

BISCAYNE

January 2012

www.BiscayneTimes.com

Volume 9 Issue 11

IN THIS ISSUE
Miami's King: Jack Is Back! p. 24
New Year's BizBuzz Bargains p. 28

Times



Family & Fortune

Donald Soffer invented Aventura and built an empire for his children, who are scrambling to save it

page 34



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HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Bay Harbor Islands. Award winning architect Barry Sugarman's home. Featured in HGTV, Florida Design, Casa & Estilo & more. 4bd/2.5ba, Open floor plan. Magnificent views. Wide Bay. \$2,975,000



Porto Vita Private Estate. ONLY single family residence in this exclusive community & it is being offered for the 1st time. Approximately 9,000 interior sf on a 16,175 sf lot on the Intracoastal Waterway with 240' on water. \$8,500,000



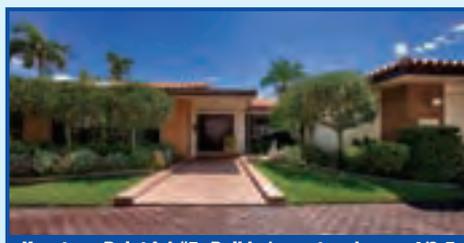
Bal Harbour Village. Great opportunity! Build your dream home in guard gated comm. 20,500 sf lot on the wide waterway w/ waterfront pool & dock. \$3.95M



Kenilworth, Bal Harbour. Open & spacious living, large terrace, open gourmet eat-in kitchen, 2 bed - \$525K & 3 bed - \$725K



Majestic Tower at Bal Harbour. Spectacular ocean views, 2/2.5, 2160sf, resort style amenities, priv. elevator, gourmet restaurant, ocean front gym, spa & tennis courts, beach serv., concierge & 24hr sec. Across from Bal Harbour Shops. \$2.1M



Keystone Point Isl #5. Builder's custom home, 4/3.5, 3,236sf as per owner, pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, 2 car garage, new dock+davits, no bridges to bay. \$899K



Turnberry Isle South, Aventura. 3,426sf hm in the sky, enormous living space, marble flrs, Wrap-around terr. overlooking ocean, Intracoastal & golf course. \$599K



Hamptons South, Aventura. 3000±sf, designer finished, upgraded 2+bd, media rm, ocean, Intracoastal & golf course views. \$849K



2 story California style waterfront in 24hr gated Sans Souci Est. Great flr plan, 3,650sf/appr., 4/3.5. Heated pool & spa, outdoor bbq, new wood deck & dock. \$949K



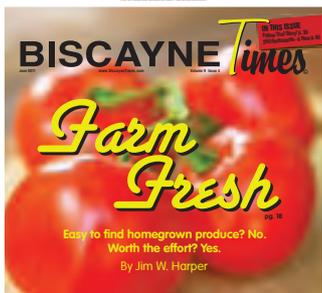
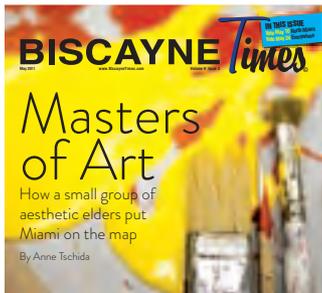
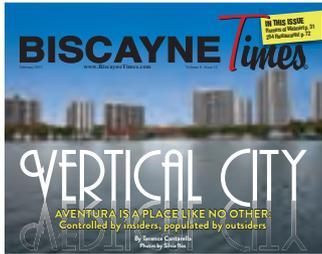
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Thank You!

As we enter a new year, we thank you, our loyal readers and advertisers, for your ongoing support. Because of you, 2011 was the most successful year in our history.

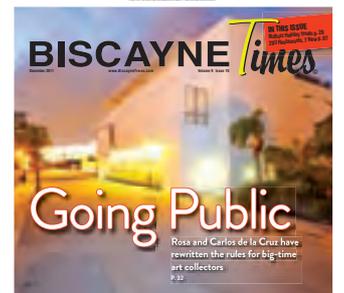
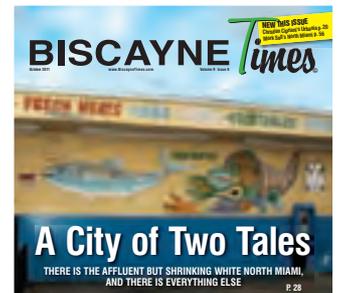
Throughout the year, we achieved many new milestones:

- We welcomed a record 150 new advertisers to *Biscayne Times*, from furniture showrooms and restaurants to doctors, dentists, and real estate professionals.
- Our page count hit 100 with the October issue and continues to climb, while our revenues in 2011 increased more than 20 percent over 2010.
- Editorial coverage of some 40 neighborhoods along the Biscayne Corridor has expanded, as has our team of award-winning journalists.
- The *BT's* Dining Guide now includes nearly 300 restaurants in our distribution area, far outpacing any other publication.
- This January issue caps a year of unprecedented circulation growth. We are currently delivering 30,000 copies of *Biscayne Times* each month.
- Many of those additional copies are now in the hands of thousands of residents who've recently moved into new condominiums from downtown to Midtown.
- We're distributing even more copies in and around Aventura, to the city's dynamic condo communities and to more than 2000 upscale single-family homes west of Biscayne Boulevard.
- As of this issue, we are hand-delivering the *BT* to nearly 16,000 single-family homes and some 140 condominiums from Brickell to Broward.
- Today we conservatively estimate that at least 75,000 individuals living and working along the Biscayne Corridor read *Biscayne Times* each month.

We owe this success to you, and we are very, very grateful.

All of us at *Biscayne Times* wish you a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

Sincerely,
Jim Mullin
Jim Mullin, publisher and editor



JANUARY

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

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

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	Million Dollar Quartet 2 & 7:30 PM Z "Whips the crowd into a frenzy with blast after blast of explosive vitality!" -The New York Times	ELVIS PRESLEY JERRY LEE LEWIS CARL PERKINS JOHNNY CASH THE BROADWAY MUSICAL MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET INSPIRED BY THE ELECTRIFYING TRUE STORY Final 2 Performances!		4  B.B. KING IN CONCERT From Eric Clapton to Jimi Hendrix, every blues guitarist for the past century has been influenced and inspired by the master - B.B. King! ONE NIGHT ONLY! JANUARY 4 @ 8PM		6 Miami City Ballet: Program II 8:00 PM Z Featuring <i>In the Night</i> (Robbins/Chopin), three glamorous pas de deux, all danced against a star-studded night sky and to Chopin's ravishing piano music!	7 FREE Adrienne Arsht Center Tour 12:00 PM Z MCB: Program II 8:00 PM Z <i>In the Night</i> (Robbins/Chopin) Three stages of love--flirtation, passion, and intimacy--all danced to Chopin's ravishing piano music!
8	MCB: Program II 2:00 PM Z Balanchine described <i>Ballet Imperial</i> (Balanchine/Tchaikovsky) as "a contemporary tribute to Petipa, the father of classical ballet."					Family Fest FREE! AT THE ADRIENNE ARSHT CENTER FREE FAMILY FUN! January 14	14 FREE Family Fest: "Music 'Round the World" 11:30 AM Z FREE Performance 2:00 PM Z Olympic Sounds of the Miami Music Project Honors Orchestra FREE Adrienne Arsht Center Tour 12:00 PM Z
	 FIRE AND ICE JAN. 27 & 28	 NE 2ND AVE Take a ride. Meet Miami. JANUARY 19-21		19 NE 2nd Avenue 7:30 PM Z "Teo Castellanos' award-winning solo-characterizations capture the diversity of urban America!" -Prague TV	20 NE 2nd Avenue 7:30 PM Z Larry Harlow's La Raza Latina: A Salsa Suite 8:00 PM Z This is the magnum opus of the Grammy-winning pianist, composer and arranger, Larry Harlow!	21 FREE TOUR 12:00 PM Z FGO presents La rondine 7 PM Z NE 2nd Avenue 7:30 PM Z Miami Symphony Orchestra: An Evening in Vienna 8:00 PM Z	
		24 FGO presents La rondine 8:00 PM Z Its combination of romantic melodies and 20th century musical styles perfectly defines the atmosphere of Paris!	LARRY HARLOW'S LA RAZA LATINA A SALSA SUITE JANUARY 20 		27 FGO presents La rondine 8 PM Z The Cleveland Orchestra: Fire and Ice 8:00 PM Z <i>The New York Times</i> hails pianist Yefim Bronfman as a virtuoso "defying comparison!"	28 FREE TOUR 12:00 PM Z FGO presents Rigoletto 7:00 PM Z The Cleveland Orchestra: Fire and Ice 8:00 PM Z	
29 FGO presents La rondine 2:00 PM Z A kept woman abandons a comfortable life to pursue true romantic love in the south of France!	FREE TOURS MONDAYS AND SATURDAYS AT NOON! Your Backstage Pass to the Adrienne Arsht Center!		31 FGO presents Rigoletto 8:00 PM Z One of the world's best-loved operas!	JOIN THE "SCAT CHAT" for your chance to win tickets!  		FLORIDA GRAND opera presents RIGOLETTO 	

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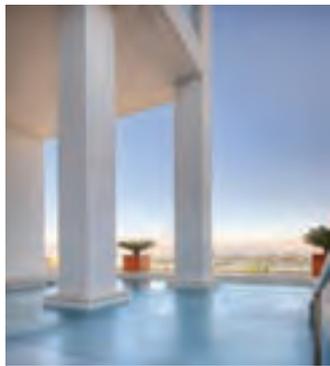
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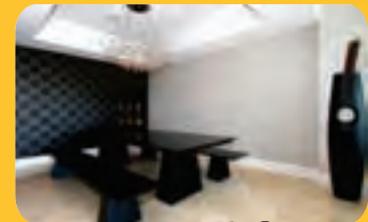
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NEW CONSTRUCTION BEAUTIFUL BAYVIEWS 174' ON WATER

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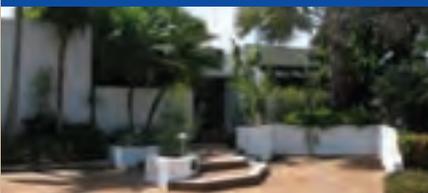


KEYSTONE POINT ISLAND #5 CORNER LOT 175' ON WATER

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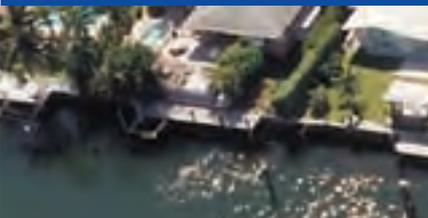


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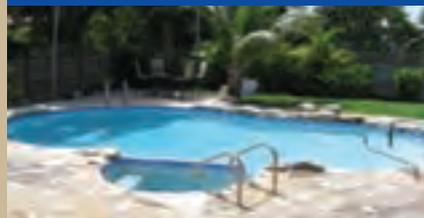
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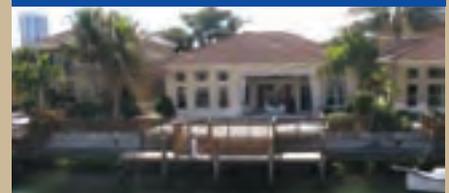
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CONTENTS

- 34 COVER STORY**
Family & Fortune: The Soffers of Aventura
- COMMENTARY**
20 Feedback: Letters
24 Miami's King: Jack King
26 Christian Cipriani: Urbania
32 Picture Story: Miami River 115 Years Ago
- OUR SPONSORS**
28 BizBuzz
- COMMUNITY NEWS**
50 New Life for a Grand Old Theater
51 Check Your Oil...Painting?
52 No Piece of Cake: Ness German Bakery
54 Criminals Only Past This Point!
- NEIGHBORHOOD CORRESPONDENTS**
60 Gaspar: Still the Season
62 Jen: Who's in Your Wallet?
64 Frank: 2011's Good, Bad, and Ugly
66 Wendy: Barely There
68 Mark: Top of the Heap
70 Shari: Living with the Lemming Effect
- ART & CULTURE**
72 Anne Tschida: Booty Call at Sundance
74 Melissa Wallen: Galleries + Museums
77 Events Calendar
- POLICE REPORTS**
78 Biscayne Crime Beat
- PARK PATROL**
80 Top 10 All-Star Parks
- COLUMNISTS**
82 Pawsitively Pets: Doggy's To-Do List
84 Going Green: Caring for Mother Earth, Glamorously
85 Kids and the City: A Promising Year
86 Your Garden: Life and Limb
87 Vino: Dirt-Cheap Reds Can Surprise You
- DINING GUIDE**
88 Restaurant Listings: 298 Biscayne Corridor Restaurants



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1051 NE 89 ST	6	5 / 1	1939	6,125	\$1,795,000	\$1,690,000
1350 NE 101 ST	3	4 / 0	1953	2,823	\$1,495,000	\$1,292,50
1066 NE 94 ST	5	4	1939	4,071	\$1,059,000	\$900,000
510 NE 56 ST	4	4 / 0	1934	3,021	\$899,000	\$815,000
531 PIGEON PLUM LN	4	3 / 0	1957	3,977	\$885,000	\$925,000
490 NE 96 ST	5	4 / 1	1941	3,893	\$849,000	\$740,000
8530 NE 10 AV	3	3 / 1	1941	3,854	\$699,000	\$500,000

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550 N ISLAND DR	7	6 / 1	1995	6,634	\$3,150,000	\$2,500,000
546 GOLDEN BEACH DR	6	5 / 1	1955	5,141	\$2,195,000	\$1,400,000
3720 NE 201 ST	5	5 / 1	1997	3,929	\$1,500,000	\$1,280,000
18920 N BAY RD	3	2 / 1	1950	2,298	\$1,499,999	\$1,050,000
475 CENTER ISLAND DR	3	2 / 0	1959	2,249	\$1,350,000	\$1,150,000
16421 NE 34 AV	3	3 / 0	1992	3,518	\$1,199,000	\$1,095,000
20825 NE 32 PL	4	4 / 1	2000	3,286	\$985,000	\$918,000
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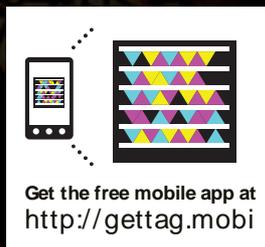
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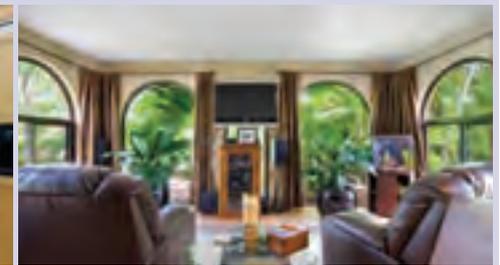
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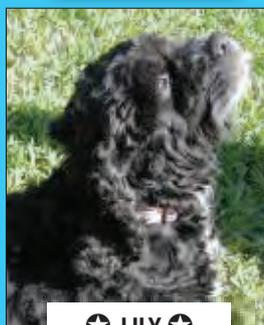
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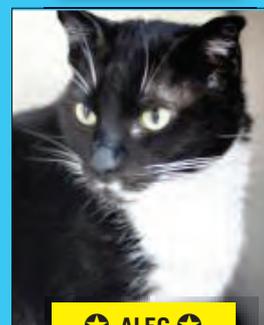
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Commentary: LETTERS

Elected Official to Parks Critic: Thanks, but We're Doing Just Fine Without You

Jim W. Harper really has chutzpah, coming into the area of Highland Village, with “trepidation” no less, and giving sarcastic criticism of a long-standing neighborhood in North Miami Beach (“A Park in Need Is a Park Indeed,” December 2011).

And yes, that’s “Beach” because when the city changed its name back in the 1930s from Fulford by the Sea, we had beachfront property in our municipality. I guess we should have changed back the name knowing you would mock us some 80 years later.

While Highland Village is not the “Swiss Alps” you might have expected in Miami-Dade County, it is home to some 600 working-class residents and snow birds mainly from Canada who live here during the winter. And by the way, they love their shuffleboard, and that, my dear, is why they’re here.

The Village, which is also known in my dictionary as a “community,” includes mobile homes, single-family homes, and multi-family developments. The Community Center houses many activities for the children as well as provides a meeting place other than city hall. This may not be a state-of-the-art facility, but it is bustling with activity and suits its purpose.

Most residents appreciate their center and realize that something is better than nothing. Obviously you weren’t raised with those principles. As for why the children congregate there after school instead of their “trailers,” gee it may be because NMB offers a safe place to go where they can do their homework and play while their parents are at work and making an honest living to provide for their families.

NMB prides itself on our Leisure Services Department, directed by Paulette Murphy. Murphy and her staff oversee five different community centers in neighborhoods throughout our city’s five square miles.

Our city, like many municipalities across our great nation, has its fair share of economic woes, and we would love to put a whole lot of money into our community centers and play areas. We are taking care of the Highland Village community for the children and residents in our city. It is a sad commentary to see a published writer like Mr. Harper make fun of lower-economic neighborhoods like Highland Village, a small local community where hard-working, taxpaying families provide

a warm and caring environment for their children and extended families.

We don’t need outsiders poking their opinions around here; we do just fine without you. The only good thing that could come out of your crude comments is that someone will hear your plea and immediately respond by sponsoring an upgrade to the Highland Village Park.

*Councilwoman Barbara Kramer
City of North Miami Beach*

Lending New Meaning to Forking Over the Dough

I really enjoyed Pamela Robin Brandt’s story about the new Miami Culinary Institute at Miami-Dade College (“Into the Fire,” November 2011). It was so interesting, in fact, that I went online to the *BT* Website and reread her story about Miami’s other two college cooking campuses, FIU and Johnson & Wales (“Kitchen Clash,” November 2010).

One thing that I wish Brandt had explored in more detail: tuition costs. I was shocked to learn from the earlier story that one year’s tuition at Johnson & Wales costs about \$24,500. That’s incredible! Compare it to FIU’s in-state tuition of \$5100.

I checked after reading the story and learned that Johnson & Wales is a nonprofit school, so its high cost can’t be attributed to the profit motive, which has caused so many problems at for-profit places like University of Phoenix, Kaplan, and others. They’re now facing a federal crackdown because so many students default on their federal student loans.

Still, can young students really afford \$25,000 a year to learn how to be a cook? It will take them a lifetime to pay back the cost of their Johnson & Wales education.

That’s why I was so interested to see what Miami-Dade College was going to offer at its new Miami Culinary Institute and what it will cost. Certainly, I thought, it would be far less than \$25,000 per year. Indeed it was, by about half. To earn a two-year degree from MCI, according to Brandt’s article, the cost would be \$24,000. But still, that’s \$12,000 per year!

I had imagined that if MDC were smart, it would keep tuition costs down and attract students right away. I was thinking I might even be one of them, although I have no ambitions to be a professional chef.

Now I’ll have to rethink everything. It seems learning to cook is so popular that even a two-year program like Miami

Continued on page 22

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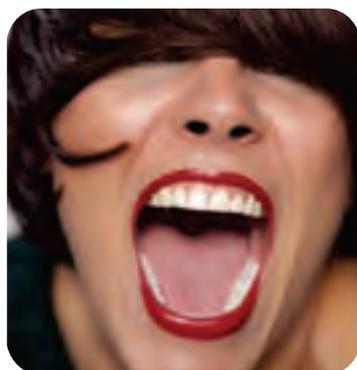
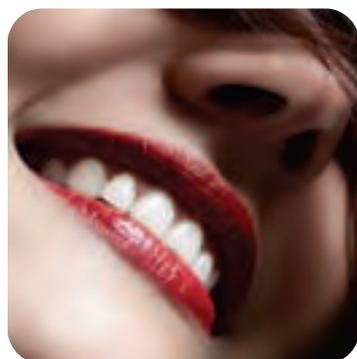
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Commentary: LETTERS

Letters

Continued from page 20

Culinary Institute's is pricey. Too pricey.
*Thomas Elrod
Miami*

An Inn of Inequity

Wow! Finally reading Terence Cantarella's article about the City Inn hotel took me right back to a place that, at one point, I let ruin my life ("Edifice Complex," August 2008).

Everything he said was *spot on!* I literally lived there on the sixth floor for about a year, with my ex and three-year-old child. We had a bad drug addiction and everything there was so convenient to catering to our needs. It was horrible. The owner knew everything that went on there! Even went on right in front of him. OMG!

Anyway, yeah, that was indeed a very vivid flashback. It took me *a lot* of time, will, and determination to get back on my feet after I landed there. I wouldn't wish my worst enemy to land in a place like that.

*Name Withheld by Request
Miami*

Some Letters from 2011 That Didn't Get Published — Until Now

A Lesson For the Beach: Parks, Not Par Threes

I hope Miami Beach officials read Jim W. Harper's cover story "The Trouble with Golf" (April 2011), as a new par-three course costing taxpayers \$3 million is in the planning stages.

I wonder what are the yearly losses at our two 18-hole public golf courses? Maybe this is a wake-up call? Instead of another golf course, Miami Beach should build a park with activities that attract a larger range of residents.

*Darren Mink
Miami Beach*

Buckle Up, Humankind, It's Going To Be a Bumpy Ride

Jim W. Harper's "Going Green" column in the March 2011 issue ("The Sun Orbits Our Flat Earth") was a refreshing dose of truth-telling. Future generations will look back with incredulity on the complacency of our current crop of politicians.

Rather than recognize what is certainly the gravest threat humanity has faced in recorded history, they've abdicated their responsibilities as leaders. Actually, imagining future generations

looking back on this era now requires a faith in our species' survival potential, which is no longer automatic.

We of the carbon-burning countries are moving the entire planet toward conditions that human beings have never before experienced. Some profess confidence that we can adapt to a radically transformed climate. Sure, given enough time, and a climate that changed gradually over many millennia.

Instead, our radical energy consumption has us headed for the geological equivalent of a sudden and catastrophic impact — a planetary car crash, as it were. And the climate-change deniers in our political and media systems are making sure that none of us will be wearing our seat belts.

*Warren Senders
Medford, Massachusetts*

Claws: Would You De-Finger A Child, Shari?

I read Shari Lynn Rothstein-Kramer's personal essay "Cat Fight" (August 2011) and was left wondering why her mother-in-law wanted the option of declawing a cat. Having this information would have made it a stronger commentary as it would have given us insight into what her mother-in-law was experiencing.

The commentary did note that having the option to declaw should be a personal one, between owner and cat, akin to a mother deciding on circumcision for her son. It's an interesting analogy, but circumcision is the removal of foreskin, which isn't quite the same as declawing. Declawing a cat or any animal requires amputating their bones.

Because it's an amputation, I would suggest that if PetSmart in Aventura adopted to people who were going to declaw cats, it would be like a foster agency allowing a person to adopt a child when those parents planned to cut off the child's fingers. Yes, it's a little dramatic but, I think you'll agree, a more fitting analogy.

As a long-time cat owner, I'd also remind them that contrary to popular myths, cats are incredibly trainable. A little bit of two-sided tape on furniture or rugs will upset a cat to the point that they will often sulk and look for their actual scratching pad. It's my experience that when I can't train a cat, it's better to find that cat a new home, with someone who has the time and energy to train the pet.

*Daisy Hernandez
Hialeah*

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Some Things Never Change

Things like mud-slinging, fear-mongering, political stupidity, and savage ideologues

By Jack King
BT Contributor

It's been nearly a year since I've written about the political scene. I think I just got tired of all the bull, how politics had deteriorated into nonstop mud-slinging and character assassination. It used to be that the way to get ahead in politics was to make your case better than your opponent. Now it's all about making your opponent look worse than you.

Fear-mongering about people who don't look or sound like you is also being used relentlessly and ruthlessly. Starting with the top, we have a president who is liked by 50 percent of the country and hated by the other 50 percent. Under normal circumstances, that wouldn't be very good for President Obama, but when you put it in context — namely, that 100 percent of Americans think congress sucks — he's actually doing pretty well.

Florida's congressional delegation gets along okay when they're dealing with Florida issues. To translate, it means bringing home the bacon in the form of federal projects. Sure, they all say they want to cut taxes and slash the budget, but not in their home state.

