

BISCAYNE

June 2011

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Volume 9 Issue 4

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Farm Fresh

pg. 18

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By Jim W. Harper


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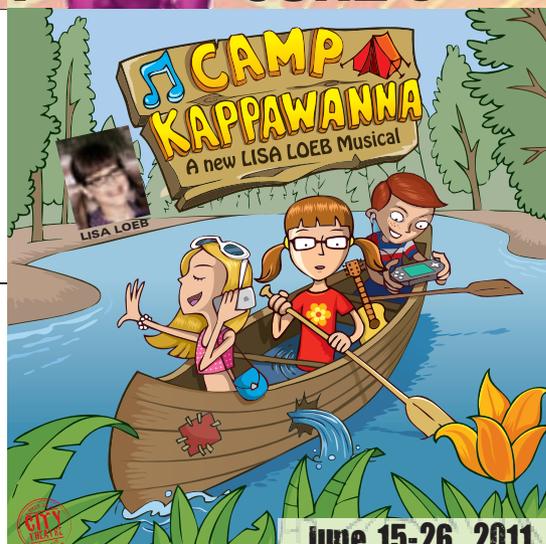
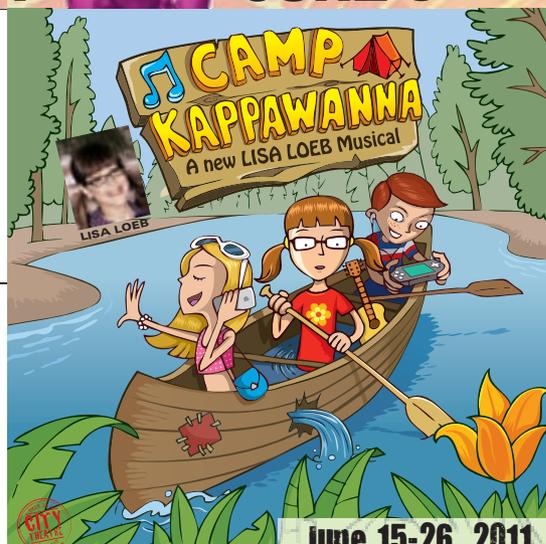


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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
 <p>HATR MAY 31 - JUNE 5</p>			1 Hair 8 PM Winner: Best Musical Revival, 2009 Tony Award	2 Summer Shorts 7 PM  Hair 8 PM  "The most exciting show in town! There's nothing like it." <i>Bloomberg News</i>	3 Summer Shorts 7 PM  Hair 8 PM  "Unadulterated joy!" <i>The New York Times</i>	4 FREE Adrienne Arsht Center Tour 12 PM Hair 2 & 8 PM  Winner of four 2008 Tony Awards including BEST MUSICAL! Summer Shorts 7 & 10 PM 	
5 Hair 2 & 7:30 PM  Summer Shorts 4 PM 	 <p>CAMP KAPPAWANNA A new LISA LOEB Musical June 15-26, 2011</p>		8	9 Summer Shorts 7 PM  The freshest, funniest, fastest 5-20 minute short plays of your life!	10 Summer Shorts 7 PM  Dirty Little Secrets 10 PM Filthy and fabulous! Sure to make you blush.	12 FREE Adrienne Arsht Center Tour 12 PM Summer Shorts 7 & 10 PM  Fast and furiously funny!	
13 Summer Shorts 4 PM  See 7 of the nation's best short plays in 1 program! Tony Awards Viewing Party 7 PM 			16 Camp Kappawanna 10:30 AM  All the summer camp fun, none of the bugs!	17 Camp Kappawanna 10:30 AM  Original musical by Grammy-nominee Lisa Loeb and playwright Marco Ramirez Summer Shorts 7 PM 	18 Camp Kappawanna 10:30 AM  "Entertaining... the kids love it" <i>Miami Herald</i> Summer Shorts 7 PM  Dirty Little Secrets 10 PM 	19 FREE Adrienne Arsht Center Tour 12 PM Camp Kappawanna 11 AM & 2 PM  A rocking family musical for all ages! Summer Shorts 7 & 10 PM 	
20 Camp Kappawanna 11 AM  Summer Shorts 4 PM  Dirty Little Secrets 7:30 PM  "The must-see show!" <i>Chicagoist.com</i>			22 Camp Kappawanna 10:30 AM  Original musical by Grammy-nominee Lisa Loeb and playwright Marco Ramirez	23 Camp Kappawanna 10:30 AM This summer's must-see musical!	24 Camp Kappawanna 10:30 AM  Summer Shorts 7 PM  Don't miss Jai Rodriguez from Bravo TV's <i>Queer Eye for the Straight Guy!</i>	25 Camp Kappawanna 10:30 AM  Summer Shorts 7 PM  Dirty Little Secrets 10 PM  Jai Rodriguez dishes the dirt!	26 FREE Adrienne Arsht Center Tour 12 PM Camp Kappawanna 11 AM & 2 PM  Summer Shorts 7 & 10 PM 
27 Camp Kappawanna 11 AM  Summer Shorts 4 PM  Grab your short shorts!							

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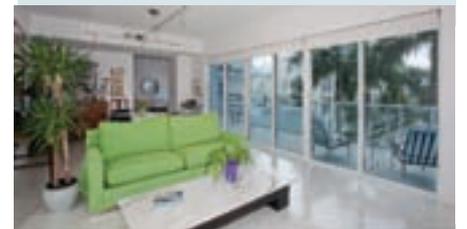
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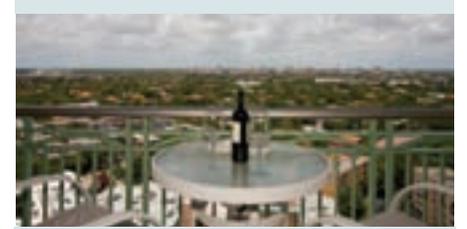
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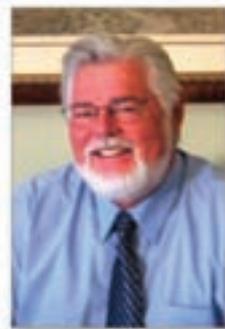
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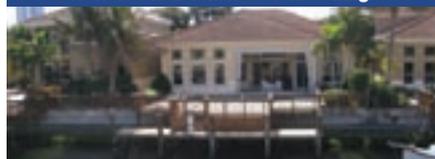
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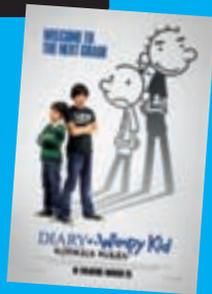
ShopStar members visit GoShopStar.com for your free bag of popcorn.

8:15 PM TUESDAYS IN JUNE SHOW SCHEDULE:



June 7
Just Go With It

June 14
Diary of a Wimpy Kid 2



June 21
Rocky Horror
Picture Show



June 28
Rio



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Commentary: LETTERS

Finally! Journalism That Ignores What's Hot/What's Not

Anne Tschida's article on artists with longstanding careers here in South Florida was excellent on a number of counts ("Masters of Art," May 2011).

First, it highlights the work of several very important artists with well-researched biographical information that provides a lot of insight into their relationship to each other and to South Florida.

Second, it describes the key elements for the growth of an authentic local arts culture: long-term interactions with fellow artists as peers and with younger artists as mentors and teachers, and a supportive — if not always stable — environment that allows them to pursue their vision. That environment includes, as Tschida noted, gallery dealers and collectors (including museums) that also understand the importance of long-term relationships with the artists they represent and collect.

She also emphasized the role of colleges and universities that employ artists as teachers, which may explain why a number of Miami's other "masters" were not mentioned: Lynne Gelfman, César Trasobares, and Edouard Duval-Carrié come to mind. They haven't had formal teaching careers but they have certainly contributed in innumerable ways to the texture and depth of the city's artistic life.

Finally, I commend Tschida for writing an article on the Miami art scene with a total disregard for the "what's hot and what's not" attitude that often passes for contemporary arts journalism.

Terence Riley
Design District

Editor's note: Terence Riley is the former director of Miami Art Museum.

Takeout? Good News: Cheap! Delicious! Free Delivery!

I just read Jen Karetnick's column "Trouble With Take-Out" (May 2011), about Chinese takeout challenges in the Shores, and I have some good news. Ricky Thai Bistro, located on 123rd Street near Biscayne Boulevard, is delicious *and* cheap *and* they deliver to the Shores for free!

They should definitely be included in the **BT's "Dining Guide."**

Jason Schleich
Miami Shores

Takeout? Get Out Your GPS and Enjoy

Jen Karetnick's piece on Chinese takeouts convenient to Miami Shores overlooked a very good place, King's Chef at 476 NE 125th St. That's behind the President supermarket and Jimmy's Diner.

The easy way to get there from Miami Shores is to drive north on NE 2nd Avenue as far as 119th Street (where Mama Jennie's is), bear right on W. Dixie and drive to the dead end at 125th Street. Make the southbound turn-back there, then the first right — across the street from the Teamsters Union hall.

King's Chef is on your left, next door to the former second-hand bookstore.

Family-operated King's Chef has a large menu, good prices, and delivery service.

Arnold Markowitz
Miami Shores

Takeout? If You Don't Like the Palace, No Complaining

No New York or even Boston Chinese, true, but China Palace just north of 80th Street on Biscayne Boulevard is worth a try. You don't want to go look inside too closely (or at all), but the food is tasty, the portions enormous, and the ribs are great.

Occasionally the vegetables are overdone, but at other times just right. Food always arrives piping hot. Their driver is nice as can be and will find your house. The girl taking the order always says it will take an hour, but I always get it in about 20 to 30 minutes. Prices very reasonable. Egg rolls not great.

I hope you enjoy it. But if you don't, I would rather not hear about it.

If Miss Yip on the Beach can get away with serving swill and charging a lot, China Palace is fine for decent Chinese in the Shores area.

Carl Dworkin
Miami Shores

Forget Chinese Takeout, Here's a French Tragedy

I read Jen Karetnick's "Trouble With Take-Out" with great interest, having lived in the Miami Shores area for more than four decades. Over these 40-plus years, our choice of restaurants has always been pretty anemic and unexciting.

However, I was excited when Côte Gourmet opened. My mother was from France, I have lived in France for four years, speak French, and I even have double nationality. I love the country! It

Continued on page 36

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North Miami: Different Name, Different Era

A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami

By Paul George
Special to the BT

Greater Miami's progression from a frontier settlement 100 years ago to the megalopolis of today is evident in this photograph of two unidentified youngsters standing on a freshly paved road representing today's NE 125th Street in North Miami, near the old East Dixie Highway.

That highway ran parallel to the Florida East Coast Railway, which was responsible for the emerging development of the area. The primitive road, simple wood-frame houses, and the spreading Australian pine trees capture the frontier ambiance.

This photograph was taken in the 1920s, when southeast Florida's first great real estate boom was transforming small farming communities into residential

subdivisions, towns, and even cities. Initially this area and other parts of the future City of North Miami were known as the Town of Miami Shores, which incorporated in 1926. In 1931 the Town of Miami Shores was renamed North Miami, while the settlement lying one mile south incorporated as the Village of Miami Shores, thus eliminating some of the confusion over two communities claiming the same name. These two settlements did share a similar history, for prior to the 1920s, they were part of a region of scattered farming communities sometimes known as "Biscayne Country."

To order a copy of this photo, please contact HistoryMiami archives manager Dawn Hugh at 305-375-1623, dhugh@historymiami.org.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



Photo courtesy of Miami News Collection, HistoryMiami, #1989-011-11859

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BizBuzz

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

By Pamela Robin Brandt
BT Contributor

Driving up Biscayne Boulevard last weekend, we had to laugh at a jubilant hand-written sign in front of one establishment: “Tourists gone! A/C’s on! Locals only!!!”

That’s Miami for ya: June’s the month when hideous heat and hurricanes start, while some of our most important sources of income depart — so let’s celebrate! Numerous advertisers have gone into high gear this month figuring out special deals, special events, and other ingenious ways locals can enjoy each other now that we have our city back for the season.

During Wynwood’s Second Saturday Artwalk on June 11, **Control Salon and Gallery** (2814 N. Miami Ave., 305-573-6910) kicks it off starting at 9:00 p.m. with a party celebrating “A Controlled Substance,” fine art and photography by Austyn Weiner. There’s music by Derek Walin, an open bar — and no cover, so you can invest the night’s entertainment/drinks budget in a cool hair cut instead.

Smiling yet? If so, make sure it’s a smile that dazzles, by contacting **The Art of Dentistry** (2999 NE 191st St. # 350, 305-466-2334). One of Dr. Valeria Soltanik’s services is actually a “smile makeover.” And this month new patients get an exam, cleaning, x-rays, and consult for just \$60.

For restaurateur Frank Crupi, nothing says summer like what he calls “food from a window” — hot dogs, burgers, and the other portable meals-in-buns. So that’s what he’s serving up at reborn **Dogma** (7030 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-3433), which Crupi and Mark Soyka recently bought and renovated retro-style. Gone are the salads and other “L.A. stuff, but we’re adding more kinds of dogs — natural casing, jumbos, Italian sausage, brats, smoked polish sausage.” There’ll be stand-style sandwiches, too, like shrimp or oyster po’boys and Philly cheesesteaks.

Start your summer weekends early at **Catch Grill + Bar**’s “Thursdays on the Bay,” a happening on the relaxing marina-side outdoor terrace of the newly renovated Miami Marriott Biscayne Bay Hotel (1633 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-536-6414). From 6:00-10:00 p.m. every Thursday in June, the restolounge is offering music by DJ Vidal, plus \$5 beer, house wine, selected cocktails, and small plates. Just five bucks!

If you really must work when you’d rather play, John Tsialas’s **UPS Store** (6815 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-8877) can at least make the cost of doing business effortless. Mention the *BT* for 15% off packaging products and services (excluding shipping). Black-and-white copies this month are only eight cents per copy (normally ten cents); color copies are 34

cents (normally 39 cents). And sign up for a mailbox in June to get 15 months for the price of 12.

Celebrating its complete makeover is new advertiser **Sunny Isles Marina** (400 Sunny Isles Blvd., 305-944-9182), which offers not only boat storage but jet ski rentals at great prices. Soon to come: A cool tiki bar and casual bistro. An especially good time to check out the facilities would be June 16-19, when the marina hosts Miami Poker Run and offshore boat races.

One of summer’s eternal questions is how to keep the kids entertained, and several advertisers have answers.

The Playground Theatre company’s professional productions ended for the season last month. Now it’s “Hey kids, let’s put on a show!” time, at Musical Theatre Summer Camp. During two sessions, from June 13-July 8 and July 18-August 12, company members will lead kids ages 6-12 in exploring self-expression by developing an original production. For further info call 305-751-9550 or find an application online at www.theplaygroundtheatre.com.

Summer camp is also gearing up at new advertiser **Miami Shores Baptist Academy** (370 Grand Concourse, 305-757-8353), which will keep your kids, ages six months through third grade, entertained and educated from 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.,

with extended hours till 5:30 p.m. for working parents. Activities, revolving around theme weeks like “What’s Under the Sea” or “God Bless America,” include both in-house fun and field trips.

Bathing-suit weather can be problematic for girls worried about body image. But no worries at **IronFlower Fitness** (7300 Biscayne Blvd., 305-640-5270), where girls ages 9-15 can have fun getting fit at Iron Blossoms Summer Camp, with activities like hula-hooping, zumba, ballet/stretch, hip hop, acro yoga, and cheer fit (cheerleading-style dance moves). Camp runs June 20-August 19, with enrollment for single weeks or the whole program.

Need to drop 10 or 20 pounds before squeezing into your own bathing suit? The folks at **Slender Fit U** (1400 Biscayne Blvd., 786-477-6194) say you can do it in just three weeks with the center’s medically monitored program based on HCG (human chorionic gonadotropin, one of the world’s currently most popular weight-loss aids). This month programs are 20% off, so give a call. Consultations are free.

Has the humidity got your head frizzed up like a fright wig? A keratin treatment will sooth those hair cells into smoothness and keep kinks from coming back. This month stylist-to-the-stars since

Continued on page 16



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The advertisement features two wooden chairs: an Adirondack chair on the left and a Steamer chair on the right. In the center is a circular logo with the text "ASCOT TEAK" and a small illustration of a chair. The background is a light, neutral color.

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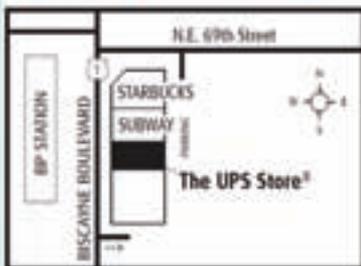
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Our Sponsors: JUNE 2011

BizBuzz

Continued from page 14

the early 1990s Hannah Lasky, proprietor of **Hannah & Her Scissors** (611 NE 86th St., 305-772-8426), offers half off on keratin treatments, Wednesday through Saturday. That's just \$150 (\$25 more for hair that's shoulder length or more).

Of course there's hair one would rather not have, too, especially in bathing-suit season. But advertiser **Uni K Wax Center** (which originated in the bikini capital of the world, South Beach, in 1993, and now has two outposts on our side of the causeway at 1815 NE 123rd St. and 14671 Biscayne Blvd.) can rid you of that, with a process that uses natural wax rather than painful paper strips. And this month Uni K is offering 10% off for new customers. Book online at www.unikwax.com.

At **Anastasia Molchanov Salon & Spa** (7242 Biscayne Blvd. 2nd floor, 305-756-7755), a new kid on the block but already wildly popular, this month's spectacular "Get Ready for Summer" specials are a Coppola keratin treatment plus cut and blow dry for \$119, plus a purifying back treatment for \$55.

With summer comes a craving for numerous seasonal snacks, so better be sure your choppers are in shape. New advertiser **Biscayne Dental Center** (14771 Biscayne Blvd., 305-945-7745) has two offers for *BT* readers only. A new-patient exam, with full digital x-rays and cleaning, is only \$39. And a free implant evaluation with a periodontist, plus a super discount on implant placement, from \$1900 down to \$999 for the first ten qualifying patients mentioning the *BT*.

Possibly the most classic summer food folks want is ice cream. But you needn't settle for plain vanilla. At **Pastry Is Art** (12591 Biscayne Blvd., 305-803-9340) chef/owner Jenny Rissone has created a line of sophisticated, inventive ice cream cakes, including red velvet with cream cheese ice cream, black forest with cherries and kirsch ice cream, and many more.

Weather-wise, winter should be BBQ season in South Florida, but no. As in less sizzling locales, it's summer that sets off 'cue cravings. To sate yourself without sweating over a hot grill, hit the **Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus** (1085 NE 79th St., 305-754-8002), where Alex Richter has brought back his famed dark-beer-marinated, slow-smoked ribs. On Friday nights there's live jazz, too, from 8:00 p.m.

Perhaps the ultimate hot weather meal is anything eaten poolside — which diners can do on the expansive riverside outdoor deck at new advertiser **Finnegan's River** (401 SW 3rd Ave., 305-285-3030). Grab bar bites and beer or a full steak dinner, and then grab a swim. (Just remember to wait an hour after eating, which'll be easy; Finnegan's is a great place to hang.)

If you'd prefer indulging poolside in your own backyard, call returning advertiser **All Florida Pool and Spa** (11720 Biscayne Blvd., 305-893-4036). They'll design and install a pool (or hot tub), as well as service and repair new or existing installations. And stop by the store for tons of fun pool accessories.

How about getting your bod into bathing suit shape (at the rate of roughly 15 pounds of weight loss per month) by eating chocolate chip cookies. Huh? Really. The owner of Aventura's new **Smart For Life** center (2980 Aventura Blvd., 305-935-5550), a new advertiser, just lost 45 pounds in 43 days, and to help *BT* readers do the same is offering a free week's supply of Smart cookies to those who start a 30-day program based on the famous cookie diet and HCG.

Several *BT* advertisers are celebrating anniversaries this month, with special events and deals for readers. At one-year-old **360 Furniture Consignments** (18340 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-627-3148), where the stock of gently used furniture is an eclectic selection often including pieces and accessories from high-end brands like Ligne Roset, you're all invited to an open-house party on Sunday, June 26. And for the whole month, mention the *BT* and get 20% off purchases.

To mark its fourth anniversary in business, the **18th Street Café** (210 NE 18th St., 305-381-8006) is, appropriately, serving birthday cake — specifically its signature red velvet cupcakes. From June 13-17, one of the mouth-watering morsels comes free with any lunch or dinner entrée (eat-in, take-out, or delivery orders). Delivery may include beer or wine so you can raise a glass to many more thriving years for this neighborhood favorite.

Raise another glass to new advertiser **Casaurbana** and the interior design/renovation company's new Miami showroom (921 NE 79th St., 305-762-8191). Don't rush right over; the showroom isn't quite open yet. But do call owner Charlie Abaca if you need a master handyman for tile installation,

The UPS Store



painting, carpentry, window treatments, etc. Charlie's custom construction and design services are already available.

Specialty Lighting & Bulbs (13611 Biscayne Blvd., 305-423-0017) has been open for several months, but the official ribbon cutting/open house is June 16, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. and you're invited. The store is also offering 30% off floor displays throughout June. Congratulations to them (on the ceremony) and *BT* readers (on the savings).

Congrats also to **Classical South Florida** on the classical music station's purchase of WXEL-FM (90.7 FM), soon to be rechristened WPBI. Already the largest listener-supported classical music broadcaster in our area, CSF will be enabled, by the license transfer, to extend its public-radio service to the Palm Beaches and Treasure Coast, says station president Doug Evans.

Major kudos to **MC2 Realty**, which just sold a 3200-square-foot penthouse condo at Jade Ocean for \$3.25 million. That's a stunning \$1020 per square foot — the highest recorded MLS sale, measured by square footage, for a home in Sunny Isles. "The market is definitely heating up right now," comments company vice president Marie-Charlotte Piro (www.mc2immobilier.com).

If that heats up your interest in buying a new home but you need financing, consult new advertiser **Preferred Mortgage Lenders** (9400 NE 2nd Ave., 305-756-3711). Banks are still wary of making mortgage loans, and won't give mortgages at all to foreign nationals. But don't get discouraged. PML, which is a lender, not a bank, does it all the time. The company can also make refinancing your home fast and easy.

Remember that June 19 is Father's Day. Traditionally the fave father meal is steak. And if you blow your dad's mind out of the water with dinner *on* the water at **Trio on the Bay** (1601 79th St. Cswy., 305-866-1234), he could score both a grilled butcher steak with hand-cut truffled fries and a calamari steak with beurre blanc, plus chocolate cake for dessert. There are other choices, too, on the new "Trio's Treat for Two" menu — which only sounds expensive. The three-course meal for two, including a bottle of wine, is only \$79.

Some of this month's deals and discounts are available even for those who don't want to venture out of their own air-conditioned realms. If your dog needs sprucing up, for instance, the

expert groomers at **Doggie's Groom Mobile** (786-234-5492 or www.doggiesgroommobile.com) will come to you.

For those with cats in need of medical attention, **The Cat Doctor**, William Marks, DVM (305-733-0007) makes house calls. How do you know your cats need care? Dr. Marks offers this checklist of warning signs: inappropriate elimination, changes in sleeping or grooming habits, changes in level of physical activity or food/water consumption, changes in interaction with owners or other pets, or posture changes indicating stress or pain, sudden changes in weight gain or loss, bad breath or body odors from ears, skin, or tail, and unusual vocalization. Here, kitty!

Sadly, we have no doctors that make house calls for humans. If you want a fabulous on-site professional massage, though, contact new advertiser **Body Well Therapy** (www.bodywelltherapy.com, 888-929-9355), and a licensed, certified massage therapist will travel to your home, hotel, or office seven days a week, day or night. Some massages for accidents or workers' injuries may be covered by your insurance.

If you have insurance, that is.

If you don't, investigate what's offered by new advertiser **Jeff Hackmeier & Associates** (12000 Biscayne Blvd. #407, 305-893-4488). The company's policies range from healthcare insurance to long-term care.

Ocean breezes make boating one of the best ways to enjoy the outdoors during summer's dog days — at least until the cooling breezes turn into destructive hurricane winds. But no worries. **Keystone Point Marina** (1950 NE 135th St.) has an excellent, affordable hurricane plan for local vessels that want to be on dry land in case of a storm. Call 305-940-6236 for info. The marina is also hosting a free boat safety check by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary on June 25 from 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. at its fuel dock.

To marshal your get up and go to take advantage of all the above, go to **Pure Energy Massage** (7136 Abbott Ave., Miami Beach, 305-767-0610), where the goal is restoring energy via therapeutic touch — specifically deep-tissue, Swedish, or Thai massage. Mention the *BT* this month and get \$25 off your first massage.

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



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Farm Fresh

Locally grown fruits and vegetables aren't impossible to find. It just seems that way.

By Jim W. Harper
Photos by Silvia Ros

Art Friedrich and his girls are working their corner of Biscayne Boulevard. Several attractive young women are milling about and chatting with potential customers, ready to sell their wares in the

world's oldest profession.

For a few of them, it's their first time, but they sport inviting smiles and chat easily with the men who approach them. It seems like they've always been here, at nine o'clock every Saturday, and Friedrich flashes a knowing smile.

But it's not *that* thing. It's another hot Saturday at 9:00 a.m., and the new regular crowd rushes in: soccer moms, reggae musicians, Payless Shoes shoppers, the random drifter. They come armed with reusable grocery bags to purchase organic vegetables, herbs,

and perhaps some fresh guarapo — sugarcane juice. Because at this corner of Biscayne, the world's truly oldest profession — farming — has come to the city.

.....
Continued on page 20

Farm Fresh

Continued from page 18

Or has it? Think about it, how many farmers do you know?

The Upper Eastside Farmers' Market at Biscayne Plaza grew out of a grassroots movement of hipsters holding old-school potluck dinners and ghetto garden tours. These urban gardeners are bringing fresh, local produce to an ultra-urbanized area that is about as far away from the farm as you can get.

These are places where there's not an alfalfa sprout for miles, and even supermarkets are rare. Such inner-city neighborhoods are called "food deserts." Moving into Miami's deserts are start-up farmers' markets like those of the young, volunteer-based Urban Oasis Project, founded by Freidrich and Melissa Contreras.

Friedrich, soft-spoken, thin, and youthful, is the anti-pimp. He believes in his mission, and he wants you to green for peace.

The Sixties are back. But this time with business plans.

The Upper Eastside endeavor is also a marketing stratagem for Terranova Corporation, the developer that manages the sad but centrally located plaza at 79th Street and the Boulevard. This past February, Terranova launched both the market and a Thursday-night food truck roundup here. The farmers' market intended to close temporarily in May, but it received a special waiver from Miami officialdom to operate at least through June, and now plans are afoot for summer operations (see sidebar).

As South Florida's traditional growing season ends and hurricane season begins, being a locavore becomes a *locachore*. While the option of locally grown



The Upper Eastside Farmers' Market is run by volunteers and supported by Biscayne Plaza's Terranova Corp.

vegetables wilts under the sun and humidity, a few farmers' markets are bucking the trend to remain open all year.

Summer is for fruits. It's the best time to reap the local harvest of mangoes, lychees, and other heat-seeking treats. Yet the mangoes currently at many markets, both farmers' and otherwise, come from Mexico and other faraway places, so the savvy shopper knows not to assume that food "in season" means food from "the farm."

