. Not for providing salaries and benefits for elected

officials. Not to provide lifetime pensions to commissioners who hold office for as few as seven years. Not to pay for their cars or their car insurance, and not to prolong their desire to continue to hold office.

Public office is a calling based on the premise of public service. It is not supposed to be a full-blown career. We are seeing the backlash against the professional politician in various state and local elections. It will only grow as we approach the November elections.

Get the picture! Yes, Miami’s employee contracts are out of whack and need to be brought back under control, but not at the expense of union-busting in the name of fiscal responsibility. The collective bargaining system works well when all participants do their part and exercise their individual roles properly.

The unions may ask for a trip to Hawaii, and management may counter with a trip to Vero Beach, but elected officials cannot come back with a trip to the French Riviera and then say, “Those dastardly unions stuck it to us again!”

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On the Clock

If you live in Biscayne Park and you're a fan of democratic principles, time may be running out for you

By Gaspar González
BT Contributor

An experiment: I'm going to try to abide by the Biscayne Park Village Commission's new proposed time-limit rule and write this column in the next ten minutes. According to the ordinance — passed on first reading at the June 8 commission meeting and scheduled for a second reading on July 13 — that's how much time soon may be allotted to commissioners wishing to speak on a particular topic before the mayor can essentially shut them up.

I'll stay on track by inserting time checks (0:00) in the text. Okay, here I go...starting...now!

It would appear that the new rule is, in part, the product of the recent — and highly contentious — FPL franchise agreement vote; specifically, the second reading of the ordinance, at which Commissioner Steve Bernard attempted, at length, to point out the ways in which the



agreement was a bad deal for Biscayne Park. Mayor Roxanna Ross and commissioners Bob Anderson and Al Childress had long made up their minds to approve the agreement and saw Commissioner Bernard's continued dissection of the deal as nothing more than a desperate

attempt to forestall the inevitable “yes” vote. Things got pretty testy that night. (To save time, please refer to my column “Uncivil War,” in the BT's May issue.)

(2:30) So now, the same three commission members who voted for the FPL franchise agreement have voted to

regulate the amount of time any commissioner may speak on any matter before the commission. Once a commissioner's ten minutes are up, it's the mayor who decides whether that person may continue. The mayor's decision to limit comments can only be overturned by a majority vote of the commission, which is to say three of the other four members would have to overrule her.

The official reason given for the new ordinance, according to Mayor Ross and commissioners Anderson and Childress, is that commission meetings are taking way too long. To help make their case, they like to cite the fact that the monthly meeting has gone as late as 1:00 a.m. on occasion.

And they're right, that is a pretty long night. But where else is the work of governing Biscayne Park going to happen if not at the commission meeting? Florida's “Government in the Sunshine” laws prohibit members of

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NEIGHBORHOOD CORRESPONDENTS: BISCAYNE PARK

Clock

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the commission from privately discussing or debating any issue that might come before the commission prior to the monthly meeting, so cutting down on the amount of time that individual members have to present their findings or views on a particular matter at that meeting can only mean decisions will be made on the basis of less information and with less accountability — since commissioners will barely have enough time to state, in a thoughtful manner, why they're actually for or against something.

Of course, that probably would suit certain commissioners just fine. One in particular — I won't mention him by name because that's another of the new rules; residents are not allowed to direct their comments at any one commissioner, but can only address the commission as a whole — gives the impression that he'd like to be able to leave the car engine running while he pokes his head into the meeting to read off his votes.

(6:25) I understand if some folks in Biscayne Park may not want to sit in a

room for five or six hours on a Tuesday night, listening to opinions that run contrary to theirs. I understand if they don't want to take the time to think through every issue and every vote that will eventually affect all of us who live in the village. Maybe they'd rather spend that time with their families, or watching *America's Got Talent*, or getting a few extra winks of beauty sleep. All of which is fine, because there's no law that says anyone *has* to run for a seat on the commission.

But having run for — and won — that seat, it would be nice if some commissioners would try a little harder to give the impression that, one Tuesday night a month, they don't have something else they'd rather be doing. Or if the meetings are taking so long, why not schedule two during the month, and divide up the agenda? After all, as a former president liked to say, governing is hard work.

But then, the new rule change, as well as a new "code of conduct" ordinance that also passed on first reading — aimed at monitoring not only the public behavior of commissioners, but of any resident who sits on a village board or attends a village meeting — may not be designed primarily to keep meetings shorter. (That's just an added benefit.) No, the two ordinances, taken together, point to a desire to stifle

The mayor would have broad powers to label comments "belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging" and to punish the offending party.

opinions and views that are different from those held by a majority of the commission; in this case, Mayor Ross and commission-

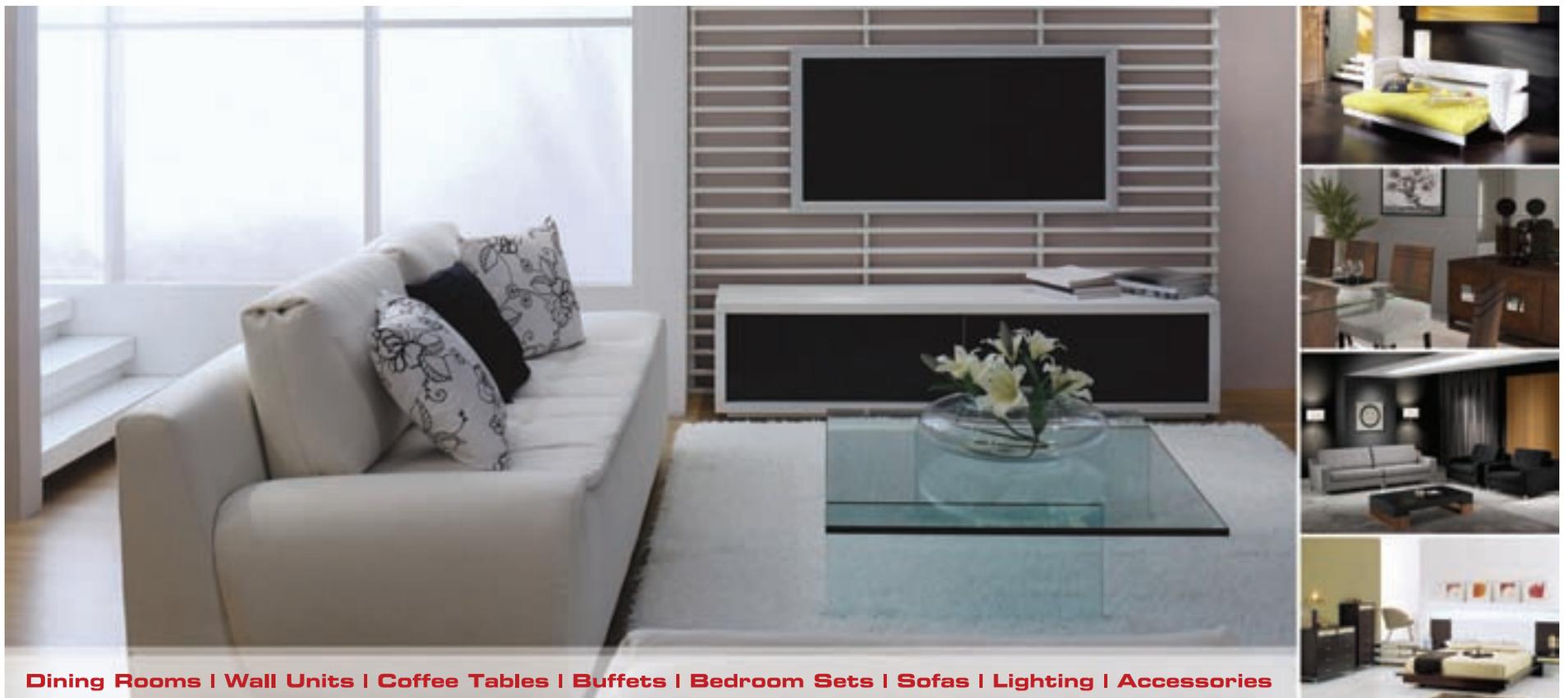
ers Anderson and Childress, who these days are simpatico on virtually every issue of note. (Not just the FPL franchise agreement or the very ordinances I'm writing about, but also, for example, a tax hike on our electric and water bills, also passed on first reading at the June commission meeting.)

(8:42) Indeed, given the current dynamic of the commission, the two ordinances — affording the mayor broad powers to label commissioner comments "belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging" and to punish the offending party — would seem to have only one practical application: To keep the questions and objections of the minority — commissioners Bernard and Cooper — to a minimum. Or put another way, this is the "We have three votes to your two, so be careful what you say and keep it short because what you think doesn't really matter anyway" rule.

It's like a super-streamlined version of democracy, one without, as Stephen Colbert might say, all the messy, time-consuming "democracy-ness" of regular democracy.

(9:53) I could add more, but I see the clock is against me, so I'll just close by encouraging my fellow residents to turn out for the July 13 meeting and weigh in on these proposed ordinances — while there's still time.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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A Sign From Below

Leaving Miami with dead frogs as *The End* approaches

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

At night a giant silver and yellow Lego glows outside the bedroom window of my Brickell-based Cotel (condo/hotel). It could be a sign of the End of Days. But it's not. I will miss the glowing Lego high-rise, which reliably bids me goodnight.

I am already engaging in "sun checks," whereby I constantly glance over my shoulder to ensure the sun is shining, because I am MUFT-bound (Merciless Un-Frozen Tundra, a.k.a. upstate New York) for the summer. By the time you read this, I will be there, 1300 miles away. There is no neon Lego there. Only a sign outside my dining room window that reads, "Dead End."

For me this move *is* the End of Days. But I'm onto something bigger here: *Everyone's* end! The glowing Lego, while comforting in its own ominous way, is too obvious to be a Doomsday



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

sign. *They want you to question if it's just a building.* I can confidently assert that the Lego is not The Sign, because I have found The Sign. And it is only appropriate that the first manifestation of The End rears its head in Miami, home to chaos-mongers and heathens. So what does The Sign look like?

Frogs. Specifically, dried-up, rock-hard frogs.

I hear that within the pages of the Bible, a "rain of frogs" occurs. Well, I'm telling you that the Bible got it wrong. The frogs don't fall from the sky. Sorry, Bible. Close, but no burning bush.

See, these mummified frogs appear often in the Brickell area. If you think that's odd, well, here's something odder. It occurred to my father's girlfriend, Sue, who discovered the latest dehydrated frog, that I would like one of these hardened critters for my "photo projects."

She was right. A mostly dehydrated frog is one hell of a find. My photography is prop-centric, so a dehydrated frog counts. Ranks, even. And I'm not speaking solely about the smell. But I could be. That's because the frog, whom I promptly named "Frogg-art!" still stank when Sue presented him to me.

Sue had planned on leaving him in a plastic bag at the reception desk, but she didn't have one. (Upon discovery, she just scooped him up in a large leaf.) So she went to the Cotel restaurant, with the frog-in-a-leaf, and asked for a bag.

Sue thought she slipped Frogg-art! by the reception woman unnoticed. She

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Frogs

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didn't. Fast forward to the next day.

RW: "Was that a *dead frog* your mom brought over?"

Me: "Um, yes. Sue, my dad's girlfriend, brought him for me."

RW [raised eyebrows]: "Oh..."

But let's back up. Luckily for me, I answered my phone when Sue called from the reception desk. If I hadn't, she would've left the bag hanging on my doorknob with a note inside. I would have opened the door and dropped dead from fright.

Anyway, I could tell by the excited tone of her voice that she had something good — *really* good. This concerned me a bit. If you knew Sue, you might understand.

After recovering from the initial image of frog corpse (Frogg-art! is far removed from Kermit), I did photograph him. With fake pink roses and sunflowers. After all, Frogg-art! needed to decay with dignity! Although he was decomposed beyond the icky maggot phase, and was as hard as granite, which

I determined by tapping him with a Bic pen, he did stink under the strobes.

Sue shrugged and suggested I kick him over the balcony. This notion horrified me for several reasons. First, it would be wrong to mishandle the dead like that, and seeing as how this was The Sign, I'd be meeting my maker soon enough. Second, what if Frogg-art! killed someone on the way down? This real "rain of frog" presented too many problems. I could just see the mathematical word problem: "If a few ounces of stiff frog travels from the 28th floor of a Miami-based Cotel at a speed of 85 m.p.h. at the same time a German tourist pauses to clean up after his miniature poodle..." And there would be headlines: "German tourist struck dead by falling frog — amphibian apocalypse suspected."

We decided to keep Frogg-art! on the balcony, on his leaf and in the open bag, so he could air out. And there he sat for another week while I tried to gather up my courage to approach him again.

Then I decided it was time to take action. Frogg-art! had to accompany me on my drive back to the MUFT. And

he wasn't going to ride shotgun for 23-hours all skanky. I contacted a few friends who specialize in mummification. Real scientists. Real mummification.

I had decisions to make. Did I want to preserve Frogg-art! as a mummy or as a skeleton? The skeleton option sounded appealing, but the process seemed daunting: boiling, carefully monitoring temperatures, multiple thermometers, sifting tiny bones through a sieve. Especially for my small Cotel kitchen. Besides, I already had to do battle with the "drain worms" once a month, when the industrial-strength Draino infusion wore off and the teeny wigglers found the strength to chomp and slurp their way up the kitchen sink pipe in an attempt to reach their Mecca — the glorious fluorescent radiance of the overhead light panel.

Adding a boiling frog to the mixture would surely summon a pissy Animal Warlord. And seeing as I have not been to the gym in quite a while, that was begging for a proper ass-whuppin'!

Just as I was gathering my freeze-dry frog preservation materials (baking soda, non-iodized salt, and Tupperware, in case you ever need to know), Sue

informed me she had found yet another frog. This one was a bit more desiccated than Frogg-art! Was I interested?

She left this one hanging on my door. I peered in and saw a small foot. I gasped, then marched him outside and docked him next to Frogg-art! I called Sue and asked her to come over and witness the frog-preservation process. Unlike Frogg-art!, Frogg-cake, as he is now known, was completely flat. No need to pen-tap this one. And yet he was still stinky.

I gave them the treatment. The salt and baking soda kill any remaining microorganisms, thus eliminating the smell while preserving the skin detail. The same process is utilized in mold-abatement for books.

So I coated my new buddies, slipped them in between the Eggo chocolate chip pancakes and the bananas foster ice cream, shut the freezer door, and asked Sue if I should expect any more found-object deliveries. Her answer: "No! I do *not* want to be known as the Crazy Frog Lady."

"Well," I thought, "I don't either." Ha!

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SINCE 1984

The Life and Times of Roberta Sherwood

She was the most famous Miami entertainer you never heard of

By Antolin García Carbonell
Special to BT

In 1956 Biscayne Park resident Roberta Sherwood, a mother of three caring for her disabled husband, was improbably trying to support her family as a nightclub singer. Her voice, which critics compared favorably to Ethel Mer- man's, was in great shape, but Sherwood herself was not exactly glamorous. In fact she was a bit dowdy. Onstage in her horn-rimmed glasses, she would drape a sweater over her evening gown to ward off the air-conditioned chill. She was also somewhat eccentric. While singing, she was in the habit of keeping time by tapping on a hand-held cymbal.

Down to \$10-a-night appearances in third-rate bars around Miami, she greatly appreciated the engagement she landed at Murray Franklin's off-beat Miami Beach nightclub. Her pay: \$150 per week.