However, last month Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart attached a rider to a massive, trillion-dollar spending bill

that would have tightened restrictions on travel to Cuba, reversing Obama's loosening of harsh restrictions that had been put in place by President George W. Bush.

Obama, in no mood to put up with such silliness, threatened a veto. Enter Rep. Kathy Castor of Tampa, who intellectually slapped the hell out of Diaz-Balart and his two congressional cronies, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and David Rivera, who co-sponsored the rider. Castor didn't have a tough job outwitting these three clowns.

Why would Diaz-Balart, who supposedly works for the citizens of this country, do something guaranteed to kill the spending bill? That would have shut down the federal government, which would have (among many other nasty things) cut off Social Security payments to thousands of his constituents, many of them fellow Cuban Americans. Anything to hurt his uncle, Fidel Castro.

Now, how much more stupid can this guy be? Well, he's good at this sort of thing, so there's more. After the amendment is stripped out of the bill, he issues a statement calling President Obama the "appeaser-in-chief."

Never mind that it was his own Republican colleagues in Congress who removed the amendment, not the president. That didn't stop Diaz-Balart. And then to top it off, he turned around and voted for the bill.



Way to go Mario. Even your brother wasn't that stupid.

I've been on a Marco Rubio watch since he got elected, and so far he seems to be doing quite well, even if he's not in lockstep with the Republican leadership. Philosophically, I don't have much in common with him, but he's avoided those ideological traps that can mess you up in Washington.

Does anyone remember what happened to former Sen. Mel Martinez right after he was elected? It was during the Terri Schiavo mess. The woman was brain dead and there was a major fight over whether the doctors should pull the plug on her life-support equipment. It was a circus like no other. Example: We had a U.S. Senator who was a doctor diagnosing the woman's condition by watching her on television.

Martinez was marched out in front of the television cameras (and there were tons of them), handed a statement to read that he had never seen, and was ordered by Republican leaders to read it. From the look on his face, it was pretty evident he did *not* agree with it, but he continued on anyway. Martinez walked away and never came back.

No doubt he didn't like what had happened to him, and only complained

privately. Nevertheless his career as a U.S. Senator was dead. He never got any important committee assignments and probably never had his telephone calls returned. After less than five years, he resigned from the U.S. Senate, ostensibly to spend more time with his family.

Martinez is a good man who was savaged by the Republican ideology machine, which demands that you win at all costs and take no prisoners — even if they're your brothers.

It looks like Rubio has managed to sidestep this, and I hope so. It's not easy to stay out of the Republicans' meat grinder if you don't march in formation with them. Keep working on it, Marco.

In the December issue of *Biscayne Times*, there was a story about the Miami District 2 city commission race won by Marc Sarnoff ("The People Have Spoken — Okay, Call It a Whisper"). In my opinion, it was heavy on BS and light on fact.

So next month I'll be doing an interview with Sarnoff. If you have questions for him, send them to the feedback address below and I'll ask them.

It's good to be back.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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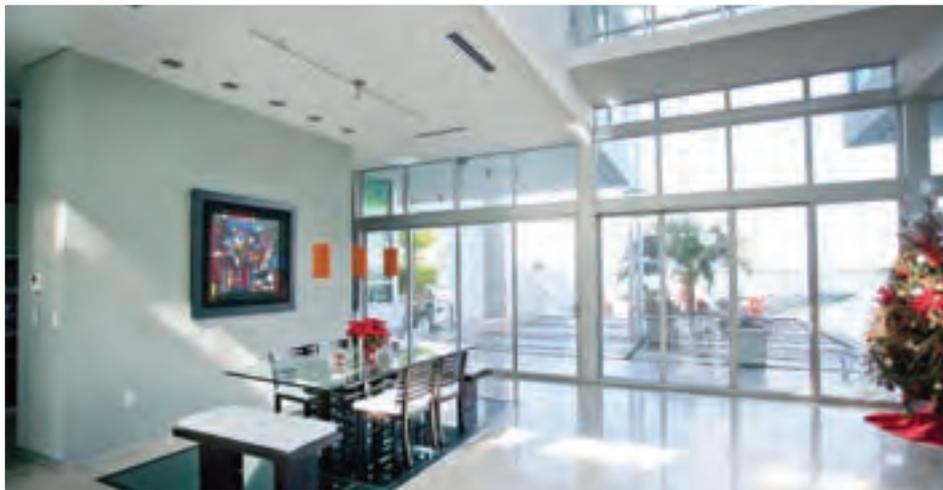
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Downtown from the Ground

Ditch the car and hit the streets in the heart of the Magic City

By **Christian Cipriani**
BT Contributor

For the first two months of 2012, I've set my sights on exploring downtown Miami. I'm something of a philistine when it comes to appreciating this area. In 2008 I slipped out of a contract at Loft II on NE 2nd Street, and finally landed about 25 blocks north in Edgewater.

This was when condos were rising but only a few decent shops and restaurants had taken a gamble on a new downtown. Today it still feels torn between grime and glitz, like so many neighborhoods on this side of the bay, but on a Saturday jaunt through our central grid, I found myself surprised by what I found.

To begin, I had to do this right: I ditched my car in front of the Wolfson Campus of Miami-Dade College and committed to an afternoon of public transportation and walking. This was, sad to say, a novelty. In six years, I've never set foot on a bus, train or the Metromover. It was only when I bought a bike that I began noticing everything I missed by car.

On my walk to the Metromover stop in the cut-out base of Loft II, I bumped into old friends and their new baby. This set a nice tone for the afternoon, one of hope that the new downtown fostered a normal, crack-free urban lifestyle.

On the platform, I pored over a map but couldn't make heads or tails of it

(I'm notoriously bad with directions). A crow flew by carrying an entire tostone in its beak. I smiled and hopped aboard the Metromover with a tourist's enthusiasm. Of course I was excited; I had no idea where I was going.

I went north, apparently, and got off at NE 11th Street. Sandwiched between two of the city's largest, most exclusive condo towers is Miami Pawn. I'd never been to a pawnshop and it was time to change that.

To my left and right, I could see untold millions in wealth; directly behind and in front of me were fear, poverty, crime, violence, and addiction. This city juxtaposes extreme inequities like few others.

The interior of a pawnshop isn't the sleazy, suspicious place you see in movies. It's more like a high-end Salvation Army, that same moth-ridden stench swirling around its unwillingly donated merchandise. I bookmarked a few pieces of DJ gear and hopped back on the Metromover.

For a guy who never really goes downtown, I ended up there a lot in December. The night before this little adventure, I went to Bahía, the seventh-floor poolside lounge at the Four Seasons. But like those towering medieval walls I remember from Oxford, which open onto serene, manicured private quads, the exquisite side of downtown lives behind closed doors — or in the case of the Four Seasons, up in the air, where location becomes meaningless.



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

The sounds, smells, and sights of downtown are livelier from the ground: shimmering new towers, historic office buildings, less-than-historic jewelry malls, reams of watch emporiums, musty shops stacked ceiling-high with cheap shoes, speed-walking businesspeople passing slow-walking vagrants.

It's truly buzzing with life — and flavors! Soya y Pomodoro and Fratelli Milano serve authentic, mouth-watering Italian; the 24-hour Manolo & Rene Cafetería is a must-have late-night munching experience; Cvi.Che 105 is ceviche like you've never seen — and the list goes on.

I found some real gems on my walk. Shoe Gallery, at 244 NE 1st Ave., is a funky cultural hybrid: skateboarding meets hip-hop meets indie, and it's stocked with some of the coolest shoes and threads I've seen in Miami. After my visit there, I had lunch at Bryan in the Kitchen, at 104 NE 2nd Ave. The charming café/bakery was bustling on this sunny afternoon, no doubt with people who'd moved downtown in just the past few years.

Bryan serves delicious, well-priced food worth waiting for, and I was happy to

see cupcakes — a confectionery harbinger of the neighborhood's rising fortunes.

I would have gone further on the Metromover but the truth is I couldn't figure it out. That says more about me than our public transit systems, but like many people, I haven't had to learn.

Unlike in New York or San Francisco, driving in Miami is practical and convenient. But imagine a water taxi along the coast of Biscayne Bay from the Upper Eastside to Coconut Grove, or a ferry to Miami Beach. I think people in Miami would eat this up.

Despite the schizophrenic mix reflected in its businesses and populace, downtown Miami is getting better and better. Going around without a car isn't ideal but it's certainly possible, and I'll probably do it again sometime — probably by bike. Downtown still has a bad reputation, so if you haven't been there in a while, check out MiamiDDA.com for some tips on where to begin.

For those of you not entirely convinced, perhaps I can entice you with next month's column: an exploration of its historic architecture.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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BizBuzz

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

By Pamela Robin Brandt
BT Contributor

Here we are again in a new year, the time for resolutions to work on everything we've dreamed about — getting organized, living better, looking better, maybe just eating better. Anything that doesn't cost a mint, since we blew most of the bank account on last month's holidays. Fortunately *BT* advertisers, as always, have special deals to help fill your dreams without emptying what's left in your wallet.

How about starting the year by receiving up to \$10,000 to support your own business? You did read that right. "Mom and Pop" small-business grants are available this month in Miami-Dade County Commission District 2 and District 3. See this issue's ads from the **Neighbors and Neighbors Association** (180 NW 62nd St.) for dates and district office addresses where applications can be picked up and accepted, as well as the dates for the mandatory workshops explaining all the application requirements. For additional info, contact NANA's Lawanza Finney at 305-756-0605.

Looking to kick off the new year in a new home? For the perfect upscale property, call new advertiser **Georgeé Kluck** (305-608-5269), who has been ranked in the top 1% of real estate agents nationwide since 1990 and specializes in luxury

homes in all the most desirable neighborhoods from Aventura to Coral Gables.

If leasing is your preference, consider a one- or two-bedroom unit in the completely restored MiMo gem, **East Wind Apartments** (7400-7420 NE 6th Ct., 305-757-7588), another new advertiser. Amenities in the pet-friendly complex range from safety features like burglar alarms and intercom to appearance niceties — landscaped courtyard, granite countertops, stainless-steel appliances, and more. And the Upper Eastside location is tops for restaurants and nightlife.

For seniors seeking a fulfilling and secure community residential situation, **Vi Living** (19333 W. Country Club Dr., Aventura, ViLiving.com) offers on-site, 24-hour care on three levels, from simple assisted living (including housekeeping and maintenance, plus a culinary program with a classically trained chef) to full skilled nursing care. There's a plethora of social and recreational activities, too.

Maybe your old house just needs some renovation — a kitchen or bathroom remodel; some striking crown molding; replacing those old doors with 30 coats of paint that don't close after May when summer humidity kicks in. The licensed expert to call is **David Hester** (786-294-0954), in business for more than 30 years and known for being on time and on budget. He does



all manner of construction, but interior renovations are his fave.

Need new flooring — and need it now, if not sooner? Take a road trip to **Endura Hardwood Flooring** (1942 Tigertail Blvd., Dania, 954-410-3981). The selection of wood flooring is huge; installation is available; prices are very competitive; and delivery is fast.

Or perhaps you'd just like to hold onto your home, whatever its condition? Well, you remember attorney **Jake Miller** (305-758-2020) and his free consultations regarding conventional or short-sale real estate closings, foreclosures, or bankruptcies — right? What you might not remember, though, is his new address (11900 Biscayne Blvd. #618), with more office space and more free guest parking. Hey, every little bit helps, right?

Home improvement is one thing. Self-improvement? Now, that's a bit trickier, because we must do it ourselves. Darn. Can't we get someone else to do it for us?

Not really, but **Miami Beach Community Health Center** is sure helping

out this month — and/or recognizing folks who already have. On January 9, there's the 11th annual CAEAR (Communities Advocating Emergency AIDS Relief) Coalition Partnership Awards dinner; those interested in attending should call Orlando Taquechel (305-538-8835, x1602). And on January 28, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., the MBCHC hosts a free health fair at its North Health Center (11645 Biscayne Blvd.). Offerings include free screenings for diabetes, blood pressure, cholesterol, and many more services, plus refreshments, entertainment, and giveaways. Call Anna Pierre (305-538-8835, x1641) for more info.

Readers will also receive a free cholesterol screening when they call for an appointment with new advertiser **Daniel Leon, MD**, whose brand-new medical suite is in the Shoreview Building (9999 NE 2nd Ave. #204, 786-497-4440). A primary-care physician, Dr. Leon specializes in all areas of internal medicine (including preventive healthcare) and

Continued on page 30



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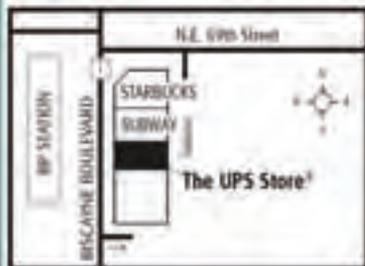
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Biz Buzz

Continued from page 28

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Got a weight problem, and all the nasties that go with excess poundage — energy loss, depression, anxiety, etc.? Attend one of the free one-hour seminars of **Dr. Lee S. Barbach** (1717 N. Bayshore Dr. #240), a new advertiser, on January 11 or 18 at 6:30 p.m. Both discuss weight loss and metabolic conditions. For reservations: 1-888-924-7664. For further info: www.iWishiFeltBetter.com/weight-loss.

You need not get in shape alone, either, at new advertiser **Steel Gym** (5580 NE 4th Ct., 305-751-7591), a famed New York City facility whose new location is at Mark Soyka's 55th Street Station complex. Welcome to the hood, guys! As at the original NYC gym, personal trainers, who design one-on-one diet and training programs, are all independent contractors whom patrons pay directly; hence there are no outrageously priced packages. Related congratulations are also due to commercial and residential Realtor Brian Carter (305-582-2424) of Majestic Properties, an old friend and advertiser, for bringing Steel to our part of town.

If exercise sounds like too much work, Fernando Maestre, owner of **Beach Beauty** (6685 Collins Ave., 305-864-8838) suggests a way to renew yourself with no effort whatsoever on your part: The salon features the only anti-aging Red Light Therapy bed in Miami. Relax while the magical mystery device reverses sun damage and reduces wrinkles by stimulating collagen and elastin production. The treatment also claims to help acne, age spots, and scars. A new advertiser, Fernando wants to introduce *BT* readers to his expansive facility and the Red Light procedure by offering some hefty discounts: \$99 for a month's worth of treatments; \$199 for three months.

Then there are the health issues associated with (ugh...) aging. That's where **Jeff D. Hackmeier & Associates** comes in (305-893-4488). Jeff has been in the insurance business for more than 30 years, which has led him to become a specialist in long-term-care insurance. Jeff notes that this past November, the Obama Administration halted the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports program, which eliminated any chance of a government-sponsored

long-term-care program. Considering that 63% of seniors will need some type of long-term care after age 65, that's troubling news. But there are still plenty of options, many of them quite affordable. Give him a call for more details.

If it's not old age, it's something else — like a car accident. If you've been in one, you know that a few days or weeks later, you're actually feeling worse than that awful day. Soreness, stiffness, cramped muscles. What you need is massage therapy from a certified professional. Did you know your auto insurance will pay for it? True fact. **Body Well Therapy** (305-350-7751; www.bodywelltherapy.com) specializes in just such relief, and best of all, their licensed therapists come to your home. Since 2005, they've rubbed thousands of clients the right way.

To help readers welcome the new year with a truly gleaming smile, Dr. Valeria Soltanik at **The Art of Dentistry** (2999 NE 191st St. #350, 305-466-2334) is offering a special price this month on Zoom whitening: \$289 (normally \$400) with mention of the *BT*.

At **Inner Balance Mind Body Studio** (12579 Biscayne Blvd., 786-383-3088), a new fitness facility and new advertiser, January brings two special events. On January 27 at 7:00 p.m. physician Nancy Clark presents a talk and demo on treating neck and back pain with acupuncture; admission is just \$3 for *BT* readers, but do call to reserve a space. And drop in the following night, January 28, for the studio's grand-opening cocktail party, which features raffles for yoga attire, memberships, and more. Consult www.innerbalancemindbody.com for further details.

With the addition of several new independent local retail outlets, **By Nature** (www.buynaturepetfoods.com) has just made it more convenient to keep your pets healthy in the new year. As well as old friend Biscayne Pet House (10789 Biscayne Blvd.), the all-natural and organic dog and cat foods are now stocked by Pets Best (14109 S. Dixie Hwy.), Animal Crackers downtown (280 NE 2nd St.), and Mary's LB (13295 W. Dixie Hwy.). The firm has a January special, too: Buy ten bags of dry food and get one free.

New Year's Day is way too festive to celebrate just once, several days ago. Luckily, **Mr. Chef's Fine Chinese Cuisine & Bar** (18800 NE 29th Ave. #10; 786-787-9030) is giving readers another

chance on January 23, Chinese New Year. Welcome the Year of the Dragon — considered a year of good fortune in health and wealth — with special combo dishes. See this issue's ad in our Dining Guide for details.

Though only a couple of months old, new advertiser **Blu Sushi** (600 Silks Run Rd., 954-744-4398) is already attracting critical attention and discerning diners to its Village at Gulfstream Park location. Edible attractions, in addition to the unusual makis, include small plates like lobster tacos with basil cream aioli, or shrimp with sriracha/teriyaki beurre blanc. And you might not expect a place specializing in "outrageous cocktails" to also feature a kids' menu, but you'd be wrong.

It's not too early to start planning those February 5 Super Bowl parties. And to ensure that everyone in the household can enjoy the game instead of being stuck in the kitchen, let **Bagels & Company** (11064 Biscayne Blvd., 305-2435) put together your platters — generously overstuffed sandwiches, fruit, everything but the beer.

To really remind ourselves why we live in Miami, there's nothing like brunching outdoors in the middle of winter on a terrace overlooking balmy Biscayne Bay, while much of the rest of the USA freezes. This is especially true when the fare includes dishes like wild Florida shrimp with artisan Anson Mills cheddar/bacon/tomato grits and a maple-sherry gastrique — just one of the unusual temptations offered at the new Sunday brunch, beginning January 8, at **Trio on the Bay** (1601 79th St. Cswy., 305-866-1234). Brunching hours are 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Eating out needn't be prohibitively expensive when entertainment is built in, as it is at **Anise Taverna** (620 NE 78th St., 305-758-2929) on nights when flamenco guitarist Alex Fox plays. Upcoming performances are scheduled for January 17 and February 21. And for those with a yen for foreign travel, just not the budget, the restaurant will take your taste buds on a grand tour on this month's "Mediterranean Mondays." Barcelona on January 9; Sardinia, January 16; Cyprus, January 23; and, on January 30, Egypt.

Man does not live by bread alone, nor woman. We want wine. So our recommendation is that you plan this month's grocery shopping trips to **Laurenzo's Italian Center** (16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381) to happen on

Saturday afternoons when, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., there will be wine tastings — a different assortment each week. And now that South Florida's growing season is in full swing again, don't forget to check out the Laurenzo's low-profile but high-quality farmers market next door, across the parking lot.

Speaking of vino, downtown Miami's popular Italian restaurant, **Fratelli Milano**, is offering *BT* readers a free glass of wine with dinner entrées, Monday through Thursday, 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., throughout the month. Just tell them you saw their ad in our Dining Guide.

Veteran advertiser **Yogurbella** (Shops at Midtown Miami, 305-576-1002) offers 12 low-fat natural flavors of froyo plus 50 fresh toppings — which, since the place is self-serve, patrons can pile on to their heart's content. And this month the Midtown shop also offers a chance to win an iPad2. Just log onto Facebook and "like" @YogurbellaMiami. Winners will be announced at the end of January.

Another chance to be a winner is offered by Yogurbella's landlords, the **Shops at Midtown Miami**. Through January 25, the Shops will be hosting a VIP free parking giveaway (12 individual year-long passes, each valued at \$900, for unlimited parking in Midtown's garage). To enter, "like" the Shops@Midtown Miami on Facebook, and explain what you most like about your car. The passes will prove especially useful since Midtown just acquired three new tenants: Irene Marie's Angel Bags (3401 N. Miami Ave. #130); Blo Dry Bar (3301 NE 1st Ave. #102); and Moloko, Art of Coffee (3201 N. Miami Ave. #103), whose grand opening is scheduled for January 6.

Something still missing in your life? If it's spiritual growth that you're seeking, welcome new advertiser and internationally known former television star Rev. Alberto Cutie and **The Church of the Resurrection** (11173 Griffing Blvd., 305-893-8523), an Episcopal church — self-described as "walking a middle way between Roman Catholicism and Protestant traditions" — where all are welcome. Sunday's 9:30 services are in English; noon's are en español. Check out www.churchoftheresurrection.org for further info.

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

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Miami River 115 Years Ago

A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami

By Paul George
Special to the *BT*

This pristine photograph of the mouth of the Miami River and its verdant banks dates to 1897, which was the year following the incorporation of the City of Miami.

In the foreground are the splendid gardens of Henry M. Flagler's magnificent Royal Palm Hotel. Across the river lies Brickell Point, named for the family that owned today's Brickell Avenue

neighborhood. One of the buildings representing the family's trading post is visible.

In the rear of the photograph, jutting into the shallow waters of Biscayne Bay, is the future Point View, which, by 1912, was the name for an upscale neighborhood of wood-frame, single-family homes.

Today the same area hosts a much different scene, ranging from the posh Epic hotel and condominium on the north bank of the river to the famed



Photo courtesy of Miami News Collection, HistoryMiami, #1989-011-3169

Miami Circle and the towering Icon Brickell complex on the south bank.

The river in 1897 was also wider at the mouth than it is today, owing to dredging and landfill projects in the 20th Century.

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

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Family & Fortune

Aventura was dreamed up by Donald Soffer. He built it and they came. By the thousands. Now his children are fighting to protect it.

By Erik Bojnansky



When Donald Soffer first visited a patch of swampy wetlands just south of the border between Dade and Broward counties, his original intent was simply to build a shopping mall.

But after seeing the land, the idea came to him for an upscale community created around an expansive golf course and country club, a vision he sketched on a cocktail napkin.

It is no exaggeration to say that Soffer's sketch gave birth to Aventura, one of the most affluent municipalities in Florida. "Without him, there would not be a City of Aventura," former mayor Jeff Perlow declares.

Soffer didn't develop everything in today's Aventura, but his master plan, which included building the Aventura Mall and the 241-acre Turnberry Isle Resort and Country Club, attracted other developers.

After Soffer came Coscan Development Corp., which built the Waterways; Joyce Bronson, who developed Mystic Pointe; Julius "Jules" Trump, who shaped Williams Island; and various other builders.

Turnberry Associates, a collection of business entities and partnerships, is another Soffer creation. Its projects reach from South Florida to Orlando, Las Vegas, Nashville, Arlington, Destin in the Florida panhandle, and Paradise Island in the Bahamas.

The Turnberry Associates' website states its \$7 billion real estate empire consists of 20 million square feet of retail, 7000 apartment and condo units, almost 2 million square feet of office space, and 2000-plus hotel and resort rooms. Among Turnberry's properties are the newly chic Fontainebleau resort in Miami Beach and an aviation service for private and corporate jets at Opa-locka Executive Airport.

Today Turnberry Associates is a family business run by Donald Soffer's two middle-age children, Jeffrey Soffer and Jacquelyn Soffer (pronounced sō-fur). Donald, 79 years old, retains a strong voice in the company.

"They work together and they argue and fight, but they settle things themselves," he told the online *Aventura Business Monthly* (ABM) this past July. "Usually, I'm part of the fight."

Lately they've had to do a lot of fighting. With the 2008 banking crisis came a slew of lawsuits filed against the Soffer family. Some of those suits

are related to Jeffrey Soffer's attempt to build a 63-story Fontainebleau casino resort in Las Vegas. Several Jeffrey Soffer-owned Las Vegas companies involved in the project's creation are in debt for close to \$1 billion, and a Chapter 7 filing is still being unraveled in downtown Miami's U.S. Bankruptcy Court.

Aside from matters of debt, Turnberry also faces litigation with a hotel chain that had managed Turnberry Isle Resort since 2004, as well as lawsuits involving two former Turnberry executives Jeffrey Soffer once considered friends.