But who cares where their food comes from, as long as it's cheap and abundant? This convenience-obsessed, Fast Food Nation mentality, especially in the inner city, contributes to the obesity epidemic and other health and quality-of-life issues. People who gobble fast food in isolation are going to be unhappier, *period*, than people who select, cook,

and share their food with care.

Doesn't everyone deserve to be healthy and food-happy? Fortunately the French-fried tide has been turning in some concerned communities, and everyone knows that the Obamas are growing organics.

During the traditional South Florida growing season, roughly October to May, many options exist to procure fresh produce. Local food activist Mike Moskos of Hialeah has compiled page upon unpublished page of what he calls "real food sources" in or near Miami-Dade County. The list includes five community-supported agriculture distributors, seven produce-buying clubs, and nearly 40 organic or regular farmers' markets. (See sidebar.)

By my count, there are at least seven farmers' markets somewhat close to *Biscayne Times* territory that are

staying open all summer. Most of these strive to offer local organics. Large outdoor flea markets that feature fresh produce also run year-round in Homestead and Hialeah.

But the only way to guarantee local produce in the summertime is to grow it yourself. Farmers' markets necessarily turn to Georgia and other parts north to stock their display tables. Supermarkets look much farther afield, and the added transportation costs start to shock consumers. Consider the \$5 gallon of milk.

"When gas prices went up, that's when people really started saying, 'Why are we flying in blueberries from Chile?'" observes Claire Tomlin, our area's most experienced manager of farmers' markets.

In the global marketplace, the cheapest produce wins, and the world, including Chile, also flies in produce from South Florida. In the winter, Florida becomes the China of fruits and vegetables. In fact very little Florida-grown produce remains in-state. Small-scale and especially organic farmers have trouble competing based on price alone.

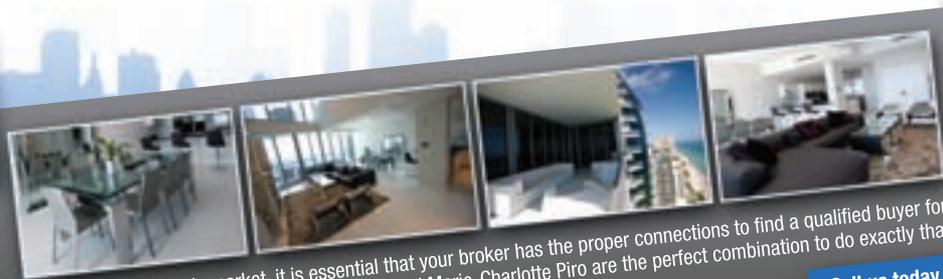
Farmers' markets, strangely enough, are not always popular with farmers. Andres Mejides, a very experienced organic farmer in the Redland, never sells his produce at farmers' markets because the return is too low to sustain his five-acre operation. He sells directly to upscale restaurants and wholesale markets. Mejides emphasizes that real, long-term farming is hard work, whereas he sees recently developed urban gardens and street markets as hobbies.

Street markets or community markets may be better terms than "farmer's market," with or without the apostrophe. A pure farmers' market offers growers

Continued on page 22

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Farm Fresh

Continued from page 20

the opportunity to interact directly with consumers, and vice versa. They can sell their produce without any middlemen forcing industrial efficiency while taking their cut. This purist, Euro-style roadside market fits in with the “slow food” movement, which encourages consumers to know where their food comes from, who grows it, and how they grow it.

Taste may be the key. Compare canned corn to fresh-from-the-farm corn, or sliced peaches in syrup (not bad) to ripe Georgia peaches (amazing). From my childhood in Fort Lauderdale, I reminisce about how our backyard tree produced huge oranges and the best juice I’ve ever tasted.

Kids raised on McDonalds don’t appreciate fresh, but they can learn. School gardens are popping up all over, and Miami-Dade even has its first preschool edible and native garden. Located at the pre-K center on Miami-Dade College’s north campus, the garden was developed in cooperation with Urban Greenworks, a nonprofit focused on gardening as a



The Lincoln Road market now features more prepared products than raw fruits and vegetables.

form of community development.

“Every community is different. That’s what I’ve learned,” says Roger Horne, director of projects and programming for Urban Greenworks. “I’m new to it, just like everybody else in South Florida, except for Claire.”

Claire Tomlin, herself a Georgia peach from Atlanta, has been in Miami for 16 years. She runs The Market Company from humble headquarters near the Design District. The for-profit operation manages roughly ten farmers’ markets in Broward and Miami-Dade counties, and she says this season was “an excellent year.”

These markets pay close attention to consumer demand, and they get their supplies from a variety of places. “I’m not idealistic,” says Tomlin. “I grew up eating tomatoes and I want tomatoes.”

She has seen many markets open and close. One of hers near the downtown Macy’s fell apart eight years ago because the location was “premature.” She also watched another market, not hers, disappear from downtown’s Bayfront Park after four years of being subsidized by the Downtown Development Authority. “The vendors were paid to come,” she says. Despite these failures, Tomlin is talking with the DDA about bringing new markets to areas in and around downtown Miami that lack grocery stores.

As small businesses, farmers’ markets can also become too successful too quickly. In 2009, when Tomlin opened the first Upper Eastside Market, of no relation to the current one of the same name, it seemed to fill a void immediately. “It was incredible,” Tomlin recalls. Located at Legion Park along the Boulevard at 66th

Continued on page 24

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Farm Fresh

Continued from page 22

Street, the market was so successful that the owner of the nearby Vagabond Motel opened an imitation, and Tomlin says the competition diluted demand and ultimately killed both markets.

The City of Miami had given The Market Company a grant to initiate the first Upper Eastside Market, but the park's fee of \$200 per market day was burdensome, says Tomlin. On top of that, the city charges \$153 per day for a requisite special-use permit.

Tomlin tried to resurrect Upper Eastside Market in 2010 at a less prominent location on private property owned by Mark Soyka, in the parking lot just south of his restaurant at 55th Street and NE 4th Court. When that venture stalled, she requested to return to Legion Park for the fall of 2011. But the City of Miami Parks and Recreation Department would not allow a market again, she says. (Spokeswoman Lara De Souza was not able to address Tomlin's situation by press time, but says her department is bound by city ordinances limiting special events.)



No self-respecting Miami farmers' market is without an orchid vendor like Judy Hosein.

With an eye still on the Boulevard, Tomlin is hoping to open a new farmers' market at an empty lot near 33rd Street.

A farmers' market can attract new and different types of customers, and Tomlin thinks her oldest market helped

to establish one of South Florida's hottest spots. On South Beach's most popular pedestrian and shopping lane, Tomlin opened her first farmers' market 16 years ago, and she says it was "designed to bring people to Lincoln Road." The market certainly did that, and it

continues to operate on Sundays all year long, although its few tents in summertime barely register in comparison to the Road's restaurant row.

On a recent Sunday, only one market vendor offered fresh produce, with mostly nonlocal items. As the techno music blared, I bought a bag of ping-pong size Key limes in green mesh netting for two dollars. The label read, "Produced in Guatemala."

That same Sunday I drove north to Hollywood, where I encountered the extremes of what is called a "farmers' market." Driving defeats the purpose of a farmer bringing his wares to you and of you saving money by going local, but I had to see the heavily promoted Yellow Green Farmer's Market, operated by the Lalo clan — Abraham, Eyal, and Gany.

Near the Hollywood water tower and west of I-95, this huge warehouse announces itself with a half-mile string of fluttering yellow, green, and orange flags. The plastic cows outside set the tone for the flea market inside.

Continued on page 26



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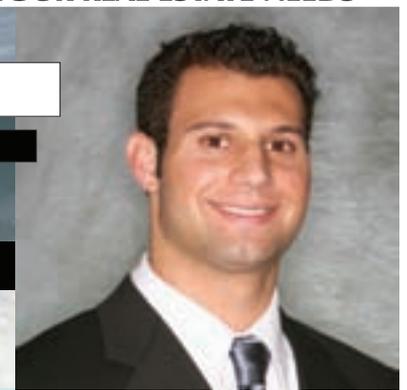


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Farm Fresh

Continued from page 24

Peruvian flute music beckons you buy CDs at one booth, while the next booth features striped hula-hoops, brought to you by Miss Padazzle. In the next aisle are ladies roasting corn, a man making candles, and a turbaned mystic giving a massage. The market, open Saturdays and Sundays all year, has fresh fish and produce, but most of its 200 or so booths are manned by the crafty and the clever, and there's not a farmer in sight.

On the other side of town is Josh's Organic Garden. And now it's time for something completely different. First of all, you're on the beach, as this combo farmers' market and juice bar resides on the world-class boardwalk along Hollywood Beach, with clear views of the Atlantic. Second, Josh Steinhauser is really there, wearing blue running shorts, a white T-shirt, and a black yarmulke while he dashes around manically giving orders, taking orders, and slicing up free samples of grapefruit. He's got the energy of Popeye on an orgasmic spinach drip.



During the summer months, fruits like these on Lincoln Road are likely to come from afar.

All of his produce is organic, much of it hails from his farms in north Florida, and he says the prices are a better deal than at Whole Foods. I bought some Florida basil and two purple yams (purple!) from California for \$2.90. The fruit I tasted was delicious, and I believe

Josh when he says he's one of the largest distributors of organic food in the world.

Regarding his distribution business, he's not talking about his Sunday market at the beach, open all year from 9:00 a.m. to 5:31 p.m. (I hear him confirm this exact time to an inquisitive customer);

he's talking about his weekday business. Organic is his thing, and the farmers' market is his baby business. He protects it stringently with an off-duty policeman.

But that's in Broward County. As most of the markets in Miami-Dade County are run by Tomlin's company, most of them follow a similar recipe: one part produce, one part prepared foods, and one part bazaar. Most operate only between November and May.

Her market in Pinecrest is one of the area's largest, whereas the markets at three universities, including Barry University, register only a few tables. In Mary Brickell Village, Tomlin says, the Sunday market cannot sell produce because of restrictions imposed by the managers of the property, which includes a Publix Supermarket. She uses the terms "crafts market" and "green market" to distinguish them from places where you might find a farmer or a grower of some kind.

I talked with Tomlin under a tent at the Jackson Memorial Foundation's Green Market, where people on low

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Farm Fresh

Continued from page 26

incomes get a two-for-one deal. This market and a few others accept the federal SNAP/EBT card (Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program/Electronic Benefit Transfer), formerly known as food stamps, and the WIC benefits for Women, Infants and Children. It's a great deal, but first these customers would need to travel here.

The food-stamp program started locally with Roots in the City in 2010 and has endorsements from on high. "The idea is that farmers' markets and community gardens will help build up and strengthen the food-stamp program," explains Roger Horne of Urban Greenworks. "Once Obama and his wife took it on as a project, funding started coming down nationally, as these are alternative methods of addressing community health and thus individual health."

Horne also wants markets to be within walking distance. "There's this dependency on corner stores and fast foods," he says. "Supermarkets don't bring a lot of quality" to poor communities.

How can farmers' markets save a community when they have trouble saving themselves? "You have to be real careful with expenses," Tomlin explains. "You need to charge enough to make a profit," she adds, noting the additional expenses of advertising and producing the markets.

Bureaucracies are also an issue. "Permits are the biggest obstacle,"

All of Josh's produce is organic, much of it hails from his farms in north Florida, and he says the prices are a better deal than at Whole Foods.

Tomlin continues. "Each municipality is different, but still they all call me." Cities on her to-do list include Boca Raton, Miramar, and North Bay Village.

In Key Biscayne, she says a tug-of-war between the city manager (for) and the local chamber of commerce (against)

went on for seven years until a group of church ladies stepped in and demanded a positive resolution. At this market, says Tomlin, a small-scale grocer participates, demonstrating that a farmers' market is not necessarily anti-grocery store.

The Jackson Memorial market, formerly held all year, had to close in May because of construction planned for its central plaza location. Tomlin is working

This market in particular features cooked foods, says Tomlin, because the patrons wanted an alternative for lunch on Thursdays. My lunch that day consisted of delicious Colombian *papas rellenas* (stuffed potato fritters), a carrot-based energy drink, and delicate French pastries from the upscale bakery Atelier Monnier.

At such markets, the produce is secondary. Interestingly, they all seem to have an orchid booth selling the common pink and white Phalaenopsis. Jumping from market to market, you start seeing the same flowers, the same vendors, and the same types of produce.

Finding a farmers' market can be tricky, and listings online are unreliable. Some markets have a staggered, uneven schedule, such as the one inside of Aventura Mall, and some disappear on the run from authorities.

At least two farmers' markets run by nonprofits struggled this year with permitting and other sticky issues in the City of Miami: Overtown's Roots in the City market and Liberty City's first-ever farmers' market operated by the Urban Oasis Project. The latter avoided the permitting conflict by moving out of TACOLCY

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Children of God

Directed by Kareem Mortimer, 104mins
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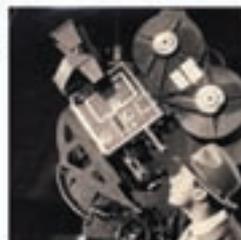
Directed by Werner Boote, 95mins
We live in the Age of Plastic. It's cheap, it's practical, and it's everywhere. Embark on a journey around the globe - from the Moroccan Sahara to the middle of the Pacific Ocean, as this fascinating film reveals the far-flung reach of plastic, sheds light on the perils of plastic to our environment and exposes the truth of how plastic affects our bodies and the health of future generations.

June 9th to 12th



Gabi on the Roof in July

Directed by Lawrence Michael Levine, 102mins
A portrait of young New York and the misguided hopefuls who can't afford to live there but do. Gabi, an unruly undergrad, heads to NYC to spend the summer with her older brother, Sam. When she gets there, she finds Sam is too busy to give her the guidance she needs. To get Sam's attention, Gabi seduces his free-loving, freeloading college buddy, only to find she's in too deep. Exs, art, sibling rivalry & whipped cream included.



Cameraman: The life and Work of Jack Cardiff

Directed by Craig McCall, 86mins

With an epic 90 year career within the movie pictures industry -from silent films, to his experiments in Technicolor, to 21st century movie making Jack Cardiff's work behind the camera altered the look of films forever. This film took 17 yrs to make and features interviews with cinema luminaries like Martin Scorsese, Lauren Bacall, Kirk Douglas and Charlton Heston.

June 16th to 19th



L'Amour Fou

Directed by Pierre Thoretton, 98mins

The public life of Yves Saint Laurent was as extravagant as it was decadent, as a design prodigy and then the grand couturier of a fashion empire he influenced fifty years of style - but few are familiar with the private life of the legend. In Pierre Thoretton's *L'AMOUR FOU*, Pierre Bergé, the man with which YSL shared four decades of his life and love, reflects on the equally extravagant history of their personal relationship. Framed around the 2009 auction of the priceless, elaborate art collection amassed by Yves and Pierre, this extraordinary documentary provides an unprecedented look at the life of a mythic personality, whose personal life matched his public for elegance, extravagance and passion.



June 23rd to 26th



How to Live Forever

Directed by Mark Wexler, 92mins

Director Mark Wexler embarks on a global trek to investigate what it means to grow old and what it could mean to really live forever. But whose advice should he take -the 94-year-old exercise guru Jack LaLanne or Buster, a 101-year-old chain-smoking, beer-drinking marathoner? This engaging new documentary challenges our notions of youth and aging with comic poignancy.



Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall his Past Lives

Directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 114mins

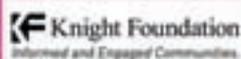
Suffering from acute kidney failure, Uncle Boonmee opts to spend his final days with his loved ones in the countryside. Surprisingly, his deceased wife's ghost appears to care for him & his last son returns home in a non-human form. Seeking the reasons for his illness, he treks into the jungle to a mysterious hilltop cave -the birthplace of his first life. Winner of the Palme d'Or.

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CINEMA

Follow That Story!

The latest on the Vagabond Motel's woes, the Lunch Box Deli's failure to launch, the Boulevard Theater's future, and the Little River Club's fight to stay open

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Contributor

Never let it be said that the *BT* has a short attention span. When we get our mitts on a story, we hang on through all the twists and turns. (This is Miami — there are *always* twists and turns.) Case in point: The four stories, below, all of which we have previously featured, and which have recently seen some new developments.

Turns out, nobody really wanted that shuttered showcase of Miami Modernism, the Vagabond Motel, after all — at least not at auction. And that swell outing to the hip, new Lunch Box Deli in El Portal? That's not going to happen, either. Something that appears like it *will* happen? A brand-spanking-new club complex at the Boulevard Theater, with — wait for it — naked ladies. (Surprise!) Finally, remember that row between the Little River Club, home to the Upper Eastside Alcoholics Anonymous chapter, and its Shorecrest neighbors? It's far from over.

Vagabond Still Up for Grabs

When the professional networking site LinkedIn offered itself to the public on May 19, its stock more than doubled on the first day.

The same cannot be said for the historic Vagabond Motel at 7301 Biscayne Blvd. According to David Lin, president of Vagabond Motel Inc., when the Vagabond was placed on the online auction block by the Miami-Dade Clerk of Courts at 9:00 a.m. on May 17, no bids were submitted. Exactly one minute later, at 9:01 a.m., the auction was shut down.

As a result, the boarded-up, fenced-off, foreclosed motel, hailed by preservationists as a prime example of Miami Modern (MiMo) architecture, is now back in the hands of its original owners, Vagabond Motel Inc., who are eager to sell it.

"We have to secure the place and make sure everything is straightened

out first," says Lin. "After that, I'll try to find someone, a broker, who will try to find a market for someone to buy it."

Lin and his three partners sold the Vagabond to Eric Silverman and Octavio Hidalgo for \$4 million in 2005. At the time,



John Tedesco in January 2011 at the site of the Lunch Box Deli that never was.

Silverman, the former president of the apparel company Hugo Boss USA, vowed to restore the 1953 motel to its original splendor. Yet in 2009, Silverman and Hidalgo walked away from the motel, defaulting on a \$2.7 million mortgage they had with Vagabond Motel Inc. and leaving the place with more than \$118,500 in code violations (a figure that is growing by \$250 a day), and \$349,191 in unpaid property taxes.

Although Vagabond Motel Inc. won a \$4.5 million foreclosure judgment against Silverman and Hidalgo in April, Lin is still not sure if his partnership will go after them for damages. "We are not up to that point yet," he says. Instead Lin is focused on settling the code violations and paying the back taxes attached to the property.

Once all the issues are settled, Jeff Morr, president of Majestic Properties, is confident someone will pay as much as \$2.95 million for the Vagabond. "We still have people who are interested," says Morr. "I'm shocked that nobody



Full of dreams: Former Vagabond owner Eric Silverman in August 2008.

BT photo by Cathi Marro

the Lunch Box Deli, a New York-style deli offering locals a place to hang out while enjoying comfort food.

It isn't going to happen.

Instead John Tedesco, the man behind the Lunch Box concept, will try to open his first restaurant venture at another location sometime in the future. "I think it will be Aventura or the North Miami area," says Tedesco, who supervises the opening of Nikki Beach nightclubs around the world.

But what was wrong with El Portal? Nothing, replies Tedesco, adding that El Portal officials were extremely cooperative. The problem, he maintains, is that a portion of the proposed site lies within the city limits of Miami, and the city's permitting requirements are just ridiculous.

"Even something as simple as a sign was very difficult to do," Tedesco says. "It got to the point where I was spending more money than we had. We wasted a lot of time going back and forth with the city."

Cristina Fernandez, spokeswoman for the City of Miami, says Tedesco's request for a "change of use" was approved in less than three months. However, a building permit issued to Tedesco in November 2010 was revoked by the city's building department this past May. Fernandez says she is looking into the reason for that, but did not have an answer at deadline.

Tedesco says a dispute with his partner, Zincenco Mineo, a Nikki Beach employee, was also to blame. Mineo withdrew from the project in January, but neither Tedesco nor Mineo would tell the *BT* the cause of the dispute. "That is a personal thing," Tedesco says.

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No Halfpipes, No Ally Oops, No Skid-Lids, No Nothing

Community pressure and perhaps some political lobbying kills a proposed skateboard park

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Contributor

Two years ago Seth Levy was so optimistic that a skate park would be built near downtown Miami that he bought property near the site. Now Levy, a business consultant and skateboarding enthusiast, is selling the land he purchased. He is also leaving. "I can't stand the politics of this city," he says.

Levy, who is moving back to his native Washington, D.C., blames politics for the derailment of a proposed public facility he spent time and money trying to bring to fruition: Biscayne Skate Park, a \$2.2 million project that was slated to be built on city-owned land at 150 NE 19th St. After more than two years of planning, city and Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) officials confirmed that the skate park project is on hold.

"It isn't being built right now," says Ron Nelson, chief of staff for Miami Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, whose district encompasses the proposed skate park. "There was an outcry."

That outcry came from some supporters of two landmark institutions in close proximity to where Biscayne Skate Park was to be built: Temple Israel, the oldest Reform synagogue in Miami, located at 137 NE 19th St., and the Miami City Cemetery, a ten-acre burial ground founded in 1897 that serves as the final resting place for many of the area's pioneers, including Julia Tuttle. Opponents of the park fear that it will generate too much noise and attract drug users and vandals to the area.

Sarnoff, who proposed building the park within the Omni Redevelopment District in December 2008, did not return phone calls from the *BT*. David Karsh, a former Sarnoff aide now working as a CRA spokesperson, questions

critics' concerns, adding that the agency is looking for other locations within the district to build the skate park. "It is something that the CRA is committed to doing," he says.

But Lansing McLoskey, a composer, University of Miami music professor, and skate park advocate, contends that city administrators have told him the project is dead. "[Opponents] screamed for the last year and a half that there were no public hearings for this, but there *were* public hearings," McLoskey says. "Then they turned around and killed the skate park *without* public hearings. It is hypocrisy of the highest order."

At a planned 54,000 square feet that included concrete slopes and obstacles, Biscayne Skate Park was meant to provide an environment for skateboarders, particularly teenagers, to practice their tricks — a safe alternative to the streets, sidewalks, bus benches, and stairwells in common use today.

But Stanley Tate, a past president of Temple Israel and a fundraiser for its expanding Joni and Stanley Tate Early Childhood Center, insists the city picked the worst possible place for a skate park. "A skate park doesn't belong in a residential area, near an historic cemetery, a place for prayer, a preschool, and a charter school," says Tate, who has been fighting the skate park for more than a year. (See the *BT*'s "Skateboards and Synagogues Are Like Oil and Water," March 2010.)

Penny Lambeth, chairwoman of the Dade Heritage Trust's City Cemetery Restoration Committee, says she found out about the planned skate park in June 2010 through a Google news alert. After reading news stories detailing rising crime rates around skate parks across North America, Lambeth saw the proposed project as a threat to the tranquil historic cemetery she has worked to



maintain for the past 12 years. "There were a lot of things — robbery, cars vandalized, skate parks being closed down because of loud boom boxes," she reports. "This was just not the right place for it."

Karsh insists there is no evidence that skate parks attract crime. In his opinion, the skate park would have deterred the prostitution, graffiti, and drug use already prevalent on the block. "We want to make this an area where people want to come," Karsh says. "A skate park will *reduce* crime and *reduce* vandalism."

Levy agrees, and says that just the prospect of the skate park had already made a dent in the criminal element in the area. Two years ago there were dilapidated crack houses near the vacant land. "I even went into one of them and there was a guy sitting there, offering me drugs," Levy remembers. So he bought the foreclosed properties from the bank and demolished the structures. "I probably would have built my home there," he says. "I thought [about] how great it would be to live in front of a skateboard park."

The chances of that happening were seriously damaged when Lambeth organized a counteroffensive consisting of several community activists, organizations, and local families who own plots at the cemetery. She says the individuals and groups supporting the skate park's relocation include the 325-student ASPIRA Eugenio Maria De Hostos Youth Leadership Charter School (also located nearby, at 1 NE 19th St.), the Urban Environment League, The Villagers, Inc., local billionaire

Norman Braman, former U.S. Senator Bob Graham, Virginia Key Beach Trust chairman Gene Tinnie, and historians Arva Moore Parks and Paul George.

These citizens and activists inundated officials with letters demanding that the skate park not be built at the city-owned site. "It was obvious a letter-writing campaign was launched," Sarnoff aide Nelson acknowledges. "But I don't know how much weight to give that. We would get the same letter a hundred times."

Levy and McLoskey doubt a letter-writing campaign stopped Biscayne Skate Park. Instead they believe closed-door lobbying snuffed it out. "The commissioners realized they were not going to do battle with well-connected powerful people," McLoskey says. "Skateboarders? Who are skateboarders? The Miami skateboard community is not a well-organized foundation."

Though lobbyist Seth Gordon admits Temple Israel members sought out his services eight months ago ("They were nervous about the potential of the skate park," Gordon recounts), Levy says the real heavy hitter was Tate, who, according to city employees he spoke with, used his contacts to kill the skate park. "People like Stanley Tate, who have more money than they know what to do with, are pushing people around," Levy complains.

Tate, a successful developer who in the 1990s was nominated by President Bill Clinton to run the federal agency tasked with liquidating the assets of troubled savings and loans, laughs at

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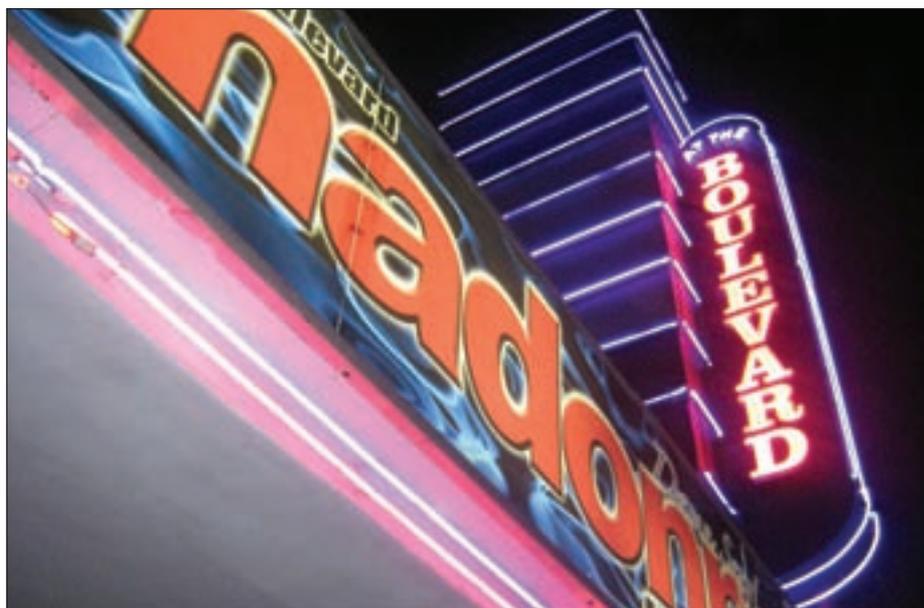
Tedesco had ambitious plans for the former gas station. Inside, he wanted to decorate the walls with vintage lunchboxes. Outside, beneath the gas station's ample awning, he wanted to create an expansive, landscaped dining area. Convenience shopping, fresh meat, prepackaged foods, and casual breakfast and lunch fare were part of the plan, too. Beer, wine, and sangria also would have been on the menu.

For now the gas station will remain closed behind a chainlink fence. Landowner Danceney Reyes says he's talking to prospective tenants.

Boulevard Porn Palace May Go Legit — Or Maybe Not

Come next month, patrons of the Boulevard Theater may be able to enjoy fine dining with their naked ladies.