Comedian Red Buttons tipped off syndicated columnist Walter Winchell



September 1, 1956: *Life* magazine photographer Nat Farbman caught Sherwood in her trademark sweater and horn-rimmed glasses at the Riverside nightclub.

about Sherwood's unappreciated talent. Winchell recalled years later: "I found

her in a café at Miami Beach...singing love songs, torch songs, sittin' on

the porch songs — 'You're Nobody 'Til Somebody Loves You,' 'Cry Me A River,' 'Take Your Shoes Off Baby and Start Runnin' Through My Mind' — and so many other greats."

Following the tip from Buttons, Winchell wrote in his widely read column: "Attention Networks, Recording Execs, et. al: Take the fastest plane, train, or bus and go to Murray Franklin's place opposite the Roney Plaza, Miami Beach, and find yourself a gold mine named Roberta Sherwood!"

The world listened. Within two weeks, Earl Wilson wrote in his competing syndicated column: "Rocking chairs in a night club! Murray Franklin, Jack Benny's double, has them in his screw-ball spot which also features on the walls 'college pennants' from Atlanta, Alcatraz, and Lewisburg penitentiaries. Plus wonderful woman singer Roberta Sherwood."

Not long after that, the *Miami News's* Herb Rau reported: "Things have

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A New Leaf

When the economy tanked, Alberto Lorenzo turned to what he knew best — cigars

By Gaspar González
BT Contributor

Alberto Lorenzo knew he'd end up in the cigar business. "Blood always wins out," says the 38-year-old, sitting in his store near Quayside Towers. Lorenzo grew up in the tobacco-rich region around Cabaiguán in central Cuba. "My great-grandfather, my grandfather, my grandmother, my uncles," he says, ticking off relatives on the fingers of his left hand. "They all worked in tobacco."

Still, the route taken by Lorenzo to the family business proved more than a little circuitous. In 1997 he joined almost 30 other refugees aboard a rickety boat bound for the Florida Keys. The trip took a harrowing three days. "Our motor gave out and we drifted, hiding out in mangroves as we went along," says Lorenzo. "We made it by the grace of God."

Afterward he settled in New York, where he went to work for a cleaning and maintenance company. "I swept floors,"



Alberto Lorenzo: "Customers will come in here and ask, 'How can you make such a great cigar and only charge \$8?'"

he says with a mixture of pride and bemusement. Lorenzo moved to Miami in 2001 and eventually started his own cleaning company. He built his business

steadily — among his clients was the Walgreens chain — until the economy tanked. "I didn't want to know about the cleaning business anymore," he laughs.

In October 2009, he opened Lorenzo Tobacco.

Originally Lorenzo had envisioned the operation as a combination cigar factory — where he'd roll his own brand — and smoke shop, but, he explains, "the permits took too much time." So except for small rolling table in the corner, he dedicated the space to retail.

The only cigars you'll find in the shop are ones Lorenzo makes himself, using tobacco from the Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Ecuador. His father, Antonio — who left Cuba in 2004 and is today a cigar manufacturer and exporter in the Canary Islands — comes to Miami for two or three months at a time to help with production.

The two men are the product of a long tradition, one whose secrets Lorenzo is willing to share, up to a point. Explaining that the tobacco leaves he receives from his suppliers are not always to his liking — increased worldwide demand

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Take This Park, Please!

A lush, undeveloped piece of waterfront land could become a Miami park — or not

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Contributor

Skip Van Cel crouches as he walks quietly through the grass and verdant foliage, pointing toward the Little River. The red eyes of a yellow-crowned night heron stare back at him. “Look!” he says. “Do you see it?” The bird strolls casually toward the river bank and disappears from view.

Wildlife is not an unusual sight in this untamed riverfront forest of oak trees, coconut palms, and gumbo limbos, Van Cel says. He should know. He owns the vacant property and visits twice a day. He’s even set up a gazebo. He also gave it a name: Manatee Bend, after the manatees he often spots swimming up and down the Little River.

Yet what he really loves about this property is the location. It may seem like something you’d stumble across in the backcountry of the Big Cypress or Everglades National Park, but it’s in the heart of urban Miami, a stone’s throw from the busy intersection of Biscayne Boulevard and NE 79th Street, in the residential neighborhood known as Palm Grove.

“This doesn’t exist anywhere else in the City of Miami,” says Van Cel. “It’s just incredible, and I’d like to see it as a park.” Then he shakes his head and utters a mantra he repeats often when speaking about his unique property: “If they can’t see the value of this land, then I can’t help them.”

Van Cel, former publisher of *Biscayne Times*, is referring to the people who run the City of Miami. In December of last year, he paid \$280,000 in cash for the 1.2-acre parcel, which is located one block west of the Boulevard along NE 77th Street Road. He then offered to sell it to the city on one condition — that it forever remain a public park. His asking price was the property’s appraised value: \$635,000.

At first Miami officials seemed interested. This past March the city commission unanimously passed a resolution supporting the purchase of Manatee Bend and turning it into Little River Waterfront Park. To finance the deal, the cash-strapped city would use funds from Biscayne Bay/Miami River Land Acquisition Trust Fund.

The trust fund was created in 1985, part of an arrangement by which the state



A lovely jungle of trees and plants and tranquility in the heart of the city.

allowed the city to use some 13 acres of public bayfront land for the construction of Bayside Marketplace. Each year the marketplace’s owner would transfer to the fund 7.4 percent rent money collected from retailers. That money can *only* be used by the city to buy waterfront land for parks, and only with the approval of Florida’s governor and his cabinet.

This past May, Gov. Charlie Crist and his cabinet gave their blessings to the city’s proposal to use \$550,000 from the trust fund to buy Van Cel’s property and to create Little River Waterfront Park. Additional money (\$185,000) would come from the Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND), a state agency that funds public waterfront projects.

Neighborhood activists were thrilled. “Oh yeah, we have a *lot* of people in the Upper Eastside who see this as potential parkland,” says Eileen Bottari, president of the North Palm Grove Community Organization.

Then, without explanation, Miami’s new city manager, Carlos Migoya, withdrew the application just prior to FIND’s annual land-acquisition meeting on June 19, says T. Spencer Crowley III, an attorney who serves as Miami-Dade County’s representative on the board of the Inland Navigation District. “I was really hoping to see that land get acquired, but it looks

like that’s not going to happen, at least not this year,” says Crowley, who visited Manatee Bend, very much liked what he saw, and wrote a letter to Migoya urging him to at least assess the property’s value before withdrawing the application. (Migoya did not respond to messages from the *BT*.)

While it’s true that money for the purchase of Van Cel’s property would not come from the city’s general fund, Miami taxpayers would need to pay for the new park’s maintenance. And therein lies the problem, says Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, whose district includes Palm Grove. The city is facing a financial crisis in the form of an anticipated \$101 million shortfall that will likely mean dramatic cuts in services, reduced benefits for unionized employees, and an untold number of layoffs.

All this is under consideration now, as city administrators struggle to prepare a balanced budget for fiscal year 2010-2011, which begins October 1. According to Sarnoff, Migoya is not in a mood to acquire *any* additional parkland. “He equally thinks that for someone to make a profit of \$250,000 in less than four or five months is not appropriate,” Sarnoff adds.

Van Cel says he would have been more flexible with his asking price had

the city not recently paid \$2.6 million for a small parcel of land (less than one acre) at 1814 Brickell Ave. Van Cel was offended by what he considered a very bad deal for taxpayers. Making matters worse, he says, the land is “on the wrong side of Brickell.”

Sarnoff, who advocated for the Brickell parcel’s purchase this past January, defends the buy: “There are 30,000 people living within a mile of [the Brickell property]. That is a staggering number. If you look at it from a per-capita user basis, it is the cheapest park the city ever acquired.”

Van Cel counters that his offer to the city was much better: \$12 per square foot for his land versus \$73 for the Brickell property. However, he’s not surprised the city backed out of buying Manatee Bend, given its “poor history” of resource management. “But *don’t* get me started,” he huffs. “I might start a newspaper.”

In March 2003, Van Cel did just that as the founder of this publication, then known as *Biscayne Boulevard Times*. After shortening the name to *Biscayne Times*, he sold it to current *BT* owner Jim Mullin in February 2007. Aside from newspaper publishing and his active interest in art (as both creator and curator), Van Cel invests in real estate. “There’s a reason they call it *real* estate,” he jokes. “Because if all else fails, at least you can drive by it.”

Van Cel’s penchant for real-estate deals would eventually lead him to Robert Gray, once an official in the administration of President Dwight Eisenhower and former head of Hill & Knowlton, among the world’s most influential public relations firms. After retiring as chairman of the firm in 1992, Gray moved to Miami Beach, co-founded Gray & Associates Properties Inc., and embarked in a new career as a developer.

County records show that in December 2004, Gray purchased 19,360 square feet of riverfront land at 457 NE 77th St. Rd. for \$985,000. A month later he bought another 33,558 square feet of adjacent property for \$1.5 million.

Gray then demolished the two single-family homes that occupied the lots, but he kept the luxuriant vegetation, says Bryan Halda, senior vice president of

BT photos by Jacqueline Doullis

Continued on page 39



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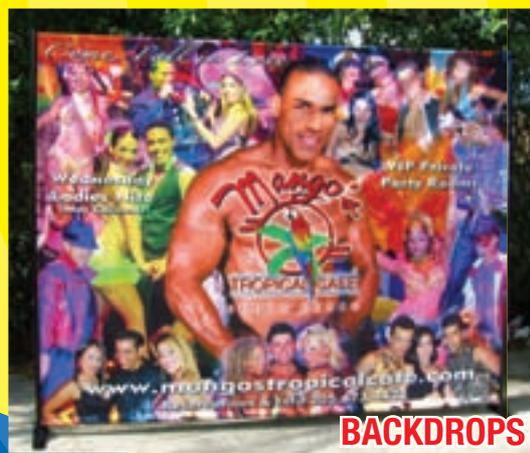
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COMMUNITY NEWS

Roberta Sherwood

Continued from page 36

changed at Murray Franklin's. Now you have to fight your way into the room and practically make a reservation for a rocking chair. And it's only the beginning. Roberta Sherwood just signed with Decca." Ten days later, Irving Berlin himself dropped in at Murray Franklin's.

At the age of 43, and seemingly overnight, Sherwood had become the "Cinderella of Song."

Sherwood had made her Miami singing debut on New Year's Eve 1933, when Don Lanning, her future husband, introduced her as part of the musical review at his Silver Slipper nightclub. Lanning was by then well on his way to becoming, according to the *Miami News's* Jack Kofoed, "The unanimous choice for Miami's official master of ceremonies."

A talented actor and singer, Lanning first appeared in Miami in 1923, with leading roles in several touring company productions of Broadway hits. Following a stint at film star Harry Richman's New York nightclub, he went on tour again. Then, in 1929, a fire destroyed Richman's club. Lanning decided to return to Miami, where he directed several musical reviews that toured the South. He was perfectly positioned in 1933 to mount a spectacular show for the opening of the Silver Slipper, a former speakeasy going legitimate with the repeal of Prohibition.

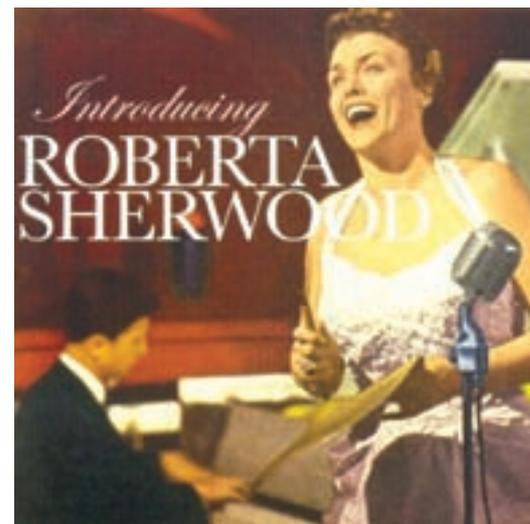
Sherwood quickly became the Silver Slipper's main attraction. In April 1934, the *Miami News* hailed her: "Ethel Merman does not sing 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes' as well as Roberta Sherwood." She continued to headline at the Silver Slipper through 1936, but performed at other clubs as well. By 1942, the *Miami News* reported, she had appeared in 18 clubs, a South Florida record.

In 1937 Lanning opened his own supper club at 7800 Biscayne Blvd.,

where the former INS office building now stands. Lanning's club was an instant hit. He bought a house on nearby NE 74th Street in 1938 and married Sherwood a year later. With two sons, born in quick succession during World War II, Sherwood worked out the seamless routines that made her complicated life possible. After a full day of housework and child care, she put her sons to bed, dressed elegantly, and was on stage by 8:30 p.m. At 10:00 p.m. she took a break from singing, raced home, breastfed her youngest, and returned for the second show.

Her stage persona emerged during this time. Columnist Kofoed noted that she "discovered that she likes the percussion department and annexed herself a cymbal to beat time to her singing at Don Lanning's."

Lanning and Sherwood closed the Biscayne Boulevard club in 1947, when their third son was born. After running the Fiesta Club in downtown Miami for a couple of years, they took over the Neptune Room at the Robert Richter Hotel on Collins



Avenue in 1950. They also purchased a \$25,000 home in Biscayne Park but kept the NE 74th Street house in Miami's Upper Eastside. Sherwood made her first televised appearance in 1951 as a guest, along with choreographer Bob Fosse, on *Cavalcade of Stars*.

In August 1953, Lanning was diagnosed with cancer and had one of his lungs removed, the only treatment at that time. Sherwood and Lanning then decided to sell their Upper Eastside home and, despite Lanning's illness, use the proceeds to open a new club at 225 NE 79th St. This club failed, and the family faced a bleak 1955.

After her discovery at Murray Franklin's club, Sherwood's career took off. She released her first album in March 1956 and moved her act up Collins Avenue to the Eden Roc,

Continued on page 41



Owner Skip Van Cel calls it Manatee Bend for the many gentle sea cows swimming up and down the river.

Park

Continued from page 37

Gray & Associates Properties. “He is a tree-lover and he didn’t want to remove any of the greenery on the property,” Halda recalls. Gray even hired a horticulturist to ensure that the 60-unit condominium he wanted to develop could be “built around the trees there,” says Halda.

Before Gray could break ground, the real estate bubble burst and economic turmoil followed. He put all 1.2 acres of his Little River land, which had cost him nearly \$2.4 million, on the market for \$1.4 million.

By October 2009, Gray had slashed his price to \$635,000. Upon learning of this, Van Cel pounced. In December he made a very low offer of \$285,000, but he could pay cash and could close on the purchase before year’s end — two things that appealed to Gray. Just ten days after striking a deal, the land was Van Cel’s.

Halda says he was surprised Gray would sell the land so cheaply and so quickly. “It may have been for tax benefits, I don’t know,” he says. (Gray divested himself of Gray & Associates Properties in December 2008, according to public records.) Whatever the reason, Van Cel is certain the city would not have been able to purchase the property as quickly as Gray wanted. “There’s just no way,” he says.

Eileen Bottari says she’s frustrated with Miami’s slow pace when it comes to parks. Yet she remains optimistic that Little River Waterfront Park will one day become a reality — unless Van Cel sells

it to a private developer. “I am hoping,” she says, “along with other people in the neighborhood, that Skip will try to be patient and see what transpires at the end of this year or the beginning of next.”

For his part, Marc Sarnoff says he will attempt to get the city to “revisit” the park in a few months. “If things work out [with the upcoming budget] we will acquire this park,” he promises.