Meanwhile, Turnberry's portfolio is shrinking. In February 2010, billionaire investor Carl Icahn, whose Indian Creek mansion is within walking distance of two separate homes owned by Jeffrey and Jacquelyn, bought the partially constructed Fontainebleau Las Vegas at a bargain price: \$156 million.

Last year lenders seized Town Square, a million-square-foot Turnberry retail and office complex in Las Vegas, claiming they're owed \$513 million, a foreclosure action Jeffrey Soffer is contesting. In December 2009, Prudential Insurance, Jeffrey's development partner, foreclosed on Turnberry Towers, also in Las Vegas. And this past July, the *South Florida Business Journal* reported a foreclosure suit filed against Davie Commons, a 153-acre cow pasture in Broward that Turnberry planned to develop into two million square feet of retail, office, and hotels.

Turnberry Associates is also selling off property. Last year Triarch Capital bought One Turnberry Place, a nine-story office building near the Aventura Mall, for \$53 million. Turnberry also sold Aventura Square, a 113,000-square-foot shopping center, to Equity One for \$56 million.

"Turnberry was the thousand-pound gorilla in Aventura," says Jay Beskin, a former Aventura city commissioner. "They had the most significant and economic power. Obviously, like a lot of real estate companies, they overextended and found themselves in trouble in the downturn. But now they're trying to recoup somehow."

The Soffer family declined to be interviewed for this article. However, a source close to Turnberry Associates says the sales are strategic, with the proceeds being reinvested in the company's best assets. "Right now we have to hunker down," explains the source, who asked not to be named.

This isn't the Soffers' first ride on a financial rollercoaster. Turnberry Associates has dealt with real estate market slumps, disagreements with partners, and a scandal so tantalizing it destroyed a presidential candidacy. Each time, however, the company bounced back stronger than ever.

"That family — they are survivors," former mayor Perlow says. "They're going to end up doing fine."

Donald Soffer's drive to survive and thrive can be attributed to his upbringing. He was raised in the working-class steel town of Duquesne, Pennsylvania, 12 miles south of Pittsburgh. "You couldn't walk outside with a white shirt on for 15 minutes and have it stay white," he told the now-defunct *South Florida CEO* magazine in 2004. "There was a lot of strip mining. I don't remember seeing any leaves on trees."

Apart from a dismal environment, he also had to deal with anti-Semitism. "I was called a 'dirty Jew' until I was 16 years old," Soffer recalled in his interview with ABM.

His father, Harold "Harry" Soffer, sold appliances and owned a Studebaker car dealership prior to developing shopping malls around western Pennsylvania. "He had a 6th grade education, but he was a great salesman and very creative," he recalled for *South Florida CEO*.

Don also credits his teenage obsession with football for his business outlook. "I think I was the first Jewish kid to play on my high school team," he told *South Florida CEO*. "Being on a team was very inspirational. The emphasis that was put on winning was just so great. You couldn't quit no matter how difficult it was because you had to face your neighbors and your friends. You had to persevere, keep on fighting no matter how difficult it got. A lot of that attitude is useful in business. When things are tough and difficult, you have to get down and just work harder at it. Nothing really comes easy."

Thanks to his football prowess, Soffer was able to leave for Massachusetts to attend Brandeis University in 1951. "If you wanted to go to Harvard or Yale or the better medical schools, they only took so many Jews. So after the war, the Jewish community said, 'Screw it, we'll have our own best university,' and they started Brandeis," he explained to ABM.



Tumberly Associates

Donald Soffer, former football standout, envisioned an upscale city rising from the swamp.

Family & Fortune

Continued from page 35

Seeking to raise more funds, Brandeis hired former all-star football player Benny Friedman as coach and allowed him to recruit players without regard for grades. “Brandeis was a very tough school to get into, academically, and I had never taken a written exam in my life. I had a C-plus average and never had a foreign language,” Soffer added. “There was no way I could have gotten into Brandeis without football.”

But once there, skating by was no longer an option. “We had to take the same classes as the rest of the student body, there was no basket weaving like there is today,” Soffer continued. “Out of the 60 guys who were brought in, 35 kids flunked out in the first semester. They couldn’t keep them in school.”

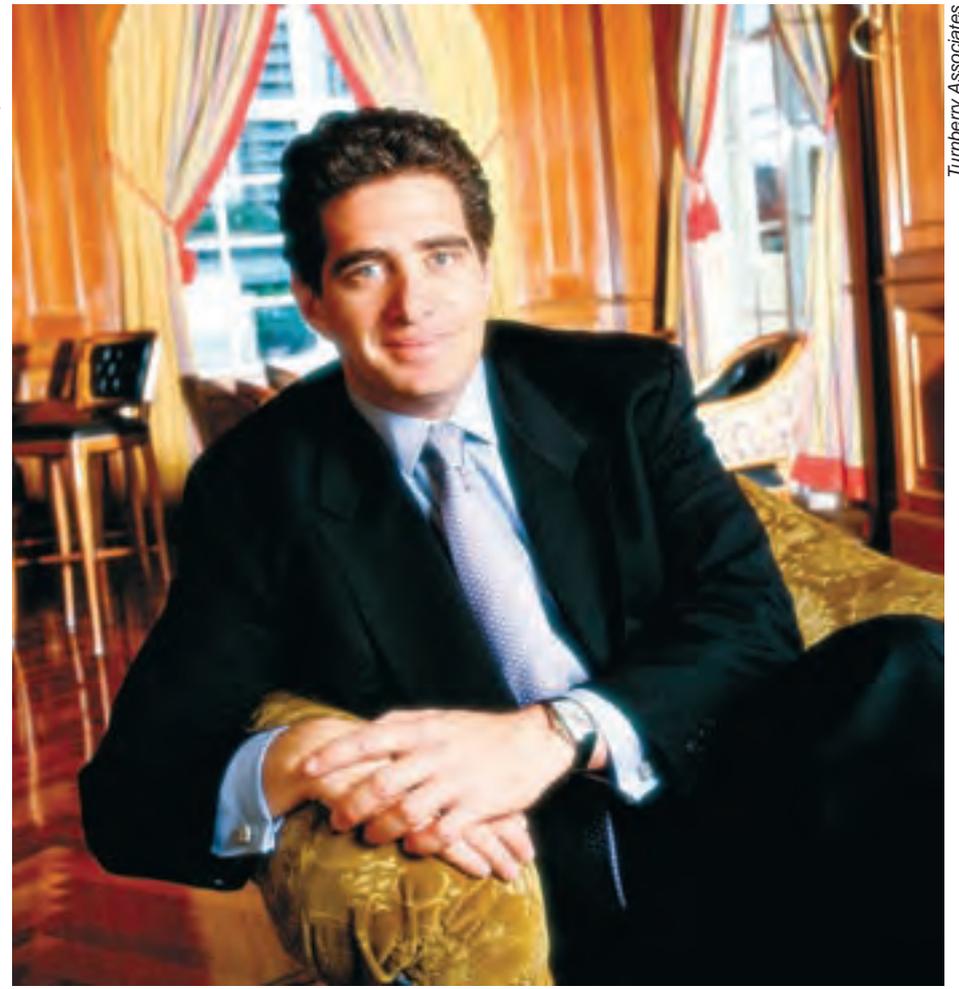
Soffer stuck it out and graduated with an economics degree in 1955. (In 2008 he donated \$15 million to Brandeis University, the largest gift in the college’s history.) Following graduation, Soffer was immediately recruited by the San

Francisco 49ers, but he decided to decline the \$6500-a-year offer. “I was pretty good, but I really didn’t want to play professional football,” Soffer told ABM.

Instead he went back home and built shopping malls for his father’s company, Oxford Development. Right out of college Don co-developed a 180,000-square-foot mall in Pittsburgh. Ten years later, in 1965, he helped build South Hills Village, Pittsburgh’s first indoor mall.

It was Harry Soffer who introduced his son to his next frontier: South Florida. In 1967 Harry and a group of investors bought 785 acres of land for \$6 million. Back then the three square miles that would become Aventura consisted of mangroves, Australian pines, mosquitoes, scattered tourist cabins, and the Point East retirement community at 183rd Street and Biscayne Boulevard. Much of the investors’ land holdings were also underwater. “Naturally, I got the job of developing it,” Donald Soffer told ABM.

Upon looking at the land, Donald remarked to his father that developing



Tumberly Associates

Jeffrey Soffer: “Sure, my dad helped me. He started me in the business, but I took it to a whole different level.”

it would be an adventure, says Seth Bramson, a local author and historian who interviewed the younger Soffer for an as-yet-unpublished book about Aventura. The name stuck. (Aventura is Spanish for adventure.)

Even then, Soffer saw the land’s potential. “He wanted more than just a middle-class-type development,” Bramson says. “He had the idea of having a very glamorous high-life development.” The centerpiece of this future wonderland for the upper class was Aventura Country Club, which would be designed by prolific golf course architect Robert Trent Jones. The planning firm of Hall and Goodhue fleshed out the rest of Soffer’s napkin design.

But first the investors had to drain the wetlands and rezone the land from residential single family to high-rise development, a feat that would raise hell from environmentalists and controlled-growth advocates today.

Fortunately their task was made easier by Gov. Claude Kirk, a self-described “tree-shaking son of a bitch” who was impressed by Soffer’s idea of an affluent city.

“We preyed on his boastfulness,” Soffer told *South Florida CEO*. “He presented it to the cabinet like it was his idea. Then we got all the permits we needed.”

By 1969 Metro-Dade County approved Soffer’s master plan, which allowed for the construction of 23,900 condo units. The golf course helped sell the plan. “The philosophy we worked out with the county was to allow for vertical structures and preserve the open land,” George Berlin, then an associate of Arlen Realty, told the *Miami Herald* in 1988. Soffer also offered to donate land to the county for the construction of a fire station, a library, and a causeway to Sunny Isles Beach.

The zoning enabled the investors, who operated as DonArl of Florida, to sell portions of this new frontier to other developers at hefty profits. DonArl purchased the land for \$5500 an acre in 1967, but sold parts for as high as \$2 million an acre in 1981, according to the *Herald*.

By 1970 DonArl completed the first phase of Aventura Country Club. Then,

Continued on page 38

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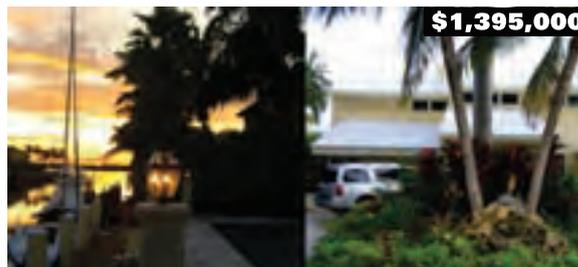
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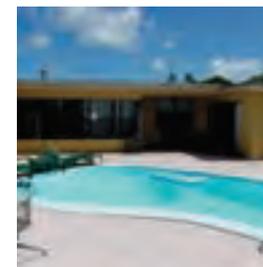


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Family & Fortune

Continued from page 36

from 1971 to 1977, DonArl constructed 4000 condo units around the golf course. But Soffer's father didn't live to see many of those new condo projects completed. Harry Soffer died in 1972 at the age of 63.

Differences in building philosophies eventually tore apart the DonArl partnership. New York-based Arlen Realty and Development wanted to build quickly and cheaply. Soffer was so infuriated by Arlen's mediocre building designs that he changed the name of Aventura Country Club — which, by 1980, had two 18-hole golf courses, a marina, tennis courts, and luxury hotels — to Turnberry Isle Resort and Country Club, named after the renowned golfing resort in Scotland.

"He felt that they [Arlen] were diluting the brand," says a source close to the Soffers' current company.

When DonArl split in 1977, Soffer called his half of the company Turnberry Associates. Berlin opted to work for Turnberry, where he oversaw the company's projects in Aventura until his death in 2008 at the age of 85.

Six years later, Arlen Realty defaulted on a \$39 million mortgage and went into Chapter 11. Soffer snatched up chunks of Arlen's 68 acres of land from the company's backers, including the site of the future shopping mall. "Time proved Don to be right," Berlin told the *Herald*.

Aventura Mall was a superstar even before the mall itself officially opened. On January 31, 1983, three months before the rest of the mall opened, Lord & Taylor held a \$1000-per-couple black-tie gala. With 250 couples confirmed, an estimated \$125,000 was raised for Mount Sinai Hospital, according to the *Herald*.

By October of that year, the first Macy's in South Florida, J.C. Penney's, Sears, and 200 smaller stores were open. Just a third of the size it is today, Aventura Mall still quickly eclipsed northeast Dade's 11 other shopping centers. Today it is among the nation's top-grossing malls, and the fifth-largest at three million square feet.

Turnberry Isle Resort was also hitting its stride as a playground for the rich and famous, thanks to the famous attracting the rich.

"You invite celebrities, you give them free room and board, and you



Donald Soffer hired the legendary Robert Trent Jones to design his golf courses.



April 1970: Aventura under construction, with Sunny Isles and the ocean to the east.

create a celebrity image," Soffer told the *Herald* in 1997. Among those reported to visit Turnberry in the 1980s were James Caan, Jack Nicholson, O.J. Simpson, Ted Kennedy, Gerald Ford, Henry Kissinger, Elton John, Bob Hope, Burt Reynolds, Bill Cosby, Elizabeth Taylor, the Bee Gees, and Madonna.

In his recent ABM interview, Soffer recalled that Turnberry was the "hottest place" on Earth. "Every property I've opened has had a great party. I'm great with parties. I had Arab sheiks and princes fly in...for the weekend on their 737s," he said. "Every major player in Europe and America came."

But Soffer wasn't happy when a 1987 *Vanity Fair* article claimed the resort

was frequented by "shady celebrities, models, drug traffickers," as well as gorgeous women who received, as a *Herald* article described, "free club memberships in return for helping wealthy men relax." Soffer initially denounced the story as "lousy journalism" filled with "total lies," but years later admitted to the *Herald*: "At one point, Turnberry Isle was the place everybody wanted to be. With any kind of thing, you get the groupies. The drug thing then was just getting started."

Soffer also chartered his fleet of yachts docked at Turnberry Isle marina. One vessel in particular was an 82-footer named *Monkey Business*, which Colorado Sen. Gary Hart, a promising

Democratic presidential candidate, chartered in 1987 during his fateful voyage to Bimini with model Donna Rice. When the married Hart was photographed with Rice on his lap, his campaign was derailed. Soffer, who has said he never met Hart, put the yacht on the market for a million dollars.

Following the Hart scandal, the atmosphere at Turnberry Isle Resort mellowed. Instead of wild parties, there were family-friendly townhomes and special courses for future mothers. "It's no longer, and mostly has never been, the swinging thing," Soffer told the *Herald*. "The glitzy crowd has changed themselves. People are not as crazy as they used to be. Overall, Turnberry's image of South Florida has showed the world what a nice place this is."

By 1988 Soffer had sold half his interest in Turnberry Isle Resort to Rafael Hotels for \$20 million. Sometime in the early 1990s, following an \$80 million renovation project, Soffer sold the other half to the hotel group. "I felt at the time the hotel luxury business wasn't doing well," Soffer told the *Herald*. "It was more advantageous to have them buy the hotel, and I had other properties."

Interested in giving "the store away," Soffer assigned his two children increased responsibilities at Turnberry Associates in the late 1990s. His daughter Jacquelyn "Jackie" Soffer started overseeing leasing operations in Aventura Mall, a task that the 45-year-old University of Colorado graduate continues to this day. Jeffrey Soffer was put in charge of new condo developments and groomed to be the company's new face.

Now 44 years old, Jeffrey began working for his father when he was 17. He described himself as a "kid who couldn't sit still" in a 2005 *South Florida CEO* article. Hating school, Jeffrey dropped out of a Gainesville community college and founded the Champion Marine boat dealership in 1986. Three years later, Jeffrey, an ex-powerboat racer and licensed pilot, sold the boat dealership and rejoined his dad's company, where he pushed for Turnberry's expansion.

"Sure, my dad helped me. He started me in the business," he told *South Florida CEO*. "But I took it to a whole different level."

That new level included buying back Turnberry Isle Resort, then owned by a

Continued on page 40

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Turnberry Associates

September 1971: The brand-new Aventura County Club takes shape on dredged land.



Turnberry Associates

Aventura Mall thus far has escaped the lawsuits swirling around Turnberry Associates.

Family & Fortune

Continued from page 38

Kuwaiti pension firm and called Fairmont Turnberry Isle Resort and Club, in 2005, and investing \$150 million to refurbish the property. As part of the deal,

Turnberry Isle agreed to keep Fairmont as the operator for the next 25 years, unless the company defaulted on its obligations.

That same year Jeffrey Soffer bought the 920-room, circa 1954 Fontainebleau Hotel (where Turnberry was already building two condo towers) from hotelier

Stephen Muss for \$325 million.

But it was Las Vegas where Jeffrey sought to make his mark. In 1997 he was the first developer to propose building high-rise condo towers in that desert city. Seven years later he claimed to have made more than a billion dollars

in sales from his first project, Turnberry Place. By 2004 there were 50 high-rise condo projects being proposed by other developers, including a contingent from South Florida.

Continued on page 42

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Turnberry Associates

Turnberry Isle resort was sold by the Soffers, bought back, and now is a lawsuit magnet.

Family & Fortune

Continued from page 40

“I’ve been there almost ten years,” he told *South Florida CEO*. “I was there when nobody was.”

The Las Vegas experience influenced how Jeffrey Soffer redeveloped the Fontainebleau Miami Beach. Transforming

the crusty old Fontainebleau into a modern resort cost nearly \$1 billion. The renovation increased the number of rooms to 1500, created space for 11 restaurants and nightclubs, and added a 40,000-square-foot spa.

“Everything’s brand-new, from the plumbing to the drywall,” he told the *Herald* in 2007. “The only thing you have here in this hotel that’s old is the concrete.”



Turnberry Associates

In 2005 Jeffrey Soffer made a bold move, paying \$325 million for the Fontainebleau Miami Beach.

But the Beach financial investment paled in comparison to the resort’s sequel, the Fontainebleau Las Vegas, where Soffer intended to use \$3 billion in borrowed money to erect a 100,000-square-foot casino, a 3300-seat theater, and a 3800-room resort. He planned to use the Las Vegas location as the flagship for a worldwide

Fontainebleau resort and casino brand.

By the time the recession hit, he had five Las Vegas projects in the works.

But even as the national economy worsened, Jeffrey was throwing elaborate parties. In December 2007, he threw himself a \$2 million 40th

Continued on page 44

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Family & Fortune

Continued from page 42

birthday party at Turnberry's aviation facility at Opa-locka Executive Airport. Performers included KC and the Sunshine Band and Prince. "It wasn't just a quick sampling of Prince's greatest hits, either," nightlife columnist Lesley Abravanel reported for the *Herald*. "It was a mind-blowing, full-blown concert." Then in November 2008, Jeffrey hosted a \$5 million weekend bash inaugurating the grand reopening of the Fontainebleau, which included a Mariah Carey concert and a Victoria Secret's fashion show hosted by Heidi Klum.

A Turnberry Associates insider credits Jeffrey's aggressive business style for the company's growth. "Turnberry did ridiculously well," says the source, who requested anonymity. "His business acumen and history are pretty strong."

His timing? Not so strong. "Las Vegas Fontainebleau was being built when Las Vegas was becoming the worst market in the country," the source adds. "Every project out there in 2008 and 2009 got slaughtered."



LIV nightclub: The Soffers spent nearly a billion dollars on the Fontainebleau's extreme makeover.

Jeffrey Soffer may have hoped to turn the Fontainebleau Miami Beach into a casino. In the summer of 2008, Turnberry contributed \$30,000 to a political action committee that sought the legalization of gambling in resorts with more than 800 rooms.

But with the fall of Lehman Brothers, a major financier of Turnberry's new

projects, Soffer's priority was saving the Fontainebleau Las Vegas. He sold a 50 percent interest in the Miami Beach Fontainebleau for \$375 million to Nakheel Leisure, a Dubai government-owned resort company that is run by Hamza Mustafa.

Soffer then sank \$200 million into the Las Vegas resort to fund cost overruns, an April 2009 *Miami Herald* article reported.

The project was 70 percent finished when lenders cut off funding, provoking a flurry of court cases. Soffer sued his lenders for the rest of the \$800 million in promised loans. In turn, he was sued by several title companies that had insured the \$3 billion in loans, claiming he operated a "shell game" that inflated the worth of his Las Vegas companies while limiting damages to the rest of the Turnberry empire. The title companies demanded up to \$1 billion in damages from Soffer and Turnberry Associates.

A holding company for Lehman Brothers also sued Jeffrey Soffer and Fontainebleau Resorts LLC, which owned both Fontainebleau resorts, for \$298 million, according to the *Las Vegas Sun*, claiming they personally guaranteed loans for a retail component for the Las Vegas project. Soffer told the *Sun* he considered those guarantees invalid since Lehman refused to fully fund his loans. (Fontainebleau Resorts LLC has since been dissolved.)

For a time the Fontainebleau Miami Beach was also threatened with foreclosure. Already being sued for

Continued on page 46

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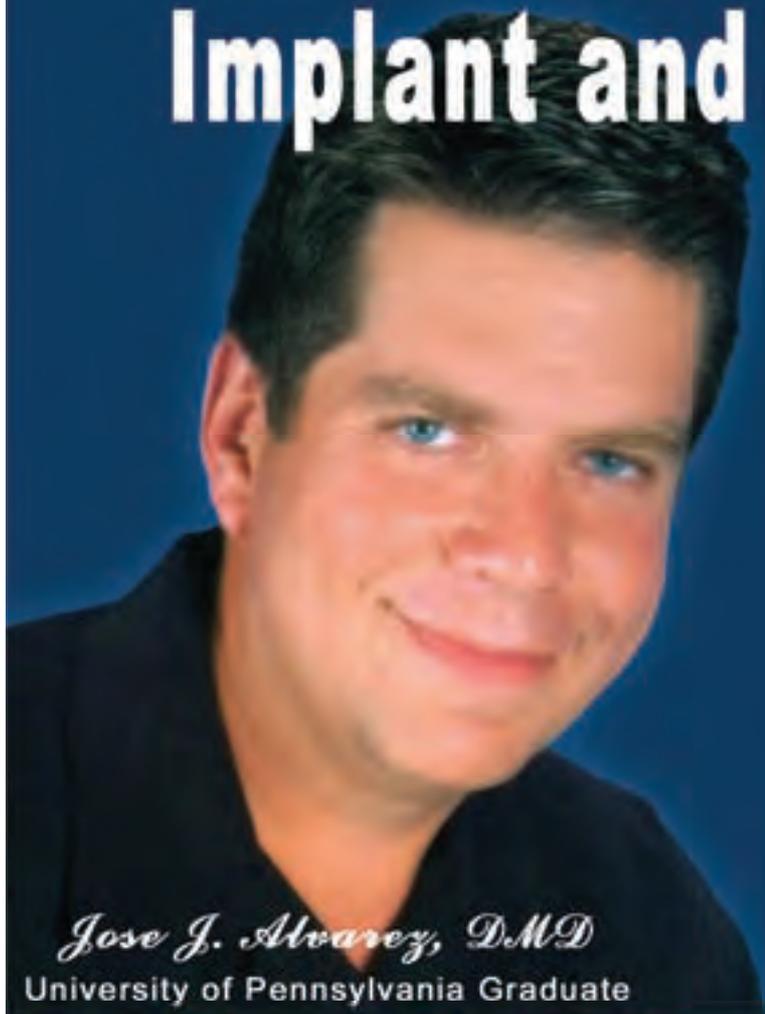
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Family & Fortune

Continued from page 44

\$65 million by contractors who claim they were not paid, a \$660 million construction loan came due in August 2009. The hotel was saved from foreclosure after Turnberry and its partners promised to invest another \$100 million into the Fontainebleau as part of a restructuring plan, according to *Bloomberg News*.