Since 1970 Leroy Griffith has operated various adult clubs and movie theaters at 7770 Biscayne Blvd. But six months ago he ceded control of the club to Sofa Entertainment Group, a nightlife and entertainment company that has put



November 2008: One of the Boulevard Theater's many incarnations, this one a straight-forward strip club.

\$1.5 million into renovations and signed a 15-year lease. The name of the new place, expected to open in July, will be Wonderland at the Boulevard.

"I made a good deal with them," Griffith says. "They put a lot of money up front. They are paying \$30,000 a

month, net lease. If they make it, good. If they don't, I will have a new club."

Built in 1941, the Boulevard Theater was once a legitimate movie house. Its last screening was the Oscar-winning *Patton*. Since then the theater has been an X-rated venue, featuring

everything from porn movies to nude women to almost-nude men. The joint's name also changed several times, from the Pussycat Theater to Club Madonna II (a sister club to Griffith's South Beach establishment), Black Gold, and At the Boulevard.

Griffith has leased out his club before, but this is the first time he has offered such a long-term lease. The deal also gives Sofa Entertainment an option to buy the Boulevard Theater for \$10 million.

Sofa Entertainment did not return calls from the *BT* by deadline. According to Griffith, Wonderland at the Boulevard will include a gourmet restaurant, a nightclub, and some measure of nude female entertainment. "There will be bare breasts, stuff like that," he explains.

Scott Timm, executive director of the MiMo Business Improvement Committee, says he heard that the new operators plan to open a gentlemen's club with fine dining. "It is interesting. The Boulevard sits almost catty-corner from the original Playboy Club," notes Timm, referring to the Hugh Hefner-owned

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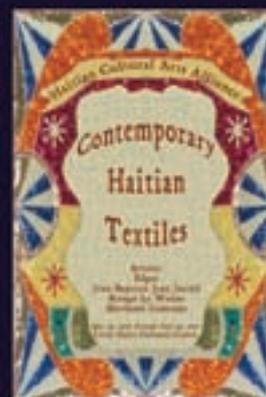
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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR

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venue that operated on the Boulevard from 1963 until 1978 and featured fine dining, entertainment, and waitresses wearing the requisite bunny costumes. "It sort of brings the area back full circle."

Unlike other area activists who have tried to shut down Griffith's operation, to no avail, or continue to hope he will opt for a different business model, Timm is reserving judgment. "I guess I have to see what they are proposing to put in there," he says. "I have never been in there. The businesses that have been in there don't really attract me as a customer."

While renovations continue, the Boulevard Theater technically remains open for business (as evidenced by the crudely painted "Open" sign which recently appeared in the parking lot). Griffith says that's to keep the venue's adult-club license from lapsing. "There has to be something going on," he explains. "If it stays closed for more than six months, I have to do a lot of paperwork."

Big Fight at Little River

On April 28, the Miami City Commission declared that a parking lot and gate entrance behind the Little River Club at 753 NE 79th St. were illegal.

That decree is being ignored by the operators of the club, a nonprofit that serves as a meeting hall for Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Overeaters Anonymous. Bob Hardison, secretary-treasurer of the Little River Club, says the city's ruling is essentially a death sentence for a 47-year-old institution that has operated at its current location since 1991.

"We are filing a lawsuit to keep it open," Hardison says. "This isn't communist Cuba. This is the United States."

Skateboard Park

Continued from page 31

Levy's claims. "He has accused me of things that he made up out of thin air," Tate says. "He thought that I had political influence here. It's silly. I never get involved in City of Miami politics. I don't even live in the city."

Far more likely, Tate theorizes, is that Sarnoff realized the skate park was a political liability: "In light of the forthcoming election, drawing two opponents, I think he is worried about being re-elected, so he has pulled back."

The main entrance of the Little River Club is not on commercial 79th Street, but on residential 80th Street, within the single-family neighborhood of Shorecrest. Many Shorecrest homeowners blame members of the Little River Club for incidents of petty theft, loitering, and vehicular speeding.

Shorecrest resident Troy Howard says his neighbors have photographed and videotaped guilty parties running into the Little River Club's rear entrance. "Nine times out of ten, problems are traced to their members," Howard maintains. By closing the fence and eliminating most of the lot, "it would remove access and opportunity."

Hardison says the Little River Club has been unfairly blamed for all of Shorecrest's problems. He adds that even the club's harshest critics within Shorecrest think it does a good job fighting addiction. They just don't want it near their neighborhood: "They say they want Shorecrest to be Coral Gables, [but] it is not Coral Gables. It is Shorecrest."

The parking lot behind the Little River Club is zoned for single-family use only. It has been used for parking since the 1950s, thanks to a variance granted by city officials to a previous business owner. City documents reveal that the variance should have lapsed back in 1966.

Hardison says that by not extending the variance, or allowing room for compromise, the city is taking away property rights the club currently enjoys, a claim he will spell out in a lawsuit he intends to file no later than June 3.

"Thirty-one years ago, when I came to the Little River Club, it saved my life," Hardison says. "That is why I am sitting here trying to protect it *with* my life."

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

With the skate park dead, Tate thinks the city could turn the land into a soccer field or a passive park. "It should be utilized for the kids and the families in the area," he says.

As for the property Levy bought and is now trying to sell, Tate says the temple is willing to purchase it for the early-learning center's expansion. "We tried to contact him to buy the lots," he says. "A broker who called on our behalf left him a message. He never called back."

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Letters

Continued from page 10

was great to know that I would have a neighborhood French café five minutes from my house.

But I will never eat there again.

My first dining experience in October 2009 was good. The second time I ate there wasn't as good — poorer, slower service with a kind of "I don't care" attitude. I still had faith, though, in the Côte Gourmet, maybe it just wasn't one of their better days.

My brother from France was visiting Miami in July 2010 and staying with me. We enjoyed many restaurants throughout the Miami area, South Beach, Coral Gables, Sunny Isles, and Aventura. I thought, "How cute it would be to bring him to the Côte Gourmet for brunch!" I actually wanted to show off to him that I actually had a little French restaurant almost within walking distance from me.

The midmorning that we arrived, there was just one other patron. We waited nearly 15 minutes just to get a glass of water! The server (a male) looked disheveled and like he had just gotten out of bed. Hair was dirty, totally unkempt. He had a lousy attitude even though both my brother and I spoke to him in French and tried to be friendly to him.

He finally took our order and it took another half-hour for our meals to come to the table. My brother ordered a salade niçoise, which does not require any cooking. (By then the one other patron had left.)

Now we were approaching noon. We decided that since our meal was becoming a lunch by now, we would like to order a glass of wine. There were no other patrons in the restaurant, yet it took this server another ten minutes to bring our two glasses of wine to the table, even though our meals had been finally served!

We kept telling him: "Don't forget our wine, please." His attitude was just terrible.

I was totally embarrassed and humiliated by this experience. I will never, ever eat at Côte Gourmet again. And bad news travels faster than good news.

*Ann Peterson
Miami Shores*

Biscayne Park: The Little Village with Big Egos

In the April issue of *Biscayne Times*, you featured letters from Biscayne Park Village Commissioners Bryan Cooper and Steve Bernard. One criticized a

variety of village matters, and the other, Commissioner Bernard, used his entire letter to criticize me.

I submitted a letter to you, hoping you would permit me to defend myself from the many charges made by Commissioner Bernard. You did not print the letter, and reasons were never given. Following discussions between you and me, you have allowed me to submit a truncated version of the original now.

I stand by my complaint that you oddly published Bernard's unprovoked written attack on me, a private citizen and resident of Biscayne Park, while suppressing the response you must have known you would get from me. I hope you will explain to me and to your readers the method behind this madness.

Bernard points out what he believes are inconsistencies about my statements. Or perhaps he's accusing me of lying. I'm not the first to be downwind of that accusation from him.

One of his demonstrations of my inconsistency, or my disingenuousness, is my statement that I didn't know if *BT* correspondent Gaspar González was for or against public art. Bernard resolved the matter for me by quoting González as saying clearly that he likes public art. In fact, I quoted that myself.

The problem is that González, despite having asserted that he simply likes public art, has committed himself to criticizing the process, done nothing to improve the process, doesn't want to donate to any public art, and is indistinguishable from someone who says he likes public art but really doesn't and is merely trying to be politically correct.

So I'll stand by my lack of clarity about González and ask Bernard to try again.

There is little point now in reviewing Bernard's accusations against me regarding his efforts to donate a tree to the village. The whole project appears to have come to a very unhappy end, pursuant to a number of problems created by Bernard.

To spare his feelings and not to embarrass him further, I will not dredge up the particulars now. And I strongly suspect that anyone genuinely familiar with the matter, my complaints, and Bernard's distinctly nasty public accusations, will know what Bernard usually likes to call "the truth."

It was not contained in the letter he sent you.

*Fred Jonas
Biscayne Park*

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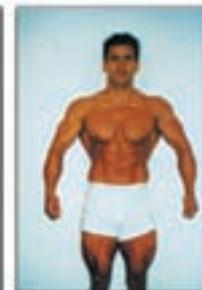
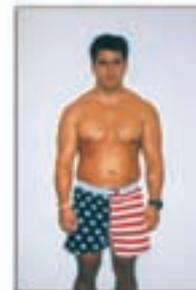
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Our underreported drought conditions should make us think twice about water

By Jen Karetnick
BT Contributor

I've had to have a serious talk with one of my cats this month. I adopted Taz and her brother, Layla (they had their genders mixed up at birth) — long-haired, white, Turkish Angoras — as senior cats, from a woman in South Carolina who had given herself emphysema from a lifetime of smoking cigarettes. The cats arrived dingy, yellow, and with a singular bad habit that I'm convinced came from being unable to tolerate smoke-wreathed standing water — they would only drink from running faucets.

Layla passed away last year from fast-growing tumors in his ear and brain (a

carcinoma related to inhaling secondhand smoke, poor guy), but Taz, a shy female who lives in my bathroom, continues to meow at a pitch as demanding as a toddler's whine at least ten times a day for me to turn on the water. She also crowds in whenever I'm washing my face, brushing my teeth, or putting on cosmetics. Parading back and forth in front of the sink and swishing her fluffy tail, she nudges me for control of the faucet, which is why she often has toothpaste stuck in her nether regions — and I usually have white hairs in my mascara, or worse, my contact lenses.

As you might imagine, then, our conversation didn't go well. "Taz," I told her, "you have to drink from a bowl." No answer. "Really. I can't keep running the



water for you anymore." Imperious stare. "Look, it's time to conserve water. We all have to do our part." Meow! Nudge, nudge, swish — in my face. I sighed, turned on the faucet and changed my lenses.

There's no telling a cat what to do, nor, apparently, humans. This is why citizens in Miami Shores and beyond continue to water their lawns on a daily basis despite the mandates set forth by

the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) that we only do so twice per week, and then only at certain hours. (See www.sfwmd.gov for more information.) No wonder our lovely Miami Shores lawns still look so green despite the little-to-no-rainfall we've had this spring.

What? You didn't know we're in a drought?

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If you've driven down NE 96th Street lately, you may or may not have noticed the yellow-jacket-hued signs punched into the median. "Extreme drought," they read. Then they exhort you to call 1-800-662-8876 for details.

If you've seen them, or have been able to read them — they're sunk pretty low into the grass, and the lettering is small, as if someone wants them to escape notice — you wouldn't be alone in thinking these signs were propaganda, meant to sell you some form of water-saving shower head or gardening system.

Surprisingly, these signs are legit, and so are the digits. They connect you to the Water Conservation Hotline. Call them and the recorded message you'll hear, in part, is: "Rainfall throughout the region is still below normal. Water shortage restrictions remain in effect." Then the voice informs you when and how you are supposed to limit your water use for lawn and garden. There are, however, "no restrictions on other outdoor uses such as car or boat washing or pressure cleaning, though we encourage you to voluntarily reduce your use."

Perhaps, then, these signs are propaganda after all. If the restrictions only

apply to nurturing your grass and flowers, why the doomsday message?

Has the *Miami Herald*, supposedly our primary source of info in town, been exhorting us to cut back? No. A quick Google search using keywords like "Miami," "drought," and "water conservation" produced no articles from 2011. A search of the *Herald's* own site produced one article written in May that deals directly with the subject — and that was sourced from the *Sun-Sentinel*.

Another article, reprinted from the Miami Springs/Doral community rag *River Cities Gazette* on April 2, is the first and only warning (at *BT* press time) of just how dire our situation is. Here's the story, almost in its entirety:

"By now, everyone has watched the news and learned that, with South Florida facing record-breaking drought conditions, water restrictions around Miami-Dade County are in place. ... Residents and businesses with an even-numbered street address will be permitted to water lawns on Thursdays and Sundays from midnight to 10:00 a.m. and/or from 4:00 p.m. to 11:59 p.m. Odd-numbered street addresses will be permitted to water on

Wednesdays and Saturdays during the same time period. No watering will be allowed on Mondays, Tuesdays, or Fridays at any time and not allowed between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on any day."

Of course, not everyone has watched the news — which, depending on the station, is often little better than the *Herald* — so you'd be forgiven for not knowing that we really are in drought, maybe not as extreme as the Miami Shores SFWMD signs would like us to believe, but certainly enough to be concerning.

The reality is that the level of Lake Okeechobee has dropped to a little more than ten feet (almost three feet below normal this time of year), which is too low for the water to flow naturally south. Lake Okeechobee is our secondary water source, our backup to the Biscayne Aquifer.

The Everglades are now more than 60 percent dry in specific water conservation areas. So you can imagine how dry is the rest of South Florida where water *isn't* managed — and how our drought is threatening wildlife communities, many of which are already endangered.

The powers that be seem to think one good tropical storm, along with the

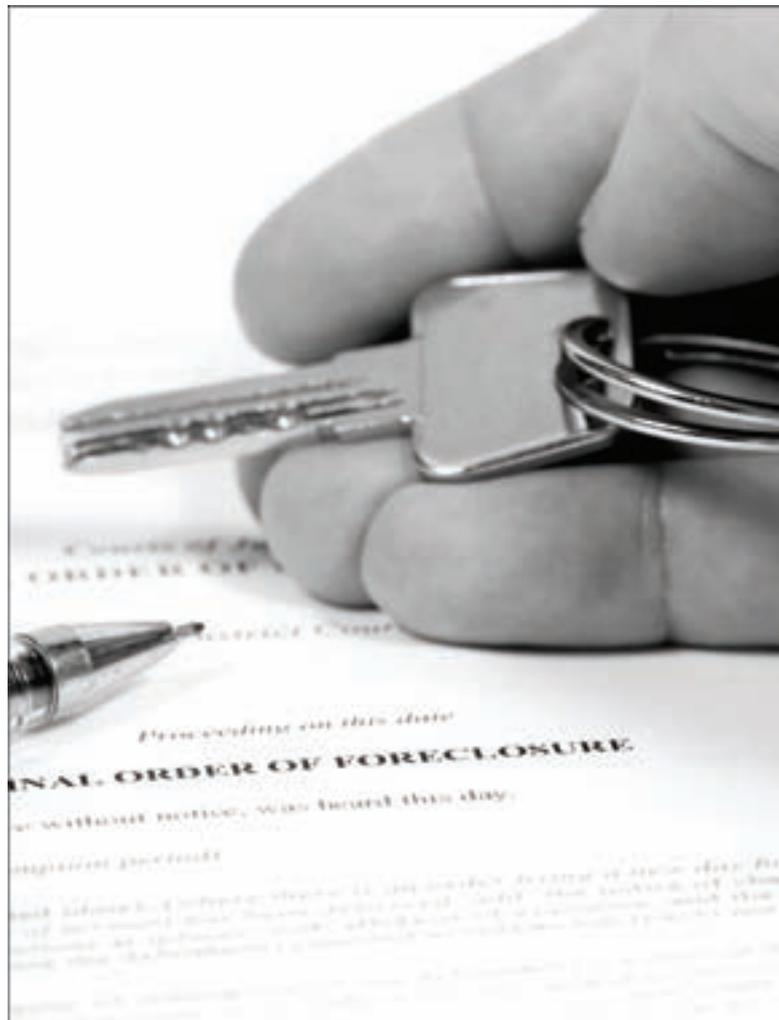
onset of rainy season, will fix these issues pronto. But rainy season hasn't begun when it should have, and who really wants a potentially damaging storm? As soon as we're threatened by a hurricane, officials dump water into Biscayne Bay to reduce the chances of flooding. Our problems are as much manmade as they are the product of nature.

As Miami Shores residents, it truly is time to reduce and reuse. Drink wine instead of water. Shower with loved ones. (There's no reason conservation can't be fun!)

Even our village government, often slow to react, has beaten most of us to the punch: Department officials are collecting water when they wash their fleets of utility vehicles to use for watering purposes, and they recently sent out information in the community newsletter explaining how rain barrels can help with irrigation and fertilizing needs

I'm sure warnings about watering violations, followed by fines, are next. And in this case, I won't be the first one to complain. My cat will.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Aventura's Poop Snoop

Our correspondent goes undercover to sniff out doggie-doo violators

By **Shari Lynn Rothstein-Kramer**
BT Contributor

Jessica Alba does it. So does Minka Kelly. Victoria's Secret model Miranda Kerr would never dream of *not* doing it. So if models and movie stars can pick up their dog's poop, why can't the residents of Aventura?

Are they too special? Can't stoop (literally) to something so crude? Can't be bothered? Perhaps they're not used to cleaning up after themselves. Or maybe they're just lazy? In a rush? Whatever the case, it is disgusting, unhygienic, and unacceptable. If you have a dog that uses the streets of my neighborhood as a giant toilet bowl,

don't forget to flush. It's that simple.

Now, there are *some* people who are responsible, otherwise we'd be knee-deep in the stuff, but despite warning signs such as "Pet Waste Transmits Disease: Leash-Curb and Clean up After your Pet" and an ample number of city-installed "poop stations" — those six-foot-tall green poles that hold a supply of plastic bags, and a trash receptacle to conveniently deposit the bagged poop — doggie droppings are routinely left to bake in the sun and stink up our so-called City of Excellence.

It wasn't until about two years ago, when I got my very first dog ever, that I took notice of this issue. My husband brought home my sweet baby Yorkie,



BT photo by Shari Lynn Rothstein-Kramer

Tika. As a five-pound teacup, we immediately trained her to use her wee-wee pad. But as 5 pounds turned to 8, then 8 to 10, then 10 to 12, and eventually a whopping 14, it became clear to us that it was time to start taking regular walks.

We use the same route most days: out our front door on 188th Street, then onto the sidewalk heading due east, toward the Aventura Arts and Cultural

Center, until we hit the path that leads us to the canal behind our building. Here's where the fun begins.

Take in this lovely scene: million-dollar yachts, the brilliant sunshine reflecting off the tranquil waters, fish jumping, perhaps a manatee or ray — and a line of doggie droppings that runs the entire length of the walkway. Travesty! Yuck!

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I don't necessarily want to make a stink of it (no pun intended), but justice must be served. Would it be effective to install cameras and send tickets like we do at red lights? Perhaps we could create a new city-appointed position — Public Pooper Scooper. I can see the job description now: "Search out, pick up, and dispose of poop. All shapes, sizes, and colors applicable." It would be a dirty job, but someone clearly needs to do it. And at the same time, it would help reduce the unemployment rate. Brilliant!

It's amazing. With Aventura being such a lovely city, you'd think residents would go to great lengths to keep it clean of dog doo. Certainly local government has given us the tools. We have at least four poop stations in a one-block radius — and two more on the block beyond — but still, there are neighbors who won't do the right thing. Aventura is home to educated, wealthy people who should know better, but sometimes they think the rules don't apply to them.

But they do apply. And if we started making a fuss, say, by publicly embarrassing them, perhaps their attitudes would change. In a perfect world, there

would be "poop sensors" and they'd sound as an owner left the scene of the crime. Piercing choruses of "Stop. Gross. Pick it up."

But until then, it's up to residents to take action.

As part of my research for this column, I've been walking my dog at least once, sometimes twice a day (FYI: she *still* uses the pee pad more often than she uses the grass), and keeping an eye on my fellow canine owners. My findings: People do pick up their dog's business when they believe someone is watching. But every now and again you have that guy who simply doesn't care — and that's when the fun *really* begins. This is an actual exchange I had with one of these poop perps:

ME: Excuse me. I think you've forgotten something.

HIM: Huh? [He looks down and around]. No, I didn't.

ME: Sure you did. You left your dog's poop on the sidewalk.

HIM: [Blank stare] Huh? What?

ME: Your dog's poop. . . . You left it there. [I point.] There's a bag right there. [I point to the station four feet away.] I

live here. It would be great if you could clean up.

HIM: It's a free country. Who the [expletive] are you to tell me what to do?

ME: I am the Poop Police.

HIM: The what?

ME: The Poop Police. And you're under arrest.

HIM: What the [expletive]. . . . Get the [expletive] out of. . . .

ME: Seriously, dude, pick it up. That's not cool.

And then it happened. Another person walked by us. I shared with her what my foul-mouthed acquaintance did — or rather, *didn't* do. She looked at me quizzically, but I had done enough to push the offender over the edge. "Fine," he grumbled en route to the poop station. Without ever looking up, he grabbed a bag, returned to the scene, scooped up the poop, and, dog in tow, dumped the load in the bin and kept going.

I'm not sure if that was his intended path when I accosted him, but he had no interest in passing by me again.

True story. And he was not the only one I called out. The reactions were much the same. No one likes it, but in

the end, they cave. So public humiliation *does* work.

My friend Laurie lives in West Pines, where the community ostracizes you if you are caught leaving your dog doo behind. "We have a tiny Chihuahua and I always clean up," she says. "His poops are teeny — like rat pellets — but if you get caught, you're a goner. There are 132 homes in my neighborhood, and everyone who lives here is watching."

Well, there's an incentive! Could we kick people out of town? Doubtful. But perhaps we could put their faces on the information sign in the median at the entrance to 188th Street. It *would* garner a significant amount of attention.

Another idea: Since there just aren't enough hours in the day, I can't single-handedly catch every offender, but then it hit me — I could launch AventuraPoopReport.com.

I will start on it soon. It'll be effective — and embarrassing. So next time you're out walking Rover, remember this: Someone may be watching. Scoop or be outted.

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A Matter of Minutes

Want to know what we really think about an issue?

Good luck finding it in the official record

By Gaspar González
BT Contributor

A riddle: How many minutes make an hour? Think you know the answer? Sixty? Wrong. In Biscayne Park, the answer is somewhere between one and three. Confused? Then you haven't been to a commission meeting lately.

See, the minutes I'm talking about aren't ticks on a clock. They're the official written record of previous meetings and, at every commission meeting, the members vote on whether to accept the minutes of the last few meetings. In most places, this would normally be considered routine. But this is Biscayne Park.

Here what usually happens is that Commissioner Steve Bernard or Commissioner Bryan Cooper — usually both — will object to the omission of what they consider a key element of a particular meeting. At the mention of this, Mayor Roxanna Ross, Commissioner Bob Anderson, and Commissioner Al Childress will roll their eyes in unison and point out that omissions do not count as factual errors, which are the only thing commissioners are allowed to revise. Then Commissioner Childress will remind commissioners Bernard and Cooper that Biscayne Park employs “summary” minutes — a bare-bones account of the proceedings — and that they are attempting to violate the spirit of that



by adding into the record specifics about who said what.

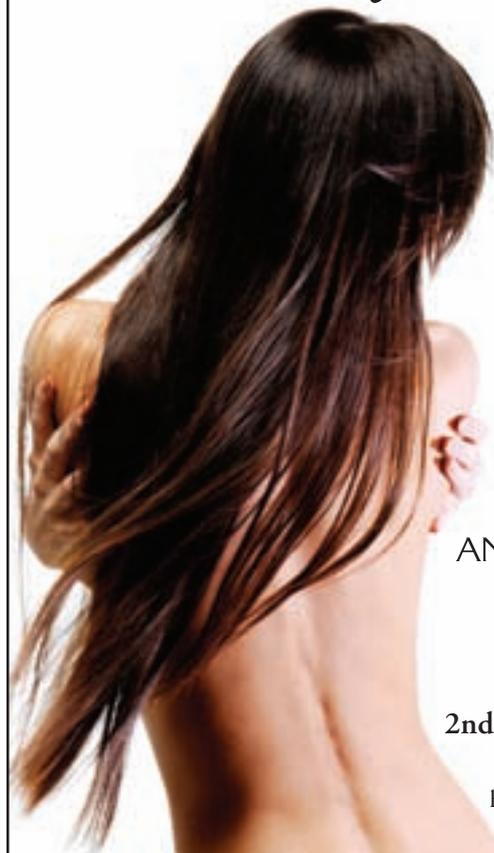
At this point, Commissioner Bernard or Commissioner Cooper will make a motion to amend the minutes anyway. The motion will come up for a vote, which always comes out the same: two for, three against. This process will be repeated for every set of minutes on the agenda. From beginning to end, it could take anywhere from 30 to 40 minutes (but really does seem more like an hour). And they wonder why attendance at

commission meetings is so poor.

The truth is that it's an important issue, and one that needs to be resolved. It's a question of transparency: Residents should have as complete a record as possible of how our government operates. That's why the debate over “accuracy” is pointless. You can have accurate minutes that don't really tell you much. In fact, one could say that Biscayne Park has perfected the form.

For example, when a resident gets up at a commission meeting to speak on an issue, the minutes record his or her presence this

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way: “Jane Q. Resident — Item 10.a Ordinance 2011-01 Fencing Allowances.” Ms. Resident was there and spoke on the fence ordinance. That’s accurate. But what she said would not be shown anywhere, which is odd, since commissioners often like to refer to “what residents want.” (Whether or not they understand what that is — more on that in a moment.)

Commissioner Bernard tried to address this particular issue at the March commission meeting. Rather than have me describe what happened, I’ll refer you to the minutes of that meeting:

“...Bernard makes a motion to amend the resolution on summary minutes to indicate that both the topic that a resident speaks on and the position of the speaker, pro or con, is included in the summary minutes. It was seconded by Commissioner Cooper. After discussion the motion was called to a vote. All in favor: Vice mayor Bernard and Commissioner Cooper. All opposed: Mayor Ross, Commissioner Anderson, and Commissioner Childress. Motion fails: 2/3.”

Think about what you just read — or rather, didn’t read. A majority of the commission doesn’t want residents’

specific views reflected in the minutes, but it’s impossible to say why, because the commissioners’ own views on the subject are *not reflected in the minutes*.

Isn’t anyone curious as to what this discussion was? I was there, and it was amusing stuff. Let me give you a snippet: Commissioner Anderson’s objection to the motion was that, often when residents speak, he has “no idea” whether they’re actually for or against something. And since he can’t tell whether residents are for or against something, it’s unfair to ask the clerk, who keeps the minutes, to try to record whether residents are for or against something.

Okay, so it’s not really that funny. There’s a history here. I don’t think it’s a coincidence that the three members of the commission who favor skeleton minutes, and who adamantly oppose additions to those minutes, are the same three members of the commission who voted last year to abolish commissioner comments from the village newsletter (which the village then stopped distributing altogether).

They apparently don’t feel it’s important for anyone on the commission to share their thoughts or views on anything,

other than to vote yea or nay. And that’s not a recipe for good government — unless, of course, you’re an oligarchy.

But I could be wrong. Maybe I’ve judged them too harshly. Maybe they really are all about transparency. If so, I’ve got a suggestion. Rather than waste everyone’s time arguing over what kinds of minutes are kept — summary or otherwise — commissioners could instead vote to produce full transcripts of the commission meetings. Every word.