Van Cel, however, is skeptical. He now has the property listed at \$824,000 and has been getting plenty of offers for all or part of Manatee Bend. Even after being down-zoned under the new Miami 21 zoning overhaul, a developer could still build a 40-unit condo there.

One of the offers Van Cel is considering: \$299,000 for just under a half-acre from a New Yorker interested in building a house there. If that sale were to go through, Van Cel says he might keep the rest of Manatee Bend for himself. He might put up a high-tech, prefabricated house, or build an art studio. “Maybe it will be the Palm Grove Yacht Club,” he muses, “but for kayaks only.”

Bryan Halda, who lives near Van Cel’s property, says he has his own ideas for the land. “If I had the money to purchase it, I would put a dog park on part of it,” he says. The rest would be dedicated to beloved animals who have passed on. “I would do a pet cemetery for some of the parcels,” Halda says. “I’ve lived in Belle Meade for 17 years and there is no place close by to have a nice respectful burial for a dog.”

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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COMMUNITY NEWS

New Leaf

Continued from page 36

has forced many growers to cut corners in the way the crop is cultivated and cured — Lorenzo walks over to a small wooden chest, opens the top, and tells me to take a whiff. “What do you smell?” he asks. It’s an herb familiar to Cubans. Lorenzo will not reveal the name of it (and asked me to keep quiet about it as well), but it’s the key to his cigars’ distinctive flavor.

“When the tobacco gets here, I wet it with a ‘tea’ made from the herb, and I let the leaves sit for 20 to 40 days,” he says. “The tobacco will soak that in and acquire a very pleasing taste.” After some prodding, he also admits to applying a bit of sweet wine to the leaves — a specific kind of sweet wine, which he also won’t name. The secretive nature, like the cigar-making skills, runs in the family: “My grandfather waited until he was 80 before he told my father the herb he used.”

The products of Lorenzo’s labors line the shelves of his shop; nine varieties of smokes, all labeled with the black-and-

red Lorenzo band. Prices run from \$1.50 to \$12, though Lorenzo suggests the best bargains are found somewhere in the middle. “Customers will come in here,” he says, “and ask, ‘How can you make such a great cigar and only charge \$8?’ Because I can.”

(Among the more intriguing options is a medium-size, torpedo-shaped cigar wrapped in Nicaraguan and Connecticut tobacco. The darker Nicaraguan and lighter Connecticut leaves give the cigar the look of a candy cane, a two-tone swirl from top to bottom.)

So far, walk-in traffic at the store, located just around the corner from the now-vacant La Paloma restaurant, has been good. “I get customers from Quayside, from Miami Shores — the country club, especially — and from a lot of the island [communities] around here,” says Lorenzo.

It’s easy to see why. Lorenzo Tobacco, which includes a cozy smoking lounge with four couches, is an inviting space, more informal even than the family-owned shops of Little Havana. Case in point: In the middle of my conversation

with Lorenzo, a tall, 50-ish man in a black T-shirt walks in, grabs a handful of cigars out of a box, holds them up for Lorenzo to see, then presses a couple of bills into the owner’s hand. “Take one more,” Lorenzo tells him. The man does, nodding appreciatively as he steps back out onto the street.

Despite such loyal regulars, what Lorenzo hasn’t been able to do — and what may eventually cost him his shop — is generate Internet sales. “That was always the idea,” he explains. “I intended the store as a showplace for the brand, but most of my business was supposed to come from national and international sales.” The problem is not a lack of demand, but an inability to charge customers through his website.

Lorenzo says his bank (and credit card processing machine provider), Wells Fargo, will not allow him to ring up either Internet or phone sales, only in-store transactions. “They tell me: ‘The

credit card laws have changed,’” says Lorenzo, clearly exasperated by the situation. “So everybody who’s been around more

than a couple of years gets to do business, but I can’t. Is that it?” He’s currently talking to other banks about their policies and is even thinking about hiring a lawyer.

The snafu has taken some of the joy out the enterprise for the normally upbeat Lorenzo. “I’m making enough to maintain the store, but no profit,” he says. By now he would have liked to have a flat-screen TV in his smoking lounge, but he can’t justify the purchase.

If he can’t get the credit card mess straightened out, he may leave Miami altogether. “My father keeps telling me to join him in the Canary Islands,” he says, adding that a regular client pointed out one ironic advantage to relocation. “He said, ‘Hey, you might finally be able to sell your cigars in the U.S.’”

For now, they’re still available only at his North Miami store.

For more information about Lorenzo Tobacco (1411 NE 109th St.), call 305-846-9959 or visit www.lorenzohumidors.com.

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Roberta Sherwood

Continued from page 38

which announced, "Roberta Sherwood, America's heartbeat set to music. Decca recording star courtesy of Murray Franklin." Two days after her premier, Walter Winchell wrote, "Roberta Sherwood opened at Eden Roc and confirmed the raves about her song styling. She doubles at Murray Franklin's.... Real loyalty to the man whose showcase elevated her to success."

Earl Wilson interviewed Sherwood after her June opening at New York's Copacabana: "I've been playing the tank towns for 30 years, but the closest I ever got to the big city before was Elizabeth, New Jersey." ... She was born in St.

Louis, daughter of Bob Sherwood, theater and circus guy. "I was hanging by my teeth at 12.... At my age, you can't belt all the time, so I got some resting songs." She opened with Mickey Rooney in Las Vegas in August, and in October was the subject of an extensive profile in *Life* magazine by writer Joe McCarthy.

Winchell flew in with Joe DiMaggio for her October opening at the Club Mocambo in Los Angeles. Lucille Ball and Debbie Reynolds also attended the opening. Syndicated writer Hedda Hopper described the scene: "During an hour of song, she took your heart out, squeezed it, patted it, and gave it back to you. When the orchestra struck up 'Auld Lang Syne,' everyone in the place rose. She left tears in sophisticated eyes. Roberta is a combination of Libby Holman, Ethel Merman, and Judy Garland. At 43 she has come full circle in one of the greatest success stories in show business."

Sherwood told another columnist: "No matter what happens, I'll never let anyone try to glamorize me.... If you put me in mink and fancy clothes, it wouldn't be me. I'd lose my personality."

She returned to Miami for PTA meetings and fund-raising performances for the marching band at her sons' school,

North Miami High. Following her husband's death in February 1960, she made guest appearances on *The Donna Reed Show* and *The Lucy Show*, then tried to spin off a TV sitcom, *Mother's the Most*, based on her life as a working mother and singer raising three sons in Miami. She also had a small part in the 1963 movie *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*. She also included her sons in many of her guest appearances, paving the way for their subsequent show-business careers.

By the early 1960s, Sherwood found it harder to spend time in Miami, but neighbors occasionally ran into her shopping for groceries at Little Farm or dining with friends at the Persian Room in the Shalimar Motel on the Boulevard. She missed Miami's beaches, but the

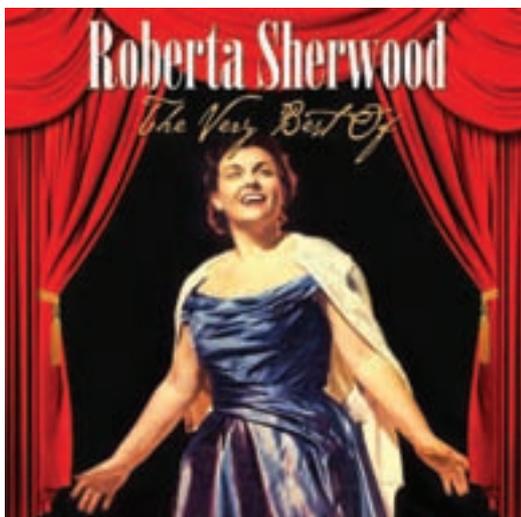
Biscayne Park house was a financial burden, so she sold it reluctantly in 1965. Whenever she was in town, however, she'd drive by for a look.

Sherwood's last known Miami appearance was in October 1980 at the Gusman Performing Arts Center's "Noon-time Lively Arts

Series." She toured nationally with the Russ Morgan Orchestra through 1983 and performed in Los Angeles as late as 1987. Spending her final years at her Sherman Oaks apartment, surrounded by family and friends, Sherwood died at age 86 in July 1999.

Herb Kelly's *Miami News* review of her 1959 opening at the celebrated Latin Quarter nightclub in Miami Beach best captures Sherwood's special gifts: "When Roberta Sherwood starts singing, an air of wholesomeness prevails.... It would not be surprising to see her break off a song and start doing the dishes. A wonderful performer, she is still a housewife and mother. Her act is warm and the audience is hers when she enters, singing 'Love Is a Many Splendored Thing.' She strolls around the tables, shakes hands, adjusts her sweater, and peers at guests through her horn-rimmed glasses."

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Watergate Miami

1700 Block of N. Bayshore Drive
On the first day in her new furnished apartment, a happy tenant arrived home to find that the place had been ransacked. She called the owner immediately and the owner told her that no one else has access to the apartment. The owner is a journalist in New York and had a suspect in mind — a certain someone who might be looking for information about a story the owner was investigating. Right now the only “story” is that this poor tenant had a rude awakening. The missing item is likely her sense of security.

They Won't Save This Guy's Résumé

4200 Block of NE 2nd Avenue
Applying for jobs can be stressful and demeaning, so this chap decided to try a different approach. He went in person to an office building and asked a woman if any jobs were available. He was told there were none. The job seeker then moved along to

other offices and tried this with other potential employers. The first woman got up from her desk and tried to follow him. Soon she saw him leave the building and get into a waiting car, which took off. An employee in the building then discovered that his wallet was missing from his desk. There are no leads. But finding the right desk at exactly the right moment does demonstrate some type of marketable skill.

The Absence of No Must Mean Yes, No?

100 Block of NE 25th Street
Officer on patrol observed a man pushing a shopping cart with a stove inside. The man looked suspicious. (Doesn't everyone?) He stopped the man and asked where he got the stove — assuming Home Depot in North Miami was too a long trek. The suspect took the officer back to a home a block away and said that he simply kicked



the door in and entered the kitchen area and then took the stove. He innocently told the officer that no one stopped him so he thought it was okay. He was arrested and the stove (unsure about the shopping cart) was returned to its rightful owner.

One More Time: This Is Not Mayberry R.F.D., So Lock Your Doors!

100 Block of NE 50th Street
A man left his back porch door unlocked and went about his business. When he

returned home, he found he had been burglarized. Three televisions from three different rooms were stolen, including a huge, old-school tube television the uninvited guest must have had trouble lifting. Nothing else was taken as this was apparently a genuine television junkie. We implore the citizenry of Miami not only to *always* lock your doors but get away from your televisions and read Crime Beat more thoroughly.

Too Much Dunkin' Donuts Coffee?

400 Block of Brickell Avenue
An overly excited officer writing a police report sprinkled it with exclamation points. “At 1300 hours was the last time she saw her ring!” But “the doors and elevators work by keycard!” This officer must be a newbie who can't fathom that there are criminals out there who not only can dupe

Continued on page 43

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Crime Beat

Continued from page 42

keycard systems but have the audacity to steal someone's valued ring. Either that or it's simply too much caffeine.

Make That Ex-Girlfriend

800 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Our victim arrived home and saw that his bedroom and living room had been emptied and vandalized. The bedroom closet was cut apart and his clothes were on the floor. All ornaments in the condo were broken — including all tables and lamps. His Armani shoes were cut up (now *that's* a crime). Money was missing from his safe. There were no signs of forced entry, but victim has a suspect — his girlfriend. Hey, doesn't *your* significant other flip out like that?

More Boulevard Motel Drama

5900 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

A sexually starved man visited Camillus House and found a fine specimen he

hoped could satisfy his appetite. Apparently the online dating thing is becoming passé and Camillus House is now the happening place. They both got on a bus and then rented a room at one of the Boulevard's finer establishments. After the act, victim took the obligatory shower and placed his wallet in conspicuous view on the nightstand. The suspect checked out — with an extra \$500 to take him back to Camillus house, this time likely in a cab.

Dog Snatcher on the Loose

NE 31st Street and Biscayne Boulevard

Victim chained her beloved dog outside the Pronto Supermarket and went inside to shop for groceries. When she returned, the dog was gone! Two witnesses gave conflicting statements about a pair of "Latin" girls carrying the dog into a car (a Dodge Neon or a Pontiac G6). Dog is a three-year-old Havanese Terrier with a light brown spot on her back. She goes by the name of Sophie. Please contact the *BT* should you have any information.

Even This Purse Got Snatched

3100 Block of N. Miami Avenue

A woman was shopping at Target in the Shops at Midtown Miami and placed her purse inside her shopping cart. She then struck up a conversation with a kindly store security guard. After this discussion, she turned and noticed her purse was gone. The security guard was so wrapped up in the chitchat he didn't see anything. While we admire his intense attention to the customer, we ask for a little caution in dealing with customers in the future. Pay attention!

Afternoon Nap Horror

1000 Block of NE 80th Street

This couple was dozing in bed when they noticed their air-conditioner was acting up. It shook from side to side and appeared to be moving. The man got up to investigate, and as he did the entire unit fell into the bedroom — and behind the unit was an unidentified male! He brazenly tried to enter the bedroom but the victim pushed him out. The suspect fled by motorcycle. Crime Beat aficionados, *please* secure those air-conditioners — or stay awake at all times.

Pickpocket Alert

54th Street and Biscayne Boulevard

In many locations around Miami in the past month, victims are being bumped or lightly fondled (and not in a good way) by criminals. Wallets are being stolen. We suggest placing your wallets in your *front* pocket and being aware of your surroundings.

Puzzling Pronouns Perk Up Police Report

100 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

This victim, who police report as a "he," met the suspect and they spent time talking near the water. At this juncture, the suspect asked the victim if he was a boy or a girl. After that, the report gets fuzzy. It states that the victim responded that "he was a girl." The suspect then asked "him" for sex. The victim refused because it was too soon and he (or she) had just met him. The offended suspect then reached over and grabbed "his" purse. Possibly a pre-op drag queen and a very confused (or very tired) police officer.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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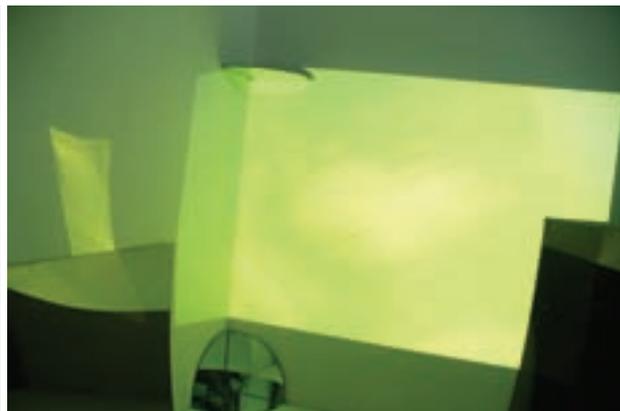
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 9600 NW 25 St Suite 2E Doral, FL 33172
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305-66-DEBT1
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What We Talk About When We Talk About Art

New local art arrives at MAM



Courtesy of the artist

Felecia Chizuko Carlisle's *Untitled (Sketches)*, mixed media installation, 2010.

By Anne Tschida
BT Contributor

When we talk about the art scene in Miami today, it's not about whether it has arrived, it's about where it is going. For more than a decade now, Miami has developed a solid visual arts community, with its institutions, museums, collections, and a base of artists finding firm roots. And of course, Art Basel Miami Beach has helped add international depth — and an extra level of scrutiny.

Along the way, museums and galleries have highlighted examples of Miami's growth, more often than not focusing on the vibrant, emerging young artists.