In May 2010, in the midst of the Vegas meltdown, Turnberry Associates fired and sued the company's president, Bruce Weiner, who had worked there for 20 years. Also fired was Bob Vollrath, Turnberry's senior vice president for nearly a decade. The company's lawsuit accuses them of accepting a "salary, bonuses, and other payments from Turnberry Residential during all of the time that [they were] actually working against Turnberry's interest."

The suit specifically cites the new St. Regis Bal Harbour Resort, which they co-developed with Starwood, allegedly behind Turnberry's back. "We are entitled to whatever piece of St. Regis



According to a knowledgeable source, mall revenues in 2011 were up 50 percent over 2010.

Weiner and Vollrath are entitled to," says attorney Michael Olin, who is representing Turnberry Associates in their suit against the former employees.

Weiner and Vollrath countersued in March 2011, asserting they always had a right to pursue independent projects and

claiming they owned a piece of several Turnberry projects.

They accused Jeffrey and Jackie Soffer of not paying them their fair share of the profits, and instead spending millions on a "grandiose lifestyle." Both Soffers, the suits point out, have a

small air force of private jets, propeller aircraft, and a helicopter.

Jeffrey owned a 257-foot yacht, exotic sports cars, racing boats, and a 4900-acre ranch in Aspen, the suit claims, while Jackie assembled an "extravagant art collection" and a second home in Aspen. They are also demanding e-mails and private tax filings from the Soffers dating back to 2004. (Attorneys for Weiner and Vollrath did not return phone calls for comment.)

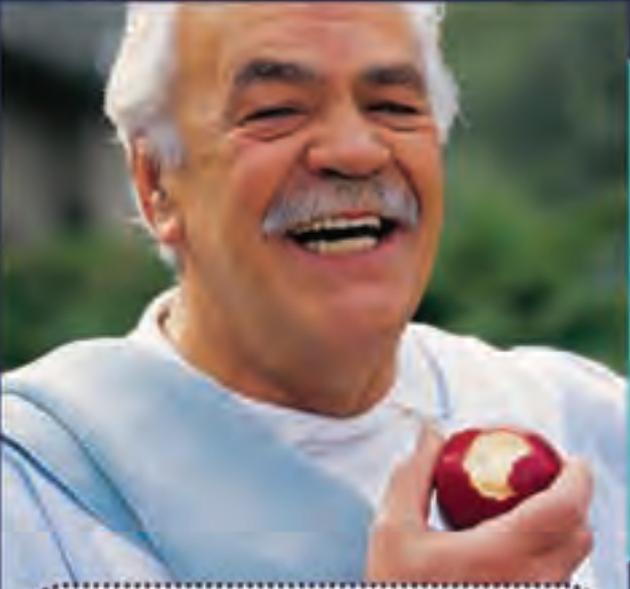
Olin says the former Turnberry executives are "just trying to embarrass Jeff," adding, "I'm still wondering why they never bothered to bring a claim against us until after we sued them for taking our corporate opportunities."

Ironically, Jeffrey Soffer once considered them his most trusted associates, Olin says: "Jeff treated them like family and made them wealthy men. And they did not do likewise for him."

Adds a source close to Turnberry Associates: "When the world goes bad, you find out very quickly who your real friends are."

Continued on page 48

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Family & Fortune

Continued from page 46

Despite the numerous lawsuits swirling around Turnberry Associates, a company source remains confident the Soffers have survived the worst, asserts there is no liability exposure to Aventura Mall, and maintains that the Fontainebleau Miami Beach is on firm footing: “There are a lot of people out there flinging mud to see what sticks.”

This source also insists Turnberry Associates is financially healthy: “All of Turnberry’s assets are performing, from an operational perspective, close to its peak.”

Signs that Turnberry Associates is becoming aggressive once again are cropping up, too.

On Sunday, August 28, 2011, after struggling for control of Turnberry Isle Resort, the Soffers abruptly fired Fairmont, altered the resort’s website and reservation system, removed the name “Fairmont” from all resort material, and issued a press release announcing that Turnberry Associates was now managing the resort itself.

Later that same Sunday, Fairmont executives checked into Turnberry’s hotel “in an effort to maintain its right to manage the resort,” the chain claimed in a federal lawsuit. By 8:00 a.m. Monday morning, the Fairmont executives were being escorted off the property by security guards. As a result of the incident, Fairmont and Turnberry Associates are once again facing each other in court.

At Aventura Mall there is none of that turbulence. Jackie Soffer is successfully attracting more luxury brand stores, once found only at Bal Harbour Shops. Among the high-fashion brands now leasing store space in the mall are Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Burberry, Lacoste, and Michael Kors. Mall revenues for 2011 are up 50 percent over 2010, according to a company source.

There’s also speculation that Turnberry Associates still wants to bring casino gambling to the Miami Beach Fontainebleau. A major hint: Gaming industry consultant Emanuel Pearlman sits on the resort’s board of directors.

“Fontainebleau was developed with casino gambling in mind,” affirms Jeff Morr, CEO of Majestic Properties, a real estate



BT photo by Silvia Ros

Former Aventura mayor Jeff Perlow: “That family — they are survivors. They’re going to end up doing fine.”

company that operates in Miami Beach and Aventura. And though the number of developers seeking unlimited casino rights is growing, Morr thinks the Fontainebleau is still in the running. “Definitely,” he says. “If there is gambling on Miami Beach, it should be at the Fontainebleau.”

The company source pleads ignorance as to whether gambling is being sought at the Fontainebleau, but insists the resort is making plenty of money without it: “Fontainebleau Miami Beach is as good as it gets. It’s a trophy property.”

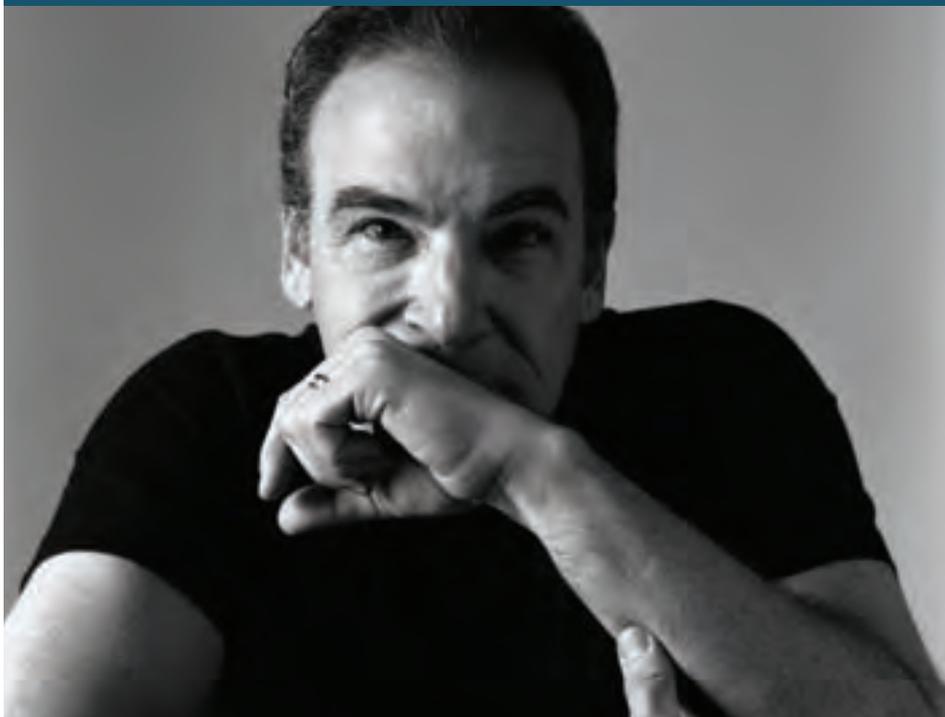
In fact the Soffers are still so enamored of the Fontainebleau brand that last month they changed the name of their aviation operation at Opa-locka Executive Airport from Turnberry Aviation to Fontainebleau Aviation, which boasts five hangars and 19,000 square feet of office and meeting space.

The Soffers have been leasing hangar facilities, once used for its own aircraft, to other corporate jet owners since the mid-2000s. Now plans are in place to expand the aviation side of the family empire.

“It’s great!” says the company source. “They just bought a fuel farm!”

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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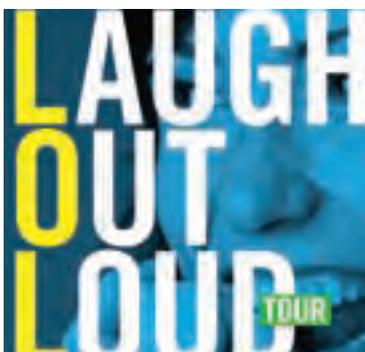
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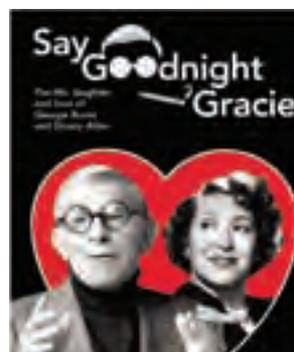


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New Life for a Grand Old Theater

Downtown Miami's Gusman Center will host a summer concert series — for free!

By **Erik Bojnansky**
BT Senior Writer

Downtown Miami residents and visitors will soon be able to enjoy free concerts *and* help support the continuing operation of a historic landmark that's under new management.

The free monthly DWNTWN Miami Concert Series will kick off a new summer session in May at the Olympia Theater at the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts, located at 174 E. Flagler St.

Since 2009, the original DWNTWN concerts, sponsored by Miami's Downtown Development Authority (DDA), have attracted big crowds and musical guests such as the Spin Doctors, Arturo Sandoval, the Jake and Elwood Blues Brothers Revue, the Spam Allstars, and various other jazz, rock, reggae, and R&B acts to Bayfront Park's Tina Hills Pavilion. But owing to the summer swelter, the outdoor concerts are only held from October to April. (On January 13 at 6:00 p.m., three local groups will appear: rappers ArtOfficial, the reggae-fusion band Jahfé, and the Afro-Colombian electronic group Afro Kumbé.)

"In order to continue year-round, we're partnering with the Gusman Center," explains Javier Betancourt, deputy director of the DDA, a taxpayer-funded organization tasked with promoting the downtown area's economic development.

Giving the partnership a big boost is a \$100,000 grant from the Knight Foundation. The grant, to be released over the next three years, requires a matching investment, so the DDA is putting another \$100,000 toward the summer series.

Some of that anticipated \$200,000 will be flowing toward the Gusman itself.

The DDA will be renting its 1567-seat Olympia Theater at a rate still to be determined.

Margaret Lake, the theater's executive director, says she suggested years ago that the DDA hold a few of their events at the Gusman. She's thrilled the agency has taken her advice. "This gives Gusman the opportunity to host an audience that may not have been inside the theater before, so we're incredibly excited," Lake says in an e-mail to the *BT*.

The theater can certainly use the money and publicity, especially after having lost a prominent benefactor: the City of Miami.

Built in 1926 and originally known as the Paramount Movie House, which screened silent films, the facility is acoustically superb and visually spectacular, with the concert hall designed as an ornate courtyard, complete with turrets and towers and a dome of night sky featuring twinkling stars and drifting clouds.

In 1975, its owner, Maurice Gusman, donated the theater and its adjoining office building to the City of Miami, on the condition that it be managed by the Miami Parking Authority, a semi-autonomous agency. Gusman reportedly insisted on this arrangement in hopes of shielding the theater from the city's political machinations.

At the time, philanthropist Mitchell Wolfson, a friend of Gusman, chaired the parking authority's board of directors. City officials contributed one-third of the theater's \$1.4 million annual operating budget but could not designate how those funds were spent.

Last year Miami officials announced the city was no longer able to afford the Gusman's \$475,000 annual subsidy. To keep the theater open, the MPA and city turned over the Gusman to Olympia



BT photo by Silvia Ros

Gusman executive director Margaret Lake: "We're incredibly excited."

Center Inc., a nonprofit formed by Herman Echevarria, a former Hialeah city councilman who owns the BVK/Meka advertisement agency.

Aside from managing the theater, Olympia Center, Inc. also solicits donations for the venue, a job that was once reserved for Friends of the Gusman, a 27-year-old charity.

This past October, Olympia Center "took over all financial responsibility for the theater," explains Lake, adding that, so far, the new managers have risen to the challenge. "We are on track for our first year's goal of \$500,000 and expect to exceed our goals," she declares.

However, the Gusman needs to tap a variety of funding sources, she adds: "The Gusman's present and future is not only dependent on donations, grants, and subsidies, but most importantly income that comes from the rental of the theater."

So it's no surprise Lake is grateful the DDA will be using the Gusman during the summer, an off-season period when fundraising and events are scarce, thanks to the heat and the threat of hurricanes. "The theater will benefit from the rental income, in addition to the concession sales and potential donations to the theater," she notes.

Lake expects the concert series to help neighboring businesses as well. "These are free events to the public, but we can be assured there will be money spent downtown," she says, citing a recent report by Americans for the Arts,

which states that patrons of nonprofit arts and cultural events spend \$27.79 per person above the cost of admission nationwide. "A patron attending an arts event may pay to park the car in a garage, purchase dinner at a restaurant, eat dessert after the show, and return home to pay the babysitter," Lake explains. "This generates related commerce for local businesses such as restaurants, parking garages, hotels, and retail stores."

This isn't the first time the Knight Foundation has supported the DWNTWN Miami Concert Series. In 2009 the DDA received \$150,000 from the foundation's Knight Arts Challenge, a program that hands out matching grants to organizations and individuals for arts programs that benefit the local community.

Betancourt, the DDA's deputy director, confirms that the Bayfront concert series attracted crowds to surrounding businesses as well as restaurants and shops across the street. He says the summer season at the Gusman can help "activate the Flagler Street corridor."

Supporters of the Gusman have been applying for Knight Arts Challenge grants every year since the program was created in 2006. In 2010, Friends of Gusman snagged a \$100,000 arts challenge grant for a "theater rental subsidy fund" that will give up to five local arts companies priority booking for

Continued on page 58

Check Your Oil... Painting?

The Dezer Schauhalle gallery and car collection combines two great passions in one eye-popping space

By Margaret Griffis
BT Contributor

Miami is a city of beautiful women, expensive cars, A-list celebrities, a surprising number of good artists, and lots of cash floating around (or at least the illusion of that). It's what drew Art Basel here a decade ago and continues to bring in film and television shoots, but could it also pull in a new museum and gallery that will be the envy of the art world? The newly opened Dezer Collection Museum and Pavilion hopes to answer that question with a definitive "Yes!"

To describe Michael Dezer, the man behind the museum, as a lover of cars is a huge understatement, along the lines of calling Biscayne Bay a lovely puddle. He owns more than 600 cars — more than many dealerships — many of them (almost) priceless classics. And along

with run-of-the-mill Duesenbergs and Rolls Royces, Dezer's collection includes vintage amphibious cars, century-old

bicycles, military vehicles, and a vast assortment of cars from film and television. Much of the collection focuses on one of Dezer's favorite eras, the 1950s.

Dezer got his start in advertising after he came to the United States from Israel in 1962. He eventually moved on to real estate and is probably best known for redeveloping New York City's Chelsea district in the 1970s. His remarkably successful career allowed him to indulge in a passion he'd developed back in Tel Aviv, when the young auto aficionado was just a bus driver's son. In the 1980s, Dezer

began purchasing collectible cars en masse, recreating his beloved 1950s in a Chelsea warehouse. He called it "Dezerland."

Dezer's son, Gil, inherited his father's dual love of cars and deal-making. While the younger Dezer enjoys Porches and road rallies, South Floridians are more likely to be familiar with Gil's other high-octane pursuit — real-estate development. In 2002 the Dezers, father and son, partnered with Donald Trump to transform Sunny Isles Beach's charming, if sleepy, motel row.

The trio replaced about 2100 feet of oceanfront 1950s-era buildings with a controversial wall of condo-hotel developments. (Even though the projects were branded with the Trump name, Gil is mostly in charge.) Rumors that the principals had cozied up to Sunny Isles politicians and Russian oligarchs didn't throw cold water on the project, which was a dream come true for Gil, who had

long admired Trump, another successful son of a New York real estate developer. It was in Sunny Isles that the

Dezer auto collection was housed until last year.

Having outgrown its 18,000-square-foot space there, the collection needed new digs. A deal to buy a 1950s-era warehouse property in North Miami's industrial district set back the Dezers almost \$7 million, but then, the purchase involved three other properties in addition to the warehouse. The 600 automobiles and other memorabilia were soon moved into the two-acre complex at 146th Street, beside the Florida East Coast Railway tracks, a block west of

An ensemble of classic cars and "star" cars — including two Batmobiles and a "General Lee" customized Dodge from *The Dukes of Hazzard* — greeted the guests in the parking lot.



On display: A Dezer collectible Mercedes with heart-shaped Jacuzzi amid photos by Bunny Yeager.



November 17, 2011: Dezer Schauhalle opening night of the Bunny Yeager retrospective.

Biscayne Boulevard.

While skeptics fixated on the Design District and Wynwood find it strange for a budding car museum and art gallery

to be located in a warehouse zone so far from the epicenter of Miami's art scene,

Continued on page 56

No Piece of Cake

Can a once-thriving neighborhood bakery survive a string of bad luck and changing tastes?

By **Wendy Doscher-Smith**
BT Contributor

What is arguably the best gingerbread outside of Germany is made at Ness Konditorei Bakery, a neighborhood institution that sits on the bend at NE 118th Street, at the point where NE 2nd Avenue flows into W. Dixie Highway. But owing to changes in the neighborhood's demographics, competition from supermarket bakeries, natural disaster, personal hurdles, and the recession, less of that gingerbread — along with varieties of bread, apple strudel, and coffee cake — is rolling out of the ovens these days.

Run by mother-and-son team Helga and Ray Ness, the authentic German bakery has stood at 11801 W. Dixie Highway, on a sliver of unincorporated Miami-Dade wedged between Miami Shores and North Miami, since the Nesses opened it 40 years ago. Despite a loyal clientele, business started a backward slide about a decade ago, and has slowed to a trickle.

"We're sitting in a hole," the 73-year-old Helga says.

Now a handful of devoted locals wants to ensure the bakery stays afloat. Musician, Biscayne Park resident, and ten-year bakery regular Bill Gordon is spearheading a fundraising effort to save Ness Konditorei. ("Konditorei" is

German for pastry shop.) Gordon and others will start with some much-needed cosmetic work on the building. They plan to cover up the current dilapidated sign and, depending on what Miami-Dade codes permit, either install a new metal one or paint one on the south-facing side of the building. The group hopes to have the signage done this month.

In addition, they're paying for advertising to help generate business. In all, Gordon estimates the cost of the improvements to be between \$500 and \$1000.

"These are hard-working, decent people who deserve a break in the form of some new, steady customers who appreciate what they add to our taste world," Gordon says. "My ultimate goal is to see them have more customers. It's a pity to see their stock often so low. I want people to stop by and discover how good their stuff is."

Miami Shores resident and bakery enthusiast John Watt agrees, and is tired of seeing independent businesses like Ness Konditorei go under. "This is a grassroots effort," Watt says. "Their style is so unique, and you can't get some of these things anyplace else."

Like Gordon, Watt favors the traditional style apple strudel, or *apfelstrudel*. On a recent day, one customer waltzed in and ordered a half-dozen of the pastries. On another day, a steady stream of customers purchased multigrain and



BT photos by Wendy Doscher-Smith

Emilie Slater (a former Ness employee) and husband Matthew Godfrey show off their baked goods as Ray Ness looks on.

farmer's rye bread, stollen, a loaf-shaped holiday cake, and pecan pies. One of them, Emilie Slater, was a former employee who started working at the bakery at age 15 to make extra money. That was in the late 1970s.

"Helga taught me every work ethic I know," says Slater, who is now in the entertainment business in California. "This place used to have a line [to order baked goods] and people would come from all over to get cakes." Glancing around, she adds, "I'm sad. There used to be twice as many cases."

The bakery is indeed a bit bare. While house-made pastries, cookies, and breads are still available (in addition to deli items and prepackaged cookies and candies), in one display case there are doilies with nothing on them. A hot serving area features German dolls. Signage is faded. Helga says she's embarrassed because there used to be "so much more."

All of Slater's birthday cakes came from the bakery, although she was particularly fond of the raspberry filling.

Helga is no longer accepting cake orders, even though she gets requests for them. She halted the thriving cake business because of a general lack of interest and difficulty finding help to fill orders.

One customer, Julie Sumitaro, refers to Helga as "Mrs. Ness" and says she has known her for 30 years. Sumitaro drives from Aventura to buy German pastries because what Ness does is "a specialty," she says. Sumitaro was first introduced to German culture and food by a friend. The friend died three years ago, but Sumitaro still makes the drive to Ness.

If the demand is there, why not deliver the goods?

Helga says she would need to hire more help and do more advertising, but the money isn't there. Her son, Ray, who lives with her in their house behind the bakery, has not drawn a salary in nine years. The Nesses are also waiting for the final approval of their 40-year building inspection, due in February.

Continued on page 57

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Directed by Renaud Barret & Florent de La Tullaye



Benda Bilili follows an unlikely group of musicians in the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo. The band, Staff Benda Bilili, is a group of street musicians composed of four paraplegics and three able-bodied men. The core of the group is four singer/guitarists with polio, who use customized tricycles to get around. Joining them is Roger, a teenage prodigy playing a one-string tin can guitar. This film is a fascinating and inspiring story.

January 12th to 15th

The Mill and the Cross

Directed by Lech Majewski



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Directed by Angelina Maccarone



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January 19th to 22nd

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Directed by Kazuya Murata



A fugitive alchemist with mysterious abilities leads the Elric Brothers to a distant valley of slums inhabited by the Milos, a proud group of people struggling against bureaucratic exploitation through a rising rebellion. At the heart of the conflict is Julia, a young alchemist who will stop at nothing to restore the Milos to their former glory.

The Other F Word

Directed by Andrea Blaugrund Nevins



What happens when a generation's ultimate anti-authoritarians, punk rockers become society's ultimate authorites -- dads. With a large chorus of punk rock's leading men including Blink-182's Mark Hoppus, Red Hot Chili Peppers' Flea, and Rise Against's Tim McIlrath *The Other F Word* follows the hysterical and moving journey of these punk rockers turned fathers.

January 26th to 29th

Splinters

Directed by Adam Pesce



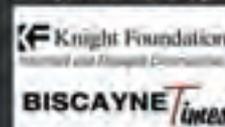
In the 1980s an intrepid Australian pilot left behind a surfboard in the seaside village of Vanimo, Papua New Guinea. Twenty years later, surfing is not only a pillar of village life but also a means to prestige. With no access to economic or educational advancement, let alone running water and power, village life is hermetic. A spot on the Papua New Guinea national surfing team is the way to see the wider world; the only way.

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Criminals Only Past This Point!

Does it make sense for taxpayers to spend \$70,000 on security fences with swinging gates?

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Senior Writer

For 23 years, the only way to enter Belle Meade by car has been to drive past a security guardhouse at NE 76th Street, a couple of blocks east of Biscayne Boulevard. All other streets leading into the Upper Eastside neighborhood are barricaded to traffic. That, however, didn't stop a violent home invader from riding his bike through one of the landscaped barricades and robbing a couple at gunpoint in September 2010.

The incident was enough for 92 percent of Belle Meade homeowners to sign a petition asking for the installation of a fence around their neighborhood of 400 homes. Now, more than a year after the home-invasion incident, the city will install fences on top of street barricades along NE 6th Court between NE 72nd Terrace and NE 77th Street, according to Jeovanny Rodriguez, assistant director of Miami's Capital Improvement Programs (CIP). "Installation is anticipated to begin mid-March 2012," Rodriguez writes in an e-mail to the *BT*. "Project completion is mid-April 2012, weather permitting."

But the abbreviated fences won't deter anyone who wants to enter Belle

Meade. Federal, state, and county laws forbid public streets from blocking pedestrians, bicycles, and wheelchairs, so each fence will have swinging, unlocked gates.

"You have to let the thief in. It's as simple as that," says Margaret Tynan, president of the Belle Meade Homeowners Association. "What the hell is it good for?"