It’s not that unusual a measure. The City of Miami, for one, does it. Or if every word of every meeting sounds too ambitious, we could follow the example of Coral Gables, which, in addition to minutes, provides transcripts of specific commission discussions if the issue is deemed sufficiently important to residents.

I know what some will say: We already videotape most commission meetings; why do we need a written transcript? There are a few advantages: It’s much easier to scroll or flip through a transcript than it is to fast-forward through a DVD; written transcripts could be made easily accessible through the Biscayne Park website; and unlike DVDs, you don’t have

to worry about a transcript not playing two years from now.

The two wings of the village commission can disagree on just about anything they want — and usually do — but when they disagree on how much the rest of us should know about how our government works, then something is wrong. Good government shouldn’t be a partisan concern.

None of this, by the way, is intended as a criticism of the village clerk or the work she does. If anything, I’d like to think we’d be doing her a favor. I’ve sat through literally hundreds of meetings — church, union, faculty, staff — where minutes needed to be kept, and not once has anyone ever jumped up to volunteer. Because it’s a crappy job. And it only gets worse when commissioners insist on pulling you in different directions — as the minutes turn into hours.

Quick Note: I’m taking a break as your Biscayne Park correspondent this summer. (Whatever will my most devoted letter-writers do without me?) Not to worry, though. I’ll be back soon. Be safe, and stay cool.

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In Miami, even a minor traffic accident can result in a free ticket to the freak show

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

I'm a loquacious extrovert. Often I note things — incidents, if you will — and relay them to my family and good friends. Okay, let's extend that to the postal worker, deli counter guy, tree trimmers, telemarketers, my dogs, the DVD player, and the occasional sandwich. You know, anyone who will listen.

People (the live ones), eyes all abulge, often say to me: "Wow! The craziest things happen to you!" My reply is always the same: "They happen to you, too. You just don't pay attention."

This statement, while an applicable fact anywhere (unless you are a shut-in,

and hey, even shut-ins have drama — just ask the Meals on Wheels people), holds especially true in Miami: Land of the Freak.

Don't get me wrong. There are freaks everywhere. It's just that, elsewhere, they tend to be closet freaks. They are hesitant to let loose their inner freak because they fear the fallout. This could range from a tongue-lashing from the president of the local Citizens for Decency chapter to a goring from the Moose Lodge volunteer mascot. And take it from me, a giant plastic rack attack is not pleasant.

In Miami, though, the Freak is as proud as the sun is strong. Live in an area long enough and you learn to



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

identify the particulars of the local Freak, just as easily as you can discern a tourist from a local. Allow me to indulge in a brief anecdote typical of the Miami Freak experience.

Like many memorable Miami moments, this particular incident started on the road. What made this one noteworthy, as usual, were the Freaks who were involved. (Excluding me, naturally.)

Traffic stopped suddenly and I didn't. Okay. It happens. I gave the vehicle in front of me a small tap. Then, like some tribe of mollusks escaping a shell, out slither the Tapped, or occupants of said vehicle. The Tapped include the driver and two women.

Me, being the Tapper and knowing my accident protocol, well, I sit frowning and cursing among the mounds of papers,



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clothes, rocks, glittery bouncy balls, and plastic farm animals that call my Subaru home. The main thought that cruises through my head is: Just *how much* of a pain in my ass are these people going to be?

The first Tapped one, the driver — a large, 20-something male — ambles around his gas-guzzler and stares at the bumper. I sigh and roll my window down. The Tapped One looks at me and shouts, “Money!”

I stare at him menacingly from beneath my “Chubby Bunny” headband, which features a huge vinyl red bow, and raise my eyebrows. Money? Oh my, what *do* we have here?

He jabs a meaty finger at the seemingly unblemished bumper and hunches his shoulders. “Look what you did!” he shouts. “Give me money or [here his voice takes on a clipped note] do you want me to call the cops?”

I shrug and reply, “Well, it *is* protocol.” He looks confused.

One of the women, a blonde, yells something at the Tapped One in a language I can’t quite pinpoint. Then she walks — or more accurately, her hips walk — over to my open window, where she

purses her lips, furrows her tattooed-on eyebrows, and looks down at me with contempt. I can’t see her feet, but I can tell she is tapping one of them. “Well? You pay?”

I look up at her Ed Hardy T-shirt stretched across her mighty faux bosom. “One hundred dollars? Yes? It’s fair?” she says.

I consider this potential solution. I’m in a hurry. I actually might have agreed to this proposition just to get her and the Tapped One out of my face. Instead I just look at the Tapped Bosom and say, “I don’t *have* \$100.”

Tapped Bosom narrows her eyes. I can feel her drinking in this thing — this thing that is I. She looks up and focuses on my bright red, mondo bow. She appraises the interior of my car. She is wondering if I am lying. She can’t imagine not having \$100 or for that matter \$10,000 cash in her pocket. I look at the trunk in front of me and imagine bodies, bags of cocaine, and crisp \$100 bills, all organized neatly inside.

“Where are you from?” she sniffs.

Small talk?

“Here. Miami.”

Tapped Bosom considers this new fact.

“Moment!” she shrieks and saunters back to the Tapped One (or Tapped Behemoth, as I’m now thinking of him).

At this point it occurs to me that I may be getting the shakedown from the Russian or Israeli — what was that accent? — mob. Great. Tapped Bosom and Tapped Behemoth bicker. Tapped Bosom returns.

“What are you going to do?”

I shrug. “You want a check?”

Tapped Bosom considers before... “Moment!”

Indeed a moment passes and she returns.

“Okay. Give to me.”

Oh, thank God! I claw through my purse, searching for my checkbook. But... it’s not there. Unreal. Tapped Bosom picks at her teeth with her long talons and eyeballs me. “Hold on, it must be in my other purse,” I tell her. A flash of doubt in Tapped Bosom’s eyes. Ha! She thinks I’m putting her on! I wish I were that quick — and organized.

Now I’m desperate. Smoothie cups go airborne over my shoulder and the errant flip-flop soars as I dig through the water-bottle graveyard that passes for the floor of the passenger side of my car. I unearth candy wrappers, a hairbrush, toy soldiers, rocks and leaves,

a dog bed, but no checkbook.

Defeated, I turn toward Tapped Bosom. “I don’t have it. I must have left my checkbook in another purse.” Tapped Bosom stares me down. I wait for it. Three, two, one: “Moment!”

After some bickering with the Tapped Behemoth and Tapped Woman No. 2, she returns. “Give me number. Write down on paper.” Ah, trusting folks, these MIA mobsters. And that is when I make my mistake: “Here’s my card,” I say.

Satisfied, Tapped Bosom takes it and replies, “My friend — he will call you.”

Okay, whatever you say.

That should have been the end of it. But this is Miami, home of the Phylum: Freak, Class: Scam Artist. So several days later I get a call, and then an e-mail from a man named “Attila.” No lie.

Attila wants me to contact my insurance company and tell them all the specific details of the accident, including how I busted up his *green Ford Focus*. Huh?

In the end, the mobsters slunk back into their mollusk shell. But not without a good slimy fight, Miami-style.

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Chit-Ching!

Cashing in on a fictional favor from the next mayor of Miami-Dade County

By **Frank Rollason**
BT Contributor

On May 12, my wife Fran and I hosted a political meet-and-greet for county mayor hopeful Carlos Gimenez at the recently remodeled New Yorker Motel on the Boulevard at 65th Street. (Many thanks to owners Shirley and Walter for allowing this event to be held at their facility.) It was a Chamber of Commerce night, as they say, and the setting provided a nostalgic walk back to the 1950s and a less complicated time.

At the conclusion of the event, a neighbor approached me and asked, "So, if Carlos gets elected, what do *you* get out of it?"

With a sarcastic grin, I wisecracked back: "Oh, millions and millions." But the guy wouldn't let it go. He was insistent that there had to be something in it for Fran and me for us to host such an event.

The premise itself illustrates the quid-pro-quo perception of how our local governments work: I do for you now, so you must do for me later. Pretty sad, but if this weren't the dominant perception, there wouldn't be such a plethora of lobbyists and other power brokers hovering around Miami-Dade County Hall, much like the turkey vultures who make their winter home atop the county courthouse downtown.



(The difference between the two is that the turkey vultures do not attempt to hide their primary mission of feasting upon the carrion and lifeless road kills that would otherwise fuel disease and pestilence, while the lobbyists' mission is to feed upon the taxpayers' coffers, further fueling the disease and pestilence of cost overruns, and put the county

deeper in debt in order to line their own pockets. I prefer the turkey vultures.)

So taking my neighbor's question seriously: What *would* I ask for? Never really gave the question much consideration since I'm not wired that way, but it deserves a thoughtful answer.

I guess I could ask that a specific piece of legislation be either approved

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or denied, but that would be too limiting and I may squander a “chit” on an issue that may turn out to be not as important as another issue down the road. (Oh, to have a crystal ball, though even a crystal ball would have a hard time predicting the future twists and turns of Miami-Dade politics.)

A chit, by the way, is the political jargon for a quid-pro-quo favor — think of it as a marker of sorts — that one owes another in return for an unrelated favor. Lobbyists deal in chits all the time. For instance, lobbyist Ron Book took a political bullet for Commissioner Marc Sarnoff at a heated community meeting when he stated that he alone made the decision to relocate the pedophiles from under the Julia Tuttle Causeway to Shorecrest. The community now knows that this was not the case, but Ron earned a chit from the commissioner for publicly taking that stance, and will call in that chit when he needs a favorable vote — perhaps the renewal of his lobbying contract. See how it works?

Chits are meant to be held, not frittered away on impulse purchases. I remember that, as a youngster, I once

found a five-dollar bill on the sidewalk. I went straight to the local five-and-dime (Herbie’s, for any of you older *Myamuhians*) and asked Herbie what could I get for five bucks. I ended up purchasing a toy tractor set, took it home, and played with it for five minutes before losing interest and giving it to my younger brother. I learned a valuable lesson that day — never squander your chits! So a single agenda item may be an unwise cashing of such a valuable commodity. After all, it is *my* chit and I must spend it wisely! What to do? Oh, what to do?

I guess I could ask for a job for my children, a friend, or myself. That is an acceptable method of cashing a chit, but chits have different values or denominations, if you will. Hosting a meet-and-greet that attracted maybe 50 people and probably did not raise very much in campaign donations would probably earn only a five-dollar chit in the overall scheme of things and we all know you can’t get much for five bucks! Even my poorly selected tractor set, owing to inflation, would be a \$50 purchase today. (The pieces were made of real metal and had moving parts.)

Now, if I had brought huge donors to the event — say, like Marlins owner Jeffrey Loria or some big developer who could bundle tons of out-of-state checks — I may have earned a chit of higher value. But alas, I just brought the poor schleps from the surrounding Upper Eastside neighborhoods who were primarily interested in finding a decent, capable, and honest candidate to end the incompetence, corruption, and insanity we know as Miami-Dade County government. My chit would hardly be worth jobs for all my friends and family. Oh, what to do? What to do?

Then I thought: If I could wave a magic wand and make one thing happen that would turn back the clock on all the egotistical and self-serving pieces of legislation that have been passed over the years, what would that be?

That’s when I remembered a June 2009 *BT* column I wrote, titled “Twisting History for Shameless Pride.” It was the story of how then county Mayor Alex Penelas, egged on by the egos of the 13 county commissioners — along with the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Beacon Council, and various

chambers of commerce — initiated a voter referendum to change the name of Dade County to Miami-Dade County.

The reason? Elected officials and their minions were tired of attending out-of-state functions and having people constantly ask them: “Where exactly is Dade County?” So as one born in the City of Miami, in the County of Dade, I would cash in my chit in exchange for Mayor Carlos Gimenez to propose legislation that would enable a vote by the residents to change our county’s name back to Dade County in memory of Maj. Francis Langhorne Dade, who took a bullet near Ocala from Seminole Chief Micanopy and gave his life on the morning of December 28, 1835 — the start of the Second Seminole Indian War.

Of course, if Gimenez is not elected mayor, my chit is worth about as much as a block of ice on an Alaskan ice floe. And when you consider that Carlos does not deal in chits anyway, my chances of prevailing are close to nil.

Still, it’s a nice thought.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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A Room of Their Own

Miami Light Project and other arts groups have a new home at Goldman Warehouse

By Anne Tschida
BT Contributor

The outside of what is now the Light Box at Goldman Warehouse has been painted a light gray. It's a somewhat unassuming building on a nondescript street in Wynwood. But inside, the new home to several nonprofit arts organizations is spectacular. (We seem to be constructing some good-looking cultural centers these days.)

The main tenant is the Miami Light Project, and when it's hosting shows, it will admit guests through a side entrance punctuated by a bamboo garden. Past the large industrial doors, audiences will be ushered into a sophisticated, slate-gray reception area, through an entranceway made of ceiling-to-floor hanging black ropes, and into an expertly fitted black-box space. Musicians, dancers, actors, and performance artists are likely going to love it even more than those who come to see them.

For more than two decades, Miami Light has brought hundreds of international acts to Miami-Dade, but maybe more important, it has been an incubator for local talent, commissioning and giving a stage to numerous experimental works. And for some years now, it has done so while living a nomadic existence.

That all changed when the organization was awarded a \$400,000 grant

from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to open an artistic laboratory, a grant matched by Goldman Properties. Architect Oscar Glottman was brought in to transform a space that had been an annex exhibition venue and storage room for the Museum of Contemporary Art, and this April, the Light Box was officially born.

The idea is to get producers and performers working and creating within the same walls — and to bring audiences in to witness the creative process in



The Light Box building in Wynwood is unassuming from the outside, but the inside is spectacular.

action. (Along with the black box, there is a practice stage.) The concept is drawing a crowd. In addition to Miami Light, Florida's oldest black theater company, M Ensemble, has moved in, as have two offspring of Miami Light, the alternative local theater company Mad Cat and Teo



Photo by Robert Harbour

A scene from Teo Castellanos's *Fat Boy*, which launches the Light Box at Goldman Warehouse.

Castellanos's D-Projects.

It's an auspicious beginning to have Castellanos's latest, *Fat Boy*, as one of the inaugural events at the Light Box. (The production runs June 2 through June 4.) Castellanos was one of the first and, ultimately, one of the most successful products of Miami Light's incubator program, "Here and Now." Begun 12 years ago, it's a signature of the institution, a yearly unveiling of experimental works from local talents commissioned

and produced by Miami Light.

Back in 2000, Castellanos started working on *NE 2nd Avenue* thanks to one such commission. It was an inspired solo performance in which Castellanos literally donned different hats — and accents — depicting the people who live and travel along that colorful Miami urban thoroughfare.

The show would go on to win one of the most prestigious awards in theater arts, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe First

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Acclaimed author and performer Teo Castellanos credits Miami Light Project with helping to launch his career.

Award, in 2003, which put the home-grown performer on the international stage. *NE 2nd Avenue* has been touring the world for nine years now, and will make a ten-year anniversary appearance back here next January at the Adrienne Arsht Center.

"I don't know what would have happened to me, career-wise, if it weren't for Miami Light, [but] I do know what *has* happened as a result of their interest in my work," says Castellanos as he readies for his latest performance. "I am but one of a handful of independent performing artists living in Miami who has been able to escape a day job."

The line brings a laugh from Castellanos. But in all seriousness, he continues, Miami Light has "nurtured local artists in the hopes of raising real national attention — presenters from around the United States are always at 'Here and Now.'" It has succeeded in drawing attention to such dancers and performers as Rosie Herrera, Octavio Campos, and many others, he says.

Beth Boone, artistic director of Miami Light, says that "Here and Now" is "the program nearest and dearest to my heart. I'm certain that the investment of time and resources we've made in Miami-based artists has contributed to our flourishing contemporary performance scene. It's enormously gratifying."

Now equipped with a handsome new space featuring a dressing area, actual green room, and a flexible stage and risers, Miami Light has an ideal venue in which to present local finds.

A much bigger production than *NE 2nd Avenue*, *Fat Boy* is co-sponsored by Tigertail Productions and New York's Hip-Hop Theater Festival and includes performers from Castellanos's troupe, D-Projects. Like the space itself, it's a step in a broader direction, incorporating multiple influences (Balinese dance, Dub music, and an exploration of global poverty and American greed, to mention only a few of the elements in this eclectic mix) and a more complicated scope.



This month the M Ensemble, Florida's oldest black theater company, debuts *Home* at the Light Box.

"I'm playing all the roles, from artistic and production director to accountant and fundraiser, even to costumer," says Castellanos, while also voicing a common concern of multi-taskers everywhere: "All the time I'm thinking of how I have seen artists *not* produce great work when they are wearing too many hats!" We're not worried.

Following *Fat Boy* onto the new stage at the Light Box will be M Ensemble. From June 9 through July 17, it will present *Home*, about a North Carolina farmer who doesn't want to look forward, and pays the consequences. In July, Mad Cat Theatre Company will unveil a new work by local Paul Tei, *Always Crashing in the Same Car*.

"I think that the Light Box is the right space, at the right time, with the right mix of partners," says the ebullient Boone. "Wynwood is hot, our home-grown performance artists are exploding with creativity, and Miami is an internationally exciting destination."

As per the space's mission, along with theater and performing arts tenants,

it will host Arts for Learning, a non-profit well regarded for its outreach into hundreds of Miami-Dade schools, with another hallway dedicated to the visual arts (currently a text piece covers the walls, courtesy of Diet Gallery).

"We will rock this neighborhood with dance, music, theater, film, and spoken word," says Boone. "And we will throw parties for the record books!"

Kinda hard to beat that.

The Light Box at Goldman Warehouse, 404 NW 26th St. For tickets and show information, please contact the respective companies.

June 2 to June 4: Teo Castellanos and D-Projects' Fat Boy; www.miamilight-project.com

June 9 to July 17: M Ensemble's Home; www.themensemble.com

July 21 to August 13: Mad Cat Theatre Company's Always Crashing in the Same Car; www.madcattheatre.org

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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www.abbafineart.com
Through July 31:
"The Pulse of Nature" and "Vanities" by Debra Holt

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305-438-0220
www.alejandravonhartz.net
Through June 4:
"Earth. Rites of Restitution" by Teresa Pereda and "Urpflanze" by Ivana Brenner

AMY ALONSO GALLERY

750 NE 124th St., North Miami
305-975-6933
www.alonsored.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

ART FUSION

1 NE 40th St., Miami
305-573-5730
www.artfusiongallery.com
Through June 22:
"Timeless Treasures" with various artists
Reception June 11, 6 to 10 p.m.

ARTSEEN GALLERY

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305-237-3559
http://artseenspace.wordpress.com/
June 3 through June 30:
"High School Senior Show" with various artists
Reception June 3, 6 to 9 p.m.

BAKEHOUSE ART COMPLEX

561 NW 32nd St., Miami
305-576-2828
www.bacfl.org
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BAS FISHER INVITATIONAL

180 NE 39th St., #210, Miami
By appointment: info@basfisherinvitational.com
www.basfisherinvitational.com
Through June 9:
"An Interdisciplinary Solo Exhibition" by Nancy Garcia

BASHA GALLERY

795 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-891-4624
www.bashagallery.net
June 21 through June 27:
"Art Is a Passion" by Arnaldo Rosello
Reception June 24, 7:30 to 10 p.m.

BERNICE STEINBAUM GALLERY

3550 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-573-2700

www.bernicesteinbaumgallery.com

Through June 4:
"Blighted Eden" by Mark Messersmith and
"Shifting Nature" by Juan Carlos Zaldivar
June 11 through August 31:
"Greenhouse" with Maria Fernanda
Cardoso, Jimmy Fike, Nancy Friedemann,
Enrique Gomez de Molina, Juan Griego,
Courtney Johnson, Cal Lane, Holly
Lynton, Carsten Meier, Mark Messersmith,
Carol Prusa, Karen Rifas, Gina Ruggeri,
Lisa Switalski, Alex Trimino, Joe Waters,
and Valeria Yamamoto

BLACK SQUARE GALLERY

2248 NW 1st Pl., Miami
786-999-9735
www.blacksquaregallery.com
Through June 30:
"Where Do Birds Go Off to Die?" by Taro
Hattori

BORINQUEN ART GALLERY

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305-491-1526
www.borinquenhealth.org
"Group Show" with H-Allen Benowitz, François Gracia,
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Through June 12:
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www.caridigallery.com
"Group Show" with various artist from Argentina and
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www.visual.org
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CHAREST-WEINBERG GALLERY

250 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-292-0411
www.charest-weinberg.com
Through June 18:
"The Forest" by John Espinosa
June 24 through August 20:



Mark Boulos, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, two-channel video installation, 2008, at MAM.

"Solo Show" by Sheree Hovsepian
Reception June 24, 7 to 9 p.m.

CHRISTOPHER MIRO GALLERY

71 E. Flagler St., Miami
305-741-0058
www.christophermirogallery.com
June 11 through July 2:
"Secrets, Regrets, Joys, and Truths" by Vanessa
Craan, Nathan Delinois, Todd Elliot Mansa, and Nicole
Ricca
Reception June 11, 8 p.m. to 12 a.m.

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www.chirinosanchez.com
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CURATOR'S VOICE ART PROJECTS

2509 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
786-357-0568
www.curatorsvoiceartprojects.com
June 11 through September 10:
"All About Me" by Rosario Bond
Reception June 11, 7 to 10 p.m.

DANIEL AZOULAY GALLERY

Shops at Midtown Miami
Store # 120 Buena Vista Blvd., Miami
305-576-1977
www.danielazoulaygallery.com
Through June 25:
"Viva Mexico" by Alfredo di Stefano
Reception June 11, 6 to 10 p.m.

DAVID CASTILLO GALLERY

2234 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-8110
www.davidcastillogallery.com
Through June 25:
"Sum of the Parts" with various artists

DIANA LOWENSTEIN FINE ARTS

2043 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-1804
www.dfinearts.com
Through June 30:
"Indigo" by Laura Kina and Shelly Jyoti and "Project
Room" by Caroline Lathan Stiefel

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www.diasporavibevirtualgallery.com
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Through June 25:
"Series 5-" by Marcos Valella

DINA MITRANI GALLERY

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Through June 25: "Animals Are Outside
Today" by Colleen Plumb

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305-576-1278
www.dorschgallery.com
Through June 4:
"The Dee Dee and Jack Wedding" by Brian Gefen
"Never Odd or Even" by Brookhart Jonquil
"Glitter Machines" by Paul Myoda
June 10 through July 9:
"Noise Field" with Raphael Lyon, Martin Murphy, Kylin
O'Brien, Odalis Valdivieso, Sam Weston, Antonia
Wright
Reception June 10, 6 to 9 p.m.

DOT FIFTYONE ART SPACE

51 NW 36th St., Miami
305-573-9994
www.doffiftyone.com
Through June 5:
"Miamicito" with various artists

EDGE ZONES CONTEMPORARY ART

47 NE 25th St., Miami
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www.edgezones.org
"Shared Island" with Ada Balcacer, Maximo Caminero,
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Through July 23:
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www.galleryid.com
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GARY NADER FINE ART

62 NE 27th St., Miami
305-576-0256
www.garynader.com
Through August 31:
"The Master Show" by Fernando Botero

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2628 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
561-251-1375
www.giovannirossifineart.com
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HARDCORE ARTS CONTEMPORARY SPACE

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info@hardcoreartmiami.com
Contact gallery for exhibition information

HAROLD GOLEN GALLERY

2294 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
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Through July 2:
"The Fabulous Bunny Yeager" by Bunny Yeager

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147 NW 36th St, Miami
(305) 576-4266
www.iconartimages.com
Through June 30:
"White Hot Heat" with Erika King, Gary Longordo, Justyn Farano, Kirk Maggio

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www.jgplatform.com
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www.kanachnina.com

Through July 9:
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Reception June 11, 6 to 10 p.m.

KELLEY ROY GALLERY

50 NE 29th St., Miami
305-447-3888
www.kelleyroygallery.com
Through June 30:
"Salad Bar" by Sebastian Spreng

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Through June 4:
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Reception June 11, 7 to 10 p.m.

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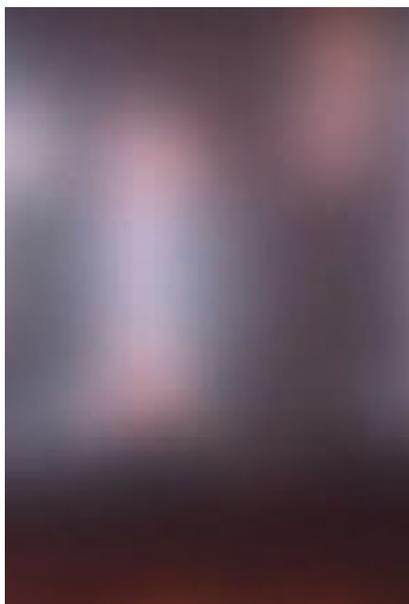
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www.miamiartspace.com
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300 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
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Odalis Valdivieso, 3.2011, C-print, 2010, at Dorsch Gallery.

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www.mymiu.com
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www.michaelperez-artist.com
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305-751-1175
www.museovault.com
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MYRA GALLERIES

177 NW 23rd St., Miami
631-704-3476
www.myragalleries.com
June 11 through September 6:
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Reception June 11, 6 to 10 p.m.

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New World School of the Arts
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305-237-3597
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NINA TORRES FINE ART

2033 NW 1st Pl., Miami
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NORMAN LIEBMAN STUDIO

2561 N. Miami Ave., Miami
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www.oh-wow.com
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PANAMERICAN ART PROJECTS

2450 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-2400
www.panamericanart.com
Through July 23:
"Uprooted/Transmigrations" with Luis Cruz Azaceta, Abel Barroso, David Boxer, Tania Bruguera, Los

Carpinteros, Humberto Castro, Hernan Dompe, Edouard Duval Carrie, Carlos Estevez, Ernesto Javier Fernandez Zalacain, Yaya Firpo, Carlos Gallardo, Milton George, Carlos Gonzalez, KCHO, Jorge Lopez Pardo, The Merger, Sandra Ramos, Graciela Sacco

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2311 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-534-2184
www.miguelparedes.com
Ongoing:
"Elements of an Artist" by Miguel Paredes

PRAXIS INTERNATIONAL ART

2219 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-2900
www.praxis-art.com
Through July 2:
"Sleeping Giant" by Shaun E. Leonardo
"Hue" by Alejandro Contreras

PRIMARY PROJECTS

4141 NE 2nd St., Suite 104
www.primaryprojectspace.com
info@primaryflight.com
"An Official State" by Andrew Nigon
Reception June 11, 7 to 11 p.m.

SAMMER GALLERY

82 NE 29th St., Miami
305-441-2005
www.artnet.com/sammerglassery.html
June 17 through July 17:
"Constructive Works" by Joaquin Torres Garcia and José Gurvich
Reception June 17, 6 to 8 p.m.

SOHO STUDIOS

2136 NW 1st Ave., Miami
305-600-4785
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www.artcentersf.org
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Reception June 4, 7 to 10 p.m.