Now the Miami Art Museum (MAM) wants to give us a little more. "New Work Miami," opening up in mid-July, aims to present a broader, more mature art scene than has been shown in the past. It's a noble ambition, and one that could benefit Miami at this point. But first, the curators of this exhibition want to emphasize that this is not a comprehensive survey of Miami's scene; it is a snapshot of a moment in the summer of 2010.

Peter Boswell, MAM's assistant director for programs and senior curator, and René Morales, associate curator, are sitting at a table in the foyer of the museum this hot, sunny morning, talking about the genesis of the show. They've been making the rounds of studios and galleries for months now, looking for new works and "not the usual suspects," says Boswell. "We were looking for stuff that jazzed us up, and hadn't really been seen before."

They came to a decision as they visited swaths of the city to include emerging, midcareer, and established artists, but in the end to limit the total amount of work so it wouldn't feel like a Miami grab bag.

"We really wanted to highlight the variety of approaches that artists take today," says Morales. "Ten years ago artists just weren't as exposed to as much as they are today. It's so diverse, and not just multiculturally."

As we walk through the spaces that will soon house the work of about 35 artists, Morales and Boswell explain that it's not just Miami that has grown in the 21st Century, but the art world itself. Says Morales: "Yes, Miami has been exposed to international art because of Basel and the [growth] of the collections here, but the Internet has changed the world as well."

So in tandem with our kinetic globe, Boswell and Morales don't want this show to be static, or just paintings "hanging on walls for one night." Throughout the run of the show, there will be performances, videos, and even artists working in the museum at certain times. There will be a room designated for works that relate to the environment, a "rock and roll" room with pop-referenced art, and sound installations.

It does seem a departure from the all-Miami shows of the past — well-received exhibitions such as "The House at MoCA" and its follow-up "Travels in Hyperreality," and MAM's own "Miami in Transition" — which were intended to introduce audiences to Miami's talent. "New Work" wants to introduce new techniques, styles, and approaches with the assumption that the Miami creators



Courtesy of the artist

Kevin Arrow, *Untitled (slide)*, LCD light box and transparency, 2010.

themselves are already recognized.

And while this is a locals-only exhibit, reflecting the multicultural backgrounds of the artistic hands, Boswell makes it clear he thinks there is no such thing as a "Miami flavor" or style: "It's a more interesting reality than that."

What will this reality entail for those visiting MAM to see the show? Because the curators didn't want "New Work Miami" to be a survey and crammed with works, some artists will get their own rooms, others entire walls or extensive floor space. Beatriz Monteavaro will make a black-light sculpture in one room, while Felecia Chizuko Carlisle

will project imagery and continue to work on abstractions as the show goes on in her "studio" of a room. Sound artist Gustavo Matamoros will take over the elevator with his acoustic art, and Tatiana Vahan will create a video installation for the front foyer.

Gean Moreno, an artist and writer, along with Ernesto Oroza, are creating a tabloid catalogue that can be found in the reading/visitors room, where they will also have crafted furniture for the space (the catalogue will also be distributed around town). The collective Talking

Continued on page 45

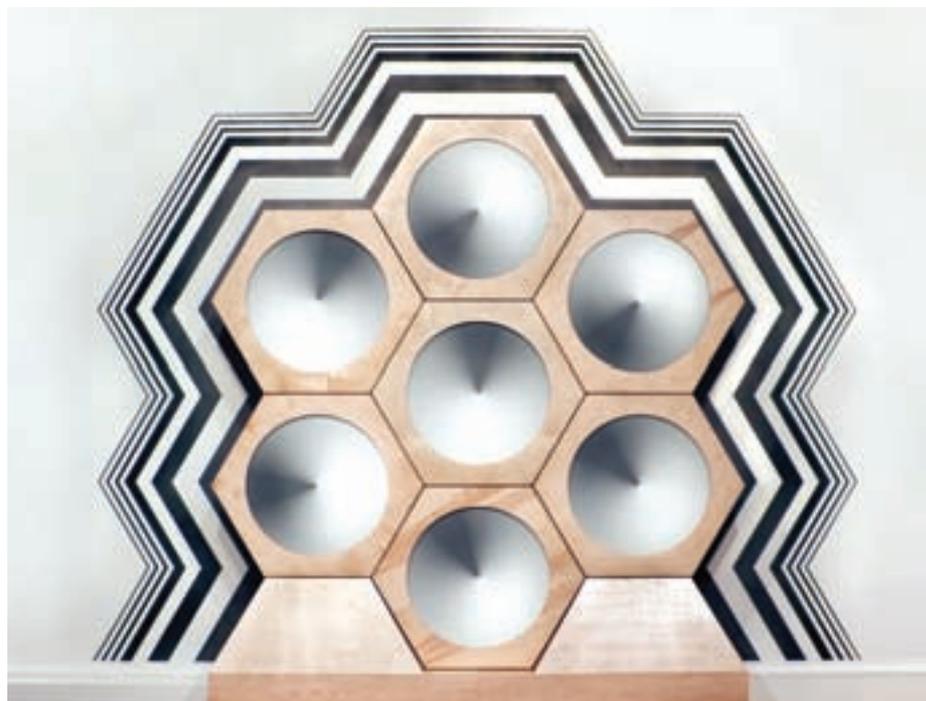
MAM

Continued from page 44

Head Transmitters will be conducting interviews in another room, and Kevin Arrow will set up a thrift-store-like installation in yet another.

In the “rock and roll” main area, artists such as Manny Prieres, Bert Rodriguez, and Don Lambert will create kinetic pieces. In the alternative-approaches space, highlighting works that are traditional maybe in essence but not in method, artists such as Lynne Golob Gelfman, Bob Thiele, Mette Tommerup, and Frances Trombly — whose “painting” is a stretched, hand-woven canvas — will be shown. The duo of Guerra de la Paz will be unveiling a new series, based on Greco-Roman torso sculptures but still made from their trademark found clothing, in this case shoulder pads and skin covering of polyester lace. And Fabian Peña will cover a wall with a piece made from bug parts. Robert Chambers, Jacin Giordano, Jim Drain, and Michael Genovese, along with others, will also contribute to the mix.

It’s a mix that is intentional, says Morales, a grouping of artists who are



Don Lambert, *Flatland*, maple, archival paper, Dibond, motors, and controller, 2009.

new, well established, or somewhere in between — and all are part of Miami’s now substantial art community. In fact Morales was a co-curator of the 2006

MAM show “Miami in Transition,” which featured 21 artists, none of whom are in this show but most of whom are still active, so one clear goal was to

Photo courtesy of Cincinnati Museum of Art

highlight yet another group of artists to underscore the heft of the scene here.

The cohesion of this particular show comes from the new work that he and Boswell saw in the making, in its depth and diversity. “Because of the global nature of art today, there is a new conversation” with the rest of the art world that makes Miami far less provincial than it once was, Morales suggests.

While the art world used to follow dictated trends formulated in art hubs, in the 21st Century, artists are familiar with work being created all over — thanks to travel and the Internet — and therefore such art centers are less important. Combine that with a South Florida demographic that is uniquely multicultural, and Miami has a lot to say. “The diversity of approaches,” says Morales, “is what they have in common.”

“*New Work Miami*” at the Miami Art Museum, July 18 through October 17, with special performances and openings the first and third Thursdays, 101 W. Flagler St., Miami, 305-375-3000.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Art Listings

WYNWOOD GALLERY WALK & DESIGN DISTRICT ART + DESIGN NIGHT SATURDAY, JULY 10

101/EXHIBIT

101 NE 40th St., Miami
305-573-2101
www.101exhibit.com
Through July 29:

Isabelle du Toit, Larassa Kabel, Ernest Trova, Pat Rocha, Ignatius Widiapradja, Roger Arvid Anderson, Michael Lucero, Curtis LaFollette, Cindy Wynn, Lepo, Troop, Albert Paley, Aaron M. Brown, Michael Costello, Marcus Antonius Jansen, David Bowers, Charles Pfahl, Jason Shawn Alexander, Omar Ali, and John Montiero

12345 WEST DIXIE STUDIO AND GALLERY

12345 W. Dixie Hwy., North Miami
305-895-2956
www.12345westdixie.com
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ABBA FINE ART

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

ALEJANDRA VON HARTZ FINE ARTS

2630 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-438-0220
www.alejandravonhartz.net
Call gallery for exhibition information.

ART FUSION

1 NE 40th St., Miami
305-573-5730
www.artfusiongallery.com
July 2 through September 22:
"TRANSLUMINESCENT FANTASIES" with various artists
Reception July 10, 7 to 10 p.m.

ARTFORMZ

171 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-572-0040
www.artformz.net
Through August 20:
"small wonders (art) salon" with Harumi Abe, Gustavo Acosta, Eric Anfinson, Duane Brandt, Pip Brandt, Leah Brown, Bill Burke, Stephanie Cunningham, Angi Curreri, Rai Escala, Shady Eshghi, Christian Feneck, Luis Garcia Nerey, Paul Glass, John Gurbacs, Bryan Hiveley, Judy King, Jacek Kolasinski, Greg Latch, Leila Leder Kremer, Silvia Lizama, Jules Lusson, John Martini, Lauren McAloon, Luisa Mesa, Venessa Monokian, Hugo Moro, Carol Munder, Sam Perry, Ron Pieniak, Barbara Rivera, David Rohn, Gustavo Román, Sara Rytteke, Beatrice Sagar, Edgar Sanchez Cumbas, John Sandell, Claudia Scalise, Gretchen Schargal, Shari Schemmel, Carolyn Schlam, Nina Surel, Peter Symons, Chu Teppa, Paloma Teppa, Kristin Thiele, Jackie Tufford, Jovan Villalba, Daniel Viñoly, Tom Virgin, and Ramon Williams

BAKEHOUSE ART COMPLEX

561 NW 32nd St., Miami
305-576-2828
www.bacfl.org
Call gallery for exhibition information.

BAS FISHER INVITATIONAL

180 NE 39th St., #210, Miami
By appointment:
info@basfisherinvitational.com
www.basfisherinvitational.com
July 10 through September 12:
"WEIRD MIAMI" with Autumn Casey, Adler Guerrier, Jason Hedges, Nick Lobo, Justin Long, Isabel Moros, Peggy Nolan, and Alyse Emdur
July 18, August 15, and September 19:
"WEIRD MIAMI BUS TOURS" artist-led bus tours with Christy Gast, Clifton Childree, Kevin Arrow, Adler Guerrier, and more
Reception July 10, 7 to 10 p.m.

BASHA GALLERY

795 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-891-4624
www.bashagallery.net
Through July 31: "Jewels of Art" with Bob Arbogast, Claudia Castillo, Allyson Krowitz, Arnaldo Rosello, Jorge Chirinos Sanchez, Kari Snyder, and Pedro Wilson

BERNICE STEINBAUM GALLERY

3550 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-573-2700
www.bernicesteinbaumgallery.com
Through September 3:
Nancy Friedemann and Jill Cannady

BORINQUEN ART GALLERY

100 NE 38th St., Miami
305-491-1526
www.borinquenhealth.org
Ongoing:
Romero Britto, Igal Fedida, François Gracia, Clarice Desousa, Andre de Plessel, Allen Benowitz, Rara Kuyuu, and Gabriella Liascovitz
Reception July 10, 7 to 10 p.m.

BREVARDS GALLERY

2320 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-5747
www.brevards.com
Through August 31: "NonDuality" by John Brevard

BUTTER GALLERY

2301-2303 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-303-6254
www.buttergallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

CALDWELL / LINFIELD GALLERY & STUDIO

8351 NE 8th Ct., Miami
305-754-2093
www.susannacaldwell.com
Ongoing:
"Seductive Assemblages and Wood Sculpture" by Susanna Caldwell

CALIX GUSTAV GALLERY

98 NW 29 St., Miami
305-576-8116
www.calixgustav.com
July 10 through September 1:
"The Passing" with Jovan Karlo Villalba, Catalina Jaramillo, and Richard Herzog
Reception July 10, 7 to 10 p.m.

CAROL JAZZAR CONTEMPORARY ART

158 NW 91st St., Miami Shores
305-490-6906
www.cjazzart.com
By appointment: carol@cjazzart.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

CENTER FOR VISUAL COMMUNICATION

541 NW 27th St., Miami
305-571-1415
www.visual.org
Through August 20: "Darby Bannard: The Miami Years" by Darby Bannard and "Beyond the Daily Life" with Guerra de la Paz and Teresa Diehl

CHAREST-WEINBERG GALLERY

250 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-292-0411
www.charest-weinberg.com
Through August 21:
"10 Years" by SunTek Chung
"Within an Arrow's Range" by Pedro Barbeito

CITY LOFT ART

61 NE 40th St., Miami
305-438-9006
www.cityloftart.com
Through July 31:
"The Beauty of Women" by Minakshi De



Zack Balber, *Religious Smiles*, Lambda print, 2010, Fredric Snitzer Gallery.

CS GALLERY

787 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-308-6561
www.chirinossanchez.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

DAVID CASTILLO GALLERY

2234 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-8110
www.castilloart.com
July 10 through August 31:
Group show with Adler Guerrier, Aramis Gutierrez, Quisqueya Henriquez, Susan Lee-Chun, Pepe Mar, Glexis Novoa, Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, Frances Trombly, and Wendy Wischer
Reception July 10, 7 to 10 p.m.

DIANA LOWENSTEIN FINE ARTS

2043 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-1804
www.dlfinearts.com
Through July 6:
"The Inspired Dream: Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art" with various artists

DIASPORA VIBE GALLERY

3938 NE 39th St., Miami
305-573-4046
www.diasporavibe.net
Through July 22:
"Exodus" with Rosamary Barrios-Hernandez, Chantal James, Ines Amado, Marlene Ramirez-Cancio/Fulana, Monique Diaz, Maria Lino, Aurora Molina, Tulu Bayer, Aleli Egues, Jorge Rojas, and more

DIMENSIONS VARIABLE

171 NE 38th St., Miami
dv@dimensionsvariable.net
dimensionsvariable.net
July 10 through August 31
"Yellow and Gold" by Felecia Chizuko Carlisle
Reception July 10, 7 to 11 p.m.

DINA MITRANI GALLERY

2620 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
786-486-7248
www.dinamitraniart.com
Through August 28:
"DISPOSABLE: NOSTALGIA FOR THE STILL IMAGE" curated by Orlando Estrada with various artists

DORSCH GALLERY

151 NW 24th St., Miami
305-576-1278
www.dorschgallery.com
Through July 10:
"in direct quote" by David Marsh and "a flawed providence" with Rene Barge, Jenny Brillhart, Richard Haden, Michelle Hailey, Corin Hewitt, Annie Hollingsworth, Jungil Hong, Jonathan Laustsen, Brandon Opalka, Ralph Provisero, Clement Valla, Neal T Walsh, and Jay Zehngebot

DOT FIFTYONE ART SPACE

51 NW 36th St., Miami
305-573-9994
www.dotfiftyone.com
Through July 8:
"Sesera" by José Luis Landet and "Tableaux" by Amalia Caputo

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
July 10 through July 31: "A Fragmented Anomaly" with Teo Freytes and Luis Padreda
Reception July 10, 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
Through July 17: "Streets" by Amos Miller

FREDRIC SNITZER GALLERY

2247 NW 1st Pl., Miami
305-448-8976
www.snitzer.com
July 10 through August 25:
"Boy, Oh Boy!" with various artists
Reception July 10, 7 to 10 p.m.