Tynan may think fences with gates are useless, but most of her neighbors still want them. Francisco Becerra, a Belle Meade resident since 1995, is hopeful the laws will be tweaked to allow homeowners to lock the gates sometime in the future. For now, even with the gates, the fence is "better than nothing," he says.

Still, this wasn't the kind of security Belle Meade homeowners had in mind when Tynan and Belle Meade Homeowner Association vice president Frank Rollason circulated a petition last year. It sought permission to install a six-foot-high fence that would run the full length of NE 6th Court, not just atop individual barricades, thus preventing anyone from entering Belle Meade except through 76th Street. And while the security guard staffing the guardhouse can't turn anyone away, a description of any



BT photo by Jacqueline Doulis

NE 6th Court, Belle Meade: Cars are blocked, but not crooks, and proposed new fences won't stop them either.

vehicle or person who passes through can be obtained.

Belle Meade residents had intended to pay for the fence, but Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, whose district includes Belle Meade and the rest of the Upper Eastside, vowed to have the city pay for the project if more than 70 percent of homeowners supported the plan.

There was precedent for Sarnoff's promise. In 2009 the Miami City Commission decided to invest \$1.7 million building a ten-foot-tall, half-mile-long wall around Coral Gate, a neighborhood near SW 8th Street and 22nd Avenue, to deter crime and unwanted traffic. Sarnoff, along with other city officials,

attended the wall's unveiling when it was completed in May 2010.

But a spokesman for the Miami-Dade Public Works Department told the *BT* last year that Miami officials never informed the county of either the Coral Gate wall or plans for a Belle Meade fence. After being tipped off by a concerned citizen this past January, county officials declared Belle Meade's proposed fence illegal and demanded the demolition of the Coral Gate wall. (See "Tear Down This Wall," March 2011.)

Rather than fight the ruling, Sarnoff worked with county officials for a fence

Continued on page 59

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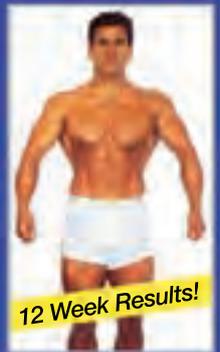
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Photo by Oscar Hidalgo



BT photo by Margaret Griffis

Collector and developer Michael Dezer with gallery curator Helmut Schuster.

If it has an engine and moves fast, Michael Dezer probably has a specimen in storage.

Dezer

Continued from page 51

the choice harkens back to Dezer's early days in then-industrial Chelsea.

Helmut Schuster, proprietor of Galerie Schuster Berlin/Miami and now curator of the gallery portion of the

Dezer space, says, "I think it's a perfect location. It's not far away from MOCA [the Museum of Contemporary Art] and the young, independent, new art spaces around 125th Street. In addition, FIU is important, and we'll cooperate with them in the future. I'm sure the art map in Miami will change completely in 2012.

This new area is as strong as Wynwood or the Design District."

It's also ideally located for the Dezer realty empire, which stretches from Sunny Isles to Miami Beach (not including the New York properties).

Schuster himself stumbled across the collection a few months ago when he

was simply driving by and let his curiosity lead him into the parking lot. (The main building is covered in low-relief classic car murals.) After seeing the car collection and speaking with the elder Dezer, Schuster followed up a few weeks

Continued on page 58

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Bakery

Continued from page 52

The trouble for the bakery started with Helga's husband's death in 2003. Roy Ness was also a baker. "After that tragedy, my mind was not there," Helga recalls. "We were married for 43 years and always working together."

The couple moved from Hamm, Germany, to the United States in 1960, making their start in Gary, Indiana, before relocating to South Florida and building the bakery business from scratch. Helga remembers when the only businesses around them were gas stations. Now, amid the auto body and repair shops and convenience stores that have sprung up in the area, there is a Haitian bakery just to the south. (Mama Jennie's, the popular Italian eatery, is also nearby.)

As the neighborhood changed, crime increased. Helga says she has had "a gun in her face" seven times over the course of the four decades she has been there. Ray, who is 44, remembers when an intruder broke into their house and spent hours ransacking the place.

To top it all off, Hurricane Wilma damaged the building and put them out of commission for several months. Helga thinks that's when a lot of people forgot about them.

Some of the problems the Nesses face are not uncommon to mom-and-pop businesses. Ron Welsandt, executive director of the North Miami Chamber of Commerce, has lived in nearby North Miami since 1988 and is familiar with the bakery. "Back when they put their bakery there, it was very close to Miami Shores, which has always been upscale, and people always went there," Welsandt says.

But Welsandt notes the changing demographics of the area. According to the 2010 census, Hispanics make up 27 percent of the population of North Miami, while blacks constitute 59 percent. Only 12 percent are non-Hispanic white. Not



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exactly a recipe for success if you're an Old World-style German bakery.

Although Haitians and other ethnic groups might be more inclined to gravitate toward establishments catering to their specific tastes, Welsandt thinks the Nesses need to beef up their marketing strategies and create a new business plan.

In a word, they need to adapt.

Welsandt points out that social media marketing is a necessity now. "The old phrase, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it,' doesn't stand in a high-tech business world," he says. "It's too bad. We've seen businesses in North Miami that have been here forever just go away."

For their part, the Nesses do not appear interested in social media. Ray views Twitter as an invitation for robbers. Moving locations is also not an option. "I'm 73 years old," Helga says. "I'm not going to move anywhere."

So the bakery's future may well come down to

the good intentions and efforts of some longtime devotees. And the fact that, as Julie Sumitaro puts it: "Some of Ness Konditorei's things you just can't find any other place."

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The popular outdoor DWNTWN concert series will move indoors during the summer.

Gusman Center

Continued from page 50

rehearsals and performance.

This year the Gusman was among 56 finalists contending for a \$100,000 grant for a “battle of the bands” event that was to be co-produced by Sweat Records, a Little Haiti-based independent music store and coffee lounge. In the end, however, Battle of the Bands wasn’t among the 31 ideas to receive grants from the foundation’s \$3 million pot of funding.

So what sort of acts will the DDA book at Gusman? That’s still being considered. “It’s a little early to have the

bands lined up yet,” Betancourt says, although he’s sure the lineup will include a mix of local and national acts performing in a variety of musical genres, just like the rest of the concert series.

Another challenge Betancourt notes is that, unlike Bayfront Park, the Olympic Theater has limited seating. “We’re going to have to figure out some kind of ticketing feature,” he says. Such tickets, he adds, will likely be issued on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information on the concert series, visit www.dwntwnmiamiconcertseries.com.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Dezer

Continued from page 56

later and proposed that the space host a show built around the Miami photographer who, along with her famous subject Bettie Page, had helped define 1950s pop: Bunny Yeager.

“I knew Bunny Yeager, and I thought maybe this could be the place where I could make a Bunny Yeager show,” recalls Schuster, “because there was such a connection to the 1950s. I thought, ‘Okay let’s do a little more.’ Let’s put Bunny Yeager’s work in *this* place.”

When Schuster pitched the Yeager retrospective to Dezer, he found himself on the receiving end of a

counterproposal: Did Schuster want to become the space’s curator? Schuster was unsure if he could handle the extra work, but ultimately couldn’t pass on the deal. At about 35,000 square feet (out of a total 250,000 square feet of exhibition space in the complex), the now-christened Dezer Schauhalle is one of the largest private galleries in the world. Schuster suspects it’s even larger than the world famous Gagosian Gallery in New York. The Dezers don’t do anything small.

Although the museum wasn’t set to open until January, an unofficial preview timed to coincide with Art Basel Miami

Continued on page 59

Criminals

Continued from page 54

that may at least deter criminals from entering Belle Meade, something supported by Roberta Quinn, a Belle Meade resident since 2005. "I am for *any* type of security," she says.

Yet building a fence compliant with county and state regulations is also increasing the price. Belle Meade received estimates as low as \$12,000 for a long fence with no gates, says Rollason, a former city administrator and *BT* contributor. In contrast, Rollason is hearing from municipal employees that the gated fence will cost city taxpayers as much as \$70,000.

Rodriguez insists the work for the fence has not been priced, but admits it will likely cost more than \$13,000. The fence job also won't be bid out, but prepared by one of four contractors pre-selected to do capital improvements costing less than \$150,000.

Ironically, criminal incidents in Belle Meade declined by 29 percent between 2010 and 2011, says Miami Police Commander Manuel Morales, who oversees patrols in the Upper Eastside. During that same period, burglaries dropped from five incidents to three, attempted car break-ins fell from nine to seven, and vandalism plummeted from 22 to 15, Morales says.

However, crime is up in eight of the city's ten Neighborhood Enhancement Team areas, Morales notes. The rest of the Upper Eastside has seen crime increase by ten percent from 2010. Among the more recent incidents was an armed robbery in Morningside on December 8, 2011, in which two thieves armed with semi-automatic pistols swiped a Louis Vuitton wallet and a cell phone from a couple who had just returned from dinner.

Tynan says outsiders walk the streets of Belle Meade all the time, as evidenced by the empty beer bottles found on the swales: "They always come in and they will try every car door to see if it's unlocked."

Still, Tynan thinks there are more affordable ways to prevent crime in Belle Meade than a fence that can't restrict access. For starters, don't leave anything in your car. "You have to think like a thief," she says.

But she also understands why her neighbors still want the fence they've been offered. "You want security because we have a lot of children living here," she says. "The whole make-up in Belle Meade has changed in the past five years. You have to look at things differently. Where it was once an adult community, now it is not. Maybe the gates will deter thieves, who knows?"

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Dezer

Continued from page 58

Beach thrilled partygoers. An ensemble of classic cars and "star" cars — including two Batmobiles and a "General Lee" customized Dodge from *The Dukes of Hazzard* — greeted the guests in the parking lot, while cocktail waitresses and 200 Bunny Yeager photographs, many never displayed before, entertained them on the inside. The opening shows are the Bunny Yeager "Retrospective to the Future" and "Ich bin ein Berliner," featuring rising art students from Berlin.

The final phase of the gallery's opening takes place in February, when the James Bond collection is revealed. Not only will patrons see custom automobiles that would be greatly coveted even without the Bond connection, the staff is also preparing airplanes, motorcycles, underwater vehicles, and other rare memorabilia for display. The opening for that exhibit will celebrate the 60th

birthday of the James Bond franchise. (Ian Fleming started writing his first Bond novel, *Casino Royale*, in February 1952.)

When it is fully operational, the complex will also house an event center capable of accommodating 1500 guests. When not socializing, guests — and for that matter, all visitors to the gallery — will have plenty to take in. Besides the auto collection and art gallery, there is an indoor drive-in movie theater, a mini bowling alley, a retro diner, a sweets shop, and a gift store. And of course, artwork is for sale, as are some of the cars. Bring your checkbook.

"Retrospective to the Future" and "Ich bin ein Berliner" run through February 29 at the Dezer Schauhalle, 2000 NE 146th St., North Miami, 954-270-7404. Admission is free.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Still the Season

For our correspondent, the holidays go into overtime

By **Gaspar González**
BT Contributor

This being the January issue, readers of this column might expect a looking-back or looking-forward column, but the truth is, my family and I will still be knee-deep in the holiday season when this issue hits lawns and mail rooms, and for some time thereafter.

No, we're not the kind of folks who run out the day after Thanksgiving to purchase our tree, or who make a habit of Christmas in July, so that the holidays will just go on forever. (Not that there's anything wrong with that.) In fact, our official holiday season probably starts a little later than the average family's. We

usually don't get in the spirit, or even pick up a tree, until after December 15. The reason we're still celebrating is that, for us, the "season" includes a few more dates than most people's.

Part of the reason for this is cultural. My parents are Cuban and, in addition to Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, growing up, I also celebrated Three Kings' Day. Marking the arrival of the Three Wise Men, or Magi, in Bethlehem following the birth of Christ, Three Kings' Day, also known as the "Feast of Epiphany," is celebrated on January 6. That's 12 days after Christmas — plus a night — for all you carolers out there.

It's not, strictly speaking, a Cuban holiday. For generations of children



throughout Latin America (as well as Spain), January 6 was the equivalent of Christmas morning here — the day presents were unwrapped. As a child, this effectively meant I got two Christmases every year. As a nod to my American

upbringing, December 25 was the day I opened most of my presents. (Never on Christmas Eve. No, no, always on Christmas morning.) But then, on January 6, something else would magically appear for me under the tree, which was still up.

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Adding to the significance of this “second Christmas” is the fact that I share a name with one of the Wise Men. (I can already hear the gnashing of teeth from some of my most devoted letter-writers.) It’s true. The Wise Men were named Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. Maybe. Those names don’t appear in the Bible — for that matter, neither does the exact number of Magi — but they have become cemented in Christian tradition.

Which is why I always have a hard time believing that so few people have heard the name. Typically, when I introduce myself to someone who isn’t originally from Latin America or Europe — where many also observe the 12 days of Christmas — they’ll comment on what an unusual name I have. And I almost always answer with my practiced shorthand: “It’s one of the Wise Men.” (At which point most people will nod and say something like, “Oh, isn’t that interesting.” Even if they don’t really think so. People are generally polite when you try to explain your name.)

Not that I was named *for* one of the Wise Men, mind you; Gaspar is an old family name. It belonged to a Spanish

ancestor on my father’s side. But no matter. It’s my name and I share it with one of the Three Kings.

That means that Three Kings’ Day is also a saint’s day for me. At least that’s what I’ve always heard. An online search for officially recognized saints yields two named Gaspar, neither one a Wise Man, nor are their feasts on January 6.

But let’s face it, Cubans aren’t ones to stand on formality. The Three Kings arrived in Bethlehem on January 6 (or so the story goes), bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. If that doesn’t qualify them for a saint’s day, then nobody should have one.

Okay, I know what you’re probably thinking: So he celebrates 12 days of Christmas. This is Miami. It’s not that uncommon. If it were, we wouldn’t have SW 8th Street clogged every year for the Three Kings Parade. What’s today? The 10th of January? The 15th? He can’t still be celebrating the holidays, can he?

I am. Follow along; we’re almost there.

My wife, Lane, knew she was marrying someone who celebrated the 12 days of Christmas. She knew better than to ask when I was going to drag the tree

out to the curb. The tree, I told her our first Christmas, stays up until at least January 7. If it’s doing well and not dried out, it might stay up another couple of days. She was cool with that.

What she wasn’t cool with was her due date when we got pregnant with our first child a couple of years ago: December 30. *That’s the worst birthday ever*, she declared. As excited as she was about becoming a new mother, she was nevertheless worried about the fate awaiting our unborn son, forced to shoehorn his birthday celebration in between Christmas and New Year’s, when nobody pays attention to such things, and fewer people care. There’s one person with a December birthday everybody remembers, and he’s already been referenced in this column. It’s not our son.

Look, I told her, he may show up a little earlier or a little later. *Who knows when that kid is going to be born?* Forget it. A few days earlier or later still meant he was going to be born way too close to the holidays to suit her. We made a deal: She should concentrate on the pregnancy and having a healthy baby, and I would

take care of his “birthday problem.”

We didn’t discuss it again until our son was born (a few days early, as it turned out). We were still at the hospital. He was maybe six hours old when Lane turned to me: “What are we going to do about his birthday?”

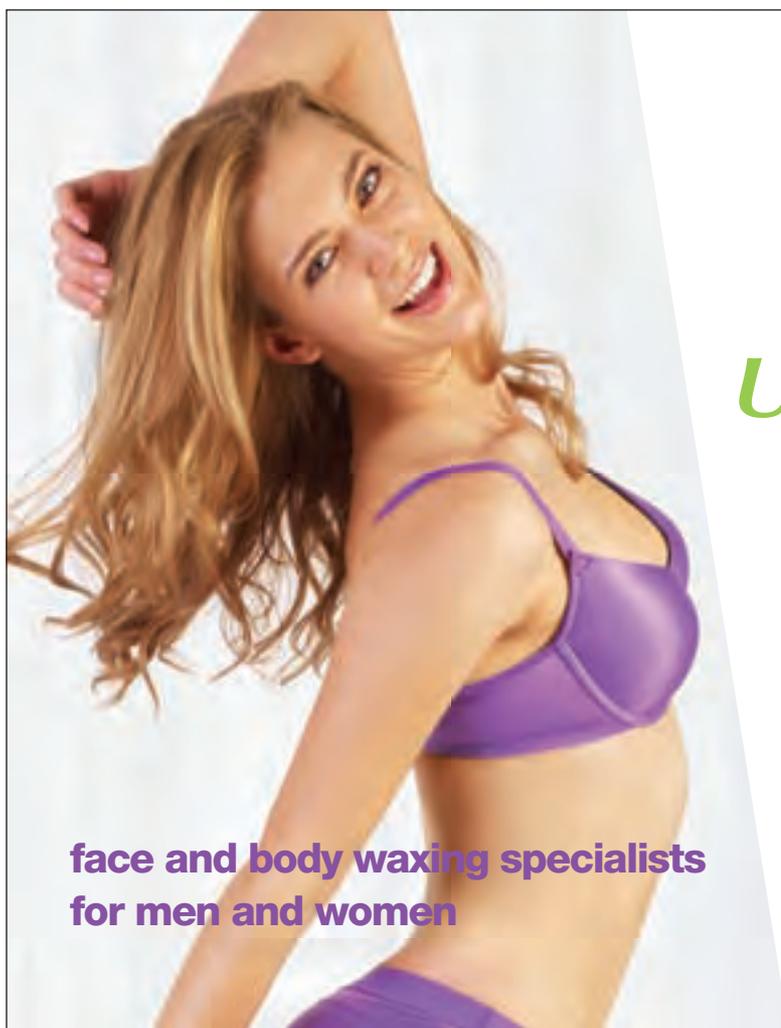
Luckily for me, I had an answer. Relying on my Catholic upbringing, I had consulted the Church’s calendar and discovered that the feast day of St. Sebastian — the name we had chosen for our son — was January 20.

“That’s perfect,” I convinced Lane. “The family can celebrate his birthday, you know, on his birthday, and we can have his official birthday party in late January. The older he gets, the more he’ll love us for it. It’s a few weeks after the holidays are done, his friends will be back in school; it competes with nothing else.”

I think that’s the first real indication she had that I might be cut out for fatherhood. As an added bonus, we get to stretch out the festive season another two weeks.

Happy holidays. Still.

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Who's in Your Wallet?

A history of ID theft and phony charges have taught our correspondent to stay on top of her credit cards

By **Jen Karetnick**
BT Contributor

I have to admit it took us a while, that first time, to catch on. The credit cards that arrived at our South Beach townhouse, a full dozen of them, I attributed to a concerted effort to sign me up. This was 1992, after all, the days when MasterCard and Visa would mail out plastic in hopes that you'd activate the accounts. It didn't strike me at all odd to be receiving credit cards in the mail that I hadn't ordered.

As for the fact that some of them said "José Karetnick?" Well, when you grow up with a name like mine, you get

used to people screwing it up in the most imaginative ways. I have a list on file at the IRS with various legal spellings of my name, let alone the de facto arrangements people have come up with — especially since I moved to Miami. Being addressed as "José" was actually closer than "Jenka Retnik" and other weird variations I've seen on envelopes. (We actually used envelopes back then.)

So it went, until "José" tried to take out a second mortgage on our condo. My identity had been stolen. By the time the bank notified us that we had been approved for the mortgage, and all that was needed was my signature, about 24



counts of fraud had been committed in my name, or a close facsimile thereof.

Remember, this was 1992. You didn't even need a spouse to co-sign in person to get okayed for a loan. And Miami Beach Police had no idea what to do, because this guy had been ringing up charges all over Miami. They actually

wanted us to file police reports in every individual jurisdiction.

In fact, there wasn't even a name for this kind of crime yet — a series of crimes, really, we now know as identity theft. (Interesting side note: Once we realized that, as per usual, the cops would do nothing, we traced this guy ourselves



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Applications online at www.miamidade.gov/district02

There will be a mandatory information/workshop meeting explaining the application and requirements held on Tuesday, January 17, 2012 6:00 p.m. at the 93rd Street Community Baptist Church 2330 NW 93rd Street Please be on time!

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to an area around the old Bakery Center, before we lost the trail.)

Recovering from identity theft is neither simple nor easy. You have to alert the IRS, your banks, and your credit agencies that you are you, and no one else is you — but the burden of proof is on you. It seems like it should be the other way around, but, remember, you're not the clever thief. You're just the law-abiding citizen who never would have thought of this kind of scheme in the first place. And hey, before the Internet had photos of you doing everything from drinking a beer to having a baby, it wasn't that easy to prove your own existence.

You also have to think about putting safeguards in place (that, quite frankly, should already be there), like little pop-up tags that alert the cashier to ask the shopper to show verifiable identification along with charge cards at department stores and gas stations. The first time I was asked for my identification, it happened to be by the same salesgirl who had assisted the thief, who was an African-American woman. This was long before online shopping, and the crook was never asked for photo ID. The salesgirl remembered my "unusual"

name, but she thought *I* was the crook. You can imagine her confusion when I turned out to be Caucasian, and Jewish.

Once established, these tags should never expire unless you request them to be removed. (The flag on my Macy's account still operates even though the card that was stolen was actually from Burdines.) But they can be ignored. In fact, it was only recently that I was asked — for the first time in years — to show ID, at a Macy's in New Jersey. Ironic, considering that's where I was born and raised, and that's where my identity was stolen again not too long ago. (Foreshadowing!)

I was reminded of this quest to clear my name and my credit while reading the *Miami Herald* in December. The front page featured a Miami Shores couple who had a similar problem with identity theft this past year, a fact they only realized when they filed their taxes and found out that a criminal had already done just that in their place, and collected their refund. It's already time to file again and, because of red tape and the frustrations that go along with trying to re-establish one's identity, they still haven't received their money.

It was as I was relating this miserable story to my husband, and simultaneously recalling our own epic horror — which haunted us even as we tried to sell our South Beach condo and buy Mango House in the Shores — that Jon sheepishly admitted something: "You know the credit card we don't really use? Well, the bank's been calling and leaving messages. I haven't really had time to call them back, so I've sort of been ignoring them. But I finally got in touch with them. Turns out, someone charged \$22,000 on our card."

Apparently our information had been taken from a store in Jersey we had visited over Thanksgiving. (Flashback: As if Thanksgiving visits aren't difficult enough.) The \$22,000 was charged in three increments at a nearby Target. Still, nearly \$8000 worth of merchandise per visit is pretty substantial, especially when you don't even have a physical card to show. Didn't that raise the checkout clerk's eyebrows at all? Well, no.

So how do you prevent this kind of thing from happening to you? Especially if you live in a perceived high-income area like Miami Shores, where "form"

criminals are more likely to snoop around? My mother-in-law, an accountant who communicates with the IRS, recommends that if you can't file early, at least file an extension as soon as possible so your legitimate information is known to the computer system.

From my own experience, I know that you should call your credit agencies (usually two or three that follow your ratings) and flag *all* your charge and credit accounts, even if they haven't been anonymously vandalized. Shred documents that are going in the trash, even those would-be credit card accounts that you're not accepting.

Assume, when it comes to white-collar, technology-based crime, that everybody is smarter than you. And don't take out credit "for a rainy day" — because the only life you're going to be stretching a rainbow over is the thief's, who is pretending to be you until you're not worth an empty pot of gold to piss in.

Next month: Crime in Miami Shores, from the trenches — or the driveways.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of 2011

Our correspondent looks back on the year that was

By Frank Rollason
BT Contributor

Happy New Year to all! As we enter 2012, it only makes sense to reflect on the issues that had an impact on the Upper Eastside over the past year, keeping in mind that these are my takes.

The Good

- Another great Halloween doggie parade spearheaded by neighbor Jo Wilder and her usual crew of dog lovers. A great time was had by all, including our four-legged family members, who enjoyed the attention and the doggie cookies.

- Another great holiday party held in the Belle Meade children's park. Once

again, Rosemary Ference rounded up the usual suspects to make this event successful. We also had a positive infusion of spirit by what I call the "Mommies Group," led by Laura Muñoz. The neighborhood is becoming younger and, as one of the old guys, I can tell you that I enjoy the kiddies.