BASS MUSEUM OF ART
2100 Collins Ave., Miami Beach
305-673-7530
www.bassmuseum.org
Through June 19:

"Come Together" by Frances Trombly and Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova
Through July 3: "An Invitation to Look: Selections from the Permanent Collection of the Bass Museum of Art" with various artists

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DE LA CRUZ COLLECTION CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE
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Through August 21:
"South Florida Cultural Consortium Exhibition" with Cooper, Michael Genovese, Francis Bishop Good, Nolan Haan, Sibel Kocabasi, Beatriz Monteavaro, Glexis Novoa, Jonathan Rockford, Bert Rodriguez, FriendsWithYou, TM Sisters, and Tonietta Walters
Through September 11: "East/West: Visually Speaking" with Cai Lei, the Luo Brothers, Ma Baozhong, Cang Xin, Shen JingDong, Shi Liang, Sun Ping, Tang Zhigang, Zhang Hongtu, and Zhong Biao
Through September 18:
"Who's Counting and Temporal State of Being" with David Hodge and Hi-Jin Hodge
Through October 31:
"From Old to New" with various artists

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Rembrandt van Rijn, *Angel Departing from the Family of Tobias*, etching, drypoint and burin on paper, 1641, at the Bass Museum

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Through June 5:
"Annual Masters of Fine Arts Candidates Exhibition" with various artists, and "UM Faculty Exhibition" by Ivan Alberht
June 18 through October 23:
"Sacred Stories, Timeless Tales: Mythic Perspectives in World Art from the Permanent Collection" with various artists
Through April 22, 2012:
"Women, Windows, and the Word: Diverging Perspectives on Islamic Art" with various artists
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Return of the Salsa Kings

Fads come and go, but Miami and the music of salsa will always be inexorably tied, just as Rubén Blades will always be known as a modern master of the genre. He's gotten together with musical soul mate and salsa superstar Gilberto Santa Rosa for a grand U.S. tour,

which lands at the James L. Knight Center (200 SE 2nd Ave.) on **Wednesday, June 18** at 8:00 p.m., for **Una Sola Salsa: Ruben Bladés and Gilberto Santa Rosa**. It's music that will never get old. For tickets and prices, go to www.jlkc.com.

Fat Attack

The creator behind *Fat Boy*, a hybrid of performance, music, dance, and local brilliance, Teo Castellanos, is himself lithe and quick. He physically and mentally moves around at a breakneck speed, incorporating b-boy beats, urban dance moves, and a Miami vernacular. Castellanos is back with Miami Light Project — which previously commissioned his international hit *NE 2nd Avenue* — performing with his troupe, D-Project, at the beautifully renovated Light Box space in Miami Light's new digs at the Goldman Warehouse (404 NW 26th St.), on **Thursday, June 2** and **Friday, June 3** at 8:00 p.m. Fat chance we'll miss this one. Tickets are \$15; go to www.miamilightproject.com for more details.

We've Got Short Shorts — and Longer Ones, Too

It used to be that the **Summer Shorts Theatre Festival**, put on by City Theatre, took place in a park, with rapid-fire short plays no longer than about 15 minutes

breaking up the heat. No more. In its 16th season, the fest now takes place over several weeks, from **Thursday, June 2** through **Sunday, June 26**, with 55 performances in three counties. And it's not all short plays anymore. This year there is a headliner: former *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *Rent* regular Jai Rodriguez tells some *Dirty Little Secrets* at the Arsht Center on Friday, June 10, at 10:00 p.m.; Friday, June 17, at 10:00 p.m.; and Sunday, June 19, at 7:30 p.m. (This event is also part of Out in the Tropics, another entry in this edition of the calendar.) The family rock musical *Camp Kappawanna* also breaks the brief mode, with a long run at the Arsht Center. Of course there will be some shorts, too, with Rodriguez joining in. For times, venues, and ticket information, go to www.citytheatre.com.

Celebrate a Pachyderm's Big Day and Save!

A native of Kerala, India, Dalip is one of the oldest Asian elephants in North

America. He'll soon be turning 45, having lived for all but two of those years at Zoo Miami (12400 SW 152nd St.). So to celebrate Dalip's birthday, and the fact that he is a pretty important pachyderm, a whole week, from **Wednesday, June 8** through **Tuesday, June 14**, will be set aside for Dalip and his elephant buddies (both African and Indian), and for kids wanting to learn more about them. (The weekend includes a watermelon stomp.) This is one of the events that can be covered with a **Summer Savings Pass**, which includes unlimited entry to the zoo, the Miami Seaquarium, Lion Country Safari, and the Museum of Discovery and Science in Fort Lauderdale through September. At \$54.95 per adult and \$44.95 per child, that's a pretty good deal. Go to www.miamimetrozoo.com for more info.

street construction has largely come to a halt, restaurants seem to be hopping, and people have populated those high-rises. But once in a while we have to venture out to the rural, semi-tropical lands on our borders, to be reminded what a unique place South Florida really is. A great one-stop, yearly re-education: **Redland Summer Fruit Festival** at the Fruit and Spice Park (24801 SW 187th Ave., Homestead). Sample exotic fruits not found anywhere else in the United States while finding out about the vast array of local vegetation that can grow here, on **Saturday, June 11** and **Sunday, June 12**, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., for only \$8. Don't miss the Mango Café with music, vendor booths with local wines and foods, and maybe best of all, those lush surroundings. Call 305-247-5727.



The Plane Truth

Little-known fact: While Miami is considered a young city by historical standards, it was one of the first places to take flight seriously. Back in 1911, only eight years after the Wright Brothers went airborne at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, a plane successfully took off and flew over Miami. The city would go on to play other important roles in aviation history, including becoming home to Pan American World Airways and Eastern Airlines. Find out all about it at HistoryMiami (101 W. Flagler St.) during **Aviation in Miami: the First Hundred Years**, opening on **Friday, June 24** and running into 2012. Go to www.historymiami.org for more information.

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Out and About, With an Edge

Out in the Tropics has managed to deliver a truly funky, edgy little festival in the few short years of its existence. This year is no different, although the festival is no longer so little. From **Thursday, June 9** through **Sunday, June 19**, some of the coolest in GLBTQ performance will hit the stages of Miami. Like *CROTCH* (*all the Joseph Beuys references in the world cannot heal the pain, confusion, regret, cruelty, betrayal or trauma...*), which comes courtesy of Keith Hennessy and his Zero Performance, and which will be at the Colony Theatre (1040 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach) Saturday, June 11, at 8:00 p.m. Singer-songwriter Bitch will also grace the Colony stage, on Friday, June 10, and for the first time, over at the Miracle Theatre (280 Miracle Mile, Coral Gables), our local spoken-word series will join in the fun, with *Lip Service: True Stories Out Loud* on Saturday, June 18 at 8:00 p.m. There's more, so visit www.outinthetropics.com.

The Grass Is Always Greener Underwater

Long-leaved sea grasses appear to dance and writhe in their marine meadows — a truly lovely sight, worth a much longer look, don't you think? If so, pack up your mask and snorkel and head over to Crandon Park (6767 Crandon Blvd., Key Biscayne) for the **Crandon Nature Exploration: Seagrass** to learn more about the flora. Starting at 1:00 p.m. on **Saturday, June 11** and running until 3:00 p.m., you'll find out about their underwater life cycles and threats to their existence while you snorkel off the beach and revel in the sea grass majesty. Rent equipment for \$8. Call 305-361-6767.

Fruity Fun in the Redland

We love our urban life around the Biscayne Corridor, especially now that

Vroom! Fest at Haulover

In front of Haulover Beach Park, in the aqua-and-green ocean, gleaming, careening boats will be frothing up the waters and enthralling speed freaks on both land and sea during the fourth **Sunny Isles Beach Offshore Powerboat Challenge**. From **Thursday, June 16** through **Sunday, June 19**, the waterfront and the hotels will play host to a race village, race meetings, race receptions — and the offshore races themselves. You'll get to see and *hear* those Cigarette boats and, yes, bikini-clad girls. It's the real thing, and a real spectacle. Go to www.offshoreevents.net for the various start times and related events.

Compiled by BT contributor Anne Tschida. Please send information and images to calendar@biscaynetimes.com.

Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Night of the Living Crooks

100 Block of NE 17th Terrace

Two males cut through a fence at a business and began loading cast-iron pipes into a car. The car was a 1989 Chevy. (For an American car that old to still be on the road comes as a total surprise to Crime Beat, and is easily the most compelling aspect of this story.) However, once the two men were approached by security, they left their golden oldie wheels behind and ran north, into the historic Miami City Cemetery. A perimeter was set up around the bedroom of the dead. However, it was to no avail as the criminals, sans 1989 Chevy, were somehow able to disappear into the night. The Chevy was towed and its rightful owner is now being identified.

An Extreme Case of Withdrawal

2600 Block of S. Bayshore Drive

It isn't true what they say. The customer is *not* always right. This particular customer entered a Wachovia branch complaining about a large amount of funds not being properly deposited into his account. Actually what he said was: "If you don't give me my money back, I am going to bomb this place!" The customer was asked to leave, which he did, only to return, yelling, "Give me back my f***ing money!" In an effort to make things even in his mind, he stole the victim's cell phone. When asked to give it back, the unsatisfied customer retorted, "Don't make this worse, I will shoot you!" The man left the scene in a

2001 gold Toyota Camry four-door with black tints.

Grand Theft Auto Parts

7700 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Our Upper Eastside neighborhoods have come back tremendously, but the fungus of what once was the Biscayne crime corridor is proving difficult to remove indeed. In broad daylight, victim left Advance Auto Parts and was stopped by a man with a gun who demanded his wallet. Since wallets are becoming a little passé with the Upper Eastside crowd, the frightened victim told the thug he did not have one. The victim did turn over his cell phone and a credit card. A brave soul across the street screamed and demanded that the suspect give back the valuables, but the gun-wielding bad guy ran off. Crime Beat hopes this is not a new trend.



A Whopper of an Assault

5300 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Here is yet another attack at a fast-food establishment. Victim was riding his bike through the Burger King parking lot and was jumped by a man who pushed him and threw his bike to the ground.

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The attacker then repeatedly punched the victim and took his wallet and backpack. A half-hour later, the victim received an anonymous call that his backpack was in a Dumpster several blocks away. It was recovered with his valuables intact. His wallet was not found. How many times do we have to hear it before we start believing it? Fast food is not good for us.

Run, Don't Walk

NE 1st Avenue and 80th Terrace

Further proof that having a car to go to the corner store is no longer a matter of ridiculous luxury, but one of safety. Victim was crossing the street when a scumbag approached him on a beach cruiser bike. The biker pulled out a 9mm pistol and pointed it at victim's head, ordering the victim to, "Give me your s***!" Victim immediately complied and handed over his wallet. Since it happened so quickly, victim was not able to describe the suspect. Remember: Miami is not a walking city.

Man Bites Mechanic

3000 Block of NE 2nd Avenue

Suspect took his car in to have his air-conditioning serviced. The shop ran the

diagnostic and identified the problem. They told the suspect that it would cost \$1000 to fix the unit. He declined and said that was too expensive. He was then told he would have to fork over \$37.50 to pay for the diagnostic test. The man calmly disconnected the machine, got back in his car, and drove away. A mechanic getting ripped off? Say it isn't so!

Nanny, Nanny, Nah

600 Block of NE 73rd Street

Figuring the youngster could use a little cash, a woman hired her nanny's daughter to watch her children for three hours. The teenager got her cash and then some — she cleaned out a bag belonging to the woman and removed \$350. She then stole an iPod belonging to one of the children. When confronted about the matter, she denied it. The nanny and her sticky-fingered daughter, we gather, will not be asked back.

Crime is a Snap...shot

5500 Block of NE 4th Court

How many times have you had a moment that you wanted to capture on film, but needed assistance? This person wanted

a photo of her family so badly she gave a stranger her shiny digital camera and asked him to take one. He did take the picture. However, he also took the camera, running south. That's one magic moment that, sadly, wasn't captured on film.

Just Don't Leave Your House

NE 3rd Avenue and 55th Terrace

As we've already pointed out, walking in Miami can be detrimental to your well-being. This poor man was taking a leisurely stroll when a gutless coward jumped him from behind and punched him in the head. Three other rotten people starting to kick him when he was down and then took his wallet. Boulevard leeches are hitting this general area more frequently. Please be aware of your surroundings.

Now That's a Useful Gadget

5400 Block of NE 4th Avenue

Victim was called over by the suspect, who was looking for a cigarette. Victim obliged and the suspect began to engage him in nonsensical conversation. (Don't all Boulevard scum do that?) As victim tried to get away from

the nonenlightening exchange, suspect screamed at him and demanded he give him his pants, or suspect was going to kill him. Suspect then pushed the victim to the ground and began to strangle him. Just as the victim was about to lose consciousness, he saw his cell phone lying next to him. He took the phone and chucked it. The suspect removed his hands from the victim's throat and, like a good dog, ran after the phone. Lesson: Carry disposable valuables you can toss to entice criminals to leave you alone.

Pompous Ass Gets His

900 Block of SE 1st Avenue

You know the type: Parks his car anywhere he wants. This particular man parked in a valet zone and was told repeatedly to move his car. Thinking the world revolves around him, he refused. When he came back to his car an hour later, the driver-side door had been severely scratched with a key. He called police but — surprise, surprise — the valets had seen nothing. There were no witnesses. Somehow we can't get worked up over this one.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

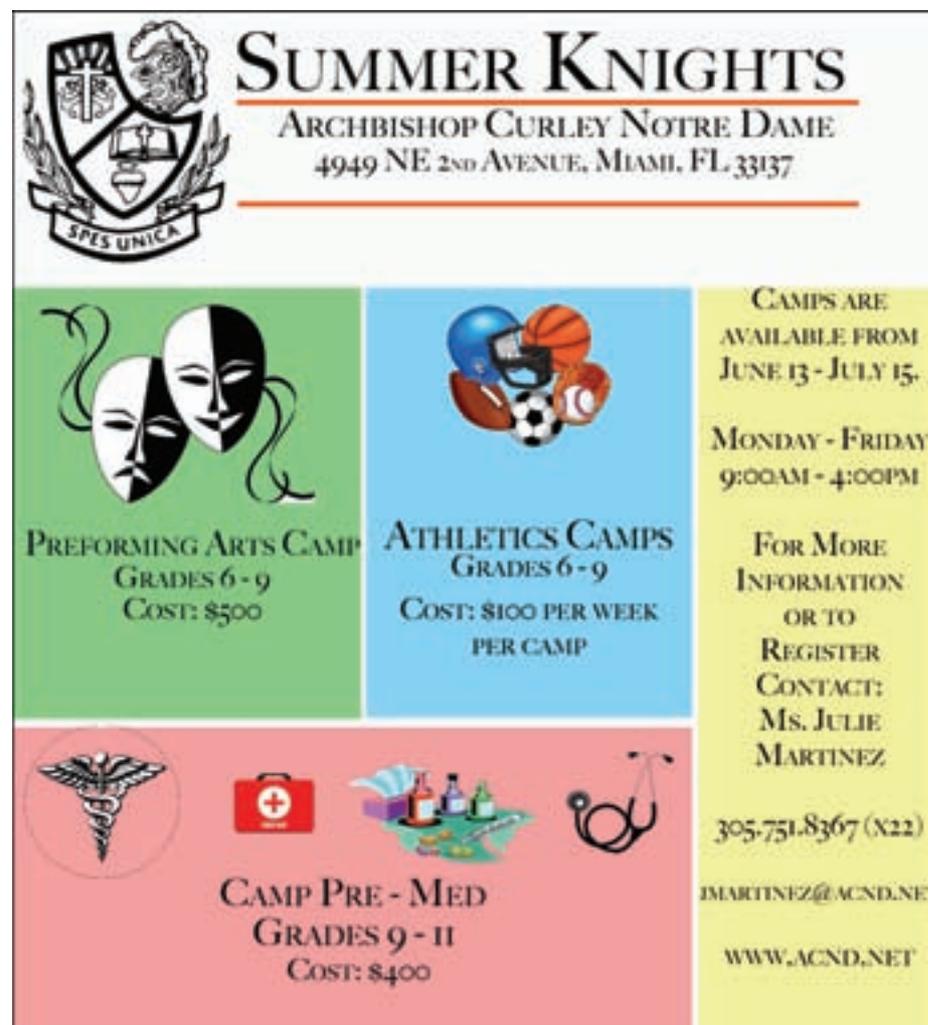


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Forgotten Flagler

Despite a million-dollar restoration in 2009, Monument Island remains a neglected landmark

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

“**N**obody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen” could be the theme song for one of Miami-Dade’s most mysterious, abused, and peculiar parks. Nobody knows its trouble, because this uninhabited island is accessible only by boat, and it’s surrounded by other exclusive islands, where people keep their gates locked and their mouths shut.

On Star Island, Palm Island, and the Venetian Islands, residents routinely look out their two-story windows at Monument Island, yet no one reported that a pornographic film was being filmed there in broad daylight. The porno incident was reported by the *Miami Herald* in February, and the location is unmistakable because of a tall obelisk in the island’s center. From a distance, the Henry Flagler Memorial penetrates the sky just like the Washington Monument, except that Flagler’s obelisk is whiter and smaller. (No jokes, please.)

A very different type of video on YouTube from a couple of years ago shows that the monument desperately needed the restoration that was completed in 2009. The memorial was covered in graffiti, worn, and discolored. Flagler got no respect.

Today the refreshed monument glows in the center of a busy section of Biscayne Bay. Isolated on its own island, it has even been called Miami’s Statue of Liberty (although there’s no real comparison), so you’d think that it would be featured on postcards and used as a backdrop for television shows set in Miami, like *Burn Notice*. Instead it remains unknown and isolated, and therefore susceptible to the mistakes of the past.

I got to the island by kayak after launching from Maurice Gibb Memorial Park, near the Venetian Causeway on Miami Beach’s main island. Interesting side note: As I prepared to use the boat launch for my little orange kayak, a muscular white motorboat was being hauled onto land. Emblazoned across the side was a huge Heat logo and the number three. Dwyane Wade doing a little boating, perhaps?

After about 15 minutes, I parked my kayak on the island. Powerboats and jet skis were lined up along the beach, underscoring the island’s reputation as a party hot spot for a boat-owning crowd perhaps more familiar with the island’s recent filmography than its 90-year history and world-class statuary. In other words, the island sees its share of beer cans.

It also apparently got its share of plastic Easter eggs this April, as the purple and pink half-shells were in evidence



BT photos by Jim W. Harper

Looking south: Maybe the celebs living on Star Island (right) could hold a benefit concert.

around the shoreline trees. (Once a month, the island gets cleaned up by ECOMB, the Environmental Coalition of Miami Beach, which adopted Monument Island in 2007. You can get a free kayak ride by joining the next cleanup on June 26.)

Although cleaner than when I have visited in the past, the island still suffers from too much litter. The trash receptacles are full and the shoreline is dotted with floating trash, though that’s hardly unique — the shorelines of *all* of Biscayne Bay’s islands are awash in trash. Furthermore, there is no permanent guard on duty at Monument Island, although the Miami Beach Marine Patrol is tasked with providing safety.

Walking toward the interior of the island and trying to locate a pathway to the Flagler Memorial, you find that the trees are thick and the pathways nearly nonexistent. Are they trying to discourage graffiti artists from getting there? How odd that such a significant work of art is so difficult to access and that there’s no signage telling you what it is. Then again, this is Miami.

Bond funding from Miami-Dade County in the amount of \$1 million paid for the 2009 restoration completed by the City of Miami Beach. Someone got sloppy at the end, because an old and broken chainlink fence, inside the new fence, mars the base of the monument. Come on, people. If this were your house being remodeled, would you leave the old roof in the front yard?

The monument itself, however, got the makeover it needed. Under the



The 100-foot tall obelisk has been restored to its gleaming glory, though it remains fenced off.

midday sun, it glistens in starch white. The nearly 100-foot obelisk looks much taller up close than from a distance, and just as impressive are the four statues surrounding its base. Each statue of a god-like figure in a toga stands 18 feet tall.

The male figure looking eastward carries a toy train, a clear nod to the Florida East Coast Railway built by Flagler that first connected Miami and the



MONUMENT ISLAND

Park Rating



Biscayne Bay, Miami Beach
Hours: N/A
Picnic tables: No
Barbecues: No
Picnic pavilions: No
Tennis courts: No
Athletic fields: No
Night lighting: Yes
Swimming pool: No
Playground: No



A kayak's-eye view paddling toward the island from the Maurice Gibb Memorial Park boat ramp.



You'd think the county would provide a groomed trail for monument visitors, but you'd be wrong.



Party central: If it's not Easter egg hunts, weekend beer bashes, and jet ski showdowns, it's porn.

northern United States, and underneath him is carved the word "Industry." The other three figures represent Education, Prosperity, and Pioneer. (The last being a reference to the mascot of North Miami Senior High School — just kidding.)

The sculptor is H.P. Peterson, and the real estate tycoon who paid for the work in the 1920s was none other than Carl Fisher.

Originally the manmade island was perfectly round, but severe erosion,

followed by reconstruction, has resulted in a more "natural" shape. The island's east side is buffered by a rock barrier, while the west side remains open as a beach. The interior is uninviting scraggle bush. Although I'm usually in favor of letting nature take over, in this case there should be some pruning to allow for better views of the monument, which is illuminated at night.

One obvious obstacle to better maintenance of Monument Island is that it

has many caretakers, but no one entity is ultimately responsible for it. The lights are operated by the City of Miami Beach's Property Management Division, and the city's Marine Division patrols this part of the bay. Officially it is one of many barrier islands in the bay owned by Miami-Dade County, but the county's website does not list it as a park. Cleaning the island falls under the county's Department of Environmental Resources

Management, which hires a janitorial service. So who's in charge here?

Maybe we should ask the island's many celebrity neighbors: Ricky Martin, Diddy, the Estefans, Rosie O'Donnell. Have they seen the troubles of Monument Island? Perhaps they could pull together a benefit concert to rescue this underappreciated landmark from its sullied past and its uncertain future.

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New Tricks for Old Dogs

Strategies for dealing with an aging pet

By Lisa Hartman
BT Contributor

Often before I write this column, I try to come up with topics that readers may want to see in print. Sometimes I get requests for topics. Other times I poll readers and Facebook friends, which is the case this month. By far the number-one topic pet owners wanted to hear about was dealing with their pets as they age. From physical problems and illness to behavioral issues, watching a pet mature at breakneck speed is tough not just on the animal but on those who love them.

As a dog trainer, one of the first calls I get from owners of elderly dogs has to do with their pets exhibiting behaviors they've never before seen: adult dogs suddenly having potty accidents in the house, aggression between dogs who have lived together for many years, even aggressive displays toward owners. Certainly many of these issues are attributable to aging, and dogs having a shorter fuse as they grow older.

But many of these changes are physical in nature. Diminished eyesight, arthritis, and slower agility are often the cause of new behaviors. As their vision gets cloudier, for example, some dogs may bark and react in a more agitated fashion because they cannot make out objects in the distance. Hearing often

also deteriorates as a pet ages. Many pets, especially dogs, will be more easily startled and snippier as they cannot hear people, other animals, and objects until they are right on top of them.

Furthermore, as bones begin to ache and a desire to sleep more sets in, many pets start retreating to comfier parts of the home — even those that have been deemed off limits, such as a couch or chair. Pet owners may try to enforce the rules and find themselves staring at their now snarling dog, communicating in no uncertain terms that he is quite comfy where he is, thank you.

Unfortunately many of the physical changes in aging pets go undetected by the average owner. Most pets decline

While many companies do have programs for senior animals, they usually will not cover a pre-existing problem or will have a very high premium.

quite quickly, seemingly almost overnight, making it hard for the owner to assimilate the change.

The result is that animals and owners often end up in combat as the owner feels their once agreeable dog is now challenging them. One source of



confrontation is incontinence — the dog simply starts having accidents in the house. Believe it or not, this is one of the biggest reasons why family dogs are surrendered to shelters.

With an older pet, simply adding a few more walks to the daily schedule, or adding additional time to each walk, may remedy the problem. Sometimes your pet's body is simply growing weary. It is up to you to have the compassion to help them through this new phase of life.

Many dogs are considered "seniors" at the age of seven, with some new physical and behavioral issues developing around eight to ten years of age. If you do see changes, make sure to first rule out a physical problem, such as a bad tooth or arthritis, by taking your pet

to the vet for a physical. Then consider your own behavior. Did you stop taking your older pet to the park because he or she can't keep up? Are your once hour-long walks now only to the corner and back because you don't have the time you once had? (This may be especially true of families with young children.)

Mental stimulation becomes even more important for older pets as they lose mobility. Chew toys (such as Kong toys), light trick training, and visits to new environments will help keep life interesting and morale up.

Next, you'll want to be your pet's compassionate best friend by making life a bit easier and more comfortable. Food bowls can be elevated for less strain on the neck and back. Thicker, softer bedding should be made available on the floor so your aging pet has no need to jump up to the couch. If an animal has

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trouble getting onto his feet or walking, using a support band or sliding a towel under his abdomen and slightly supporting his rear end will help lessen the pressure on his legs and hips.

Along with physical and mental growing pains are the pains of the heart that are part of dealing with sick animals and finally losing them. Medical bills can add up, leading to difficult decisions as the financial strain of maintaining a sick pet deepens. Pet Insurance usually needs to be in place well before the pet is ill or old.

On my own dog's policy, I needed to opt for the maximum coverage before the animal turned five years of age. And while many companies do have programs for senior animals, they usually will not cover a pre-existing problem or will have a very high premium.

Many of the readers who wrote in over the past month are dealing with pets with cancers or other heart-wrenching difficulties and have decisions to make. Knowing when to say goodbye, for one. It's a decision only the owner can make,

with the help of a veterinarian.

With my last dog, perhaps my vet would say I held out too long. But I can still see the twinkle in my dog's eye and his desire to be with me, to sleep next to me, to try to keep going. When the day came that I finally had to let him go, I knew it was time. There was no more spark; he had turned into a shell of his former self.

On the bright side, we have the ability to end our animals' suffering, something we can't always do for the humans

we love. And living with animals with shorter life spans than ours also affords us the opportunity to enjoy and care for our pets over their entire existence, and to have more than one in our lives.

Lisa Hartman is a dog-friendly trainer, behavior specialist, and author of Dial a Dynamite Dog. You can reach her at lisa@lisathedogtrainer.com, or visit www.pawsitivelypetsonline.com.

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Rain, Spain, Pain

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

By Bill Citara
BT Contributor

Remember that old saying about plans, mice, and men? Squeak! I've been on the Spanish wine bandwagon for several years now, enthusiastically touting their quality, their reasonable prices, their ambitious young winemakers, the chance they offer to smash the chains of Chardonnay and Cabernet and Merlot with improved Riojas and Monastrell and Tempranillo blends, the always intriguing Albariño, and more exotic varieties like Xarel.lo and Verdejo.

When looking over more than three years' worth of wine columns for this distinguished journal, I saw that I had never devoted an entire column to the joys of Garnacha, which is what the Spanish call Grenache, the grape most closely identified with France's Rhone region. At this point, man, mouse (well, touchpad, anyway), and plan all came together.

Then I tasted through my half-dozen Spanish Garnachas.

To be honest about it, none of them was particularly impressive. Three were just okay, the other three a lot less so. Instead of the rich, round, berry fruit with hints of spice and smoke, olives, and leather, there was harsh, thin fruit that managed to be candied and sour-lemon puckery at the same time, with little in the way of complexity or nuance. Or to put it another way, they weren't very much fun to drink.

They did fare a bit better when poured with food, especially robust, full-flavored dishes that helped mellow

some of that tart fruit and biting acidity. Hearty tomato-sauced pastas, beef or lamb ragouts, old-timey dishes like chicken cacciatore and coq au vin, or a well-marbled steak lightly charred on the grill would all go a long way toward improving what's in your glass.