GALERIE HELENE LAMARQUE

125 NW 23 St., Miami
305-576-6095
www.galerieheleneamarque.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
July 9 through July 31
"What is found there" Fabienne Lasserre
Reception July 9, 6 to 8 p.m.
Reception July 10, 7 to 9 p.m.

GALLERY I/D

2531 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-778-4568
www.galleryid.com
Through July 7:
"Rise" with various artists
July 10 through August 28:
"[Sundara] Faces of India" by Karolina Wojtasik
Reception July 10, 7:30 to 10:30 p.m.

GIOVANNI ROSSI FINE ART

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

GODONAMERICA

1 NE 40th St. #5, Miami
786-362-5546
www.godonamerica.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

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Art Listings

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HARDCORE ARTS CONTEMPORARY SPACE

3326 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-1645
www.hardcoreartcontemporary.com
July 10 through September 4:
"IMPACT" by Troy Simmons and "Tar and Feathered"
by Julie Friel
Reception July 10, 7 to 10 p.m.

HAROLD GOLEN GALLERY

2294 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-989-3359
www.haroldgolengallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

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.

KAVACHNINA CONTEMPORARY

46 NW 36th St., Miami
305-448-3060
www.lurie-kavachnina.com
Through August 31:
"IDENTITY + RESISTANCE: YOUR BODY IS A BATTLEFIELD" with Billy Corben, Alex Nahon, Somy Ali, Marie Komphavong, Adrian De Brasi, Mariano Costa Peuser, Alex Guofeng Cao, and Angela Lergo

KELLEY ROY GALLERY

50 NE 29th St., Miami
305-447-3888
www.kelleyroygallery.com
Through July 31:
Tom Seghi

KUNSTHAUS MIAMI

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

LILIENTHAL ART STUDIOS

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

LOCUST PROJECTS

155 NE 38th St., Miami
305-576-8570
www.locustprojects.org
Through July 10:
"The LAB" with Omar Alvarez, Leslie Chavez, Jason Flores, Luna Goldberg, Kevin Hobbs, Ximena Izquierdo, Vanessa Lacayo, Asher Mones, and Christina Quinlan

LYLE O. REITZEL GALLERY

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

MAIN LIBRARY 2ND FLOOR EXHIBITION SPACE

101 W. Flagler St., Miami
305-375-2665
www.mdpls.org
www.society4preservation.org
Through September 19:
"Florida Arcane" by Raul J. Mendez



Raul J. Mendez, the unwritten rule of law in the keys during the 19th century, ink on money, 2010, at Main Library.

MIAMI ART SPACE

244 NW 35th St., Miami
305-438-9002
www.miamiartspace.com
Through July 7: "20(12): Twenty Twelve" curated by Kiki Valdes with Reinier Gamboa, Kiki Valdes, David Tamargo, George Sanchez-Calderon, David Marsh, Brian Gefen, John Seigny, Raul Perdomo, Alvaro Ilizabe, Eric Torriente, and Oliver Sanchez

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.

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

3620 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-9531
www.miriamfernandes.com
July 11 through July 30:
"Brazil in Blue" with various artists

MUSEO VAULT

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

OUR HOUSE WEST OF WYNWOOD

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

PANAMERICAN ART PROJECTS

2450 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-2400
www.panamericanart.com
Through August 14:
"Summer Salon: a selection of works under \$2,500" with Francis Acea, Gustavo Acosta, José Benito, Ernesto Berra, Andrea Cote, Carlos Estevez, Daniel Joglar, Ted Larsen, Armando Mariño, Santiago Porter, Magnus Sigurdarson, Tracey Snelling, Pablo Soria, and Enrique Camejo

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
Through August 1:
"Constructive art from the 50s & 60s" with Carmelo Arden Quin, Carlos Cruz Diez, Maria Freire, Bolivar Gaudi, Antonio Llorens, Juan Mele, J. Altabe, Miguel Vidal, Eduardo Jonquiers, Rodolfo Ian Uricchio, Jesus Soto, and Costigliolo

SETH JASON BEITLEE FINE ARTS

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

SPINELLO GALLERY

155 NE 38th St., Miami
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www.spinellogallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information.

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Art Listings

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STASH GALLERY

162 NE 50th Terr., Miami
305-992-7652
www.myspace.com/stashgallery
July 10:
"Visual Intercourse" with ABSTRAK and DoTheLiteThing
Reception July 10, 7 to 11 p.m.

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
July 10 through July 30:
"M T Your Pockets" with Maitejosune Urrechaga and Tony Kapel
Reception July 10, 6 to midnight

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI PROJECTS SPACE

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

WALLFLOWER GALLERY

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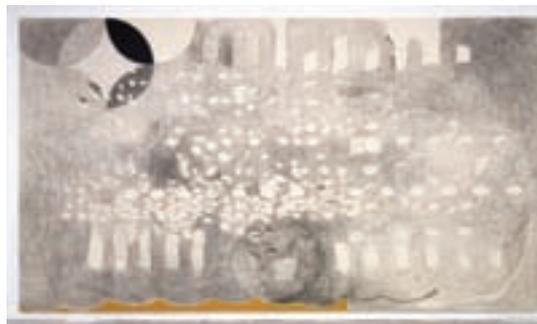
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David Marsh, *Untitled*, graphite, acrylic, pastel, and artificial gold leaf on canvas, 2010, at Dorsch Gallery.

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Events Calendar

Cocktails and Dancing at Gusman's Flickin' Summer Movies

The Gusman Center is featuring four films for dancing fools in its second annual **Flickin' Summer Movie Series**. *Dirty Dancing* kicks it off on **Thursday, July 8**, reminding us that Patrick Swayze will live forever on screen, and continues on following Thursdays with *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo*, *Saturday Night Fever*, and *Footloose*. All screenings are at 7:00 p.m., with a happy hour at 6:00 and a DJ dance party right after. Tickets are \$10 from Ticketmaster or at the Gusman box office (174 E. Flagler St.). *Special offer*: Buy three tickets at the box office before the day of the show and get a fourth for free. More information: 305-372-0925.

Luuuucy! He's Home!

Desi Arnaz — or at least his pioneering Latin sounds — finds a home at the Arsht Center from **Thursday, July 8 to Sunday, July 11** for the extravaganza of the conga king's greatest hits, *Babalu*. The brainchild of his daughter Lucie Arnaz, the show features his signature songs plus other faves with a Cuban beat (and a 15-piece band), dancers, and a special conga-playing appearance by Desi Arnaz, Jr. It's the closest we'll get to the old Tropicana. Performances start at 7:30 p.m. in the Knight Concert Hall. Tickets \$35 to \$70 available at www.arshtcenter.org, or call 305-949-6722.

Out in the Tropics, It's All Cool

There's a good chance you've never encountered a performance festival like this one — both in caliber and content. *Out in the Tropics* is queer, racy, quirky, and unquestionably groundbreaking. For instance, in its first-ever U.S. appearance, the Cuban troupe Teatro El Publico takes center stage **Thursday, July 8 and Friday, July 9** at the Colony Theater (1040 Lincoln Rd.), 8:00 p.m., to reinterpret Fassbinder's classic cult film *The Bitter Tears of Petra Van Kant* (hint: three female characters are played by men). On **Sunday, July 11** at 7:00 p.m. at the Colony, Sara Felder performs a one-women show starring herself, her girlfriend, and a Jewish wedding (hint: it also involves juggling and knife-throwing). The event runs July 7-11; tickets range from \$25 to \$35 and



Day of the Lizard



Mango Festival



Kassav'



are available at Ticketmaster and the Colony. Go to www.fundarte.com or 305-316-6165 for more details.

The Triumph of the Refugee, Miami Style

The Haitian and hip-hop-flavored play *Refugee* from Marc Joseph is semi-autobiographical. But then, stories about struggle and escape from oppressive lands and adapting to new, sometimes cold and indifferent shores is an essential part of Miami's biography as well. From **Friday, July 9 to Sunday, July 11** the Little Haiti Cultural Center (212 NE 59th Terr.) will be the venue for the song-and-dance tale of a refugee whose experience reflects the trials and triumphs of so many in this town. Shows at 7:00 p.m., tickets \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door. Proceeds go to the Haiti Rebuilding Project. Call 305-960-2969.

Hispanic Theater Festival XXV: Latin Script At Its Best

For ten days this month, Miami again hosts one of the premier events in the theater world when the Hispanic Theater Festival presents its 25th anniversary season. The diverse fare includes treats such as *Filo al Fuego (Blade to the Heat)*, a boxing play set in 1960s Miami about (what else?) love, violence, and sex, a production of Miami's Teatro Prometeo, with English subtitles, **Friday, July 9 and Saturday, July 10** at 8:30 p.m. at the Miami-Dade College Auditorium, Wolfson Campus. For tickets call 305-237-3262. Then there's Teatro Avante's *Por Las Tierras de Colon (Across Columbus's Land)*, also with English subtitles and directed by festival founder Mario Ernesto Sánchez, about a couple caught in Colombia during rioting in 1948. It's onstage at the Carnival Studio Theater at the Arsht Center **July 28**

through July

31. For tickets call 305-949-6722. More details at www.teatroavante.com.

The Caribbean Rhythm Is Gonna Get You

Considered originators of the zouk sound, *Kassav'* (from the Creole for a cassava dish) meshes mesmerizing rhythms from the French Caribbean. But *Kassav'* has moved far beyond those island confines, and the 14-piece big band needs a venue like the Fillmore at the Jackie Gleason (1700 Washington Ave., Miami Beach) to do it justice. Courtesy of the Rhythm Foundation, you can groove to zouk on a dance floor, or just listen up in seats on **Saturday, July 10**. Concert starts at 8:00 p.m., and tickets are \$40 from Ticketmaster or from outlets found at KassavMiami.com. Call 305-672-5202 for more information.

The Mother of All Mango Festivals

While Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (10901 Old Cutler Rd.) hosts the biggest annual mango festival around — this year for the 18th time — the ancestral and spiritual home of the king of fruits is India. This year's festival is an homage to the subcontinent's jewel, which has been cultivated there for thousands of years. (By comparison, we've only grown the mango for 150 years.) As in the past, the weekend of **Saturday, July 10 to Sunday, July 11** will be *jam* packed with tastings and workshops and

cooking demos, but it will also feature India-centric topics and dishes, yoga, and even a Bollywood dance performance. Admission is \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors, and \$10 for kids. Call 305-667-1651 or visit www.fairchildgarden.org.

Yes, She Can and Does Go Home Again

The premiere of *Mary Jane*, a quiet, Haitian-American film, takes place at the Gusman Center on **Saturday, July 17**. The story is narrated by a 26-year-old woman who takes the audience back home to face her past, and to the uncle who molested her as a child. While making the film, the producers encountered child-victim advocates who opened their eyes to the sadly multi-ethnic, multi-cultural world of abuse. This is their fight in motion. The film screening is at 8:00 p.m. and there's a Q&A with the producers at 7:30. Tickets are \$25 in advance. Call 305-372-0925.

Film in the Foliage

Elusive Landscape may be one of the most original ways to make us pay attention to our lush surroundings, by projecting handmade, 16mm films directly onto trees in our neighborhood parks. Artist Dinorah de Jesús Rodríguez focuses her camera on our natural surroundings, and the resulting moving images will next be shown on the foliage of Legion Park (6447 NE 7th Ave.) on **Saturday, July 17**, from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m. Ricardo Lastre will provide music. Ignoring our environment is costly, but this event is *free*. See elusivelandscape.blogspot.com.

The Day of the Lizard

They come creeping and crawling and slithering — and that's just the lizards! Men, women, children, and cold-blooded creatures gather once a year at the Miami Science Museum (3280 S. Miami Ave.) for **Lizard Day** on **Sunday, July 18** from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., where proud owners enter their companions in reptilian beauty contests. Afterward owners and gawker visitors alike can sample *insect cuisine* prepared on-site by a professional chef. The combo can't be beat! Lizard registration closes July 17. Call 305-646-4256.

Compiled by BT contributor Anne Tschida

North Miami's Out-of-Sight Delight

It's tucked away in a mangrove forest, which suits the joggers and quirky kickballers

By Jim W. Harper
BT Contributor

The University of Florida Gators may romp in "The Swamp," but no real alligators and no significant wetlands exist in that part of the campus. In our neighborhood, however, there is a stadium that rises out of a mangrove forest. Almost invisible until you get there, the North Miami Athletic Stadium is a real swamp baby that finally is growing into its skin.

Opened in 1985, The Other Swamp sat for years in its lonely, woody encampment on 151st Street with no neighbors except for the North District Wastewater Treatment Plant, hidden even deeper within the woods. Perhaps the stadium was built by the City of North Miami to distract people from the wizard of sewage behind the mangrove curtain.

The concealed stadium seems strangely displaced from nearby Biscayne Boulevard, where it could have been a landmark, and from Florida International University's Biscayne Bay Campus. It stands about a half-mile away from either entity, and no sidewalks lead directly to the stadium property, although there is a sidewalk on the other side of the four-lane road that skirts by the field.

The stadium's fate changed in recent years as a spate of construction projects brought it into the light. Most notoriously, the twin towers of the ill-fated Biscayne Landing project loom across



Excellent running track, expansive bleachers, and Astroturf, which isn't so bad.

the street from the stadium in their own morass of obscurity and unrealized splendor. Two much more successful projects, however, ensure that the stadium will have a steady stream of users.

The David Lawrence Jr. K-8 Center, a public school and home of the mighty Dolphins, has been bringing soccer moms and kids to this side of town since 2006. Its cheery squash-yellow walls stand a stone's throw away from the stadium. In 2009 the Alonzo and Tracy Mourning Senior High Biscayne Bay Campus, home of the mighty Sharks, popped up next to the stadium's parking lot. The modern school in

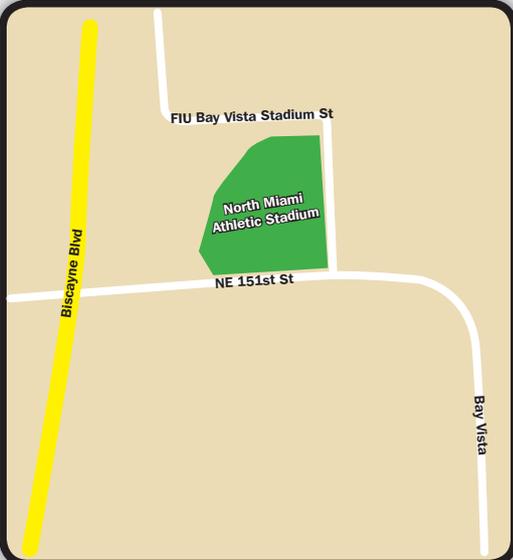
BT photos by Jim W. Harper

In years past, when the field was grass, the stadium hosted both a men's and a women's semi-pro football league, and it has been the site of some serious soccer matches. Earlier this year it hosted a one-time soccer showdown between teams representing City of North Miami Mayor Andre Pierre and Miami-Dade Superintendent of Schools Alberto Carvalho. Created to promote participation in the 2010 census, the "Clash of the Bureaucrats" ended in a tie.

This summer the stadium's sports scene has turned into a quirk-fest worthy of the screwball comedy *Dodgeball*. An adult kickball league relaunched on June 17 and expects to play every Thursday, with additional "meetings" held at the North Miami Beach Miller's Ale House. Part of the World Adult Kickball Association, which everyone knows as



Biscayne Landing's lonely twin towers loom over the stadium.