- The renovation of the New Yorker Motel, a result of the hard work of owners Shirley and Walter Diaz, stands as a beacon for the historic MiMo District. With basically no financial assistance from the city, the hotel has been reborn, with positive results, as witnessed by the number of cars in the parking lot. The other motels would do well to follow the New Yorker's example.



- Overall crime is down in our neighborhood, and the Upper Eastside in general, thanks in large part to our police commander, Manuel Morales. He is untiring in his efforts and relentless in pursuing the bad guys. We are fortunate to have him, and the city is better because of his commitment and work ethic. Thank you, Commander Morales!

- County Commissioner Audrey Edmonson has been a helpful ally in assisting us on county-level issues. Her liaison, Marta Martinez-Aleman, is always available and dutifully follows up with county departments without constant prodding or reminders. Thank you, Commissioner Edmonson and staff for your efforts on our behalf.

The Bad

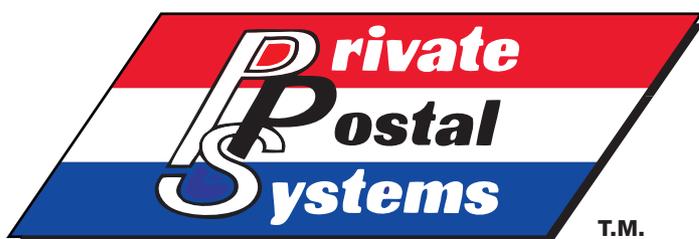
- The ongoing influx of sex offenders and pedophiles from under the Julia Tuttle Causeway to the Upper Eastside is an insult. Hardly a week goes by that we don't receive a recorded message informing us of the

latest such arrival to our neighborhood. A good, old-fashioned Bronx cheer to those responsible for this onslaught.

- The plethora of red-light cameras up and down the Boulevard, thanks to our city commission, which anticipated a windfall of dollars for shoring up the city's budget woes, only to find that drivers learn real fast not to run the lights when Big Brother is watching. The worst part of the installations is the addition of pole and sign pollution along pedestrian walkways. Take a look at just about any block along the Boulevard and the number of signs from the city, county, and FDOT is enough to gag a maggot. How nice it would be to have

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these government entities work together to share poles and cut down on the eye pollution, as has been proposed for years by Belle Meade resident Steve Hagen.

The Ugly

• The latest Marlins ballpark debacle, involving the question of who is ultimately responsible for any taxes as a result of leasing space in the parking garages, is a travesty. It is just inconceivable that no one in the city administration, on the commission, or in the mayor's office (that would be former Mayor Manny Diaz)

picked up on the language that left the city holding the bag — *again!* It is either the height of incompetence or it is complicity before the fact. One or the other.

• The federal indictment and conviction of Miami Fire Department Division Chief Veldora Arthur for mortgage fraud has brought another scandal to the City of Miami, and a particularly painful wound to yours truly. As a past deputy chief of our fine fire department, it's especially poignant that the first black female member of our department betrayed the trust placed in her. She has brought shame upon the city, the department, and the black community, which was so proud of her accomplishments. To piss it all away for a few thousand dollars is inexcusable. She was a role model to many, and now only serves as an example of greed and self-indulgence.

• The naming of the Miami Art Museum for Jorge M. Pérez is somewhere between ugly and silly. Mr. Pérez's installment plan for the payment of his millions, which includes artwork from his collection in lieu of cash up front, is quite the

cat's meow. Keep in mind, this is the same individual who wrangled \$4.2 million out of the City of Miami to help defray the costs of bay-walk improvements at one of his downtown high-rise projects. Why? Because it was just too expensive for him to absorb the cost of the amenities himself. So the city, under then Mayor Manny Diaz, forked over the millions to help out poor Jorge.

If Mr. Pérez really wants to be philanthropic, perhaps he might consider reimbursing the city for the bay-walk improvements — in cash, not artwork. I mean, as long as he is in such a giving mood. Perhaps the city might just consider naming that portion of the public bay-walk the Jorge M. Pérez Promenade. Certainly has a nice ring to it, does it not?



• The selling out of the West Grove business district to a developer to bring in a Publix and a block of high-rise construction (81 feet tall) adjacent to a residential community has to be one of the biggest insults ever to the black community. The district commissioner described the principal developer as godlike and spiritual, saying he would "certainly keep his word" on all promises to the community. Now, I consider Mother Teresa godlike and spiritual, not a developer who, though he may be an honorable person, is in business to make money.

The historical significance of the West Grove, like that of Overtown, is an intrinsic thread in the fabric of the City of Miami. It's the duty of our city leaders to ensure that these last vestiges of our founding communities be preserved, not whittled away in search of the almighty dollar. With this type of leadership, there will eventually be no Bahamian Village in the West Grove and there will be no Lyric Theater in Overtown. Shame on the leaders of the city and shame on all residents for allowing this to happen.

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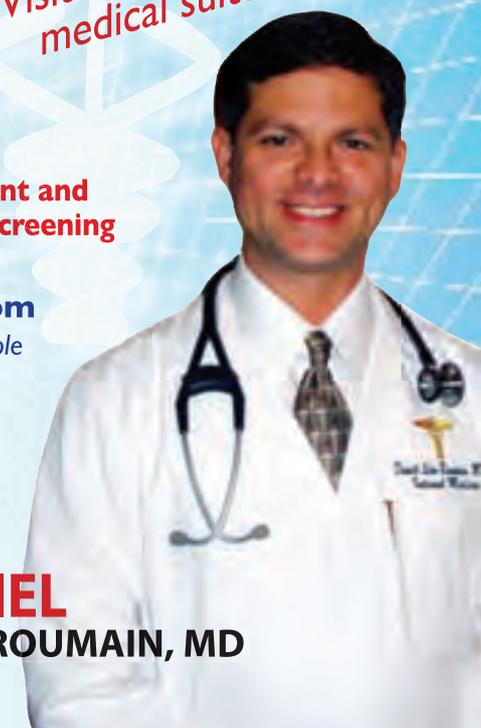
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Barely There

An Art Basel fashion show goes very, very wrong

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

I'm standing outside, naked except for pasties and combat boots that scream, "If you value your balls, then you best back off." I'm surrounded by people in various states of dress and undress, distress and undistress, bustling around me. If you listen closely, you can almost hear the hum. The hum of chaos.

The wind blows, causing the white-tarp flaps of the makeshift "dressing room" to flop up and down, much like the movements of a frantic fish gulping its last breath.

To my left is a plastic table. On top there are palettes of makeup in every

conceivable color. Crammed below are totes of personal belongings. My body is being spray painted primarily with silver. That's because, for my part in this show, I am a robot. I've got my arms (non-mechanical) up in the air, so as not to smudge, as the *whisshhh* noise of the airbrush pumps pigment onto my bare skin.

Welcome to the behind-the-scenes of a fashion show at Art Basel. Truly behind the scenes? Yes. For example: It is 7:00 p.m. The show was supposed to go on at 6:00 p.m. Oops.

But this is only the beginning. Because that "hum of chaos" I just referenced is a distinct sound specifically reserved for just these types of occasions. Let me enlighten you.



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

When the lights and music go on, it's "show time" and, no matter what kind of adolescent nonsense, including but not limited to displays of diva-dom, extreme tardiness, hissy fits, crying, screaming,

refusing to perform, drug snorting/shooting/smoking, or weapon-brandishing occur, the show, as they say, must go on.

Now, if you arrived just a few hours early, or if you could act as a proverbial



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fly on the wall (or tarp, in this case) for a fashion show, play rehearsal, television show taping, or magazine photo shoot, you would likely get a glimpse of the very unbeautiful world of the talented and beautiful. Or so some of them think themselves to be.

On my Saturday night slot of "As Their World Turns: Art Basel Edition," many things went very wrong. I need to stress that this is not unusual. When you are dealing with, er, artistic personalities and creative minds, you are asking for a headache. Ask and you shall receive. The question hangs in the air: Will this be a two-aspirin-and-call-it-a-day headache or a blinding migraine, complete with all the toppings, including light sensitivity, nausea, and the inevitable hugging-of-the-toilet?

How bad it gets depends greatly on the level of professionalism the artists bring to the performance. To my ears, the word "professionalism" sounds simultaneously presumptuous and childish. You can almost always bet anyone who tosses that word around is a petty moron. That being said, that fateful night, "professionalism" exited stage right.

On the Fashion Show Level of Headache Scale, mine ranked in the middle. Aspirin did not cover it, but I also wasn't projectile vomiting off the runway. (But I did spit up in my mouth. Just a bit.)

Did I type "runway"? Yes, unfortunately, I did. Intrigued by the prospect of being body painted, I signed on for the gig both for the experience and to see the process at work. And also because I loved the costumes, one of which I was supposed to wear. What I was *not* interested in was "walking the runway."

Now, I've done a lot of strange and what some might think of as "exciting" things. I've been interviewed live on television and radio. I've modeled for magazine and newspaper shoots. I've documented several "behind-the-scenes" reality shows. But I've never done "runway."

See, while I may be outgoing, I don't like people staring at me; at least, not collectively. Strutting stork-style, like some affected imp, while glaring or pouting down at gawkers never appealed. Yet I agreed to "man up" and do this show because I was so interested in the final presentation.

Unfortunately, for me, I never got to wear a costume.

Then again, little did I know that I was electing to participate in Project Dumbway.

If people really knew what modeling entailed, they probably wouldn't be so impressed by it. Frankly, it's a pain in the ass. Sometimes, depending on what you must wear and the poses you twist into, it literally is. For this show, I was naked except for paint, boy shorts, and big-n-tall, clunky boots. A headpiece was supposed to complete the look, but Diva Designer decided to just shove a blue wig on my head instead because she said the piece did not work with short hair.

Last-minute changes are common. What struck me here was the fact that Diva Designer knew as soon as she arrived (five hours late, mind you) that I had short hair. I stood up from adjusting my boots and met her pursed lips. She expressed her realization like this: "Ohhhh."

"What's wrong?" I asked.

D-squared just clucked her tongue.

Why she didn't immediately switch my designated costume remains a

mystery. One of many mysteries, including why she was so late, therefore causing her own show to run four hours behind, disrupting the next scheduled fashion show, and infuriating all those involved, who had nowhere to prep.

I guess I was lucky, as the massive headpieces, which included wigs and materials ranging from large metal chunks to feathers, were extremely uncomfortable. It hurt me just to watch one model trying to hold her head up as D-squared and her minions stabbed feathers into her skull.

Why D-squared supplied zero direction as to what we were supposed to do on the runway, other than looking me over and saying, "It would help if you didn't [affects hunched-over posture]," is also odd.

In the end, I sashayed down the runway, all boobs and no costume. I cannot say it ranked as one of my favorite extracurricular activities, but at least my posture was excellent.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Top of the Heap

The Swerdlow Group has big plans for developing North Miami's big landfill

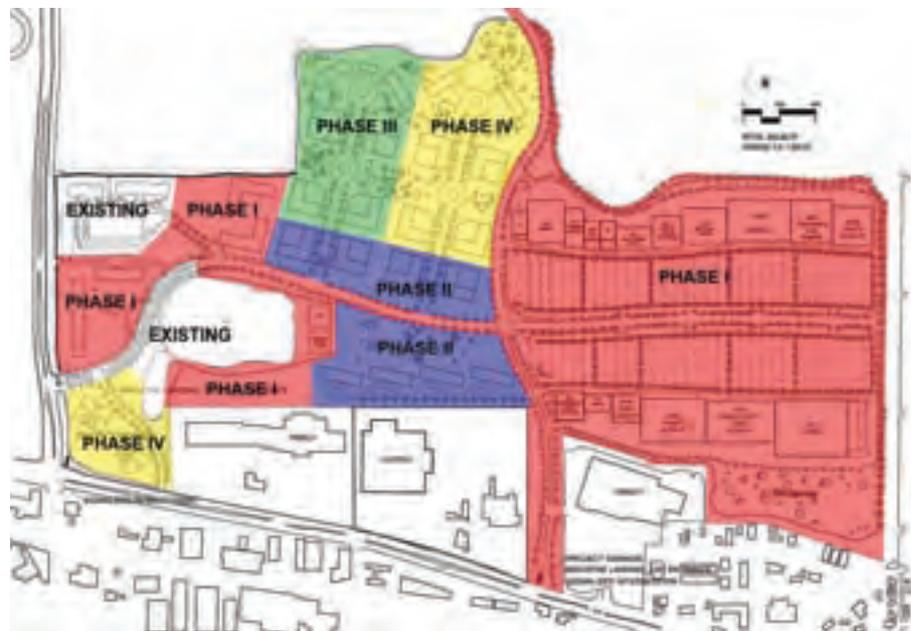
By **Mark Sell**
BT Contributor

Biscayne Landing's future boils down to one stark fact: The City of North Miami needs money, and the Swerdlow Group has it.

The posturing and shadowboxing of November have given way to pressure to close the deal so Swerdlow can get control of the 184-acre former landfill, develop the property, and start making money. Mayor Andre Pierre and most of the city council want to speed things along. The deal could close as early as mid-January, as late as March. Michael Swerdlow figures Valentine's Day, when the real labor of love begins.

Once the deal is complete, Swerdlow will wire \$21.5 million to the city, sparing it more than 100 employee layoffs and painful service cutbacks. Then Swerdlow will spend lots of money: \$50 million to clean out the old municipal dump and get the ground and infrastructure ready, and \$200 million to build 800,000 square feet of big-box retailer space on 81.5 acres directly behind Target.

By mid-2014, expect to see stores equivalent to Lowe's, Ross Dress for Less, Toys R Us, Babies R Us, BrandsMart, Kohl's, perhaps even a Walmart, if not Ikea. Negotiations are well along with retailers; some have signed letters of intent. The complex will resemble Broward's 107-acre Oakwood



Plaza that runs a mile east of I-95, between Stirling Road and Sheridan Street. Swerdlow successfully developed that property, as well as partnered to build the Dolphin Mall.

A spine road will snake from Biscayne Boulevard and 143rd Street through the shopping center to 151st Street, connecting to the road that leads from 151st to the 25-story Biscayne Landing twin towers, which by then should have a pool, 14,000-square-foot community center, and lakeside park and

promenade. Swerdlow plans a high-end, assisted-living facility for seniors just to the towers' northwest, and an independent-living complex just to the southeast.

Drivers along Biscayne Boulevard will have a good view of the project, as it will level out at a grade about ten feet higher than the Boulevard, or 17 feet above sea level.

Expect a prominent entrance on the widened 143rd Street and more turn lanes on the Boulevard, and the same at the corner of 151st Street.

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If Florida International University can succeed in getting permits — a tall order through wetlands — the spine road will link to a new entrance running to FIU, via an overpass through wetlands and mangroves. If FIU is not lobbying for this in Tallahassee already, you can bet it will ramp up efforts after the holidays.

On the Biscayne Landing side, the first environmental order of business will start almost instantly this spring: Dig 32 wells from 7 to 70 feet deep, 150 feet apart. These wells will extract ground water with small levels of ammonia (17 parts per billion) and push it into an injection well running 3300 feet into the ground, far below aquifers, into a boulder zone through impermeable substrata rock. Four similar injection wells at the sewage-treatment plant just to the north dump waste to the same location a kilometer into the earth.

The idea is to keep ammonia from seeping into Biscayne Bay, just 2000 feet to the east. These wells should be completed by late 2012.

To the south and north, from Highland Oaks in North Miami Beach — or from the balconies of the twin

Biscayne Landing towers — expect to hear groaning, grinding, and pounding from bulldozers, cranes, and other heavy equipment, as they level out the hillocks and ridges, unearth garbage 23 feet deep from the old dump, and pound nonbiodegradable diapers, wood, concrete, plastics, glass, and yard clippings.

To pulverize that garbage, giant cranes will drop 15,000-pound weights 60 feet, compounding and compressing in a process called deep dynamic compaction. This compressed trash, webbed together, will undergird the roadway and the 50 percent or so of the site that will be “capped,” or topped with asphalt, concrete, or buildings to ensure that any contaminants from the garbage do not get into the air. Already about 300 to 400 feet of the Biscayne Landing road as been compacted in this way.

Once this is done, in the second half of 2013, crews will lay in the utilities: electricity, sewer, and water, followed by the construction of the big-box stores and, finally, the paving and landscaping of the parking lot.

At the Biscayne Landing Oaks towers, by mid-2012, the Swerdlow

Group will likely present plans to the Oaks condominium association for a swimming pool and clubhouse. By this time, Swerdlow will be a controlling presence in the building, as the developer is now in advanced negotiations to buy the 160 unsold units in the 383-unit complex. As part of the deal, Swerdlow will build the community center and a plaza with a coffee shop.

Swerdlow is also now in talks with three adult-care providers to build a luxury assisted-living facility along 151st Street, and an independent-living facility nearby. Since utilities and infrastructure are already in place, this higher-end version of John Knox Village in Pompano Beach will probably come online in early 2014.

Two parks totaling 14 acres are part of the plan, too. In addition to a lakeside promenade near the twin towers, a second park, of about six acres, including a ball field, is slated for the opposite, southwest corner of the property near Highland Oaks.

This, in sum, is “Phase I” of the project. Phases II and III remain flexible. Residential development will come last; perhaps a mid-market rental complex for individuals and families, if and when the

market justifies it. Phase I will take up more than half the 184 acres and should be substantially finished in 2014.

Swerdlow even has a plan to suppress the rotten-egg stench of hydrogen sulfide that wafts from the sewage-treatment plant. It happens when workers clean filters, as they unclog rags and grit blocking the tubes, a nasty job that requires opening the vents for their own safety.

Michael Swerdlow and two other executives toured the plant, and Swerdlow, appalled, has promised to pay for on-premises equipment to minimize, if not eliminate, the stink in exchange for a break in impact fees.

Everything Swerdlow does is designed to enhance the property’s value and thereby make money: Lure proven retailers to a coveted location, collect rents while the city and county get the taxes, finish the project in a decade, and then, sometime around 2022 or 2023, sell the whole property at a substantial profit to a real estate investment trust. Then, perhaps, the Swerdlow Group will move on to the next conquest.

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Living with the Lemming Effect

In Aventura, people are born to swarm

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

I've lived in Aventura since 2004. Not very long in the grand scheme of things, but long enough to realize that Aventura is an anomaly. It is profoundly different. Different from what? Well, almost anything, anywhere. Nothing that should apply, does. Things that don't make sense, do. Even the people are — how to put this — surreal.

Aventura is one of the only places you can pull into a gas station (I go to the Mobile on Biscayne and 191st Street) and see 25-year-olds gassing up Bentleys and Aston Martins, and 75-year-olds with comb-overs posing by their convertible

Porches. Naturally, there are a plethora of garden-variety BMWs and Mercedes.

Meanwhile, you'll see women drop \$750 on a pair of Christian Louboutins at Nordstrom, but complain about the price of tomatoes at Publix. ("Oy, \$2.98 a pound? *Outrageous!*") Now, put those same tomatoes in Whole Foods, increase the price by two bucks a pound, and people can't buy them fast enough!

I think much of this is a result of the Lemming Effect: If influential people like it, do it, or deem it okay, others are quick to follow. Granted, not a phenomenon unique to Aventura, but this town is certainly a place where acceptance is important, rules don't necessarily apply, and reality goes out the window more often than not.



Don't get me wrong. It's not that I dislike this place. In fact Aventura has lots of appealing qualities. For instance, it's centrally located. I can be in Fort Lauderdale or South Beach in 20 minutes. It is safe and clean. And we have a hospital, guaranteeing that if a hurricane knocks out power, we're sure to be among the first to get it back.

Our demographics may surprise some. Contrary to popular belief, we are made up of a variety of ethnicities, religions, and age groups. There are even some less-than-rich residents who

slipped in. The median age actually appears to be dropping. Broadly speaking, most people who live here have made significant amounts of money, live well, and are not afraid to spend as long as they can find something worthy. And they frequent the places *everyone* goes, which is fine even if it's a product of the Lemming Effect. After all, that's how a business becomes *the* place to dine or meditate or groom your pet or shop.

Yes, Aventura has a ton of shopping. There are the small shops like Jessie (a real crowd favorite), Wink, SoMi,



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Starstruck Style, and C. Madeline (the most famous vintage shop in town). Some are new and some have been here for years. Some will last and some won't.

And of course there is The Mall — filled with chain stores like Victoria's Secret, the Gap, Banana Republic. Cookie-cutter stores with cookie-cutter clothes. I know I'll choose the independent entrepreneur every day. But hey, that's just me.

The same applies to restaurants. There are small family or individually owned places like Pilar, Timo, Etzel Itzik Deli, Barrio Latino, and Juice & Java. Love these. They are original, personal, and fresh. Then there are the safe and familiar chains, including Houston's, P.F. Chang's, and Morton's. They stand adjacent to each other along Biscayne Boulevard, forming a kind of culinary theme park. And they are *always* jammed.

A huge new Olive Garden just opened front and center on the Boulevard, where Fuddrucker's used to be. *Really?* Is this a favored dining destination for people who supposedly want only the best?

I'm not judging. I'm just saying.

As a born-and-bred Manhattan girl who has been a writer for more than 20 years, I will *always* side with the little guy. I understand why people feel comfortable in chain outlets, but let me not digress too far. The point is that if Aventura locals, both young and old, have traveled and seen, tasted and experienced amazing and unique things, why gravitate toward the typical?

Is it the business itself, or are there other factors?

Let's consider location. Any business operating west of Biscayne Boulevard is going to find it extremely difficult to attract die-hard Aventurans, giving literal meaning to "wrong side of the tracks." No rhyme or reason. It's simply not in vogue. At least not *yet*. Not until that one influential mouth spreads the word, and then it starts looking good. However, opening a hair salon or lounge in one of the well-known centers may increase chances for success, but prime location alone is no guarantee.

The recently opened Aventura Arts & Cultural Center is lovely, spacious, and well-appointed. Its location at the foot of 188th Street places it in a neighborhood

that is home to Aventura's largest concentration of youthful professionals. Between the Artech, Atrium, and Uptown Lofts condominiums, I can honestly say I've never seen anyone older than 50 on the block. But will they walk down the street for live drama or symphonic music? Or will they prefer to party around the corner at Avenue 29, the newly opened nightclub? Perhaps both.

Local entrepreneurs are desperately seeking ways to keep the youthful and young-at-heart here in town. So I began posing a question: "What would make you a loyal customer to any kind of business?"

After asking more than a dozen people, the consensus answer was this: "Give us something good."

Something good? Does that mean the service? The concept? The quality? The cool factor? That proved to be much more complicated.

I've watched many small businesses — restaurants, clothing stores, hair salons, gift shops — open with the promise of great success, only to have their hopes and dreams die painful deaths. Asian World Fusion (the least-known but best local Chinese) closed in

mere months. Richard & Co., after years in business, has departed and been replaced by a new hopeful called Zen Zen Salon. Yogen Früz, a gimmicky yogurt store, opens its doors just as That Cool Café, which offered delicious yogurt, has "closed for the summer" after less than two years in operation. Shall I go on?

So what *does* it take to make it in this town? At this point, I still can't answer the question, but I promise, as I probe more deeply into this city and its residents, I will try. Along the way, and with your help, I hope to uncover intriguing trends, quirks, tips, and obscurities. Maybe I'll even expose some of those things we just don't talk about here in Aventura.

Editor's note: Experiencing a bit of déjà vu? That's because this was Shari's debut column, 17 months ago. She did have a fresh column ready for this issue, but it got zapped, along with her computer, in some kind of electrical conflagration — just before she set sail on a cruise. No computer, difficult communications, looming deadline. We were hoping for a shipboard miracle, but we ran out of time.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Booty Call at Sundance

The Life and Freaky Times of Uncle Luke has a group of local filmmakers riding high on the festival circuit

By Anne Tschida
BT Arts Editor

At the largest independent film festival in the United States, Sundance, which starts on January 19, some familiar Miami names will scroll across the screen. But it may be the not-so-familiar names that will be the attention grabbers in the future.