What's going on here? Hard to say, though 2008 and 2009 (the vintages of five of the six wines) were challenging times for Spanish winemakers. In 2008, cool temperatures and spring rains in the northeastern regions where Garnacha is the predominant red grape affected quality, while in 2009, high temperatures and lack of rain were the culprits.

I should have known this tasting was going to be a disappointment when even one of Spain's most reliable producers of inexpensive Garnacha poured up a real turkey. The **2007 Las Rocas**, normally a favorite for its fresh cherry-berry flavors and minty-olive undertones, released such a musty, vegetal, rotten-egg stench upon opening, it was all I could do not to dump it down the drain. A half-hour or so later, most of the stench had blown off and the wine was back to some semblance of its normal self, but with pronounced tarry, earthy flavors that overwhelmed the fruit.

At least it wasn't acidic enough to strip the enamel off your teeth, like the **2008 Aletta** and **2009 Nostrada Old Vines**.

The latter was something of a shocker, as old vines reds typically overflow with lush, inky black and blueberry fruit. This one, though, started off with candied, cough syrup aromas and segued into a wine that was thin in the mid-palate, short

on the finish, and tasted of under-ripe strawberries and raspberries.

The former, at least, offered some promising aromas of bright red and black cherry fruit with Garnacha's characteristic smoky-earth-leathery tones. Unfortunately, on the palate it offered simple, bracingly acidic cherry-ish fruit with barely a hint of its aromatic complexity.

The other three wines were better, though not anything you'd write home to Mom about. Of those, the **Agustin Cubero Calatayud 2006 Stylo Old Vines** came closest to fulfilling my Garnacha expectations. It's an exceptionally aromatic wine, with plummy, black cherry-berry fruit so deep as to almost be raisiny, giving way to traces of leather, black olive, tobacco, menthol, cinnamon, and cloves. It's simpler on the palate — not at all raisiny, with lush blackberry, blueberry, and cassis flavors and earthy-toasty side notes.

The **2008 Artazuri**, the only Garnacha from the Navarra region, was a good deal more restrained, with light, refreshing, slightly candied strawberry-raspberry fruit, a touch of spice and white pepper, moderate acidity, and long, clean finish.

The **2009 Fabla** showed off its youth, but was well enough balanced to make me think that more time in the



The North Miami Beach ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525) has the Stylo Old Vines for \$8.99, while the Aventura Whole Foods Market (21105 Biscayne Blvd., 305-933-1543) carries the Aletta, also for \$8.99. Las Rocas can be found at Aventura's Wine & Spirits Cellar (21055 Biscayne Blvd., 305-936-9433) for \$11.99, and the Artazuri (\$11.99), Nostrada (\$7.99), and Fabla Garnachas are on the shelves of Total Wine & More in North Miami Beach (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270).

bottle will smooth some of its tart edges and help develop more complexity. Like many of the other Garnachas in this tasting, its fruit tends toward strawberry-raspberry, with earthy aromas that include cloves, black olives, and leather. Those aromas carry through to the palate and end in a long red-cherry finish.

Perhaps the saying that best describes this month's Garnacha adventure is: Better luck next time.

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Trash Talk

Tired of hauling garbage to the curb? Here are some tips to cut the trips

By Jim W. Harper
BT Contributor

Taking out the trash is nobody's favorite chore, so why not stop doing it? I only take the large green trash can to the curb once a month. That works for a household of two people and a few pets. Our recycling goes to the curb and gets picked up twice a month.

Some items that used to go into the garbage get diverted or repurposed. With a few adjustments, you too can most likely cut your trash in half.

To get started, I've assembled a "Trash Reduction Kit," a list containing helpful methods and useful items for minimizing trash. The items make it easier to sort actual waste from things that can be reused and recycled.

This list is organized by household zones, and each item you'll need to acquire has a number.

The Trash Reduction Kit could also be called a "home green-over," as using it will reduce your household's impact on the environment and make it a greener place to live. Remember, always follow the three R's: reuse, recycle, and finally, reduce your use of disposable products.

Okay, here goes:

Zone A: Office. Reuse printer paper by printing on both sides. Get 1) a blue plastic bin for recyclable papers, as having one in the office will greatly increase the odds of papers being recycled instead of thrown out.

Zone B: Kitchen. To reduce the scraps usually thrown in the trash, obtain 2) a pot with lid for composting. Place it by the sink and use it for all coffee grounds, loose tea, and fruit and vegetable scraps (no meat or dairy). You can accumulate several meals' worth of scraps before taking it to the compost pile.

Item number 3) is a repository for cans, bottles, and other recyclable containers. It also should be near the kitchen sink. I use a small, white plastic bin, and the accumulated contents go into the recycling bin daily.

Next, hang 4) a bag near the place where you unpack groceries. Place all plastic bags inside. You will be amazed at how many you accumulate within a few weeks, even if you use permanent bags and try to avoid plastic.

Ditch the paper-towel rack and invest instead in 5) cloth dish towels.

For the dinner table, replace paper napkins with 6) cloth napkins.

Zone C: Outdoors. Get an old-fashioned 7) clothesline and clothespins. If hung inside a garage, a clothesline works well during the rainy season, too.

Create 8) a compost bin out of chicken wire or an old trash can. (Since you won't be needing that old can for trash anymore.) Find information about making your own composter online at www.compostinfo.com.

Zone D: Car. Stock your car with 9) reusable grocery bags. They will be waiting for you the next time you rush



to the market. Also be sure to carry your own 10) mug and/or solid water bottle wherever you go.

And there you have it. How many of these items do you have and use already — or own, but don't use? Take those beautiful cloth napkins out of the drawer and use them. Recycle your junk mail. Try buying food with less packaging.

To complement your Trash Reduction Kit, here is a quick list of other useful strategies for reusing, recycling, and reducing even more.

1. Take your plastic bags to a grocery store for recycling. Publix does it, and other stores are beginning to offer this service.

2. Get a free showerhead. Exchange your old showerhead for a new, low-flow unit from Miami-Dade's Water and Sewer Department (www.miamidade.gov/wasd/showerhead.asp).

3. Try using a rain barrel for irrigation. Learn how from the Miami-Dade Extension Service, a great resource for all things in the garden (<http://miamidade.ifas.ufl.edu/environment>).

4. Choose the newer LED style instead of the curly fluorescent bulbs when possible and install a programmable thermostat at home. Also sign up with FPL's "On Call" program for a reduction in your electric bill.

5. Recycle electronics, batteries, and bulbs. Try taking electronics to Best Buy. Take batteries to Radio Shack or Home Depot and all of the above, plus fluorescent light bulbs, to ECOMB (Environmental Coalition of Miami and the Beaches) at 210 2nd St., Miami Beach. (For more info, go to www.ecomb.org.)

These are very practical ways to reduce your home's impact on the environment, but it's true that these steps alone will not save the planet. (They also won't necessarily reduce your garbage bill because that depends on the habits of everyone else in your community.) But change, however small, has to start somewhere. You will be educating yourself and your circle of friends, and that's the way real, lasting change happens.

Doing these things should also make you feel good. For me, composting has become a thrill, because it works like magic by creating something useful out of "nothings." It also makes me happy to know I'm not contributing to all the disgusting trash clogging our landfills.

Send your tips and clever ideas to: goinggreen@biscaynetimes.com.

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Viva la Difference!

Diversifying your garden can help keep it safe from insects and disease

By **Jeff Shimonski**
BT Contributor

A native of Cuba, Hispaniola, and South America, yellow poinciana — or *Peltophorum dubium* — also goes by the colloquial names *Ibirá-pitá*, *Arbol de Artigas*, and *Caña Fístula*. As an attractive, smaller-growing tree, it makes a fine landscape and streetscape tree in our area. It is also one of many new tree species being grown and planted into the landscape at Jungle Island, where I work.

Adding attractive plants to our landscape is a priority, but as many readers know, the landscape at Jungle Island is a completely sustainable site. No pesticides, fungicides, or commercial fertilizers have been used in the garden since the original installation of the main canopy trees ten years ago.

One of the cornerstones of a successful sustainable landscape is diversity, and I'm attempting to achieve that goal by planting as many different species of trees and shrubs as possible. As many of us found out during the fig whitefly outbreak, not all species of ficus are vulnerable to that particular insect. So in our case, having 16 different species of ficus was key to maintaining a strong tree population.

As it turns out, Jungle Island didn't lose any trees, and the infestation seems to be winding down — or I should say, under the control of established beneficial insects that eat or parasitize the

fig whitefly. Of course, there had to be another species of whitefly on the heels of the last one. That would be the spiraling whitefly. It showed up in Miami-Dade County this past year and is not as picky as the fig whitefly. It enjoys many species of trees, palms, shrubs, and even bananas and heliconias.

This new whitefly recently was given a new appellation: rugose spiraling whitefly. It was previously known in the industry as gumbo limbo spiraling whitefly. The name change came courtesy of the Florida state taxonomist, who successfully submitted the new appellation to the Entomological Society of America. But there are also many species of plants that it does not attack or thrive on, hence the need, again, to establish plant variety in the landscape.

As a professional horticulturist and arborist, I have always attended seminars and lectures given by researchers from the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS). I have also paid close attention to their research on plants, insects, and diseases, since much of their work is done here in South Florida. This information is invaluable and gives horticulturists, professionals, and interested amateur growers better insight into the problems they may encounter.

I recently gave a tour of the Jungle Island landscape to Catharine Mannion, an associate professor and extension specialist from UF. She works with insects,



BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

Yellow poinciana, *Peltophorum dubium*, is a nice, smaller-growing tree for our local landscapes.

and is often quoted in the media talking about many of our local insect problems, including whitefly. I have benefited from attending many of her lectures and reading her publications over the years. Mannion took many samples of the rugose spiraling whitefly while touring the park. She wanted to examine the larvae of this insect back at her lab to see if it was being parasitized and, hence, controlled naturally.

A few weeks later she contacted me and said that the samples were loaded with the parasitoid *Encarsia guadeloupa*. She and other researchers and inspectors had detected this parasitoid at other locations in Miami-Dade County, but this was by far the most they'd ever seen.

Encarsia species are tiny parasitic wasps that either lay their eggs within the body of other insect larvae — like whitefly — or eat them directly. This is most likely why the fig whitefly has been controlled at the park. Many species of beneficial insects have become naturally established in the landscape at Jungle Island. None has ever been purposely released at the park — they came in on their own and found a habitat where they could thrive. I'm sure this would not happen if we used pesticides in the

landscape or were not sustainable.

Homeowners can emulate what was done at Jungle Island. I recommend they start by utilizing all the free resources offered by the University of Florida IFAS. Learn firsthand about the insects and plant diseases in your area. Visit their website, stop by one of the local offices, and look through the free brochures offered on just about any horticultural subject. Get to know what is bothering your plants so you can effectively communicate with your landscape contractor or yard maintenance crew.

You may not need to spray or fertilize to correct a plant issue. Wouldn't it be great to save money by managing your landscape, and instead be able to spend it on more plants? Remember that more species of plants and trees will go a long way toward helping you achieve sustainability.

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.

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Flying Solo, and Loving It

Taking a vacation without the kids doesn't have to be a guilt trip

By Crystal Brewé
BT Contributor

No one tells you before you have kids that parenting can be so emotional. It's probably on some hidden list right under "Childbirth *does* hurt." The love you feel for these creatures is inconceivable, so it's easy to lose yourself in being a parent and all of the day-to-day that goes into it. As a result, marriages can suffer greatly in taking a back seat to the kids.

My little brood lives more than 1400 miles from relatives who can help with the kids. My husband and I work hard. We drive the kids to extracurricular activities. Needless to say, our own relationship is oftentimes neglected. (I'm sure I'm not alone in fearing the day that our nest is empty and we look at each other and say, "Okay, now that the kids are gone, what do we have in common?")

So is a kid-free vacation selfish? Even though the idea of a week without the kids can evoke enough guilt to drive you to the bottle, a vacation without your offspring is anything *but* selfish. It could be just the thing to rekindle the energy your relationship had, before the pressure of parenting. If you have the funds and can manage both time off and childcare, there is no good reason not to get away for a few days or even a week.

Over spring break, my friend Callie took a weekend getaway to reenergize.

She and her husband went to Chicago and had a wonderful time seeing old friends, shopping, going to the theater, and sightseeing. Upon her return home, Callie was faced with judgmental remarks from her mother-in-law, who couldn't understand the concept of a vacation without the kids.

My list of opinions as to why her mother-in-law felt so strongly is lengthy. As long as there are women who judge others like this, we will continue to grapple with the 1950s Mother Myth. The fact is, every mother falls short by someone else's measure, but I digress. So I'll reserve these thoughts for another column.

My husband and I recently took a trip without the kids. There was electricity in the air as we arrived at the airport way too early, owing to the fact that we are accustomed to the snail's pace of traveling with two little ones. The airport sans children itself was a new experience. We enjoyed some unabashed people-watching and a preflight cocktail. (No need to board before everybody else!)

Of course, it wasn't long before I started noticing the traveling families around us. I both pitied and envied the parents as they dealt with the endless luggage, in-flight kiddie entertainment, and flight-induced earaches.

Sure, I missed my own kids so much during my week away that my ovaries hurt, but isn't that healthy? To



return home refreshed, reacquainted with your partner, and wanting to see your children?

The time away made me realize that there are benefits in it for the whole family. My in-laws got coveted time alone with their grandchildren. The girls seemed to appreciate us more. They were excited to see us and to tell us how they spent their days. We had new experiences to talk about and share.

A public and heartfelt thank you goes out to my in-laws for flying to Miami to watch the kids for a week and facilitating our whimsical getaway. Not everyone is lucky enough to have this kind of support, and childcare you can trust is tough to find. (But it does exist; you just have to seek it out.)

Skype is also a wonderful thing. Use it daily on your trip. Text your kids with pictures of your adventures in real time and encourage your caretakers to do the same with updates on your kids' adventures without you.

These are all important things to remember as you venture out on a kid-free escape. Here's one more: To keep your guilt level in check, and to maximize

your own enjoyment of the experience, choose an activity that you wouldn't be able to do *with* the kids. Going to an amusement park is out. Instead hit a casino, visit the theater, enjoy a nice restaurant, or escape to a quiet beach or ski lodge.

There is plenty of adult-friendly action right here in South Florida that you can dip your toe into. Some of my favorites include:

- A night at the Fontainebleau or other resort hotel.
- A trip to the beach with a picnic and thermos of margaritas.
- A visit to one of our local theaters to see some of this summer's offerings.
- A swing by Sra. Martinez or some other dining hot spot in the Design District.
- A long drive to the Keys or the Everglades, enjoying the sights along the way.

Your relationship with your partner is the foundation of your family. If it has been too long since the two of you have gotten away together, just do it!

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Farm Fresh

Continued from page 28

Park and resettling nearby on county property at the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center, 6161 NW 22nd Ave. Next fall, thanks to a waiver from the city, it plans to return to TACOLCY Park.

In Overtown it gets messier. Miami City Commissioner Richard Dunn has been trying to clear his name after being accused of obstructing the Overtown market for a period in March and April. “My office was totally oblivious to what was happening between Overtown and code enforcement,” he says. “I’m not anti-farmers’ markets.” The gardening side of Roots in the City, which grows food for its market, has lost its annual \$100,000 grant from the city’s Overtown/Park West CRA — at least temporarily.

Representatives of these markets say the City of Miami jumps from green to red when it comes to allowing fresh produce to be sold on the street. The applicable special permit can only be granted three times per year, and thereafter it requires the procurement of weekly waivers, says Maggie Pons of Roots in

the City. She didn’t say much else, as our phone interview terminated abruptly.

The Upper Eastside Market at Biscayne Plaza obtained a waiver from February 12 to June 25 this year, thanks to support from Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, whose district includes the plaza. Under current regulations, these special waivers would need to be obtained over and over again.

“It’s not a streamlined process,” says Art Friedrich of the Urban Oasis Project, using tactful understatement. “It seems strange that you need a special resolution from the city commission to have a farmers’ market.”

The Urban Oasis model depends on volunteers, and it places gardens in homes and low-income complexes for mostly personal consumption instead of for sale. For their farmers’ markets, they reach out to local suppliers. “It’s definitely been a challenge to find ample supply from local, small farms, especially for certified organics,” Friedrich notes.

The Upper Eastside Market’s business plan combines the financial muscle of a corporate sponsor (Terranova) with the authentic passion of a local nonprofit organization. That combo might work,

though farmers’ markets without the profit motive may succumb to an early death by idealism, as they are unlikely to become self-sustaining in the short-term.

Another survival technique is education. “One of the models we like to push is to have these markets, especially in underserved markets, at schools or community organizations,” says Roger Horne of Urban Greenworks. His latest school project is at Nathan B. Young Elementary in Opa-locka.

But school is out for the summer, so what is the alert shopper to do? Food activist Mike Moskos traces his own year-round shopping habits. “I progressed from Whole Foods to Glaser to Josh’s,” he says. The name Glaser refers to South Miami-Dade farmer and vegan guru Stan Glaser, the force behind Coconut Grove’s Organic Farmers’ Market since 1979, making it a classic.

Moskos used to do all his shopping at “Glaser’s” in the Grove when he lived closer, despite prices that are higher than most markets. Now he makes the hike to Josh’s in Hollywood when local produce disappears in the summertime.

Josh’s seems to be winning in southern Broward County, while the most successful model in Miami-Dade County

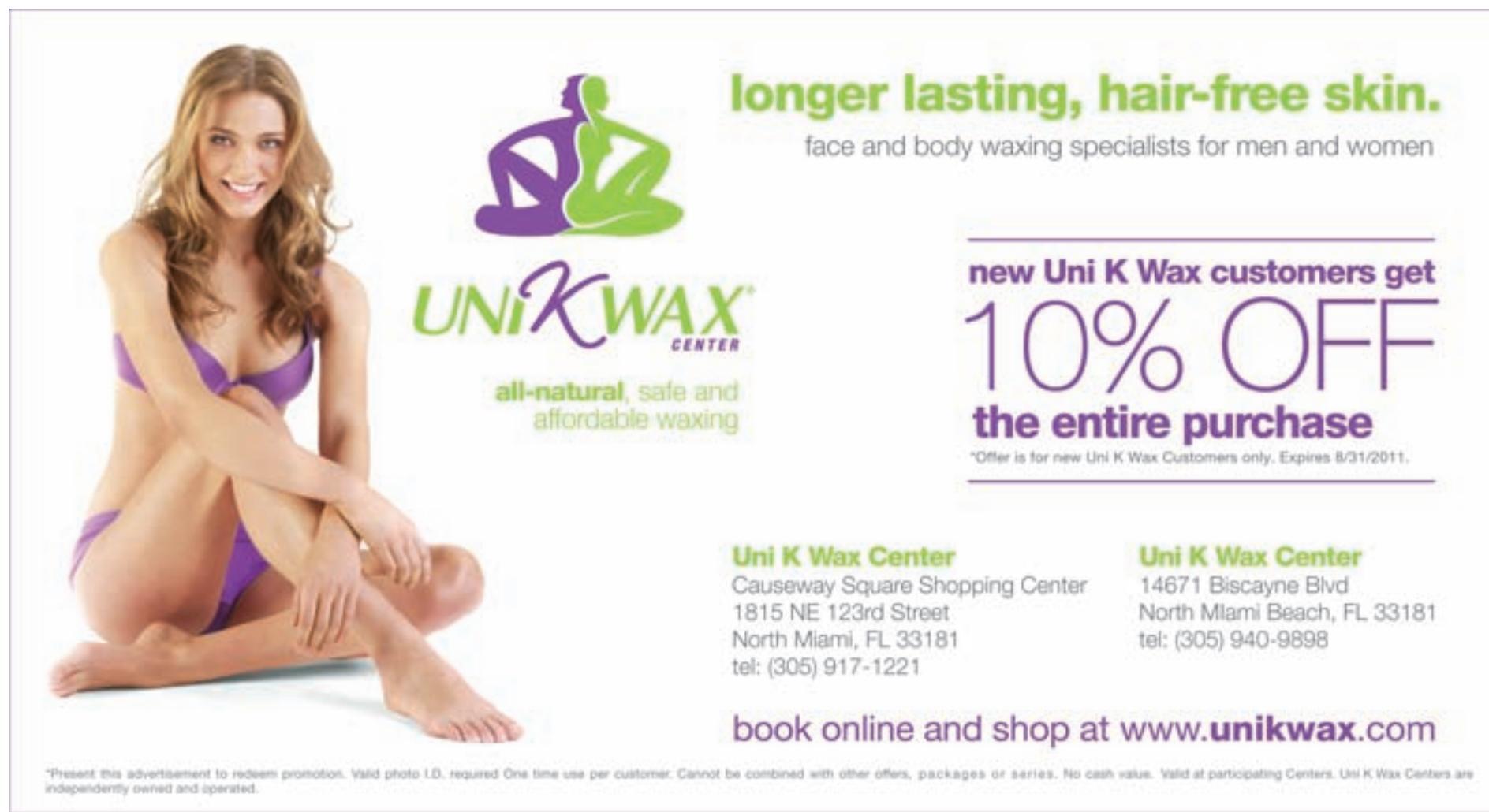
comes from The Market Company, both of which are for-profit operations. There are no handouts, notwithstanding the sliced peach samples Josh forces on you.

The nonprofit model needs more time and more successes to prove itself. Are these markets up to the challenge?

The Urban Oasis Project issues this appeal on its website: “In Miami-Dade County, we have lost many farms to development and other pressures, so there just aren’t enough farmers for local markets. To help with this problem, we are asking home gardeners to plant a few extra rows to sell at our market. If you have produce, please contact us to either come to market and sell it, or sell or donate to us for sale in a terribly underserved inner-city area. There are lots of nice folks there who deserve good, clean, healthy food!”

For now, however, most of Miami’s farmers’ markets serve affluent areas that can support them. In poorer areas, residents must walk to the corner store and take what they can get — and that almost never includes those luscious, juicy tomatoes Claire Tomlin loves so much.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Dining Guide

Restaurant Listings

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 268.

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

\$= \$10 and under

\$\$= \$20

\$\$\$= \$30

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

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

MIAMI

Brickell / Downtown

Accua
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, 305-424-5234

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. \$\$\$

bistro e
485 Brickell Ave., 305-503-0373

A full power lunch from a Michelin-starred chef for \$15? Sounds unbelievable, but you'll find just such a daily special (like corn/jalapeño soup, a grilled-cheese BLT, airy cheesecake, and a pint of beer) at bistro e, daytime name for Michael Psilakis' dinner-only new Aegean eatery Eos. The name change emphasizes lunchtime's wholly different, globally influenced menu. Among à la carte temptations: pork belly tacos, a Korean BBQ prawn salad, or a brisquet/gruyere sandwich with dipping juice. Breakfast, too, from 6:30 a.m. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Botequim Carioca
900 Biscayne Blvd.
305-675-1876

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

Café Bastille
248 SE 1st St., 786-425-3575

Breakfasting on a ham-egg-cheese crepe at this very French-feeling – and tasting – café is a most civilized way to start the day. Formerly breakfast and lunch only, the café is now open for dinner, too. And while the crepes (both savory and sweet) are tempting and varied enough to eat all day, dinner choices like homemade foie gras (with onion jam and Guerande salt), salmon with lentils and fennel salsa, or a very affordable skirt steak au poivre make it possible to resist. \$\$\$

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

NEW THIS MONTH

MIAMI

BRICKELL / DOWNTOWN

La Sandwicherie
34 SW 8th St., 305-374-9852

This second location of the open-air diner that is South Beach's favorite après-club eatery (since 1988) closes earlier (midnight Sunday-Thursday, 5:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday), but the smoothies, salads, and superb Parisian sandwiches are the same: ultra-crusty baguette stuffed with evocative charcuterie and cheeses (saucisson sec, country pâté, camembert, etc.) and choice of salad veggies plus salty/tart cornichons and Sandwicherie's incomparable Dijon mustard vinaigrette. Additionally the larger branch has an interior, with a kitchen enabling hot foods (quiches and croques), plus A/C. \$\$\$

Little Lotus
25 N. Miami Ave. #107, 305-533-2700

Secreted inside the International Jewelry Exchange, this eatery (owned by stealth super-foodie Sari Maharani – paralegal by day, restaurateur by night) is tough to find but seems destined to become one of our town's toughest tables to book. Two talented chefs, whose credits include Morimoto (NYC) and hometown fave Yakko-san, create Japanese, Indonesian, and fusion small plates that look remarkably artful and taste like they're about ready to take on Iron Chef Morimoto himself. Saucing, often with multiple but balanced potions, is especially noteworthy. The prices? A steal. \$\$\$

LouLou Le Petit Bistro
638 S. Miami Ave., 305-379-1404

When Indochine's owner, Jacques Ardisson, closed his Asian spot to open this charming French eatery in the same space, it was a return to his roots. He and his daughter, for whom the place is named, come from Nice. You'll be transported, too, by dishes like lamb shank with flageolet (known as the caviar of beans), duck leg confit on a bed of mouthwatering green lentils from Le Puy, a classic moules/frites, a shared charcuterie platter with a bottle from the savvy wine list, and, of course, salade nicoise. \$\$\$-\$

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

Chophouse Miami
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. \$\$\$

Crazy About You
1155 Brickell Bay Dr. #101
305-377-4442

The owners, and budget-friendly formula, are the same here as at older Dolores, But You Can Call Me Lolita: Buy an entrée (all under \$20) from a sizable list of Mediterranean, Latin, American, or Asian-influenced

Mint Leaf
1063 SE 1st Ave., 305-358-5050

Part of London's famous Woodlands Group, this stylish spot, like its Coral Gables parent, serves the sort of upscale Indian food rarely found outside Great Britain or India. More interestingly, the menu includes not just the familiar northern Indian "Mughlai" fare served in most of America's Indian restaurants, but refined versions of south India's scrumptious street food. We've happily assembled whole meals of the vegetarian chaat (snacks) alone. And dosai (lacy rice/lentil crepes rolled around fillings ranging from traditional onion/potato to lamb masala or spicy chicken) are so addictive they oughta be illegal. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

MIDTOWN / WYNWOOD / DESIGN DISTRICT

Crumb on Parchment
3930 NE 2nd Ave., 305-572-9444

Though located in a difficult spot (the Melin Building's central atrium, invisible from the street), Michelle Bernstein's bakery/café packs 'em in, partly due to Bernstein's mom Martha, who makes irresistible old-school cakes: German chocolate with walnuts, lemon curd with buttercream frosting, more. Lunch fare includes inspired sandwiches like seared rare tuna with spicy Asian pickles and kimchi aioli. And for morning people, the savory chicken sausage, melted cheddar, kale, and shallot sandwich on challah will convince you that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. \$\$\$

AVENTURA

Café Bistro @ Nordstrom
19507 Biscayne Blvd. #15, 305-937-7267

In the days before quick-bite food courts, upscale department stores had their own real restaurants, civilized oases where "Ladies Who Lunch" took leisurely respite from shopping. In today's "Women Who Work" times, those restaurants (and privileged ladies) are anachronisms, but this room, hidden on Nordstrom's second floor, is a relaxing time-trip back. Enjoy creamy crab bisque, extravagant salads (shrimp with cilantro-lime dressing; pear, blue cheese, and candied walnuts with cherry balsamic vinaigrette), or a retro-modern club sandwich. Organic ingredients from local purveyors are emphasized. \$\$\$

choices (like Thai-marinated churrasco with crispy shoestring fries) and get an appetizer for free, including substantial stuff like a Chihuahua cheese casserole with chorizo and pesto. The difference: This place, housed in the former location of short-lived La Broche, has an even more upscale ambiance than Dolores – including a million-dollar water view. \$\$\$