NORTH MIAMI ATHLETIC STADIUM

Park Rating



2555 NE 151st St.
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305-947-9253
Hours: Varied (call for details)
Picnic tables: No
Barbecues: No
Picnic pavilions: No
Tennis courts: No
Athletic fields: Yes
Night lighting: Yes
Swimming pool: No
Playground: No

the mangroves, with its angled, slate gray, windowless façade, was designed by Miami's famed architectural firm Arquitectonica.

With school kids running in and out of the stadium all day, it remains closed to the public on school days until 3:30 p.m. Then all hell breaks loose.

Actually the stadium can be a haven for solitude or the place to meet up. For years it has been a popular site for pick-up soccer games, and teams still congregate here on weekends and evenings. These visitors even enjoy an outdoor shower in one corner of the stadium, created by someone who ingeniously tied a hose onto a fence.

The main reason to visit the stadium now is to hit the fresh Astroturf.

WAKA, the league is open to everyone over the age of 21 and costs \$69.95 for the season.

Another adult league debuting at the stadium this summer is coed recreational flag football. This group plans to play every Monday from July 26 to September 27, because apparently that is the time of year when football goes coed. This romp costs \$75 to join and is coordinated by the Miami Sport and Social Club.

Having undergone renovations in 2009, the stadium is high in quality. It shines with a new Astroturf field surrounded by a springy orange track. The

.....
Continued on page 51

PARK PATROL

Delight

Continued from page 50

artificial green turf may not be everyone's favorite to play on, but a big plus is that it never needs trimming. As a testament to the lack of mowing, three large clipping collectors sit idle on one of the facility's few remaining patches of grass.

The quarter-mile track, ready for its close-up, draws a steady stream of walkers, joggers, and sprinters to its well-marked, blood-orange surface. Some visitors follow their inner Rocky and hit the bleachers, hopping up and down the silver steps. For jogging, the track feels wide open, although it is harshly exposed to the daytime sun.

The extensive bleachers can accommodate thousands, and on top of the western bleachers perches an announcer's (bachelor) pad with a windowed office below (for privacy) and an open-air viewing platform above (for starlit nights). In the evenings, the stadium produces its own daylight with massive floodlights.

Considering the thin number of



The facility features a tricked-out announcer's booth, which could double as a bachelor pad.

visitors on any given day, the facility has a large number of bathrooms with functioning water fountains. The main pea-green restrooms stand at the stadium's



The springy quarter-mile track attracts simple strollers and serious sprinters.

entrance on the southeast side, near the high school, and they appear to remain open during park hours.

Another set of restrooms on the park's northwest end (near the sewage plant) appear to be on permanent lockdown. Near this building stands another green rectangle, a men's locker room underneath the Myrna A. Pavilack scoreboard. The locker room probably should be locked but wasn't the first time I visited. Also near the scoreboard is the long jump pit, in case you feel the need to leap.

The entrance sign to the park calls it the Ronald L. Book Athletic Track, named after a prominent lobbyist, but it is doubtful that anyone calls it anything other than the North Miami (Athletic) Stadium. Hidden in the rear of the park (near the sewage plant) stands a large, rusty plaque embedded

in sturdy coral rock dating the stadium to 1985. At the front, next to the concession stand area, is a new plaque dating its renovation to 2009.

NoMi's stadium in the woods is ready to rumble. It may gain prominence now that the City of North Miami is not getting funding from the doomed Biscayne Landing project to build a proposed Olympic training center.

Anyone know a professional rugby team looking for a home? They will probably feel welcome in the eclectic city that built its stadium in the swamp.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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On the Road Again

This summer consider a Florida family vacation

By Jenni Person
BT Contributor

Ah, the lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer! This happens to be a busy summer for our family, with lots of transitions going on. So instead of one big family vacation, our travel this summer will be a medley of short trips.

We really enjoy these mini vacations that have us eating up Florida asphalt and strengthening our already abundant love for the Sunshine State. We'll take any excuse to find ourselves in different corners the state, and highly recommend discovering places you may not know — from Gatorland (www.gatorland.com) in Orlando to the Florida Black History Trail (www.visitflorida.com/articles/the-florida-black-heritage-trail) to real mermaids and a pirate-themed water park at Weeki Wachee Springs State Park (www.weekiwachee.com) to sponge docks and great Greek restaurants in Tarpon Springs.

I could go on and on with ideas for interesting family trips around Florida. I also feel very strongly that this is the time to support the areas most vulnerable to the negative economic impact of the oil explosion in the Gulf. These areas are likely dropping their prices to entice tourists. As fellow Floridians, we should get out and support them, even if it means sticking to the pool to avoid tar balls and oily water at the beaches. Truth is, my kids are just as happy to spend full days in the chlorine than in the sand and saltwater.

Wherever you travel this summer — whether you're staying in-state or



Weeki Wachee photo by John Athanasou

globe-trotting, remember to take your museum and zoo membership cards with you. Pretty much all of them are good for reciprocal programs across North America. We missed the opportunity to save more than \$50 on admission to the very cool Mote Aquarium in Sarasota (www.mote.org) because we didn't have our Metro Zoo cards with us.

If you haven't done so already, it's worth joining, say, the Miami Science Museum at \$95 for the year, which is about the same as two visits for a family of four. The membership gets you reciprocity at more than 270 science centers, plus discounts on things like summer camps and gift-shop items (great for the birthday gifts you need to buy throughout the year), as well as invitations for special museum events. So remember: Bring your membership cards with you on the road.

I have another summer travel tip: If your kid uses a footstool to be independent at home for washing hands,

brushing teeth, and so on, bring one for use at hotels. Izzi, my adamantly independent four-year-old, very sweetly wandered around the hotel room on that Sarasota trip looking for "the stool" so he could wash his hands and get himself a glass of water.

At most other places where he spends time — home, school, Mom-Mom's, and our friends' homes — stools are available, and he innocently thought there would be one at our hotel. He was very frustrated to learn there wasn't. I felt awful, especially given that I'd written a very pointed note to Disney about 18 months ago suggesting they stock their hotel rooms with footstools since they serve this same height-challenged preschool set.

We parents need to take charge and bring our own! You can throw one in the car or you can buy a folding one for your suitcase, or pick up a cheap one at Target for \$2.50 while on the road — unless you're visiting some very rural or rustic place, in which case a footstool will

probably be the last thing your kid will be thinking about.

Summer is also a great time to pull out that rainy-day list and make sure you're on top of all your parenting visions. Here are a couple of things to put on that list if you haven't already:

- Voluntary Pre-K program (VPK). All children who turn four prior to September 1, 2010, are eligible for free education through the VPK program. Designed to encourage early-childhood development and learning, VPK makes it easier for families to gain access to fee-based programs. Sometimes, in a private-school setting, the VPK offsets a portion of the tuition, while in other programs it covers tuition in full. For more information about the VPK program and registering your four-year-old, check out www.vpkhelp.org.

- Florida Pre-Paid College Plan. At the other end of the education spectrum is the Florida Pre-Paid College Plan, which helps parents squirrel away money for their kids' college tuition. I'm always surprised how many parents I encounter who don't know about or aren't participating in this. With various options, you can lock in today's tuition rates and have college paid for affordably at any of Florida's public colleges and universities in advance of need. It functions as a standard 529 college savings account (and is one of the better ones nationally), so that if your child ends up attending a school outside the system or in a different state, you still have college savings available to use toward tuition. For more information go to www.myfloridaprepaid.com.

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The Deadliest Cut

Palm trees are not toy poodles, so don't prune them to look cute

By Jeff Shimonski
BT Contributor

Every day when I drive home I pass a home whose owners recently planted some very expensive Canary Island date palms in the front yard. These four palms are beautiful matching specimens that certainly cost thousands of dollars each when they were installed. A few weeks ago I was shocked to see that the palms had been “pineappled,” meaning all the lower fronds had been trimmed off so the remaining fronds resembled the top of a pineapple.

Many people believe this common practice makes the palms look more attractive. Property management companies regularly trim off all the lower fronds for a “hurricane cut” that supposedly keeps the palm from blowing over in a storm. Let me tell you what you are *really* doing to your expensive investment when you prune palms in this manner.

In South Florida, there are many diseases and insects that attack palms. Did you know that some of the fungal diseases fatal to palms have been proven to be transmitted by pruning tools? These tools include chain saws, hand saws, and hand clippers. Landscapers and arborists need to sterilize their tools every time they finish trimming an individual palm before they move onto the next. Since chain saws are nearly impossible to sterilize, hand saws or clippers should be the only tools used to cut off palm fronds.

Do you know what else happens when you cut off a green palm frond or cause any other type of wound to the trunk? You may attract one of several species of palm weevils to lay their eggs. These are large

weevils up to two or three inches long, usually all black and displaying long “snouts.” Some species have attractive red marks or patterns on their hard exoskeletons. These large insects are attracted to stressed palms, which include newly planted palms and those which have been recently pruned. When palm weevils arrive at an appropriate site, they can lay several hundred eggs in a month. When these eggs hatch, the larvae, which can grow as large as your thumb, eat themselves into and throughout the heart and trunk of the palm.

It only takes about 20 larvae to kill a large Canary Island date palm.

Another result of extreme pruning: loss of important nutrients. When trees and palms have leaves that are beginning to die, certain nutrients are put into a soluble form and pulled out of the older foliage and usually sent to new growth. Palms mobilize potassium, one of the important plant macronutrients, and perhaps other nutrients from the older leaves. If the older leaves or fronds are continuously cut off, the new growth will eventually show nutrient deficiencies and palm health will be affected. Extreme pruning done on a regular basis has been shown to be fatal to certain species of palm owing to nutrient deficiencies.



A butchered Canary Island date palm, ready food for palm weevils.

Palm fronds should not be removed if they still have green on the leaflets or midrib. They are still manufacturing and supplying food to the palm.

A typical indication of regular removal of green fronds is “pencil-ing.” This is the section of trunk directly underneath the head of the palm (where all the existing fronds are connected) that keeps getting skinnier and skinnier. Eventually these “penciled” trunks snap off from the weight above, and the palm is killed.

I often see palmetto palms in large developments with this manmade damage. When the heads of these palms snap off in a hurricane, I hope the property owners contact their landscape maintenance

companies for an explanation regarding the “hurricane pruning” that had been done previously to these palms.

After a freeze or severe cold damages and burns palm fronds, I have learned that if I cut off too many of the damaged fronds, the new leaves that come out may break off in windy conditions. The new leaves are soft. The lower, older and stiffer fronds not only help support the newest fronds until they become mature and stronger, but there has also been a loss of nutrients to the newest growth, making the new fronds more susceptible to wind damage.

If a palm has a crown shaft like a royal palm, with the green part underneath the frond that clasps and surrounds the upper part of the trunk, then the palm is self-cleaning. The fronds should be allowed to drop off on their own and not be cut off. Palms that are not self-cleaning, like Canary Island date palms and palmetto palms, have no crown shaft, meaning dying and dead fronds will hang on the palm for a long time. It is best to cut off the fronds once they turn completely yellow or brown.

One exception to the rule of not pruning the green parts of a palm is the removal of palm fruit. Coconuts and other large palm fruit can be hazardous and should be removed, especially before an expected hurricane.

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

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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

By Bill Citara
BT Contributor

So the big day, July 4, our nation's birthday, has come and gone. It didn't feel all that celebratory, did it? Like one of those birthdays when your dog gets hit by a car, which then jumps the curb and crashes into your living room, where it knocks your new flat-screen TV off the wall, causing it to burst into flames and almost burn your house down because the fire department responded to the wrong address.

You know, one of *those* birthdays.

But despite it all we persevered, marching in time to perform the ritual charring of the flesh — a.k.a. barbecue — because if you can't transform a few hunks of innocent animal protein into blackened, desiccated, meat-flavored cinders, what the hell kind of birthday would it be?

Operating on the assumption that we'll continue with the barbecue charring all summer, VINO has roused himself from his Valium-induced torpor to present a handful

of blessedly affordable, barbecue-friendly wines. They're guaranteed to make ribs, brisket, pork shoulder, chicken, even tofu go down easier.

Let's start with the token whitey, the **Santa Julia 2009 Torrontes**. This lush, aromatic grape, considered *the* white-wine grape of Argentina, is becoming my new favorite pour; think a fuller-bodied Albariño at half the price. This one shows off all the characteristics of the varietal, opening with honeysuckle and tropical fruit aromas and segueing to flavors of peach, mango, and orange. I think it's terrific, and with grilled chicken, fish, veggies, and, yes, tofu, it would make an excellent partner.

It seems appropriate in this age of the Tea Party and other abominations to include a token pinko, and since there's something indescribably satisfying about drinking sparkling wine with barbecue,



finding a simple, inexpensive, and easily available pink bubbly was a no-brainer. **Korbel's NV Brut Rosé** fills the bill quite nicely. It gives off a bit of funk when first opened but settles down to reveal pleasant cherry-strawberry flavors with enough acidity and effervescence to balance the fattiness of grilled meat.

Now for the hard stuff, red wines that can stand up to the heartiest 'cue a grillmaster can muster, beginning with the **Louis Jadot 2008 Beaujolais-Villages**. This isn't sweetish, grapey Beaujolais Nouveau but a crisp, lean wine with tart cherry and strawberry flavors — very tart by Nouveau or California standards, and with a long citrus finish. That and fairly high acidity make it another wine that can cut the richness of grilled pork and beef.

Next comes a second French product, the **2007 Jean-Luc Colombo "Les**

Abeilles" Côte du Rhône. A blend of 50-percent Grenache, 30-percent Syrah, and 20-percent Mourvedre, it's a truly delightful wine. It kicks off with red cherry-raspberry flavors from the Grenache and Syrah, leavened by the earthy-tobacco character of the Mourvedre. The fruit is tangy but not tart, with hints of anise and soft underlying acidity. Very nice, and hard to *stop* drinking.

With all the candy-cane wines that have come out of Australia over the past many years, I tend to regard inexpensive Aussies with a pretty jaundiced palate, so the **Penfolds 2008 "Rawson's Retreat"** was a very welcome surprise. Three-quarters Shiraz (Syrah) to one-quarter Cabernet Sauvignon, it's lusciously aromatic, filling the schnozz with big, bold blueberry and blackberry fruit, tossing in a little leather, tobacco, and black olive on the side. It's not quite so complex in the mouth, but the fruitier Shiraz and earthier Cabernet play extremely

Continued on page 55

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Vino

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well together and have “barbecued brisket” splashed all over them.

One of the best-value California winemakers you’ve never heard of is Bogle, and the **Bogle 2008 Old Vine Zinfandel** is one more bottle of proof. It displays everything you love about California Zins — bracing black cherry-berry fruit, lots of spice and black pepper, a generous dollop of oak. What it doesn’t

display is that jammy, overly ripe, port-like fruit of some California Zins, which means you can drink more than a glass without your taste buds going limp.

The big dog in this tasting is — no surprise here — Carmerene, specifically the **2008 Santa Rita Reserve**. Blackberries, cassis, allspice, black pepper, dust, earth, even a squinch of diesel all run around like crazy in your mouth. If you want a wine that really kicks butt — pork and otherwise — you’ve come to the right place.

And now I’ve got to go get that car out of my living room.

The North Miami Beach Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270) is the source of the Bogle Zinfandel and Santa Julia Torrontes, \$8.97 and \$8.99 respectively. The Korbel Rosé (\$10.99) and Jadot Beaujolais (\$9.99) can be found at ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525), while the Jean-Luc Colombo Côtes

du Rhône is at Aventura’s Cellars Wine & Spirits Warehouse (21055 Biscayne Blvd., Aventura, 305-936-9433) for \$11.99. Get the Penfolds “Rawson’s Retreat” at the Biscayne Commons Publix (14641 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-2171) for \$8.99, and the Santa Rita Carmerene for \$11.99 at the Whole Foods Market (21105 Biscayne Blvd, 305-933-1543) in Aventura.