The Life and Freaky Times of Uncle Luke was selected as one of only 64 short films to be screened in Utah, the second year in a row that a product of Miami's quirky Borscht Film Festival has been chosen. It stars Luther Campbell, the former 2 Live Crew rapper who, in recent years, has been a Miami-Dade mayoral candidate, columnist, and activist.

The film was directed by Jillian Mayer, a rising star on the local arts scene, scripted by Lucas Leyva, the founder of Borscht, and produced by Rakontur, the group behind the hit documentaries *Cocaine Cowboys*, *The U*, and *Square Grouper*.

That whole combo makes *Freaky Times* a fascinating subject in its own right, and puts a spotlight on cultural developments in Miami at the beginning of a new year.

First, about the film: Shot on trippy, expressionistic sets created by Mayer, the film is loosely based on an experimental and groundbreaking film from 1962, *La Jetée*, a time-travel tale that

takes place in a post-nuclear-war world.

In this updated version, Uncle Luke — as Campbell is affectionately called around these parts — has successfully fought for the right of free speech of all kinds and has won election as mayor. But then the Turkey Point nuclear power



Still from *I Am Your Grandmother* by Jillian Mayer, courtesy of the David Castillo Gallery.

plant explodes and turns Miami into a radioactive wasteland, which Uncle Luke must now navigate to save humanity. He does that through, yes, the music of booty bass, and booty calls.



Converging Harmonies, 2011, Chris Janney, Miami International Airport.

Photos courtesy of Jillian Mayer

Amendment rights and nuclear devastation are no joking matters, but there is obvious humor here, as Mayer uses jiggling, bare, female butts — a take on the notorious *As Nasty as They Wanna Be* album cover — as backdrop, while Luke mugs for the camera.

But Campbell's complicated struggle for free speech is precisely why Mayer and Leyva wanted him as the subject for their film, commissioned by Borscht and premiered last April at the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts.

"Uncle Luke is a public figure who people feel very strongly about," explains Mayer, who has worked on music videos with Leyva in the past. "In his younger days, he focused on being a musician, which made him into a celebrity. The character he may have played several decades ago seems inescapable to the contemporary public. He is now a vocal figure in the City of Miami trying to be involved with politics, but many people can't stop judging him from a character he played in his musical career several decades ago."

But, she says, they didn't think they could actually snag the celebrity for their



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In the film, Miami is devastated when the Turkey Point nuclear plant explodes.

little indie production. That's when Evan Rosenfeld of Rakontur got involved, pulling Campbell into the project. Campbell, Mayer says, also worked well within her own artistic exploration: "I was into the fact the he plays with notions of identity and public personas, which is something I address in my own work."

Mayer is predominantly a video artist who incorporates performance and installation into her work. She's represented by the David Castillo Gallery in Wynwood and currently has a solo show at the home of the Scholl Collection, World Class Boxing, through January.

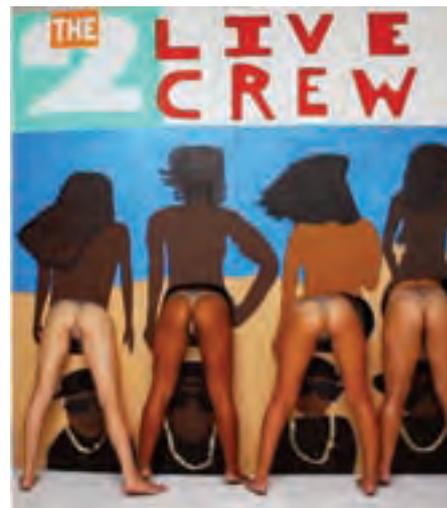
A previous short she made with Leyva, called *I Am Your Grandmother*, was an eye-catcher in 2011 — at the Castillo Gallery, the Museum of Contemporary Art's annual Optic Nerve film festival, and eventually, on the Internet, becoming a viral hit. *Grandmother* has been making a tour of Guggenheim museums, screening in New York, Bilbao, and Berlin.

As Mayer was developing her artistic vision in a blossoming visual arts scene over the past decade, Leyva was graduating from the New World School of the Arts High School, where he had helped start a film festival to highlight local work, called UnMinced. While he and fellow filmmakers flew north after high school, some of them wanted to capitalize on what they felt was a talented pool of young people born in the 1980s, influenced by an increasingly vibrant Miami.

So Leyva returned to found the alternative Borscht Film Festival, which, according to the group, is a "quasi-yearly event held at iconic Miami venues that commissions and showcases films created by emerging regional filmmakers telling Miami stories that go beyond the typical portrayal of the city as a beautiful, but vapid party town, forging the cinematic identity of the city." Now entering its eighth year, Borscht has evolved from a loose and amorphous



"Uncle Luke is a public figure who people feel very strongly about," says Mayer.



With a nod to Campbell's 2 Live Crew, *Life and Freaky Times* does booty.

entity into something far more solid.

In 2011 Sundance picked up the animated short *Xemoland*, made by Borscht alum and Key Biscayne native Daniel Cardenas, about a seven-year-old boy's alternative universe on that well-to-do island. Three other Borscht films also screened at international festivals this past year. The exposure has paid off: The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

has recognized the Borscht mission, and has awarded it a \$150,000 Knight Arts Challenge matching grant.

Rakontur, founded by Miami film-making duo Alfred Spellman and Billy Corben, has thrown support behind the festival as well. "Leyva and I...collaborate on almost all our creative projects in one way or another," says Mayer. "But this was my first time working with Rakontur. They were really positive and encouraged the whole project, and the indie film scene in general." Hence this project involving contributions from across Miami's contemporary cultural spectrum — music, writing, film, and visual arts.

Now the group is packing its bags for Sundance. Just what the broader culture will make of Luther Campbell — and Miami's — freaky world is anyone's guess. But with projects such as this, Miami artists are cultivating a unique identity for themselves and their hometown.

Says Mayer, who will be one of the team on a plane out West later this month: "We're really excited to bring booty-bass music to Utah!"

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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www.101exhibit.com
Through February 8:
"Undertow" by Jason Shawn Alexander

12345 WEST DIXIE STUDIO AND GALLERY
12345 W. Dixie Hwy., North Miami
305-895-2553
www.dixieimageworks.com
Through January 31:
"Resurrection II" with Paul Morris and Randy Burman

ABBA FINE ART
233 NW 36th St., Miami
305-576-4278
www.abbafineart.com
Ongoing:
"Nature's Pulse" by Debra Holt

ACND GALLERY OF ART
4949 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
305-751-8367
www.acnd.net
Through January 21:
"Faces of China" by Tom Salyer

ALBERTO LINERO GALLERY
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305-587-0172
www.albertolinerogallery.com
Through January 4:
"Caleidoscopio" with Pedro Sandoval, Santiago Betancur, Dario, Luis Jimenez, Paola Restrepo, Dana Milik, Adriana Carvalho, David Zalben, Breceda, Moleiro, and Romgo
January 2 through 31:
"Untouched" with Pedro Sandoval, Nelly Del Rio, Santiago Betancur, Dario, Luis Jimenez, Moleiro, Romgo, Orkomo, Suarez Molinares, and Alex Garcia
Reception January 14, 2 to 10 p.m.

ALEJANDRA VON HARTZ FINE ARTS
2630 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-438-0220
www.alejandravonhartz.net
Through January 28:
"The Eyes, Sometimes" by Karina Peisajovich

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
January 2 through March 19:
"Odyssey 2012" with various artists
Reception January 14, 6 to 10 p.m.

ARTSEEN GALLERY
2215 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-237-3559
http://artseenspace.wordpress.com/
Call gallery for exhibition information

ASCASO GALLERY
2441 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-571-9410
www.ascasogallery.com
Through January 31:
"Collector's Delight" with Carlos Cruz Diez, Fernando Botero, Jesus Soto, Alexander Calder, Alejandro Otero, Cornelis Zittman, Nicolas Shoffer, Oswaldo Vigas, Victor Valera, Alirio Palacios, James Mathison, Luisa Richter, Arturo Correa, and Jorge Segui

BAKEHOUSE ART COMPLEX
561 NW 32nd St., Miami
305-576-2828
www.bacfl.org
Through January 20:
"Woman to Woman" with Julie Davidow, Carol Prusa, Vickie Pierre, Sara Stites, Samantha Salzinger, Francie Bishop Good, Felice Grodin, Michelle Weinberg, Elizabeth Cerejido, and Mia Leonin
"Small Works Show" with various artists

BAS FISHER INVITATIONAL
180 NE 39th St., #210, Miami
By appointment: info@basfisherinvitational.com
Through January 14:
"Mary, Richard, Clouds & Dirt" by Richard Haley

BERNICE STEINBAUM GALLERY
3550 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-573-2700
www.bernicesteinbaumgallery.com
Through January 7:
"A Critique of Established Attitudes Towards Aging & Beauty" by Aurora Molina
"New Work" by Peter Sarkisian
"Fleeced" by Holly Lynton
January 14 through February 29:
"This Is Not Taxidermy" by Enrique Gomez de Molina
Reception January 14, 2 to 9 p.m.

BLACK SQUARE GALLERY
2248 NW 1st Pl., Miami
786-999-9735
www.blacksquaregallery.com
January 11 through February 27:
"Levitation" by Victor Sydorenko
Reception January 11, 6 to 9 p.m.

BORINQUEN ART GALLERY
100 NE 38th St., Miami
305-491-1526
www.borinquenhealth.org
Ongoing:
"Group Show" with H-Allen Benowitz, François Gracia, Clarice de Souza, David Tupper, Sharon Dash, and Hector Maldonado, and "Creatos Aetas" by Kourtney Eugene Brown

BRIDGE RED STUDIOS / PROJECT SPACE
12425 NE 13th Ave. #5, North Miami
305-978-4856
www.bridgedredstudios.com
Through January 29:
"MDCC North Campus 1970s Faculty Exhibition" with Jim Couper, Elmer Craig, Duane Hanson, Charles Hashim, Shirley Henderson, Michael Klezmer, Salvatore La Rosa, Peter McWhorter, Ron Mitchell,



Dana Schutz, *Swimming, Smoking, Crying*, oil on canvas, 2009, at Miami Art Museum.

Gary Monroe, and Robert Thiele
Reception January 8, noon to 4 p.m.

BUTTER GALLERY
305-303-6254
www.buttergallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

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

CAROL JAZZART CONTEMPORARY ART
158 NW 91st St., Miami Shores
305-490-6906
www.cjazzart.com
By appointment: carol@cjazzart.com
Through January 29:
"You Are Here Forever" with Robert Melee, Franklin Evans, Greg Lindquist, Suzanne Stroebe, Hackworth Ashley, Ernesto Burgos, Pinar Yolacan, Edgar Serrano, David Brooks, and Renata Padovan, curated by Omar Lopez-Chahoud

CARIDI GALLERY
758 NE 125th St., North Miami
786-202-5554
www.caridigallery.com
Through January 31:
Danny Esquenazi

CENTER FOR VISUAL COMMUNICATION
541 NW 27th St., Miami
305-571-1415, www.visual.org
Through January 14:
"Travelers in Time" by Luis Barba

CHAREST-WEINBERG GALLERY
250 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-292-0411
www.charestweinberg.com
Through February 29:
"Black Sculpture" by Fernando Mastrangelo

CHRISTOPHER MIRO GALLERY
71 E. Flagler St., Miami
305-741-0058
www.christophermirogallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

CS GALLERY
787 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-308-6561
www.chirinossanchez.com
Ongoing:
"Group Show" with various artists

CURATOR'S VOICE ART PROJECTS
2509 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
786-357-0568
www.curatorsvoiceartprojects.com
January 5 through 14:
"Time & Place" by Susy Iglicki

DANIEL AZOULAY GALLERY
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DEZER SCHAUHALLE MIAMI
2000 NE 146th St., North Miami
954-270-7404
www.dezerschauhalle.com
Through February 29:
"Retrospective to the Future" by Bunny Yeager
"Ich bin ein Berliner" with various artists, curated by Verena Tafel and Helmut Schuster

DIANA LOWENSTEIN FINE ARTS
2043 N Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-1804, www.difinearts.com
Through January 31:
"Thoughts, Meditations, Acts" by Xawery Wolski
Reception January 14, 6 to 10 p.m.

DIASPORA VIBE GALLERY
3938 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305 573-4046
www.diasporavibe.net
January 1 through March 31:
"New Possessions: Caribbean Artists in the US. Call to artists in the Diaspora" with various artists

DIMENSIONS VARIABLE
171 NE 38th St., Miami
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Through February 3:
"Full Salute" by Mette Tommerup
"Modern Trance" by Martin Murphy

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51 NW 36th St., Miami
305-573-9994
www.dotfiftyone.com
Through January 10:
"Poetics of Expansion: Nine Views of Contemporary Argentine Photography" with Juan Sebastian Bruno, Bruno Dubner, Marcelo Grosman, Ignacio Iasparra, Cecilia Lenardón, Jorge Miño, Oligatega, Guillermo Ueno, and Alejandra Urresti

ELITE ART EDITIONS
2732 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
754-422-5942
www.elitearteditions.com
January 14 through 30:
"Energy & Nature" with Marisa Leicach and Rosy Lofer
Reception January 14, 6 to 10 p.m.

ETRA FINE ART
50 NE 40th St., Miami
305-438-4383
www.etrafineart.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

FLAGLER ART SPACE
172 W. Flagler St., Miami
www.flaglerartspace.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

FREDRIC SNITZER GALLERY
2247 NW 1st Pl., Miami
305-448-8976
www.snitzer.com
January 10 through February 4:
"Speed of Life" by Mauricio Gonzalez
Reception January 10, 6 to 9 p.m.

GALERIE HELENE LAMARQUE
125 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-582-6067
www.galeriehelenelamarque.com
Through January 20:
"Recent Works" by Claude Viallat
"New Sculpture" by ORLAN

GALERIE SCHUSTER MIAMI
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Through January 15:
"Wondering" by London Tsai

GALLERY 212
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786-431-1957
www.gallery212miami.com
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GALLERY DIET

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305-571-2288
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January 6 through February 11:
"Hysterical Sublime" by Richard Hoglund
Reception January 6, 6 to 9 p.m.

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www.greyareamiami.com
info@greyareamiami.com
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HARDCORE ARTS CONTEMPORARY SPACE
3326 N. Miami Ave., Miami
www.hardcoreartcontemporary.com
info@hardcoreartmiami.com
Through February 4:
"Down & Under" with Consuelo Castañeda, Gaston Ugalde, and Milton Becerra
Reception January 14, 7 to 10 p.m.

HAROLD GOLEN GALLERY
2294 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-989-3359
www.haroldgolengallery.com
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IDEOBOX ARTSPACE
2417 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-9878
www.ideobox.com
Through February 26:
"Astilla en el Ojo" by Rodrigo Echeverri Calero

JG PLATFORM GALLERY
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305-573-0208
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KABE CONTEMPORARY
123 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-573-8142
www.kabecontemporary.com
Through February 25:
"Superflat Donkeys and Zooms" by Meyer Vaisman

KAVACHNINA CONTEMPORARY
46 NW 36th St., Miami
305-448-2060
www.kavachnina.com
Through February 3:
"Black Collection" by Salustiano
Reception January 14, 7 to 10 p.m.

KELLEY ROY GALLERY
50 NE 29th St., Miami
305-447-3888
www.kelleyroygallery.com
Through January 28:



Heriberto Mora, *Emptiness*, oil on canvas, 2011, at Kelley Roy Gallery.

"Sculpture" by Albert Paley
"Inner Journey" by Heriberto Mora
"Group Show" with John Henry, Dolly Moreno, Kevin Paulsen, Neljé, Tom Seghi, Sandra Muss, Linda Lee Johnson, Antonio Ugarte, and Sebastian Spreng

KIWI GALLERY
48 NW 29th St., Miami
305-200-3047
www.kiwiartsgroup.com
Ongoing:
William John Kennedy's Fine Art Photography
Collection of Early Pop Artists

LELIA MORDOCH GALLERY
2300 N. Miami Ave., Miami
786-431-1506, www.galerieleliamordoch.com
Through February 2:
"Is Art An Antidepressant?" with various artists

LOCUST PROJECTS
155 NE 38th St., Miami
305-576-8570
www.locustprojects.org
Through January 28:
"Cores & Cutouts" by Ruben Ochoa

MAOR GALLERY
3030 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-9995
http://maormiami.org
Through January 31:
"On the Edge of Light" with various artists

MIAMI ART SALON
36 NW 36th St., Miami
305-775-9683
www.miamiartsalon.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

MIAMI ART SPACE
244 NW 35th St., Miami
305-757-6000
www.miamiartspace.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, CENTRE GALLERY
300 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
Bldg. 1, Room 1365
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www.mdc.edu
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MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, FREEDOM TOWER
600 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
305-237-7700
Through January 8:
"We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball" by Kadir Nelson

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MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, HOMESTEAD ART SPACE
500 College Terr., Homestead
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MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, KENDALL GALLERY
1110 SW 104th St., Miami
305-237-2322
www.mdc.edu/kendall
Through January 15:
"It Matters: Faculty Exhibition" with Jennifer Basile, Antonio Chirinos, Alberto Meza, and Yomarie Silva

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MYRA GALLERIES
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www.myragalleries.com
Through January 31:
"New York-New York" by Paul Ching-Bor
"Urban Life In Cuba-Colombia" by Camila Malo
"Pop Art World With Swarovski Crystals" by Milani

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Reception January 7, 7 to 10 p.m.

BASS MUSEUM OF ART
2100 Collins Ave., Miami Beach
305-673-7530
www.bassmuseum.org
Through February 12:
Laurent Grasso



Martin Murphy, *Forecaster*, video projection, resin, aluminum, and polypropylene, 2011, at Dorsch Gallery.

Through March 4:
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CIFO (Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation)
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DE LA CRUZ COLLECTION CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE
23 NE 41st St., Miami
305-576-6112
www.delacruzcollection.org
Ongoing:
"Works from the Collection of Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz" with various artists
Through March 10:
"Maintain Right" by Funner Projects, with Justin H. Long and Robert Lorie

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305-348-2890
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"2iPM009" by Magdalena Fernández
"The Florida Artist Series: Humberto Calzada: The Fire Next Time" by Humberto Calzada
Through February 19:
"Color on Color" with various artists
Through March 18:
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Collective (FAU), Megan Riley, Tom Scicluna, Joaquin Segura, SOMA, Natika Soward, Lara Stein Pardo, Suzanne Stroebé, Third Streaming/Yona Baker, Cecilia Szalkowicz, TM Sisters, and Pinar Yolacan

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Through January 15:
"China: Insights" with Chen Yuan Zhong, Hua Er, Jia Yu Chuan, Li Nan, Yang Yan Kang, Yu Haibo, and Zhang Xinmin
Through April 22:
"Women, Windows, and the Word: Diverging Perspectives on Islamic Art" with various artists
Through September 23:
"Saintly Blessings: A Gift of Mexican Retablos from Joseph and Janet Shein" with various artists
January 28 through March 25:
"From the Vault: Building a Legacy — 60 Years of Collecting at the Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami" with various artists
Reception January 27, 7:30 to 10 p.m.

MIAMI ART MUSEUM
101 W. Flagler St., Miami
305-375-3000
www.miamiartmuseum.org
Ongoing:
"Between Here and There: Modern and Contemporary Art from the Permanent Collection"
Through January 22:
"Schneebett" by Enrique Martinez Celaya
Through March 18:
"Focus Gallery: Marcel Duchamp" by Marcel Duchamp, curated by Rene Morales
January 15 through February 26:
"If the Face Had Wheels" by Dana Schutz
Reception January 14, 6 to 9 p.m.

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
770 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-893-6211
www.mocanomi.org
Through February 12:
"Pivot Points V" by Teresita Fernandez
Through February 19:
"Rolling Stop" by Mark Handforth

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www.margulieswarehouse.com
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http://rfc.museum
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"American Exuberance" with various artists

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Through February 11:
"Love Trips: A Triptych on Love" by Jillian Mayer

Compiled by Melissa Wallen
Send listings, jpeg images, and events information to
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BISCAYNE *Times*



Play It Again, Carmen

Bizet's *Carmen*, playing at the Aventura Arts and Cultural Center (3385 NE 188th St.) on **Thursday, January 5 and Friday, January 6**, is one of the most performed operas of all time, and with its "Toreador's Song" one of the most famous in opera history. Melodrama is part of the genre, but the story of Carmen the gypsy woman and her tortured lover, José, took it to new heights, helped by the work's fiery and erotic music. Ballet Etoile does not intend to tone it down, with partially clothed dancers who drive home the point that passion can be as much about destruction as it is about love. Shows are at 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$28 and \$32. Please visit www.aventuracenter.org.

Mad About Macbeth

Mad Cat Theatre is the rebel of the local stage scene, its original and off-off-off Broadway productions sparking up Miami for the past decade. Headed by Paul Tei (who has a recurring role on TV's *Burn Notice*), Mad Cat now makes its home at the new Light Box at the Goldman Warehouse (404 NW 26th St.). To kick off the 2012 season, the company debuts *Macbeth and the Monster*, about little Macbeth being read a bedtime story so scary he might shout, "Out, out damned classic!" The play comes from Los Angeles playwright Angela Berliner, the director of spiritual West Coast cousin L'Enfant Terrible theater group. *Mini Macbeth* runs through **Sunday, January 8** and, unlike previous performances, this one is for all ages. For tickets, go to www.madcattheatre.org.

Fresh-Air Markets to Spare

All those processed, tasteless vegetables, fruits, and breads in the grocery aisle have created an interest in organic, fresh, and native foods — hence the number of

open-air farmers' markets. Every **Thursday** in January (through March), from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., North Miami holds its market at the MOCA Plaza (770 NE 125th St.). A little farther south, the Barry University Green Market sets up shop **Tuesdays**, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., at NE 2nd Ave. and 115th St., with bonsai and orchid arrangements accompanying the usual organic fare. And then there are the two year-round markets close to *BT* territory: Normandy Village at the fountain on 71st Street (Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) and the new Brickell Green Market at Central Park, 1300 S. Miami Ave. (Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.).

Heavenly Choir

If you haven't heard yet, *Seraphic Fire* is one of the best cultural bets in town. Made up of singing professionals from all over the country, some of whom are flown in for specific performances, ranging from classical to contemporary, sacred to secular, the all-star ensemble is celebrating its tenth anniversary. To commemorate this notable birthday, the choir will appear at churches in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties, from **Wednesday, January 11, to Sunday, January 15**. For specific locations, times, and tickets, go to www.seraphicfire.org.

Bike Back in Time

Want to see what South Florida looked like when Native Americans navigated the bay, before the first European explorers landed? One of the best-preserved slices of Old Florida is Bear Cut in Crandon Park on Key Biscayne. Designated an environmental study area, the hammocks and oceanfront wilderness of Bear Cut are the real (original) thing. Go exploring on a **Miami-Dade County EcoAdventures Bike Tour on Sunday, January 15**. Starting at 1:30 p.m., the bike ride also takes in the old Crandon Park Zoo site (now Crandon Gardens) and the Village of Key Biscayne. Meet up at 6767 Crandon Blvd., Key Biscayne. Reservations are required. Please call 305-365-3018.



What, You Can't See a Movie With Your Mother?

The **Miami Jewish Film Festival** is back for a 15th year, at venues that include the Cosford Cinema at the University of Miami, the Regal South Beach Cinema, and the Sunrise Cinema in Broward. The Jewish thread can be broad, from political and historical dramas to documentaries, and the films come from a surprising number of countries. Last year the winning film, *The Roundup*, about an especially dark moment in World War II, was from France, while a popular favorite was an Israeli-German production about a corpse in a bakery. The festival runs from **Saturday, January 21, to Sunday, January 29**. For schedule and tickets, go to www.miamijewishfilmfestival.com.