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. \$\$

db Bistro Moderne
345 Avenue of the Americas, 305-421-8800

Just two words – "Daniel Boulud" – should be enough for foodies craving creative French/American comfort cuisine to run, not walk, to this restaurant. If they can find it. (Hint:

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

The mysterious "Avenue of the Americas" is really Biscayne Boulevard Way. Don't ask.) Downtown's db is an absentee celeb chef outpost, but on-site kitchen wizard Jarrod Verbiak flawlessly executes dishes ranging from the original NYC db Bistro's signature foie gras/short rib/black truffle-stuffed burger to local market-driven dishes like crusted pompano with garlic/parsley veloute. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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

Eos

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

Unlike their Michelin-starred New Adriatic restaurant Anthos, in Manhattan, this venture of chef Michael Psilakis and restaurateur Donatella Arpaia has influences ranging way beyond Greece to the whole Mediterranean region, and even Latin America. Unchanged is Psilakis' solid creativity, and a beautiful sense of balance that makes even very unfamiliar combinations taste accessible. So skip the safe stuff and go for the luxuriantly custardy, egg yolk-enriched lobster and sea urchin risotto, or any raw seafood item, especially the unique marlin with pistachio, apricot, and house-cured speck. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Finnegan's River

401 SW 3rd Ave., 305-285-3030

Pool tables are expected in a sports bar and grill. But an actual pool? And a Jacuzzi? This Miami River hideaway has other surprises, too, on its extensive outdoor deck, including a boat dock and a large array of umbrella tables and lounge chairs where it's easy to while away many happy hours. The menu is the same array of bar bites served by South Beach's older Finnegan's, but angus burgers are big and tasty, and zingy jalapeño-studded smoked-fish dip is a satisfying table-snack choice. \$\$

First & First Southern Baking Company

109 NE 1st Ave., 305-577-6446

How Southern is this restaurant/bakery? During the course of one breakfast of fluffy biscuits with rich sausage gravy, a friend from Italy, we swear, developed a drawl. While y'all will also find familiar fare (burgers, salads, etc.), highlights here are traditional and/or reinvented country cooking favorites - especially homemade sweets. More than two dozen desserts daily are featured, from a roster topping 150: chocolate pecan pie, lemon bars, potato candies, seven-layer cookies, and Jack Daniels pound cakes, which are perfect for parties, though you won't want to share. \$\$\$

Fratelli Milano

213 SE 1st St.

305-373-2300

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

Fresco California Bistro

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

This festively decorated indoor/outdoor bistro packs a lot of party spirit into a small space, a large variety of food onto its menu. To the familiar Latin American/Italian

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

Garcia's Seafood Grille and Fish Market

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

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

Giovana Caffè

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

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

Grimpa Steakhouse

901 Brickell Plaza

305-455-4757

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

Half Moon Empanadas

192 SE 1st Ave., 305-379-2525

As with South Beach's original Half Moon, you can get wraps or salads. But it's this snacker's unique take on Argentine-style empanadas that makes it seem a natural for national franchising. The soft-crust, doughy crescents - baked, not fried, so relatively guilt-free - are amply stuffed with fillings both classic (beef and chicken, either mild or spicy) and creative: the bacon cheeseburger, the pancetta/mozzarella/plum-filled Americana, and several vegetarian options. At just over two bucks apiece, they're a money-saving moveable feast. \$

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. \$\$\$

Indigo / Table 40

100 Chopin Plaza, 305-577-1000

Long known for its power-lunch buffet - including hot entrées, carving station, custom pastas, packed-to-the-gills salad, sushi, and dessert stations - the InterContinental Hotel's Indigo restaurant now has a hip offsprung intended for private dining: Table 40. The charming, glassed-in wine "cellar" (actually in the kitchen) enables 12-14 diners to watch the action in heat-shielded, soundproofed comfort while eating creations by veteran chef Alexander Feher, combining Continental technique with local seasonal ingredients. Highlights: tender house-smoked, stout-braised short ribs; lavish lobster salad with grilled mango; and a seductive fresh corn gazpacho. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Iron Sushi

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

(See Miami Shores listing)

Jackson Soul Food

950 NW 3rd Ave., 305-377-6710

With a recently refurbished exterior to match its classy/comfy retro interior, this 65-year-old Overtown soul food breakfast institution now has only one drawback: It closes at 1:00 p.m. Never mind, night owls. If you're a first-timer here, order the astonishingly fluffy pancakes with juicy beef sausage, and you'll set multiple alarm clocks to return. Classic drop biscuits (preferably with gravy) are also must-haves. And hearty Southern breakfast staples like smothered chicken wings or fried fish do make breakfast seem like lunch, too. \$



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Jamón, Jamón, Jamón

10 SW South River Dr., 305-324-1111
From the outside, you know you're walking into the ground floor of a new condo building. But once inside the charmingly rustic room, you'd swear you're in Spain. Obviously Spain's famous cured hams are a specialty, as are other pork products on the weekly changing menu, from a roast suckling pig entrée to a fried chorizo and chickpea tapa. But seafood is also terrific. Don't miss bacalao-filled piquillo peppers, or two of Miami's best rice dishes: seafood paella and arroz negro (with squid and its ink). \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 truffile 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 Nicoise on artisan bread) will truly transport diners to co-owner David Thau's Provençal homeland. \$\$

Le Boudoir Brickell

188 SE 12th Terr., 305-372-233
At this French bakery/café, mornings start seriously, with choices ranging from quality cheese, charcuterie/pâté, or smoked salmon platters to chic Continental and complete American breakfasts. At lunch, generously salad-garnished, open-faced tartines are irresistible. But sophisticated salads and homemade soups make the choice tough. And do not skip dessert. Superb sweets include rich almond/fresh raspberry or properly tangy lemon tarts, traditional Madeleines, airy layered mousses, and addictive mini-macaron sandwich cookies with daily-changing fillings. \$\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

1 W. Flagler St., Suite 7, 305-789-9929
(See Midtown / Wynwood / Design District listing.)

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. \$

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. \$

Miss Yip Chinese Café

900 Biscayne Blvd., 305-358-0088
Fans of the South Beach original will find the décor different. Most notably, there's an outdoor lounge, and more generally a nightclub atmosphere. But the menu of Hong Kong-style Chinese food, prepared by imported Chinese cooks, is familiar. Simple yet sophisticated Cantonese seafood dishes

rock (try the lightly battered salt-and-pepper shrimp), as does orange peel chicken, spicy/tangy rather than overly sweet. And a single two-course Peking duck (skin in crepes, stir-fried meat and veggies with lettuce cups) makes mouth-watering finger food, shared among friends. \$\$\$

Novecento

1414 Brickell Ave., 305-403-0900
For those who think "Argentine cuisine" is a synonym for "beef and more beef," this popular eatery's wide range of more cosmopolitan contemporary Argentine fare will be a revelation. Classic parrilla-grilled steaks are here for traditionalists, but the menu is dominated by creative Nuevo Latino items like a new-style ceviche de chernia (lightly lime-marinated grouper with jalapeños, basil, and the refreshing sweet counterpoint of watermelon), or crab ravioli with creamy saffron sauce. Especially notable are the entrée salads. \$\$-\$\$\$

Oceanaire Seafood Room

900 S. Miami Ave., 305-372-8862
With a dozen branches nationwide, Oceanaire May seem more All-American seafood empire than Florida fish shack, but menus vary significantly according to regional tastes and fish. Here in Miami, chef Sean Bernal supplements signature starters like lump crab cakes with his own lightly marinated, Peruvian-style grouper ceviche. The daily-changing, 15-20 specimen seafood selection includes local fish seldom seen on local menus: pompano, parrot fish, amberjack. But even flown-in fish (and the raw bar's cold-water oysters) are ultra-fresh. \$\$\$

Pega Grill

15 E. Flagler St., 305-808-6666
From Thanasis Barlos, a Greek native who formerly owned North Beach's Ariston, this small spot is more casually contemporary and less ethnic-kitschy in ambiance, but serves equally authentic, full-flavored Greek food. Mixed lamb/beef gyros (chicken is also an option), topped with tangy yogurt sauce and wrapped, with greens and tomatoes, in fat warm pita bread, are specialties. But even more irresistible is the taramasalata (particularly velvety and light carp roe dip), available alone or on an olive/pita-garnished mixed meze platter. \$\$

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

Prelude

Adrienne Arsht Center
1300 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-6722
Though the opening of Barton G.'s elegant performing arts center eatery did feature a live giraffe, the food's actually more grown-up than at his original SoBe spot. The concept is prix fixe: Any three courses on the menu (meaning three entrées if you want) for \$39. Highlights include silky, tarra- gon-inflected corn/bacon chowder, beautifully plated beef carpaccio with horseradish/mustard and shallot olive oil dipping sauces; and over-the-top playhouse desserts, one with a luscious crème fraiche ice cream pop. \$\$\$

Puntino Downtown

353 SE 2nd Ave., 305-371-9661
The first U.S. venture of a hotelier from Naples, this stylish little place is open Monday through Saturday for dinner as




PRIME TIME MENU

LONDON BROIL
Tender sliced london broil served with choice of side dish, salad, beverage, and dessert.

SALMON
Poached or grilled salmon served with choice of side dish, salad, beverage, and dessert.

TILAPIA
Sauteed in a garlic butter sauce served with choice of side dish, salad, beverage, and dessert.

CHICKEN PARMESAN
Breaded chicken breast topped with marinara and mozzarella cheese. Served with angel hair pasta, salad, beverage, and dessert.

CHICKEN MARSALA
Chicken breast sauteed with mushrooms, tomatoes, and scallions in a marsala wine sauce. Served with angel hair pasta, salad, beverage, and dessert.

SHRIMP SCAMPI
Sauteed shrimp and tomatoes in a garlic butter cream sauce. Served with angel hair pasta, salad, beverage, and dessert.

GRILLED CHICKEN
Grilled chicken breast served with a choice of side dish, salad, beverage, and dessert.

ROASTED CHICKEN
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MEAT LOAF
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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 brightly tomato sauce, pools of melted buffalo mozzarella, and fresh basil. \$\$-\$\$\$

Raja's Indian Cuisine 33 NE 2nd Ave., 305-539-9551

Despite its small size and décor best described as "none," this place is an institution thanks to south Indian specialties rarely found in Miami's basically north Indian restaurants. The steam-tabled curries are fine (and nicely priced), but be sure to try the custom-made dosai (lacy rice crepes with a variety of savory fillings) and uttapam, thicker pancakes, layered with onions and chilis, both served with sambar and chutney. \$\$

The River Oyster Bar 650 S. Miami Ave., 305-530-1915

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

Rosa Mexicano 900 S. Miami Ave., 786-425-1001

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

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. \$

Soi Asian Bistro 134 NE 2nd Ave., 305-523-3643

From the owners of Calle Ocho's hip Mr. Yum and 2B Asian Bistro, Soi sports similar casual-chic ambiance and eclectic Thai/Japanese cuisine. Traditional Thai curries and familiar sushi rolls are prepared with solid skill and style. But most intriguing are new inventions adding Peruvian fusion flair to the Asian mix, such as a spicy, tangy tangle of crisp-fried yellow noodles with sautéed shrimp plus slivered peppers and onions – mod mee krob, with jalea-like tart heat replacing the cloying sweetness. \$\$

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. \$\$-\$\$

Sparky's Roadside Restaurant & Bar 204 NE 1st St., 305-377-2877

This cowboy-cute eatery's chefs/owners (one CIA-trained, both BBQ fanatics nicknamed Sparky) eschew regional purism, instead utilizing a hickory/apple-wood-stoked rotisserie smoker to turn out their personalized style of slow-cooked, complexly dry-rub fusion: ribs, chopped pork, brisket, and chicken. Diners can customize their orders with mix-and-match housemade sauces: sweet/tangy tomato-based, Carolinas-inspired vinegar/mustard, pan-Asian hoisin with lemongrass and ginger, tropical guava/habanero. Authenticity aside, the quality of the food is as good as much higher-priced barbecue outfits. \$\$-\$\$

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

SuViche 49 SW 11th St., 305-960-7097

This small Japanese-Peruvian place serves food influenced by each nation distinctly, plus intriguing fusion items with added Caribbean touches. Cooked entrées, all Peruvian, include an elegant aji de gallina (walnut-garnished chicken and potatoes in peppery cream sauce). But the emphasis is on contemporary ceviches/tiraditos (those with velvety aji amarillo chili sauce particularly), plus huge exotic sushi rolls, which get pretty wild. When was the last time you encountered a tempura-battered tuna, avocado, and scallop maki topped with Peru's traditional potato garnish, huancaína cheese sauce? \$\$

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

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

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

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

Tre Italian Bistro 270 E. Flagler St., 305-373-3303

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

Truluck's Seafood, Steak, and Crabhouse 777 Brickell Ave., 305-579-0035

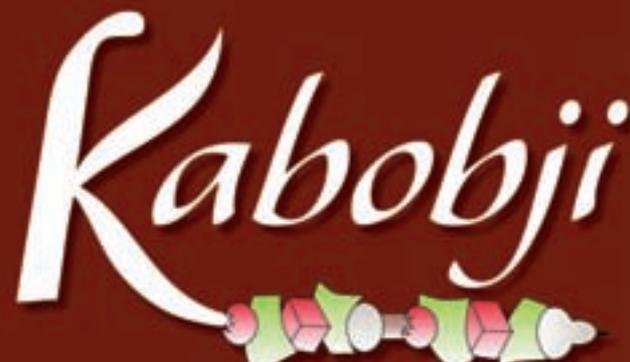
Compared to other restaurants with such an upscale power-lunch/dinner setting, most prices are quite affordable here, especially if you stick to the Miami Spice-priced date-dinner menu, or happy hour, when seafood items like crab-cake "sliders" are half price. Most impressive, though, are seasonal stone crabs (from Truluck's own fisheries, and way less expensive than Joe's) and other seafood that, during several visits, never tasted less than impeccably fresh, plus that greatest of Miami restaurant rarities: informed and gracious service. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Waxy O'Connor's 690 SW 1st Ct., 786-871-7660

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

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

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



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parmesan cheese*

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(choice of one per person)

GRILLED BUTCHER STEAK
demi-glance, hand-cut truffled fries

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CHICKEN RISOTTO
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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 / Wynwood / Design District

3 Chefs Chinese Restaurant

1800 Biscayne Blvd. #105, 305-373-2688

Until this eatery opened in late 2010, the solid Chinese restaurants in this neighborhood could be counted on the fingers of no hands. So it's not surprising that most people concentrate on Chinese and Chinese/American fare. The real surprise is the remarkably tasty, budget-priced, Vietnamese fare. Try pho, 12 varieties of full-flavored beef/rice noodle soup (including our favorite, with well-done flank steak and flash-cooked eye round). All can be customized with sprouts and fresh herbs. Also impressive: Noodle combination plates with sautéed meats, salad, and spring rolls. \$\$

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. \$

Andalus

35 NE 40th St., 305-400-4422

Early publicity pegging this place (in Pacific Time's former space) as a tapas bar seemed to set it up as direct competition for nearby Sra. Martinez. It's actually quite different, with emphasis divided between small-plate lounging and full fine-dining meals. And regardless of size, dishes aren't contemporary riffs on tradition but authentic regional

specialties. Subtly nutty jamon pata negra (the Rolls-Royce of cured hams) or salmorejo (Cordoba's Serrano ham/egg-enriched gazpacho) truly take your taste buds on a trip to Andalusia. On weekends, food is served till 4:00 a.m. \$\$\$

Bengal

2010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-403-1976

At this Indian eatery the décor is cool and contemporary: muted gray and earth-tone walls, tasteful burgundy banquettes. And the menu touts "Modern Indian Cuisine" to match the look. Classicists, however, needn't worry. America's favorite familiar north Indian flavors are here, though dishes are generally more mildly spiced and presented with modern flair. All meats are certified halal. Islam's version of kosher — which doesn't mean that observant orthodox Jews can eat here, but Muslims can. \$\$\$

Bin No. 18

1800 Biscayne Blvd., 786-235-7575

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

Blue Piano

4600 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-7919

The address suggests a street-corner location, but this casually cool wine bar/bistro is actually hidden midblock. It's well worth the hunt, thanks to the passionate, very personally hands-on involvement of its four owners, whose individual areas of expertise encompass food, wine, and live entertainment, melding all seamlessly. The music is muted, encouraging conversation; wines are largely small-production gems, sold at comparatively low mark-ups. And the small-plates menu features delectably different dishes like the McLuvvin', a meld of savory Spanish sausage and chicharrones, topped with a quail egg and chipotle cream — supremely satisfying. \$\$

Buena Vista Bistro

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

If a neighborhood eatery like this one — which serves supremely satisfying bistro food — were within walking

distance of every Miami resident, we'd be a helluva hip food town. Like true Parisian bistros, it's open continuously, every day, with prices so low that you can drop in anytime for authentic rillettes (a rustic pâté) with a crusty baguette, steak with from-scratch frites, salmon atop ratatouille, 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, custardy quiche plus perfectly dressed salad costs little more than a fast-food combo meal. As for Postel's home-made French sweets, if you grab the last Paris-Brest, a praline butter-cream-filled puff pastry, we may have to kill you. \$-\$\$

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. \$\$

Catch Grill & Bar

1633 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-536-6414

A location within easy walking distance of the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, in the extensively renovated Marriott Biscayne Bay, makes this casual-chic eatery, whose specialty is local and sustainable seafood, a great option for pre-show bites. Then again, enjoying lures like sweet-glazed crispy shrimp with friends on the outdoor, bayfront terrace is entertainment enough. It's worth calling to ask if the daily catch is wreckfish, a sustainable local that tastes like a cross between grouper and sea bass. Bonus: With validation, valet parking is free. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Cerviceria 100 Montaditos

3252 NE 1st Ave. #104, 305-921-4373

Student budget prices, indeed. A first-grader's allowance would cover a meal at this first U.S. branch of a popular Spanish chain. The 100 mini sandwiches (on crusty, olive oil-drizzled baguettes) vary from \$1 to \$2.50, depending not on ingredient quality but complexity. A buck scores genuine Serrano ham, while top-ticket fillings add imported Iberico cheese, pulled pork, and tomato to the cured-ham slivers. Other options revolve around pâtés, smoked salmon, shrimp, and similar elegant stuff. There's cheap draft beer, too, plus nonsandwich snacks. \$\$

The Cheese Course

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

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

Clive's Café

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

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

The Daily Creative Food Co.

2001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-573-4535

While the food formula of this contemporary café is familiar — sandwiches, salads, soups, breakfast food, and pastries, plus coffee and fruit drinks — a creative concept differentiates the place. Signature sandwiches are named after national and local newspapers, including Biscayne Times, giving diners something to chat about. Sandwiches and salads can also be do-it-yourself projects, with an unusually

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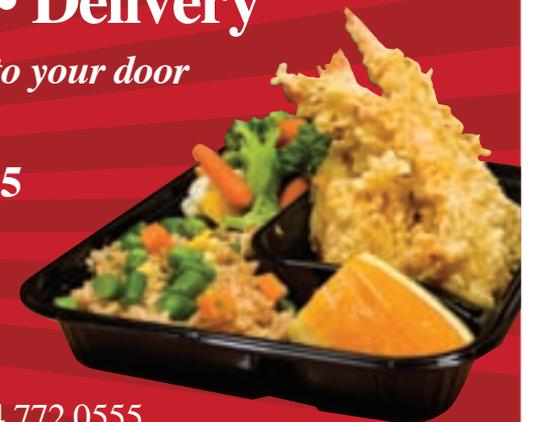
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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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*. \$\$

Egyptian Pizza Kitchen

Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Avenue, 305-571-9050

Pizza, pita – hey, they're both flatbreads. So while many pizzas do indeed, as this halal place's name suggests, have initially weird-seeming Middle Eastern toppings, it's really not surprising that the Giza (topped with marinated lamb, feta, olives, peppers, and pungently spiced cumin sauce) works at least as well as Italian classics. Additionally the menu includes interesting Middle Eastern fare like *foul*, a hummus-like but lighter Egyptian dish of fava beans, tahini, garlic, lemon juice, and olive oil. A brick oven makes both pizzas and homemade pitas superior. \$\$

18th Street Café

210 NE 18th St., 305-381-8006

Most seating in this cool, pioneering neighborhood café is in a giant bay window, backed with banquettes, that makes the small space feel expansive – fitting, since the menu keeps expanding, too. Originally breakfast/lunch only, the café, though closed weekends, now serves dinner till 10:00 p.m., with comfort food entrées like secret-recipe meatloaf joining old favorites: daily-changing homemade soups, varied burgers, layered international salads, inspired sandwiches (like roast beef and provolone with creamy horseradish). Beer and wine is available, and now so is delivery. \$\$

Five Guys Famous Burger and Fries

Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Ave., 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. \$\$\$

Gigi

3470 N. Miami Ave., 305-573-1520

As befits its location in artful, working-class Wynwood, Gigi has minimalist modern diner ambiance paired with truly creative contemporary Asian-influenced comfort food from *Top Chef* contender Jeff McInnis (formerly of the South Beach Ritz-Carlton) at surprisingly low prices. From a menu encompassing noodle and rice bowls, steam-bun ssams, grilled goodies, and raw items, highlights include pillowy-light roast pork-stuffed buns, and possibly the world's best BLT, featuring Asian bun "toast," thick pork belly slices rather than bacon, and housemade pickles. There's \$2 beer, too. \$-\$\$

The Grrrrtz of Sandwich

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

305-374-4305

Riot Grrrrtz 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 grrrrtz'll even deliver you an elegant (yet inexpensive) breakfast in bed. \$

Hurricane Grill & Wings

Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Avenue, 305-576-7133

This Florida fast/casual chain became an instant hit in

Midtown Miami owing to a winning concept: more than 35 heat-coded sauces and dry rubs meant for custom-tossing with wings and other things (including white-meat "boneless wings," really wing-shaped chicken breast pieces), accompanied by ranch or classic blue-cheese dip and celery. It would be silly to not pair your main with garlic/herb-butter parmesan fries. There are many other items, too, including salads. But hey, celery is salad, right? \$\$

Jimmy's Kitchen

2700 N. Miami Ave. #5, 305-573-1505

No need to trek to South Beach for what many consider Miami's best classic Puerto Rican mofongo (fried green plantains mashed with fresh garlic, olive oil, and pork cracklings, surrounded by chicken or shrimp in zesty criollo sauce). This new location is bigger and better than the original, plus the mofongo is served every day, not just on weekends. But don't ignore the meal-size salads or high-quality sandwiches, including a pressed tripleta containing roast pork, bacon, Black Forest ham, provolone, and caramelized onions. \$\$

Joey's Italian Café

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

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

La Provence

2200 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-8002

(See Brickell / Downtown listing.)

Latin Café 2000

2501 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-3838

The menu is similar to that at many of our town's Latin cafés, largely classic Cuban entrées and sandwiches, with a smattering of touches from elsewhere in Latin America, such as a Peruvian *jalea mixta* (marinated mixed seafood), or *paella Valenciana* from Spain, which many Miami eateries consider a Latin country. What justifies the new millennium moniker is the more modern, yuppified/yaufied ambiance, 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 fiery *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-drizzled endive stuffed with lump crab, or customizable tacos average \$5-\$8. Also available: big breakfasts and salads, hearty soups, housemade pastries like lemon-crust ed wild berry pie, and a hip beer and wine list. \$





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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 straightforward 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 irresistible: fried artichokes with lemony aioli; seafood lasagna with heavenly dill-lobster sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 restolounge, festooned with graffiti-style murals designed to evoke a bustling Mexican street market, just for the dangerously smooth margaritas. But the main must-haves here are tacos, encased in a rarity: genuinely made-from-scratch corn tortillas, small but fatly-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. \$\$\$

Morgans Restaurant

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

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

Orange Café + Art

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

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

Pasha's

3801 N. Miami Ave., 305-573-0201

(See Brickell/Downtown listing)

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 pizza is right, with few entrées topping \$20. The capper: It's open past midnight every day but Sunday. \$\$

Primo Pizza Miami

3451 NE 1st Ave., 305-535-2555

Just a few years ago, chain pizza joints were dominant most everywhere. Today many places now offer authentic Italian or delicate designer pizzas. But a satisfying Brooklyn-style street slice? Fuhgedit. Thankfully that's the speciality of this indoor/outdoor pizzeria: big slices with chewy crusts (made from imported NY tap water) that aren't ultra-thin and crisp, but flexible enough to fold lengthwise, and medium-thick – sturdy enough to support toppings applied with generous all-American abandon. Take-out warning: Picking up a whole pie? Better bring the SUV, not the Morris Mini.

Sakaya Kitchen

Shops at Midtown Miami, Buena Vista Avenue

305-576-8096

This chef-driven, fast-casual Asian eatery is more an izakaya (in Japan, a pub with food) than a sakaya (sake shop). But why quibble about words with so many more intriguing things to wrap your mouth around? The concept takes on street-food favorites from all over Asia, housemade daily from quality fresh ingredients. French Culinary Institute-trained Richard Hales does change his menu, so we'd advise immediately grabbing some crispy Korean chicken wings and Chinese-inspired, open-faced roast pork buns with sweet chili sauce and homemade pickles. \$\$

Sake Room

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

Sake takes a back seat to sushi – and sophisticated décor – at this small but sleek restolounge. Among the seafood offerings, you won't find exotica or local catches, but all the usual sushi/sashimi favorites, though in more interesting

form, thanks to sauces that go beyond standard soy – spicy sriracha, garlic/ponzu oil, and many more. Especially recommended: the yuzu hamachi roll, the lobster tempura maki, and panko-coated spicy shrimp with hot-and-sour Mayo and a salad. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Salsa Fiesta

2929 Biscayne Blvd., 305-400-8245

The first stateside offshoot of a popular Venezuelan mini chain, this "urban Mexican grill" serves health-conscious, made-fresh-daily fare similar in concept to some fast-casual competitors. But there are indeed differences here, notably pan-Latin options: black beans as well as red; thin, delightfully crunchy tostones (available as a side or as the base for a uniquely tasty take on normal nachos). Other pluses include weekday happy hours with two-for-one beers – and free parking. \$\$\$

S & S Diner

1757 NE 2nd Ave., 305-373-4291

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





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

Sustain

3252 NE 1st Ave. #107, 305-424-9079

Is it possible for a restaurant to be sincerely eco-conscious without being self-righteousness? It is at this casual/chic restolounge, where dedication to local, sustainable food comes with considerable humor. Fare includes playful items like "wet" fries (with mouthwatering gravy), corn dogs, housemade soft pretzels with mustard and orange blossom honey, and a "50 Mile Salad" that seems almost like a game show in its challenge: All ingredients must come from within a 50-mile radius. At brunch don't miss the glazed "sin-a-buns." \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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

Vintage Liquor & Wine Bar

3301 NE 1st Ave. #105

305-514-0307

Gentrified ambiance, a remarkably knowledgeable staff, and a hip stock (including global beers as well as liquor and wine, plus gourmet packaged foods to accompany), and self-service wine dispensers for sampling make this an enjoyable retail shop. A wine/cocktail/tapas bar, open from 4:00 p.m. daily, makes it an enjoyable neighborhood hangout, too. Tapas include beef carpaccio, bruschetta cones, varied salads and empanadas, a daily ceviche, and fresh-made sandwiches. And remember to ask about special events: karaoke Thursdays, monthly wine dinners, tastings, more. \$\$\$

Wynwood Kitchen & Bar

2550 NW 2nd Ave., 305-722-8959

Neither man nor woman can live by bread alone. But art alone doesn't do the trick, either. Father-daughter development visionaries Tony and Jessica Goldman satisfy the full range of life needs by combining cuisine from master chef Marco Ferraro with works from master street artists, in one venue – that fits perfectly into its gritty artistic neighborhood. Here Ferraro eschews his upscale Wish fare for simple yet inspired small plates (crisp, chili-dusted artichoke hearts with tart/rich yuzu aioli; mellow veal sausages enlivened by horseradish sauce; etc.) ideal for work or gallery-walk breaks. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Upper Eastside

American Noodle Bar

6730 Biscayne Blvd., 305-396-3269

For us personally, a three-word Homer Simpson review says it: "Bacon sauce! Mmmm..." But responsibly, the chef/owner of this casual, counter-service Vietnamese fusion cheap eats joint is Michael Bloise, formerly executive chef of Wish, one of South Beach's most glamorous. At his own anti-establishment place, customers customize. Seven bucks will get you a bowl of thick, charmingly chewy noodles, plus one of nine sauces (smoked lobster, lemon grass, brown sugar/ginger, bacon) and ten toppings (recommended: slow-roasted duck, sweet Chinese sausage). Also enjoy cheeseburger dumplings, banh mi subs, house-made fruit sodas, beer or wine, and attitude-free fun. \$

Andiamo

5600 Biscayne Blvd., 305-762-5751

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

Anise Taverna

620 NE 78th St., 305-758-2929

The new owners of this river shack are banking on Greek food and festivity for success – a good bet, judging from their wildly popular previous eatery, Ouzo. The mainly mezze menu ranges from traditional Greek small plates to creative Mediterranean-inspired dishes like anise-scented

fish croquettes with spicy aioli. But don't neglect large plates like whole grilled Mediterranean fish (dorado or branzino), filleted tableside. The interior is charming, and the outdoor deck on the Little River is positively romantic. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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

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. \$\$\$

Chef Creole

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

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

DeVita's

7251 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-8282

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

Dogma Grill

7030 Biscayne Blvd.

305-759-3433

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

East Side Pizza

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

Minestrone, sure. But a pizzeria menu with carrot ginger soup? Similarly many Italian-American pizzerias offer 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.