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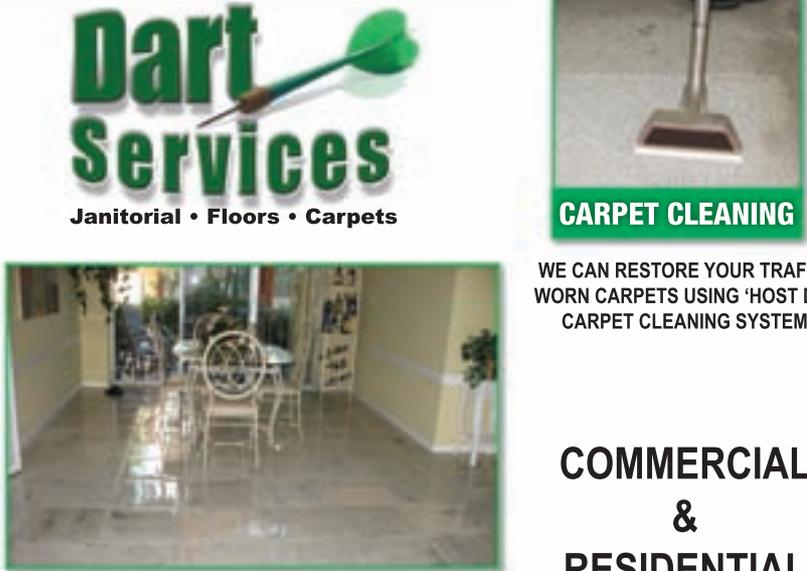
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Problem Pooper? Put His Nose in It!

Five persistent myths regarding dog behavior and what to do about them

By Lisa Hartman
BT Contributor

Some myths just won't die. Regardless of the fact that they may have been proven beyond a doubt to be inaccurate, they are passed down from one generation to the next. In health matters, we've all heard "feed a cold, starve a fever," along with many other so-called remedies we would never think of using today. The world of dog training and behavior is no different. Below are some of the most common training myths and some answers for the problems at hand.

If your dog has an "accident," you should show it to him and rub his nose in it.

It is amazing that this piece of advice is still making the rounds. In truth you should *never* punish for such "accidents" or the dog may be afraid to potty in front of you. This can lead to sneaky behavior as the dog feels it is only safe to eliminate when you're not looking. Smacking the dog with a newspaper is just as bad.

Your touch and presence should be comforting to your dog, not scary! A better system would be to reward the dog for eliminating in the right spot, and supervise and avoid accidents in the wrong areas. After all, we know our dog has to go; it is where he eliminates that we care about. Accidents mean we goofed up somewhere and didn't take him out often enough or supervise him well enough.

Aggressive dogs need a "firm hand."

Most aggression stems from fear and a lack of socialization early on in the dog's



development. The dog has had a bad experience or not enough experience with people, other animals, or specific situations. Furthermore, some aggression has been reinforced intentionally and unintentionally by the owner. An example of this is when the owner of a small dog pets her little precious and coos, "It's okay..." as the dog snaps and growls at the doorman. In a case like this, the dog is receiving affection and attention and being told it's okay to act uncivilized.

Sometimes an owner punishes the dog for his aggressive display. But this

only goes after the symptom (growling, biting, and so on), not the cause. The root of the problem is still there and possibly made worse by punishment and stress.

In any case, the best protocol for aggression is desensitization and a counter-conditioning program in which the dog learns to be comfortable around and possibly even enjoy the object of his irritation.

If your male dog "humps" you or another dog, he is trying to be dominant.

Dogs mount for many reasons. The most obvious one is that they are

aroused. If your dog is constantly mounting and isn't neutered, doing so will take the edge off and lessen the behavior. But even altered dogs hump sometimes, including female dogs. It is a natural action for animals and still enjoyable to do whether fixed or not. Sometimes it arises because of nerves or too much pent-up energy.

When I worked at shelters, I would let dogs in the play yard and they would mount other dogs — male and female — constantly. They'd been in a kennel so long they didn't know what to do with themselves during play time. Sometimes the mounted dogs cared, sometimes they didn't. You can also teach the dog to respond to "Off!" or another command that tells him you would like that behavior to stop.

If your dog growls or snaps at you when you try to take something away from him, he is trying to be "alpha."

If I ask ten people what *alpha* means to them, I'll get ten different answers. Actually we contemporary trainers rarely if ever talk in those terms. I don't. But thanks to the transmission of old, bad information, terms suggesting pack rank are kept alive for new generations of dog owners.

Dogs hold onto items and try to keep them from you because they are important to them. It's called "resource guarding." This is a hard-wired behavior that would keep a dog alive in the wild. He certainly wouldn't last long if he gave up his dinner and safe living spot to any animal who desired it.

Continued on page 57

An example of unintentional reinforcement: The owner of a small dog pets her little precious and coos, "It's okay..." as the dog snaps and growls at the doorman.

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Problem

Continued from page 56

Getting angry and taking items from him may exacerbate the problem. Now the dog may consider you a threat, a thief who takes all things important, and he'll hold onto his possessions more tightly. A better course of action would be to teach the dog that it pays off extremely well to give up things through careful and systematic training and a behavior-modification program.

If your dog jumps on you, you should kneel him in the chest.

The dog only wants to say hello to you! Hurting him would not be the answer. A kinder strategy would be to teach him a more mannerly way to say hello and get your attention, such as a "sit to greet." The dog is taught that the only way someone will acknowledge him is if his butt is firmly planted on the floor. With a little practice and the reward of getting to greet you (you

now reach down to pet him), most dogs pick this up in no time.

"Resource guarding" is a hard-wired behavior. He certainly wouldn't last long in the wild if he gave up his dinner and safe living spot to any animal who desired it.

There is usually a bit of legitimacy or reason behind "old wives' tales" and myths. That's how they came into

existence. But just like swallowing a spoonful of turpentine to fight illness, we usually have a more modern explanation and a better solution to the problem.

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

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Which hurricane was the worst you've experienced?

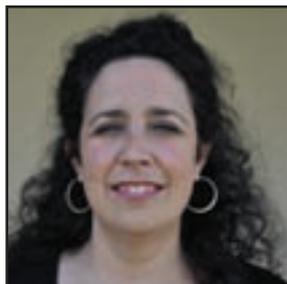
Compiled by Cathi Marro – BT Contributor



Naila Boodhoo
Journalist
Design District
 Hurricane Andrew [August 24, 1992] is the one I remember most vividly — especially the shock of a city that wasn't prepared. My friend had no electricity for two weeks. Luckily our house was fine, but our other property was destroyed. I couldn't sleep through it. The loud, howling sound of the wind during a hurricane is unforgettable!



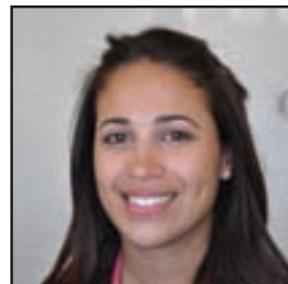
Tom Klimetz
Store Owner
Miami
 Hurricane Donna in the 1960s. I was a little kid and I was terrified! I was so small, I didn't know what to expect. I remember seeing my dad going out to close up all the doors. We owned a business and there was damage to the store. The windows were blown in. I've been through all of the hurricanes down here but that was the worst because I was so young.



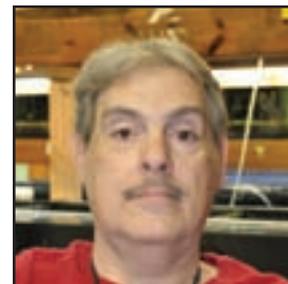
Terry Alfonso
Education Administrator
Miami Shores
 Hurricane Andrew was the worst. My mom was a hospital administrator so she was at work. My dad and my grandfather slept through the whole thing, and I sat up in bed with my guitars, listening and feeling the whole house shaking — only to be followed by three weeks without electricity in Miami summer heat. And we were very lucky. The whole thing: Not fun!



Patrick McMillan
Learning Center Director
North Miami Beach
 Definitely Andrew. That's the one that affected more people. I went down south to volunteer lifting trees and such. Some houses weren't in living condition anymore. I lived on the northern end of Dade so we only lost power. We were equipped with food and everything, though. I've been camping before and I think those kind of survival skills come in handy.



Yuliana Rodriguez
Pet Spa Owner
North Miami
 Wilma was the worst for me. We had a store room over on 125th Street and the storm blew the air conditioning off the top of the building. We were boarding dogs in there and my mom, our co-owner, was out of town. I had to take care of everything by myself. I kept both doors open, but it was pretty scary. It was very uncomfortable, but luckily none of the animals was hurt.



Rene Bacallao
Disabled
Miami
 My first year living here was 1992, and I had just bought a house. I heard about it on a Saturday, then on Monday, Andrew hit! I put plywood up inside my windows. I secured the plywood in place with two-by-fours. I ended up with only two cracked windows, an orange tree down, and 50 roof tiles missing. The real shock was in the morning, when I saw that the neighbors' roofs were missing!

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Dining Guide

RESTAURANT LISTINGS

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 228.

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-crustured 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 pastetes 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. \$\$\$\$

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. \$\$

NEW THIS MONTH

MIAMI

BRICKELL / DOWNTOWN

Sandwich Bar

40 NE 1st Ave., 305-577-0622

This cool hideaway has a limited menu. Which is a good thing when it means everything served is solidly crafted by hands-on chef/owners, two of whom amassed sous-chef chops at Cioppino and Sardinia. The main fare is imaginative sandwiches on fresh breads; an especially delicious creation features slow-braised short ribs, caramelized onions, and melting muenster and provolone cheeses. Finish with fine-shaved Aloha Ice topped with fresh fruit and other full-flavored syrups, all housemade, plus rich condensed milk. A sno-cone for sophisticates. \$

Zuma

270 Biscayne Blvd. Way, 305-577-0277

This Miami River restolounge has a London parent on San Pellegrino's list of the world's best restaurants, and a similar menu of world-class, Izakaya-style smallish plates (robata-grilled items, sushi, much more) meant for sharing over drinks. Suffice to say that it would take maybe a dozen visits to work your way through the voluminous menu, which offers ample temptations for vegetarians as well as carnivores. Our favorite is the melt-in-your-mouth pork belly with yuzu/mustard miso dip, but even the exquisitely-garnished tofu rocks. \$\$\$\$

MIDTOWN / DESIGN DISTRICT

Prosecco Ristorante

3930 NE 2nd Ave., 305-438-2885

Its sheltered location, in a showroom building's central atrium, makes Prosecco not the Design District's easiest-to-find Italian eatery/enoteca. But the owner's longtime experience in Tom Billante restaurants like Carpaccio tells you the place is a people-pleaser, with food and wine that's accessible, affordable, and worth the hunt. Beautifully garnished carpaccios (like mustard-vinaigrette-dressed smoked salmon with baby beets, purple potatoes, and a soft-cooked egg), pastas like ricotta and spinach-stuffed agnolotti with sage/butter sauce, and similar temptations ensure you'll return. \$\$\$

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 smallish plates include fried fresh zucchini with dip (cheese recommended); chorizo with homemade cilantro July; or steak tacos, served Mexican-style with onions, cilantro, and spicy 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

UPPER EASTSIDE

Balans Biscayne

6789 Biscayne Blvd.
305-534-9191

It took longer than expected, but this Brit import's third Miami venue finally opened, and rather quietly – which has an upside. It's easier to get a table here (and to park, thanks to the free lot on 68th Street) than at Lincoln Road or Brickell. This, along with the venue's relatively large, open-to-the-street outdoor area, contributes to a more relaxed, neighborhood-focused vibe. The fun menu of global comfort food is the same (ranging from a creamy-centered cheese soufflé through savory Asian potstickers and, at breakfast, fluffy pecan/maple-garnished pancakes) and prepared as reliably well. \$\$-\$\$\$

AVENTURA / HALLANDALE

Bulldog Café

190048 NE 29th Ave.
305-931-9244

The bulldog is the same as at Bulldog Barbecue, pugnacious *Top Chef* contender Howie Kleinberg, but the menu is quite different at this newer venue in Loehmann's Plaza – basically suburban shopper-friendly fare like salads, sandwiches, and flatbreads. That said, the dawg has designed some knock-out, BBQ-enhanced items, including a smoked-brisket sandwich with caramelized onions, blue cheese, and horseradish cream; and a Cuban sandwich with pulled pork barbecue, plus Black Forest ham and Dijon mustard. That one is pretty much an "ultimate." \$\$

Tonino Lamborghini's Caffe Corsa

600 Silks Run Rd., #1210
954-456-4500

The new Village at Gulfstream Park (a massive Mediterranean-via-Vegas mall adjacent to the racetrack) has a zillion eateries. Still, the spot-on authenticity of this modish café's food makes it stand out. The chef is from Rome, so spaghetti carbonara is a great choice. It's the real thing. No heavy faux-Alfredo sauce, just the savory classic combo of pancetta, shallots, and creamy eggs. Additionally all cheeses and cured meats are top-end imports, so even loungers seeking to simply sip and snack can enjoy a genuinely Italian, gimmick-free graze. \$\$\$

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. \$\$\$

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

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Restaurant Listings

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Eos

485 Brickell Ave. (Viceroy Hotel), 305-503-0373
Unlike their Michelin-starred New Adriatic restaurant Anthon, 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 focaccia 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, nontraditional surprise: unusual sauces like sweet/tart passion fruit or mint, tomato-based BBQ, and mango chutney, along with the ubiquitous chimichurri. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Il Gabbiano

335 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-373-0063
Its location at the mouth of the Miami River makes this ultra-upscale Italian spot (especially the outdoor terrace) the perfect power lunch/business dinner alternative to steakhouses. And the culinary experience goes way beyond the typical meat market, thanks in part to the flood of freebies that's a trademark of Manhattan's Il Mulino, originally run by Il Gabbiano's owners. The rest of the food? Pricy, but portions are mammoth. And the champagne-cream-sauced housemade ravioli with black truffles? Worth every penny. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Indochine

638 S. Miami Ave., 305-379-1525
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 Miami's 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., 305-372-2333
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 weekday lunch special of jerk chicken with festival (sweet-fried cornmeal bread patties), but even vegetarians are well served with dishes like a tofu, carrot, and chayote curry. All entrées come with rice and peas, fried plantains, and salad, so no one leaves hungry. \$

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; shoe-string frites that rival Belgium's best; mouthwatering maple-basted bacon; miraculously terrific tofu (crisply 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 July 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

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DINING GUIDE

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focchi 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 Arshet 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, tarragon-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 fraîche 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 housemade marinated veggies; crisp-fried calamari and shrimp; airy gnocchi with sprightly tomato sauce, pools of melted buffalo mozzarella, and fresh basil. \$\$-\$\$\$

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

Soya & Pomodoro

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

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

Sushi Maki

1000 S. Miami Ave., 305-415-9779

Fans of the popular parent Sushi Maki in the Gables will find many familiar favorites on this Brickell branch's menu. But the must-haves are some inventive new dishes introduced to honor the eatery's tenth anniversary – and Miami multiculturalism: "sushi tacos" (fried gyoza skins with fusion fillings like raw salmon, miso, chili-garlic sauce, and sour cream), three tasty flash-marinated Asian/Latin tiraditos; addictive rock shrimp tempura with creamy/spicy dip. Also irresistible: four festive new sake cocktails. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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. \$\$

Tré Italian Bistro

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

"Bistro" actually sounds too Old World for this cool hang-out, from the owners of downtown old-timer La Loggia, but "restolounge" sounds too glitzy. Think of it as a neighborhood "bistolounge." 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 n'gaw for Grandpa Vinnie, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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

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

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SUSHI SAKE

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

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 housemade pâtés, sinfully rich pork rillettes, superb salami, and other charcuterie classics) are irresistible, and a buttery-crust-ed, 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 July have to kill you. \$\$\$

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 Julyo. 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 Pearline 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 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 Grrrlz of Sandwich

555 NE 15th St., 2nd floor (Venetia condo)

305-374-4305

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

Joey's Italian Café

2506 NW 2nd Ave.

305-438-4888

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-ed 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/ yucafied ambience, encouraged by an expansive, rustic wooden deck. \$\$

Lemoni Café

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

The menu here reads like your standard sandwiches/salads/starters primer. What it doesn't convey is the freshness of the ingredients and the care that goes into their use. Entrée-size salads range from an elegant spinach (goat cheese, pears, walnuts, raisins) to chunky homemade chicken salad on a bed of mixed greens.