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Recommended are moist tamales, tasty sandwiches (especially the dripping 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 Mayo), 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. And now that the place is open for dinner, you can indulge your breakfast cravings for several more hours. 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. And don't forget traditional diner entrées like meat loaf, roast turkey, liver and onions, plus burgers, salad platters, and homemade chicken soup. \$\$\$

Lo De Lea 7001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-456-3218

In Casa Toscana's former space, this cute, contemporary parillada is proof that you can have an Argentinean meal and a cholesterol test in the same month. While traditional parillada dishes are tasty, they're meat/fat-heavy, basically heaps of grilled beef. Here the grill is also used for vegetables (an unusually imaginative assortment, including bok choy, endive, and fennel), two of which are paired with your protein of choice. You can indulge in a mouthwateringly succulent vacio (flank steak), and walk out without feeling like you're the cow. \$\$\$

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

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. \$\$\$

Reva's 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

Since opening in 1999, Soyka has often been credited with sparking the Upper Eastside's revival. Now the arrival of new executive and pastry chefs plus a wine-wise general manager, all Joe Allen veterans, signals a



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culinary revival for this neighborhood focal point. The concept is still comfort food, but a revamped menu emphasizes fresh local ingredients and from-scratch preparation. (The meatloaf gravy, for instance, now takes 24 hours to make.) Unique desserts include signature sticky date pudding, a toffee-lover's dream. And the wine list features new boutique bottles at the old affordable prices. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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. \$

Kabobji 1624 79th St. Causeway 305-397-8039

(See North Miami Beach listing)

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)

Trio on the Bay 1601 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1234

Several ventures have failed in this expansive indoor/outdoor waterfront space, but that's hard to imagine once you've experienced this stunning incarnation as an exciting yet affordable restaurant/nightclub where food definitely doesn't play second fiddle to entertainment. Former Crystal Café chef Klime Kovaceski demonstrates a rare mix of Old World technique and New World invention in dishes like perfectly caramelized sea scallops with smoky bacon-garnished spinach salad, filet mignon atop surprisingly pistachio-studded béarnaise sauce, and figs with panna cotta so light one fears a bay breeze might carry it off. \$\$\$

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. \$\$\$

K'Chapas 1130 Normandy Dr., 305-864-8872

Formerly the Peruvian restaurant Pachamama, this space is now both Peruvian and Venezuelan – but not fusion. The Venezuelan sisters who run the place keep dishes true to country. Most Big Food comes from Peru: fresh ceviches, classic cooked entrées. But it's the Venezuelan breakfast/snack items that keep us coming, especially signature cachapas, somewhat similar to arepas but harder to find in restaurants. These moist pancakes, made from ground corn kernels instead of just corn meal, are folded over salty white cheese for a uniquely bold balance of sweetness and savor. \$\$\$

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 heartier fare, too, like the steak/frites (entrecôte with choice of sauce, housemade fries, and a salad), and rich fig tarts. \$\$\$

Lou's Beer Garden 7337 Harding Ave., 305-704-7879

"Beer garden" conjures up an image of Bavarian bratwurst, lederhosen, and oompah bands – none of which you'll find here. It's actually a hip hideaway in the New Hotel's pool-patio area, a locals' hangout with interesting eclectic fare and a perennial party atmosphere. Especially recommended: delicately pan-fried mini-crab cakes served with several housemade sauces; hefty bleu cheese burgers with Belgian-style double-cooked fries; blackened "angry shrimp" with sweet/sour sauce; fried fresh sardines. And of course much beer, a changing list of craft brews. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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

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. \$\$\$

Iron Sushi 9432 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-0311

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

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. \$\$

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Moovie's

9545 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-3666

"Kid friendly" generally means restaurants will tolerate youngsters. Moovie's, an ice cream parlor plus, positively pampers them, from the cute play area out back (equipped with old-school toys like giant bean bags) to a children's menu that doesn't condescend. (Who says kids don't appreciate pizzas with fresh mozzarella?) For grown-ups there are sophisticated salads and sandwiches like a turkey, pear, garlic oil, and brie panini on house-baked bread. Just don't neglect Moovie's mainstay: ice cream, dense yet creamy-soft Blue Bell. Pistachio almond is our pick. \$

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-crust lamb or tuna tartare with sriracha aioli, plus reviving old favorites like pork tenderloin with ginger-caramel sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

NORTH MIAMI

Los Antojos

11099 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-1411

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

Bagels & Co.

11064 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2435

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

Bulldog Barbecue

15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-940-9655

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

Burritos Grill Café

11717 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-1041

Originally a friendly little 125th Street hole-in-the-wall that garnered raves for its limited menu of terrifically tasty treats, Mario and Karina Manzanero's café is now in more sizable and atmospheric quarters. But the friendly, family-run (and kid-friendly) ambiance remains, as do the authentic Yucatan-style specialties. Standouts include poc-chuc, a marinated pork loin; tacos al pastor, stuffed with subtly smoky steak, onion, cilantro, and pineapple; sinful

deep-fried tacos dorados; and signature burritos, including the Maya, filled with juicy cochinita pibil, refried beans, and pickled onions. \$\$

Canton Café

12749 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2882

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

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 Mayan-rooted Yucatan cuisine. So why blow bucks on burritos when one can sample Caribbean Mexico's most typical dish: cochinita pibil? Chéen's authentically succulent version of the pickle-onion-topped marinated pork dish is earthily aromatic from achiote, tangy from bitter oranges, and meltingly tender from slow cooking in a banana leaf wrap. To accompany, try a lime/soy/chili-spiced michelada, also authentically Mexican, and possibly the best thing that ever happened to dark beer. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Chef Creole

13105 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-893-4246

(See Miami listing)

Flip Burger Bar

1699 NE 123rd St., 305-741-3547

Casual-chic burger bars, everywhere in South Beach, are still rare farther north. One reason this easy-to-miss venue is a must-not-miss for North Miami locals: The hefty half-pounders on fresh brioche buns include a scrumptious patty with Gruyere, mushrooms, and onion marmalade. The Fireman is a jalapeño/chipotle scorcher. There are even turkey and veggie variations. Other draws are hand-cut fries, beer-battered onion rings, a top-drawer beer list, budget-priced combo specials, conversation-friendly acoustics, and a South Beach rarity: free parking. \$\$\$

Happy Sushi & Thai

2224 NE 123rd St., 305-895-0165

Grab a booth at this cozy eatery, which serves all the expected Thai and sushi bar standards, including weekday

lunch specials. But there are also delightful surprises, like grilled kawahagi (triggerfish) with seasoned Japanese mayonnaise. This intensely savory/sweet "Japanese home cooking" treat satisfies the same yen as beef jerky, except without pulling out your teeth. Accompanied by a bowl of rice, it's a superb lunch. For raw-fish fans, spicy, creamy salmon tartare (accompanied by hiyashi wakame seaweed) is a winner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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. \$

Pastry Is Art

12591 Biscayne Blvd., 305-640-5045

Given owner Jenny Rissone's background as the Eden Roc's executive pastry chef, it's not surprising that her cakes and other sweet treats (like creamy one-bite truffle "lollipops") look as flawlessly sophisticated as they taste – perfect adult party fare. What the bakery's name doesn't reveal is that it's also a breakfast and lunch café, with unusual baking-oriented fare: a signature sandwich of chicken, brie, and caramelized peaches and pecans on housemade bread; quiches; pot pies; even a baked-to-order Grand Marnier soufflé. The pecan sticky buns are irresistible. \$\$

Petit Rouge

12409 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-7676

From the mid-1990s (with Neal's Restaurant and later with Il Migliore), local chef Neal Cooper's neighborhood-oriented Italian eateries have been crowd-pleasers. While this cute 32-seat charmer is French, it's no exception, avoiding pretense and winning fans with both classic and nouvelle bistrot fare: frisée salad with lardons, poached egg, and bacon

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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. \$\$\$

Rice House of Kabob

14480 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-4899
Since 2006, South Beach's original Rice House has been serving up mountainous platters of basmati rice and Greek salad topped with Persian-style marinated/char-grilled meat, poultry, seafood, or veggie kabobs – for very little money. This branch of what is now a growing chain has the same menu (which also features wraps, for lighter eaters) and the same policy of custom-cooking kabobs, so expect fresh, not fast, food. Sides of must-o-keyar and must-o-mooseer (thick yogurt dips with herbed cukes or shallots) are must-haves. \$\$

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

Steve's Pizza

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

Tokyo Bowl

12295 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-9400
This fast-food drive-thru (unexpectedly serene inside) is named for its feature item, big budget-priced bowls of rice or noodles topped with cooked Japanese-style items like teriyaki fish (fresh fish sautéed with vegetables), carried

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
At this fast/casual Italian eatery, the specialty is mix-and-match. Choose one of seven fresh or dried pastas (whole wheat and gluten-free options available), then one of 15 sauces. Our personal pick is carbonara, correctly creamy-coated (via egg thickening, not cream overload); Bolognese is a wise choice for those who like sauces rich and red. Many options exist for vegetarians and pescatarians as well as carnivores, all clearly coded on the menu. \$\$

smokehouse now also turns out ribs and delectable bris-ket. Other new additions include weekend fish fries. Entry is directly from 163rd Street, not through the main park entrance. No admission fee. \$

China Restaurant

178 NE 167th St., 305-947-6549
When you have a yen for the Americanized Chinese fusion dishes you grew up with, all the purist regional Chinese cuisine in the world won't scratch the itch. So the menu here, containing every authentically inauthentic Chinese-American classic you could name, is just the ticket when nostalgia strikes – from simple egg rolls to pressed almond duck (majorly breaded boneless chunks, with comfortingly thick gravy). \$\$\$

Chipotle Mexican Grill

14776 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-2779
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 Gouveia, 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. \$

Empire Szechuan Gourmet of NY

3427 NE 163rd St., 305-949-3318
In the 1980s, Empire became the Chinese chain that swallowed Manhattan – and transformed public perceptions of Chinese food in the NY metropolitan area. Before: bland faux-Cantonese dishes. After: lighter, more fiery fare from Szechuan and other provinces. This Miami outpost does serve chop suey and other Americanized items, but don't worry. Stick with Szechuan crispy prawns, Empire's Special Duck, cold sesame noodles, or similar pleasantly spicy specialties, and you'll be a happy camper, especially if you're an ex-New Yorker. \$\$

Flamma Brazilian Steakhouse

3913 NE 163rd St., (Intracoastal Mall) 305-957-9900
The rodizio formula is familiar: Pay one price (\$39.90 for dinner, \$29.90 at Sunday brunch), then eat till you drop from a groaning salad/appetizer bar and a massive selection of beef, pork, lamb, poultry, sausage, and fish (16 varieties at dinner; 5 at brunch) carved tableside by costumed waiters. What spectacularly differentiates Flamma: its setting on the Intracoastal Waterway. But also spectacular is a Monday-Thursday two-for-one dinner deal with a coupon available at Flamma. Unbelievable but true. \$\$\$

El Gran Inka

3155 NE 163rd St., 305-940-4910
Though diners at this upscale Peruvian eatery will find ceviches, a hefty fried-seafood jalea, and Peru's other expected traditional specialties, all presented far more elegantly than most in town, the contemporary Peruvian fusion creations are unique. Especially recommended are two dishes adapted from recipes by Peru's influential

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

Hanna's Gourmet Diner

13951 Biscayne Blvd. 305-947-2255
When Sia and Nicole Hemmati bought the Gourmet Diner from retiring original owner Jean-Pierre Lejeune in the late 1990s, they added "Hanna's" to the name, but changed little else about this retro-looking French/American diner, a north Miami-Dade institution since 1983. Customers can get a cheeseburger or garlicky escargots, meatloaf in tomato sauce or boeuf bourguignon in red wine sauce, iceberg lettuce and tomatoes, or a mushroom and squid salad with garlic dressing. For oysters Rockefeller/tuna-melt couples from Venus and Mars, it remains the ideal dinner date destination. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Hiro Japanese Restaurant

3007 NE 163rd St., 305-948-3687
One of Miami's first sushi restaurants, Hiro retains an amusing retro-glam feel, an extensive menu of both sushi and cooked Japanese food, and late hours that make it a perennially popular after-hours snack stop. The sushi menu has few surprises, but quality is reliable. Most exceptional are the nicely priced yakitori, skewers of succulently soy-glazed and grilled meat, fish, and vegetables; the unusually large variety available of the last makes this place a good choice for vegetarians. \$\$

Hiro's Sushi Express

17048 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-949-0776
Tiny, true, but there's more than just sushi at this mostly take-out spin-off of the pioneering Hiro. Makis are the mainstay (standard stuff like California rolls, more complex creations like multi-veg futomaki, and a few unexpected treats like a spicy Crunch & Caliente maki), available à la carte or in value-priced individual and party combo platters. But there are also bento boxes featuring tempura, yakitori skewers, teriyaki, stir-fried veggies, and udon noodles. Another branch is now open in Miami's Upper Eastside. \$

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. \$\$\$

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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

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Thursday.....\$9.95
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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 atmospheric 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 fagirole, 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. \$\$\$

Miami Prime Grill

16395 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-5101

Don't be confused by the name, suggesting a steakhouse. It's really a reinvented sports bar, which has been packing in more varied crowds than the average man-cave by offering more varied food and entertainment options. No worries, sports fanatics. For you there's an astonishing array of high-def TVs plus all sports snacks known to mankind. But food fans should check out the special deals on full meals, offered daily. Our favorite day: Thursday, which hosts both Ladies Night (free drinks for us!) and Lobster Night (a Maine lobster plus two sides for \$16). \$\$\$

New China Buffet

940 North Miami Beach Blvd., 305-957-7266

The venue (a former Bannigan's) is clean, casual, and not kitschy. The all-you-can-eat fare is voluminous – scores of Chinese dishes (recommended: Mongolian pork, spicy garlic shrimp, and surprisingly authentic steamed fish with ginger and scallion); international oddities (pizza, plantains, pigs-in-blankets); plus sushi, salad, and pastry/ice cream bars. And the price is sure right. Lunch is \$6.75 (\$7.75 Saturday and Sunday). Dinner features more seafood, \$9.55. There's an inexpensive take-out option, too, and reduced kids' prices. \$

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 albón-digas – spicy, ultra-savory meatballs. \$\$\$

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

1815 NE 18th Ave., 305-830-3354

Attention ex-New Yorkers: Is your idea of food porn one of the Carnegie Deli's mile-high pastrami sandwiches? Well, Roasters will dwarf them. Consider the "Carnegie-style" monster containing, according to the menu, a full pound of succulent meat (really 1.4 pounds; we weighed it), for a mere 15 bucks. All the other Jewish deli classics are here too, including perfectly sour pickles, silky hand-sliced nova or lox, truly red-rare roast beef, and the cutest two-bite mini-potato pancakes ever – eight per order, served with sour cream and applesauce. \$\$

Sang's Chinese Restaurant

1925 NE 163rd St., 305-947-7076

Sang's has three menus. The pink menu is Americanized Chinese food, from chop suey to honey garlic chicken. The white menu permits the chef to show off his authentic Chinese fare: salt and pepper prawns, rich beef/turnip casserole, tender salt-baked chicken, even esoterica like abalone with sea cucumber. The extensive third menu offers dim sum, served until 4:00 p.m. A live tank allows seasonal seafood dishes like lobster with ginger and scallion. Recently installed: a Chinese barbecue case, displaying savory items like crispy pork with crackling attached. \$\$\$

Shing Wang Vegetarian, Iced & Tea House

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

At this unique, mostly Taiwanese eatery, all seafood, poultry, and meats used to be skillfully crafted and delicious vegetarian imitations. These are still here, plus there's now a wider choice of dishes, some featuring real meat. Try the authentic-tasting Vietnamese banh mi sandwiches (available with a variety of meat and mock-meat fillings). Bubble tea is the must-not-miss drink. The cold, refreshing boba comes in numerous flavors, all supplemented with signature black tapioca balls that, sipped through straws, are a guaranteed giggle. \$

Siam Square

54 NE 167th St., 305-944-9697

Open until 1:00 a.m. every day except Sunday (when it closes at midnight), this relatively new addition to North

Miami Beach's "Chinatown" strip has become a popular late-night gathering spot for chefs from other Asian restaurants. And why not? The food is fresh, nicely presented, and reasonably priced. The kitchen staff is willing to customize dishes upon request, and the serving staff is reliably fast. Perhaps most important, karaoke equipment is in place when the mood strikes. \$\$\$

Scorch Grillhouse and Wine Bar

13750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-5588

Though some food folks were initially exasperated when yet another Latin-influenced grill replaced one of our area's few Vietnamese restaurants, it's hard to bear a grudge at a friendly, casual neighborhood place that offers monster ten-ounce char-grilled burgers, with potatoes or salad, for \$8.50; steaks, plus a side and a sauce or veg topper, for nine bucks at lunch, \$15 to \$18.75 (the menu's top price) at night; and three-dollar glasses of decent house wine. \$\$\$

Sushi House

15911 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-6002

In terms of décor drama, this sushi spot seems to have taken its cue from Philippe Starck: sheer floor-to-ceiling drapes, for starters. The sushi list, too, is over the top, featuring monster makis like the Cubbie Comfort: spicy tuna, soft-shell crab, shrimp and eel tempura, plus avocado, jalapeños, and cilantro, topped with not one but three sauces: wasabi, teriyaki, and spicy Mayo. Hawaiian King Crab contains unprecedented ingredients like tomatoes, green peppers, and pineapple. Boutique wines, artisan sakes, and cocktails are as exotic as the cuisine. \$\$\$

Sushi Sake

13551 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-4242

Chic Asian-accented décor, video screens, 99-cent drink deals, and late-night hours make this hip hangout not just a sushi bar but sort of a neighborhood bar, too. That said, the sushi is impressive, mainly because seafood is delivered daily and all except the shrimp is fresh, not frozen (as is customary at most Miami sushi places). Also notable: All sauces are housemade. Cooked makis like a crunch-topped Miami Heat are most popular, but it's as sashimi that the fish's freshness truly shines. \$\$\$

Tuna's Raw Bar and Grille

17850 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-932-0630

The reincarnated Tuna's has gained new owners, a new name, a dazzling outdoor bar and dining area, and a newly

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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

Vegetarian Restaurant by Hakin

73 NE 167th St. 305-405-6346

Too often purist vegetarian food is unskillfully crafted bland stuff, spiced with little but sanctimonious intent. Not at this modest-looking vegan (dairy-free vegetarian) restaurant and smoothie bar. Dishes from breakfast's blueberry-packed pancakes to Caribbean vegetable stews sparkle with vivid flavors. Especially impressive: mock meat (and fake fish) wheat-gluten items that beat many carnivorous competitors. Skeptical? Rightly. But we taste-tested a "Philly cheese steak" sandwich on the toughest of critics – an inflexibly burger-crazy six year-old. She cleaned her plate. \$\$

Yakko-San

3881 NE 163rd St. (Intracoastal Mall), 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. \$\$

BAY HARBOR ISLANDS

Asia Bay Bistro

1007 Kane Concourse; 305-861-2222

As in Japan's most refined restaurants, artful presentation is stunning at this Japanese/Thai gem. And though the voluminous menu sports all the familiar favorites from both nations, the Japanese-inspired small plates will please diners seeking something different. Try jalapeño-sauced hamachi sashimi; toro with enoki mushrooms, bracing ooba (shiso), tobiko caviar, and a sauce almost like beurre blanc; rock shrimp/shitake tempura with a delicate salad; elegant salmon tartare with a mix-in quail egg. And

spicy, mayo-dressed tuna rock makis are universal crowd-pleasers. \$\$\$

Caffe Da Vinci

1009 Kane Concourse; 305-861-8166

After renovations in 2010, this old favorite (since 1989) reopened with a hip new lounge – but no fixes to what ain't broke, notably handmade artisanal pastas sauced with high quality ingredients. Choose luxe stuffed models (like crab-filled ravioli with rich lobster sauce) or relatively pristine preparations like linguini with garlic, wine, and fresh littlenecks. Eating light? Make a meal of lavish salads or starters like true beef carpaccio – dressed, like the original from Venice's Harry's Bar, with creamy mustard sauce rather than mere olive oil. \$\$\$

The Palm

9650 E. Bay Harbor Dr., 305-868-7256

It was 1930s journalists, legend has it, who transformed NYC's original Palm from Italian restaurant to bastion of beef. Owners would run out to the butcher for huge steaks to satisfy the hardboiled scribes. So our perennial pick here is nostalgic: steak à la stone – juicy, butter-doused slices on toast, topped with sautéed onions and pimientos. This classic (whose carb components make it satisfying without à la carte sides, and hence a relative bargain) isn't on the menu anymore, but cooks will prepare it on request. \$\$\$\$

AVENTURA / HALLANDALE

Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza

17901 Biscayne Blvd., 305-830-2625

When people rave about New York pizzas' superiority, they don't just mean thin crusts. They mean the kind of airy, abundantly burn-bubbled, uniquely flavorful crusts that can only be consistently produced by a traditional coal (not wood) oven – like those at Anthony's, which began with one Fort Lauderdale pizzeria in 2002 and now has roughly 30 locations. Quality toppings, though limited, hit all the major food groups, from prosciutto to kalamata olives. There are salads, too, but the sausage and garlic-sautéed broccoli rabe pie is a tastier green vegetable. \$\$

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., 786-279-0658

(Fairmont Hotel, Turnberry Resort)

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. \$\$\$\$

Il Migliore

2576 NE Miami Gardens Dr., 05-792-2902

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

Gourmet Carrot

3599 NE 207th St., 305-749-6393

Since the first Gourmet Carrot – a healthy and kosher but not at all preachy eatery – opened in South Beach, its menu expanded to include many red-meat items. The same is true of this new Waterways mall branch. When confirmed cholesterol-careless carnivores like ourselves opt voluntarily for an eatery's veggie burgers (a brown rice/lentil/veggie blend more satisfying than beef), or remarkably juicy ginger-mayo-dressed chicken burgers, over normal hamburgers, based solely on flavor – well, religion aside, that's a major miracle. \$\$\$

Heavy Burger

19004 NE 29th Ave., 305-932-7555

Sure, South Beach is our town's burger capital, if you're judging by high profile. But if creativity is what counts, no joint bangs a gong like homeboy Mark Panunzio's place, where the concept is: Nothing goes together better than heavyweight burgers and heavy-metal music. What rocks us: a fire-grilled, 10 oz. Motley Burger (with cheddar, applewood bacon, tomato, Bibb lettuce, and frizzled plus raw onions on a challah roll; upon request, chipotle aioli was cheerfully substituted for BBQ sauce). Get hand-cut cheese fries, too, and get wasted on craft beer. \$\$

Kampai

3575 NE 207th St., 305-931-6410

At this longtime neighborhood favorite Japanese/Thai restaurant, many come just for the slightly pricy but very generous sushi specialties. Most makis are cooked, but for raw-fish fans the tempura-flake-topped crunchy tuna/avocado roll with spicy mayo, and tuna both inside and out, is a people-pleaser. Don't neglect Thai specialties, though, especially red and green curries customizable as to heat (mild, medium, hot, and authentic "Thai hot"). And for a bargain light lunch, try tonjiru, miso soup jazzed up with veggies and pork. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

The Grill on the Alley

19501 Biscayne Blvd. (Aventura Mall)

305-466-7195

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

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. \$\$

Mr. Chef's Fine Chinese Cuisine & Bar

18800 NE 29th Ave. #10, 786-787-9030

Considering our county's dearth of authentic Chinese food, this stylish eatery is heaven-sent for Aventura residents. Owners Jin Xiang Chen and Shu Ming (a.k.a. Mr. Chef) come from China's southern seacoast province of Guangdong (Canton). But you'll find no gloppily sauced, Americanized-Cantonese chop sueys here. Cooking is properly light-handed, and seafood specialties shine (try the spicy/crispy salt and pepper shrimp). For adventurers, there's a cold jellyfish starter. Even timid taste buds can't resist tender fried shrimp balls described this way: "With crispy adorable fringy outfit." \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Ocean Prime

19051 Biscayne Blvd. (Aventura Mall)

305-931-5400

Most mall dining experiences are akin to NASCAR pit stops: quick pauses to refuel. Ocean Prime, as its super-sleek, circa 1930s cruise ship ambiance would suggest, is more like the tranquil trans-Atlantic crossings of slower-paced times – which makes the steak and seafood eatery's mall location perfect. After a frenetic shopping day, there's no better way to decompress than a couple of hours in a time warp, savoring retro supper-club specialties: pecan-crust mountain trout with brown butter, an oversize cocktail, and a live lounge pianist. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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-plurgers, 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. \$\$

Playwright Irish Pub

801 Silks Run Rd. #2597

954-457-7563

The vintage Old World look and convivial atmosphere of this new pub, located in the Village at Gulfstream Park, are more traditionally Irish than most of the menu, which ranges from penne with marinara sauce to Thai-inspired spring rolls. But fish and chips are always crisp-coated and satisfying; potato leek soup is the real thing; and the crab cakes (crab meat mixed with just enough celery, onions, and peppers for interesting texture) are so good you'll be thinking Maryland, not Dublin. \$\$

Sushi Siam

19575 Biscayne Blvd.

305-932-8955

(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)



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