Sandwiches (cold baguette subs, hot pressed paninis, or wraps, all accompanied by side salads) include a respectable Cuban and a veggie wrap with a deceptively rich-tasting light salad cream. \$\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

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. \$

Limón y Sabor

3045 Biscayne Blvd., 786-431-5739

In this dramatically renovated space, the room is now light and open, and the food is authentic Peruvian, with seafood a specialty. Portions are huge, prices low, quality high. Especially good are their versions of pescado a lo macho (fish fillet topped with mixed seafood in a creamy, zesty sauce); jalea (breaded and deep-fried fish, mixed seafood, and yuca, topped with onion/pepper/lime salsa), and yuca in hot yet fruity rocoto chili cream sauce. \$\$

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-ed salmon, chipotle-dripped endive stuffed with lump crab, or customizable tacos average \$5-\$8. Also available: big breakfasts and salads, hearty soups, housemade pastries like lemon-crust-ed 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 table-side 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 Sbroggio 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 irresistibles: fried artichokes with lemony aioli; seafood lasagna with heavenly dill-lobster sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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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)

Mercadito Midtown

3252 NE 1st Ave.
786-369-0423

Some people frequent this fashionable restoulounge, 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 fatty-stuffed. Of 11 varieties, our favorite is the carnitas (juicy braised pork, spicy chili de arbol slaw, toasted peanuts). A close second: the hongos, intensely flavorful huitlacoche and wild mushrooms, with manchego and salsa verde – a reminder that vegetarian food need not be bland. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 July 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.

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

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 restoulounge. Among the

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seafood offerings, you won't find exotic 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 Julyo 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 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 croissants 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 (featuring 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 house-made 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

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sauce-garnished, all-beef, soy veggie, turkey, and chicken hot dogs. The 22 varieties range from simple to the elaborate (the Athens, topped with a Greek salad, including extra-virgin olive oil dressing) to near-unbelievable combinations like the VIP, which includes parmesan cheese and crushed pineapple. New addition: thick, juicy burgers. \$

East Side Pizza

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

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

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 capicola, 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 Julyo), or a wonderfully healthful sesame-seasoned chicken soup with spinach, rice noodles, and sizable slices of poultry. Health ensured, you can 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 July 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 focaccia. Dine either inside the architect-designed restaurant or outdoors on the patio. Beer and wine. \$\$\$

Michy's

6927 Biscayne Blvd.

305-759-2001

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

Moonchine

7100 Biscayne Blvd.

305-759-3999

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

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Restaurant Listings

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

Revales 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 fiume (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 July 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 main draw for its large and loyal clientele. Choices range from homey, meaty lasagna to luxuriant crab ravioli with creamy lobster sauce, with occasional forays into creative exotica such as seaweed spaghetti, with sea scallops, shiitakes, and fresh tomatoes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Shuckers Bar & Grill 1819 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1570

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

Sushi Siam 1524 NE 79th St. Causeway, 305-864-7638 (See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

NORTH BEACH

Café Prima Pasta 414 71st St., 305-867-0106

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. \$\$\$

Lemon Twist 908 71st St. 305-865-6465

In warm weather, we like to hit this French bistro for either a cornichon-garnished charcuterie platter (including mouthwatering Rosette de Lyons salami, hard to find in Miami) or the frisée salad with lardons and poached egg. Add iles flottantes (meringue islands on a crème anglaise pond) and a glass of wine, et voilà! A perfect Parisian light supper. But there's honest hefty fare, too, like the steak/frites (entrecôte with choice of sauce, housemade fries, and a salad), and rich fig tarts. \$\$\$

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 Julyo. 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. \$\$\$

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Miami Shores Country Club

10000 Biscayne Blvd., 305-795-2363
Formerly members-only, the restaurant/lounge facilities of this classy 1939 club are now open to the public — always, lunch and dinner. Not surprisingly, ambiance is retro and relaxed, with golf course views from both bar and indoor/outdoor dining room. The surprise is the food — some classic (steaks, club sandwiches) but other dishes quite contemporary: an Asian ahi tuna tower; a lavish candied-walnut, poached-pear, grilled chicken salad; and fresh pasta specials. Prices are phenomenal, with dinner entrées \$9 to \$17; drinks average \$3 to \$4. There's live jazz on Thursday and Friday nights, too. \$\$

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 ajiaico. 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 non-carnivores 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. \$

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 Julya, filled with juicy cochinita pibil, refried beans, and pickled onions. \$\$

Canton Café

12749 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2882
Easily overlooked, this strip-mall spot serves mostly Cantonese-based dishes. However, there are also about two dozen spicier, Szechuan-style standards like kung po shrimp, ma po tofu, and General Tso's chicken. And there are a few imaginative new items, like the intriguingly christened "Shrimp Lost in the Forest," Singapore curried rice noodles, crispy shrimp with honey-glazed walnuts, and Mongolian beef (with raw chilis and fresh Oriental basil). Delivery is available for both lunch and dinner. \$\$

Captain Jim's Seafood

12950 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-892-2812
This market/restaurant was garnering critical acclaim even when eat-in dining was confined to a few Formica tables in front of the fish counter, owing to the freshness of its seafood, much of it from Capt. Jim Hanson's own fishing boats, which supply many top restaurants. Now there's a casual but pleasantly nautical side dining room with booths. Whether it's garlicky scampi, smoked-fish dip, grilled yellow-tail 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 gnocchi with pesto or better yet, delicate fagottini — "beggar's purses" stuffed with pears and cheese. \$\$

Chéen-huyae

15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-956-2808
Diners can get some Tex-Mex dishes here, if they must. But the specialty is Julian-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. \$\$\$

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Sakaya Kitchen



Photo by Simon Here

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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 pizzas; the top topping here is the savory housemade sausage. And no one leaves without garlic rolls, awash in warm parsley oil and smashed garlic. New branches are now open in Miami's Midtown neighborhood and in North Bay Village. \$

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, bergerbrite, Cezarrrr salad, hammm, meat-a-ball, schmopperrr – July cause queasiness. But the schmopperrr itself is one helluva high-octane veggie burger. \$-\$\$

Steve's Pizza

12101 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-0202
At the end of a debauched night of excess, some paper-thin designer pizza with wisps of smoked salmon (or similar fluff) doesn't do the trick. Open till 3:00 or 4:00 a.m., Steve's has, since 1974, been serving the kind of comforting, retro pizzas people crave at that hour. As in Brooklyn, tomato sauce is sweet, with strong oregano flavor. Mozzarella is applied with abandon. Toppings are stuff that give strength: pepperoni, sausage, meatballs, onions, and peppers. \$

Tokyo Bowl

12295 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-9400
This fast-food drive-thru (unexpectedly serene inside) is named for its feature item, big budget-priced bowls of rice or noodles topped with cooked Japanese-style items like teriyaki fish (fresh fish sautéed with vegetables), curried chicken and veggies, spicy shrimp, or gyoza dumplings in tangy sauce. There's also an all-you-can-eat deal – sushi (individual nigiri or maki rolls) plus tempura, teriyaki, and other cooked items for \$14; three bucks more for sashimi instead of sushi. \$-\$\$

Venezia Pizza and Café

13452 Biscayne Blvd., 305-940-1808
No frozen pizza crusts or watery mozzarella here. No imported designer ingredients either. The pies are New York-style, but the dough is made fresh daily, and the

cheese is Grande (from Wisconsin, considered America's finest pizza topper). Also on the menu are Italian-American pastas, a large selection of hot and cold subs, simple salads, and a few new protein adds – grilled chicken breast, fried fish, or a steak. \$-\$\$

Wong's Chinese Restaurant

12420 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-4313
The menu reads like a textbook on how to please everyone, with food ranging from traditional Chinese to Chinese-American to just plain American. Appetizers include honey garlic chicken wings or Buffalo wings. A crab-claw starter comes with choice of pork fried rice or French fries. Seafood lovers can get shrimp chop suey, or salty pepper shrimp (authentically shell-on). And New Yorkers will find a number of dishes that are mainstays of Manhattan Szechuan menus but not common in Miami: cold sesame noodles, Hunan chicken, twice-cooked pork. \$\$\$

Woody's Famous Steak Sandwich

13105 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-1451
The griddle has been fired up since 1954 at this indie fast-food joint, and new owners have done little to change the time-tested formula except to stretch operating hours into the night and expand its classic menu to include a few health-conscious touches like Caesar salad, plus a note proclaiming their oils are free of trans fats. Otherwise the famous steak sandwich is still a traditional Philly. Drippin' good burgers, too. And unlike MacChain addicts, patrons here can order a cold beer with the good grease. \$-\$\$

Yes Pasta!

14871 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-1006
The space, formerly a Pasha's, isn't posh. But minimalism fits a partially self-service Italian eatery centering on a DIY concept: mix-and-match pastas. Diners choose one of seven pasta types, then one of 15 sauces, ranging from simple tomato/basil to funghi e tartufi (wild mushrooms in truffle sauce), decadent Alfredo, creamy yet clean-tasting Flaminia (puréed yellow peppers with black pepper), and more. Also available are panini (on excellent bread), salads, soups, imported salumi or cheese platters, desserts, and several wines. \$\$\$

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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 to rillas 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 Gouvela, 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 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 nik-kei (Japanese/Creole) chef Rosita Yimura: an exquisite, delicately sauced tiradito de corvina, and for those with no fear of cholesterol, pulpo de oliva (octopus topped with rich olive sauce). \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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 ambiance, comfortable contemporary décor, and free WiFi all encourage luxuriant lingering. \$

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 nuta – mixed with scallions and dressed with habit-forming honey-miso mustard sauce. Other favorites include goma ae (wilted spinach, chilled and dressed in sesame sauce), garlic stem and beef (mild young shoots flash-fried with tender steak bits), or perhaps just-caught grouper with hot/sweet/tangy chili sauce. Open till around 3:00 a.m. \$\$

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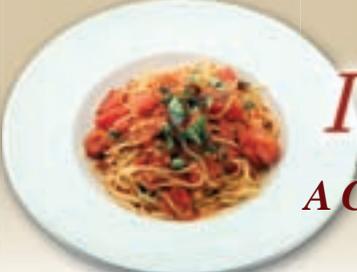
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- Chicken Parmesan
- Tilapia Picatta
- Grilled Salmon
- 10 oz. Chopped Sirloin Steak
- Sauteed Calves Liver
- Rigatoni Alla Norma
- Penne Amatriciana
- Lasagna Bolognese
- Ravioli Di Ricotta E Spinaci

CHOICE OF DESSERT:

Key Lime Pie	Chocolate Mousse
Mini Canolis	Rice Pudding
Ricotta Cheese Cake	Biscotti
New York Cheesecake	

Coffee or Tea

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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 Renaisa. Their menu's mix-and-match option allows diners to pair their choice of meat, poultry, fish, or vegetable with more than a dozen regional sauces, from familiar Indian styles to exotica like satkara, flavored with a Bangladeshi citrus reminiscent of sour orange. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Iron Sushi

16350 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-2244

(See Miami Shores listing)?

Jerusalem Market and Deli

16275 Biscayne Blvd., 305-948-9080

Specialties like shawarma, spinach pies, kebabs, hummus, and kibbeh (a savory mix of ground lamb and bulgur) are native to many Middle East countries, but when a Lebanese chef/owner, like this eatery's Sam Elzoor, is at the helm, you can expect extraordinary refinement. There are elaborate daily specials here, like lemon chicken or stuffed cabbage with a variety of sides, but even a common falafel sandwich is special when the pita is also stuffed with housemade cabbage and onion salads, plus unusually rich and tart tahina. \$\$\$

Kabobji

3055 NE 163rd St.
305-354-8484

This place makes a very good tahini sauce. In fact that alone is reason enough to visit. We prefer ours with this bright, cheery eatery's delightfully oniony falafel or a veg-garnished wrap of thin-sliced marinated beef schwarma. They also do a beautifully spiced, and reassuringly fresh-tasting, raw kibbi naye (Middle Eastern steak tartare). It's hard to resist putting together a grazing meal of starters and wraps, but there's also a roster of full entrées (with soup or salad plus starch), including tempting vegetarian and seafood meals for noncarnivores. \$\$\$

Kebab Indian Restaurant

514 NE 167th St., 305-940-6309

Since the 1980s this restaurant, located in an unatmospheric mini strip mall but surprisingly romantic inside (especially if you grab one of the exotically draped booths) has been a popular destination for reasonably priced north Indian fare. Kormas are properly soothing and vindaloes are satisfactorily searing, but the kitchen will adjust seasonings upon request. They aim to please. Food arrives unusually fast for an Indian eatery, too. \$\$\$

King Palace

330 NE 167th St., 305-949-2339

The specialties here are authentic Chinatown-style barbecue (whole ducks, roast pork strips, and more, displayed in a glass case by the door), and fresh seafood dishes, the best made with the live fish swimming in two tanks by the dining room entrance. There's also a better-than-average selection of seasonal Chinese veggies. The menu is extensive, but the best ordering strategy, since the place is usually packed with Asians, is to see what looks good on nearby tables, and point. \$\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

14831 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-8800

(See Midtown / Wynwood / Design District listing)

Laurenzo's Market Café

16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381

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

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 esoterica like abalone with sea cucumber. The extensive third menu offers dim sum, served until 4:00 p.m. A live tank allows seasonal seafood dishes like lobster with ginger and scallion. Recently installed: a Chinese barbecue case, displaying savory items like crispy pork with crackling attached. \$\$\$

Shing Wang Vegetarian, Icee & Tea House

237 NE 167th St., 305-654-4008

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

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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 Julyo. 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 / HALLANDALE

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. \$\$

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 break out his many regulars by eliminating from the menu the Bahamian lobster and crab cakes. But lobster-lovers will find that the 20th anniversary menu also offer new excitements like tandoori-spiced rock lobster, along with what might be the ultimate mac'n'cheese: lobster crab macaroni in a Fris vodka sauce with mushrooms, scallions, and parmesan. The famous dessert soufflé's flavor changes daily, but it always did. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Il Migliore

2576 NE Miami Gardens Dr., 305-792-2902
This 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

The Grill on the Alley

19501 Biscayne Blvd. (Aventura Mall), 05-466-7195
Enconced 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 char-broiled 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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. \$\$

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

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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