We Can Dance If We Want To

One of the most remarkable and distinguished dance events in Miami, now in its 12th edition, is the annual danceAble production. It has long left the curiosity factor behind, and shown the world what a group of dancers, including those with disabilities, can do. This year **AXIS Dance Company**, recently featured on *So You Think You Can Dance*, will premiere *Full of Words*, co-produced by Tigertail Productions and the Florida Dance Association. The mixed-ability troupe will create a dialogue using their bodies and movements on **Saturday, January 28**, at 8:00 p.m. at the Colony Theatre, 1040 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach. Tickets cost \$35. For more information, please go to www.tigertail.org.

Let's Meet in the Lobby

Downtown Miami, despite its high-rise renaissance, is still largely unexplored terrain, especially when it comes to the district's historic buildings. That can be corrected on **Monday, January 30**, with a tour of some of the more spectacular lobbies in town, including those of the Ingraham and Alfred DuPont buildings. Courtesy of HistoryMiami, Michael Pearlman will lead **Hungry for History: Elegant Art Deco Office Lobbies**, introducing the



Fired Up For Flamenco

Flamenco has experienced a renaissance in recent years, making it one of the most popular forms of dance for both concerts and lessons. The Arsht Center for the Performing Arts (1444 Biscayne Blvd.) gives a nod of its own the form with the **Arte Flamenco Festival**, running **Saturday, January 7, to Sunday, January 15**. It will kick off with *Suma Flamenco Miami Gala*, featuring both local and international musicians and dancers, and culminate with *Mi Calle Flamenco*, straight out of Andalusia. All events will be at the Carnival Studio Theater. Times vary. Please consult www.arshtcenter.org.

uninitiated to the grand style of the early 20th Century. The tour runs a lunchtime-friendly 11:00 a.m. to noon. Tickets are \$20; \$30 for nonmembers. Meet at HistoryMiami, 101 W. Flagler St. For more information or to reserve your space, e-mail citytours@historymiami.org.

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

Return to the Avenue

A decade ago, local performance artist, dancer, and writer Teo Castellanos burst onto the scene with the one-man stage show *NE 2nd Avenue*. Its wit and energy thrilled audiences, and it went on to win a prestigious Edinburgh Fringe Festival award before touring the world. For its tenth anniversary, the Haitian jitney driver, Puerto Rican drug dealer, Cuban rafter, and other characters return home, this time to the Carnival Studio at the Arsht Center (1444 Biscayne Blvd.), from **Thursday, January 19, through Saturday, January 21**. For tickets and show times, go to arshtcenter.org.

Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Locksmiths Pick Their Victims

100 Block of NE 11th Street

Things are bad out there, and they're only getting worse. At this establishment, someone picked the lock of the front door and subsequently changed the lock on two separate occasions. There is video of the incidents. Victim thinks it's an inside job perpetrated by a disgruntled ex-employee who hired a locksmith to do the deed. Sound equipment is now missing from the business. There are no real leads, but the owner is going to take the video to police. The lesson to be learned here is that your friendly neighborhood locksmith will sell out to the highest bidder. Apparently it's not personal, just business as usual in Miami.

Forget the Laptops, I Want to Know About His Hemorrhoids

100 Block of NE 82nd Terrace

Doctor had secured his practice, but returned the following morning to find that a side door had been pried open. Though there was computer equipment in the office, the criminal only took medical files. There is no video of the break-in, but Miami lowlifes have now compromised the personal information of patients. Did you know that, on the black market, medical files can snag as much as \$50 per file? Should you receive a random phone call from someone trying to sell you Viagra for your penile dysfunction, know that you are not alone — your neighbors likely know about this, too.

If You Build It, They Will Take It

2700 Block of NE 2nd Avenue

This business owner wanted to beautify her business by planting trees around it. We're living in Miami, and we're here, in part, to celebrate the wonders of nature. The problem is that the celebration of nature is a popular theme. Upon arriving one morning, the business owner discovered that all the trees were missing, leaving unseemly holes in their absence. Robbers had brazenly removed the trees, likely in an effort to make their own home — or crack house — pleasing to the eye. In the Garden of Eden that is Miami, not even Adam could have



envisioned a world where sinners would actually take the whole tree.

Scary Moment in Palm Grove

100 Block of NE 80th Terrace

This serious Crime Beat entry should serve as a reminder to Miami residents

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to be wary of their surroundings. A man was parking his car when he was approached by two gun-wielding robbers. The door of the car was unlocked, so the crooks were able to open it and reach into the man's pocket, taking \$400 in cash. They then fled on foot. Please take extra caution, no matter where you are. There are armed bandits in Miami looking for victims. It's all they do. All day. This is only one of several incidents to have occurred along the Biscayne Corridor in the past month.

Will a Footlong Fit in That Bag?

200 Block of NE 3rd Street

While some criminals rob banks for a living, there are others who aim slightly lower. Man wearing a black baseball cap and dark sunglasses walked into a Subway and ordered a sandwich, then claimed he had a bomb in his bag and was going to blow up the store unless the cashier handed over the money. The cashier was apparently unimpressed with the lame bomb threat and pressed the alarm button. The man ran out of the store. He didn't even get his sandwich. The only thing "taken" was the

labor required to make the sandwich. If you were a criminal and had a bomb, would you seriously target Subway for your big payday? Blimpie locations are now on notice.

Take My Car, Please

7000 Block of N. Miami Avenue

Man got out of his car and entered the convenience store of the Shamrock Gas station. He left his keys in the ignition because he was "only going to be a minute." Unbeknownst to him is that, in Miami, a minute is 57 more seconds than the average criminal needs to steal your wheels. Criminals are in perpetual queue here, waiting for their next score — especially the easy ones. The car was quickly stolen and the man was stranded. We gather this so-called victim just wanted his insurance company to buy him a new car. Good luck with that.

Makeup Bandit Leaves Only Lipstick Trace

4800 Biscayne Blvd.

The holiday season has passed and what better gift to have given than makeup. Your significant other wants to look

pretty, after all. A man placed Maybeline products inside his bag while he was walking down the makeup aisle at CVS. Another customer noticed this and told store personnel. The man then made a run for it, but store security gave chase, forcing him to drop the bag. The makeup was returned to the shelves. Guess his woman had to go with a more natural look this holiday season.

Maybe They Were Just Helping Him Move

200 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Our victim was moving out of his residence when he placed a bunch of items next to his car — rather than placing them in his car, under lock and key. He went back upstairs and gathered more items, only to discover, upon his return, that his belongings were gone. There is video of the incident, as this happened in a garage. What a way to say goodbye to a neighbor!

Unlike Buses, Miami Crooks Run on Schedule

7500 Block NE Miami Court

Man was waiting for the bus when he fell asleep. (Miami-Dade Transit officials

really have to do something about the long waits for buses.) He was rudely awakened by four men punching him in the face. They dragged him from the bench and continued to punch him in the face, causing multiple injuries. They then took his wallet. Strangely, they only used the wallet to further pummel his face, dropped the wallet, then ran off. That must have been some wallet. No leads in this case. The man reportedly is still waiting for his bus.

Ride Rage

79th Street and Biscayne Boulevard

Bus driver let a man on a bus who angrily asked, "How much?" When told about the two-dollar fare, the man refused to pay. Bus driver told him to get off the bus and began to close the door. Once the door closed, the incensed man kicked the door, causing the glass to shatter. The bus driver drove away. We know. We can't believe it, either. Two bucks to ride a bus? That's if it shows up, of course.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

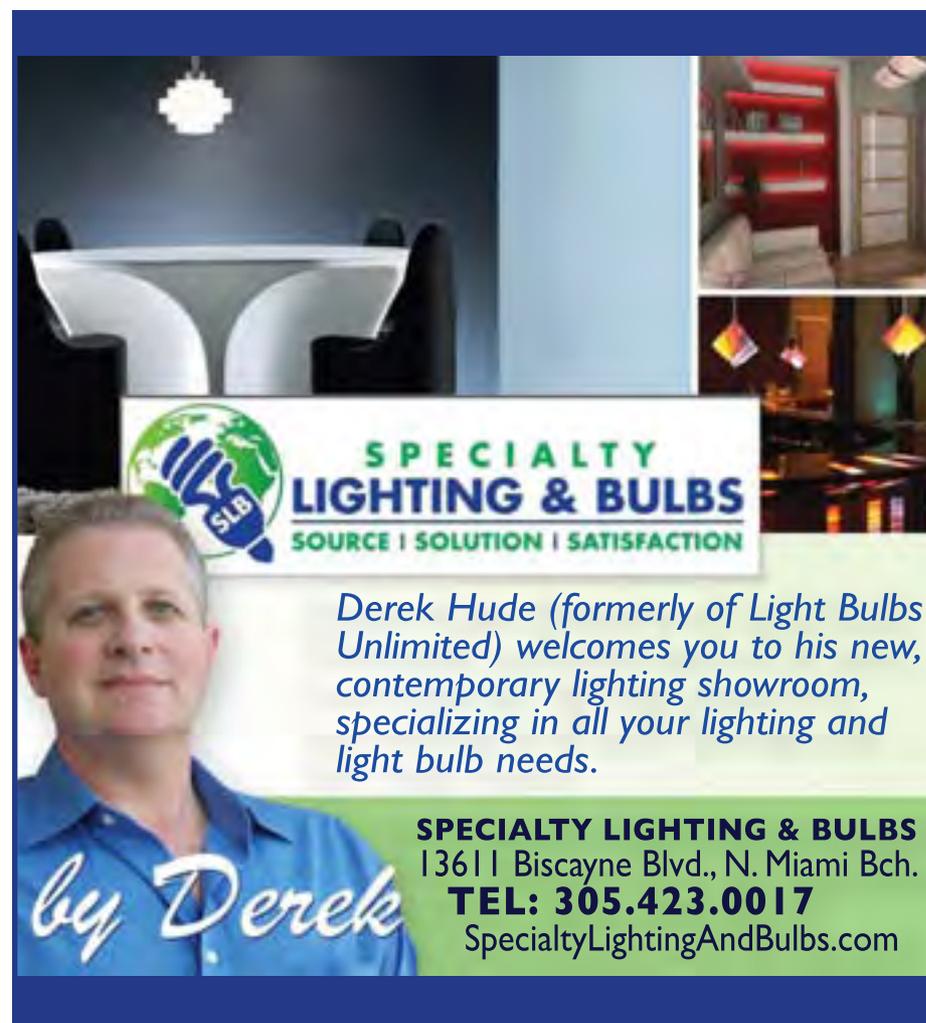


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by Derek

All-Star Parks

The top ten green spaces in Miami-Dade

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

Here's an easy New Year's resolution to keep: Visit the best parks in town. Here and only here will you find the ultimate bucket list of which neighborhood parks deserve your patronage. Plan to visit one per month, or hit them all in less than two weeks. It's your choice and these are your parks. You paid for them.

Miami-Dade County beats the City of Miami on this list, four parks to three, but there is also a hidden winner: the City of North Miami. Within a few miles of each other are three of the top five parks, including number one.

As the nation's only professional local park critic, I have been honored (and paid) to visit and review a new park every month since March 2007. With more than 50 parks under my belt, I feel quite confident that these are the best parks in *Biscayne Times* territory — northeast Miami-Dade.

All parks are rated four trees or above. This list centers on the mainland around the Biscayne Corridor and excludes Miami Beach. So from Biscayne Boulevard's peak in Aventura to its terminus downtown at the Miami River, here are the best parks according to Park Patrol. In reverse order, and with a new nickname for each, they are:

10. Biscayne Bay Campus of Florida International University: "The Free Oleta."

Although not technically a park, the campus is public property and used frequently by the public. Regular dog and human walkers know to avoid the buildings and head for the quiet trails at the end of 135th Street. A few years ago, these folks pressured the university to abandon plans to pave over the trails, but now FIU is at it again, saying it needs the trails for an access road. We'll see about that.

The trails begin with an environmental preserve that leads into mangrove forests, over canals, and alongside one of the largest open stretches of glistening Biscayne Bay to be found anywhere. And unlike "the other" Oleta, its neighboring state park, this one is completely free.

9. Highland Oaks Park: "The Anti-Mall."

Escape the madness of Aventura Mall at this nearby park with some surprisingly thick elements of nature. Operated by Miami-Dade County and adjacent to schools of the same name, Highland Oaks has a side for sports — soccer, beach volleyball, baseball — and a side for strolling around the lake. The ducks



BT photos by Jim W. Harper

No. 2: Greynolds Park, with miles of paths, a golf course, covered bridge, bird sanctuary, lots of water, and pavilions in the woods.



No. 5: Enchanted Forest, where petite ponies and majestic oak trees fit nicely together.

7. Morningside Park: "Loops on the Bay."

This hidden pearl on 55th Terrace saved the Upper Eastside shoreline from the fate of neighborhoods north of 79th Street, where the bay is untouchable owing to an unbroken string of private residences. It's also the area's best public launch for a boat or kayak. Mingle with the locals by speaking their language: "Tennis, anyone?"

6. Margaret Pace Park: "Thrones on the Bay."

This excellent location earns the title of "biggest gainer" from its makeover in 2003, which included the installation of a set of towering ceramic thrones decorated by local art students. These eight acres on the water offer everyone in the Omni/Edgewater communities a place to play basketball, soccer, flag football, beach volleyball, and tennis — and be seen walking the dog.

5. Enchanted Forest Elaine Gordon Park: "Horsing Around in Town."

Not to be confused with Santa's (Dis-) Enchanted Forest! One block west of the 135th Street Starbucks and the Boulevard, this sizeable spread in North Miami has a little of everything and a lot of mature oak trees. It keeps good company with Arch Creek Park (number three) and the street of *tasteful* holiday lights, Enchanted Place. Who knew we had horse stables this close to Target?

here are fat and happy.

8. East Greynolds Park: "Dogs 'n' Mud."

Not to be confused with the number two park on this list, East Greynolds is also known as "the doggie park." One of only a handful of official dog parks in the county, the Northeast Regional Dog Park lies east of Biscayne Boulevard and takes up about a third of the park's space, while other sections offer thick woods or pockets along the bay, where fishermen try their luck. There is an entrance fee, and the large half of the dog park has mud issues, but it also offers doggie baths and showers.

BEST PARKS IN NORTHEAST MIAMI-DADE

Park Rating



Oleta River State Park
State



Belle Meade Mini Parks
City of Miami



Morningside Park
City of Miami



Highland Oaks Park
County



Greynolds Park
County



Enchanted Forest
City of North Miami



East Greynolds Park
County



FIU's Biscayne Bay Campus
State University



Arch Creek Park
County



Margaret Pace Park
City of Miami



No. 3: Arch Creek Park is a step back in time, to an era when all of Dade County was thickly forested.



No. 8: East Greynolds Park has gone to the dogs, in the best sense, offering doggie baths and showers.



No. 9: Highland Oaks Park, where athletes play, walkers stroll, ducks waddle, and nature shows her best.

4. Belle Meade Mini Parks: “Little Hood that Could.”

While these two parks are quite modest, they offer something that most Miami neighborhoods lack: spaces for daily gathering. The playground fits the bill for parents, and the other park opens the gate for dog owners. While technically run by the City of Miami, these parks are clearly the property of the neighborhood. It took a local hero, and a village,

to occupy that little dog park.

3. Arch Creek Park: “La Flaca.”

Like a Venezuelan beauty queen, this small park always makes the finals. While diminutive, it excels in natural beauty and the quality of its native plants. By preserving the forested Biscayne Boulevard of yesteryear, this park poses the question: What happened to the rest of Miami? It would seem that the other beauty queens were scalped.

2. Greynolds Park: “Long and Wind-ing Road.”

One of the oldest parks in South Florida, Greynolds could be called our noble gray lady. The park’s many roads and walking paths wind around a golf course, a covered bridge, a bird sanctuary, a villa on the lake, and many pavilions in the woods. Drive, bike, jog, walk, or paddle along the pinkie of Oleta River.

1. Oleta River State Park: “El Gordo.”

As a 1000-acre state park, Oleta ranks as Florida’s largest urban park, and on par with its best. It is our area’s Central Park, and actually larger than the one in New York. While hardly a neighborhood park, Oleta is the tropical mangrove forest that faces a strip mall. It is the contradiction that is Miami. It’s also the best place in town for a barbecue.

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Shira Abergel in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Photo by Pavel Antonov, 2010

Doggy's To-Do List

There's no end to the number of activities out there for your pet

By Lisa Hartman
BT Contributor

Last month Hilary Swank was on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, talking about her latest movie. Ellen, knowing full well that Hilary is an animal lover with a menagerie of pets at home, presented her with a gift for her fighting fish: a fish agility set.

Now, my first thought was, what a great idea! Here this sad, lonely fish sits in a tank all day, hoping to have something to do or something interesting to look at. Finally, an activity! The fish footage on *Ellen* was priceless: A cute little fish — goldfish, I think — swam over hurdles, went through hoops, and

even navigated through weave polls. Of course, it was all a put-on.

But as doctored as the footage may have been, why *not* have an agility course for fish, or any other activity for that matter?

Boredom, lack of physical activity and, especially lack of mental stimulus are the causes of most of the problems we see with our pets. So it's always important to seek out new adventures for our furry (or scaly) friends, to give them a more interesting life.

For those who haven't gotten the memo, doggy dock diving has hit South Florida. The "doggy beach" where the fun happens is located in Hollywood, on Ravenswood, just west of I-95. The



facility has a big manmade lake in which dogs can swim — and a dock that dogs are allowed to dive off! If you haven't seen dock diving for dogs, it's quite exciting. Jumps are measured in distance or height, usually with an emphasis on distance. Generally it is for toy-driven dogs that like the water.

Many owners start teaching their dogs to jump by tossing a toy into the water for the dog to go after. Small tosses lead to bigger tosses, and the dogs are enthusiastically encouraged to jump. The dock dive and water dog park is currently open Saturdays and Wednesdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. "Performance

An advertisement for Adams Veterinary Clinic. The background is a green field with several dogs and a cat. The text reads: "Adams Veterinary Clinic", "Serving the Upper Eastside since 1965.", "Open Monday through Saturday", "Specialists with small animals, avian and exotics", "672 NE 79th St. • 305-757-7309", and "www.adamsvetclinic.com".

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An advertisement for Smiling Pets Mobile Vet Clinic. The background is a light green color. The text reads: "We come to you!", "Free house call", "Free House Call! New client 1st visit 3+ Pets any visit", "Smiling Pets Mobile Vet Clinic", "305-754-0844", and "www.mobilevetmiami.com". There is a photo of a dog wearing sunglasses and carrying a black bag. A small logo for Smiling Pets is in the bottom right corner.

We come to you!
Free house call
Free House Call!
New client 1st visit
3+ Pets any visit
Smiling Pets Mobile Vet Clinic
305-754-0844
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Pups,” a South Florida group dedicated to bringing you more activities for your dog is at the helm of this wonderful enterprise (www.p-pups.com).

Can your dog catch a Frisbee? “Disc dogging” is another fun activity that has gained tremendous popularity. There are even national and international competitions where the best of the best compete. “Freestyle” is where you develop a choreographed routine of disc catches, tricks, and fancy dance moves all set to music.

The distance competition, on the other hand, is just that: You need to throw the Frisbee a certain distance, and your dog must catch it and bring it back to you as many times as possible in the allotted amount of time.

For this, owners must acquire a skill as well — that of learning to throw the disc properly so your dog can catch it. Competitions and clinics are held several times a year and, as luck (and our weather) would have it, some of the best competing “disc doggers” reside in South Florida. Check it out when you can, or just take the leap and get your dog involved.

Perhaps your dog isn’t a jock, but very friendly, well behaved, and brings

smiles to all he meets? Being a therapy dog may be his calling. Therapy dogs come in all shapes and sizes, but some of the best are with the Canine Assisted Therapy Program, or “CAT” for short.

With CAT, dogs must pass the American Kennel Club’s Canine Good Citizen (CGC) test before moving on to more advanced training and testing specifically for therapy dogs. Dogs are evaluated for their strengths and special areas where they might excel. For example, some dogs do better with children, while others might work better with the elderly.

There are tests to see how well the dogs listen to their owner, and how they handle wheelchairs, people with disabilities, and anything else that may come into play. “Team building” with your dog is emphasized, which is at the forefront of all training, obedience and sports included. To find out more about Canine Assisted Therapy or get on their mailing list, contact them at www.cat-dog.org.

They may not learn to rub two sticks together to make a fire, but believe it or

not, there are “Dog Scout” troops across the country, including in Florida. Dog Scouts can earn badges just like Boy or Girl Scouts can. Scout owners must agree to adhere to rules of conduct, such as always setting a good example (picking up poop, following leash laws) and being kind to dogs and other dog owners in public.

They even have drill teams where dogs perform obedience behaviors in tandem. The best place for more information on Dog Scouts of America is the

Agility competitions are probably the fastest-growing and most addicting animal sport in the country.

parent website, www.dogscouts.org.

Agility competitions are probably the fastest-growing and most addicting animal sport in the country. An agility field is set up with different obstacles in a different order every time. The dog handler is allowed to walk the course

beforehand and strategize on the best and fastest way to lure the dog through, as speed and accuracy are judged.

All of this takes time to learn and much practice for the dog and handler to feel comfortable and confident enough to take on the various obstacles, such as jumping through hoops, running through chutes, and walking over dog walks.

But agility is not just for dogs. Cats enjoy it, too, and are usually lured by a shiny toy the owner shakes over the obstacles. I have also seen pet pigs tackle agility courses, and I am sure other pet versions are not far behind.

Whatever your pet’s strengths or weaknesses, there is an activity out there for you and your furry friend that will strengthen the relationship between you and provide lots of fun in the process.

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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Caring for Mother Earth, Glamorously

What the environmental movement needs is a little pizzazz

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

Glamorous people of Miami, unite to save the planet! The green movement needs a makeover. Its signature color is fading like a dead Kermit the Frog settling into rigor mortis. People are so distracted by the economy of Miss Piggy (Wall Street) and her wardrobe (Washington) that they can't see the giant frog of death in front of their faces. It isn't easy being green when your life force has gone gray.

The traditional centers of power in the U.S. are so 2011, and so very, very anti-green, and that is why the new and improved environmental movement must begin here. Who better than the fashionistas of South Florida to force out the frumpy and bring on the fabulousness for Mother Earth? Let's replace "green" with "teal." Let's replace litter with glitter.

This is the dawning of the Age of Anthropocene. This new scientific term, heading to a dictionary near you, signifies the "age of man." We have been so successful on this planet that we own it and affect everything on it. Now we need to step up and take responsibility for keeping our home healthy. Why not do it in style?

Style gets attention. Did you know that Kim Kardashian's next wedding gown will be made out of organic fig leaves? That statement, while absurd and false, will get more attention on Google than anything else written in this article.

Let's throw in Charlie Sheen saying the environment is "losing" and maybe this column can start trending.

Miami, as the gateway to the Americas, should also become a gateway to the extreme, sparkling beauty of Caribbean coral reefs and Amazon rainforests. Instead of just a green city, we should become The Emerald City.

For example, Miami does Halloween in great style, and this Halloween I was very inspired by a couple of eco-monsters who had fashioned their outfits from palm fronds and other found materials. These biodegradable costumes looked both scary and fashion-forward, and they stole the show from the drag queens on Lincoln Road, who are stuck in last century's polyester. Could granola become the new Halloween candy?

The world's contemporary art scene has landed here, and the next Andy Warhol will likely be discovered in Miami. Art Basel has its fair share of eco-artists who recycle objects, such as using vintage matchbook covers as tiny canvases. But some of the event's green satellite fairs — 2009's Green Art Fair and 2010's "Art Basil" farmers market come to mind — seem to have fizzled. More basil in Basel would be welcome for the next edition of Miami's most fabulous week.

The highest green note for 2011's Art Basel was the first EcoArtFashion Week. Local artist and environmentalist Luis Valenzuela, who formerly organized the Green Art Fair, put together a series

of catwalks and parties of wearable art. He says that the fashion industry has embraced environmentalism.

Valenzuela's sustainable clothing is on display nightly at the Adrienne Arsht Center, as he designed its uniforms and manufactured them locally of recycled plastic. He has also designed gowns for Miss Earth U.S.A. (There's a pageant for Miss Earth? Now we're talking!)

While we're dropping names, Donna Karan, along with Mr. Valenzuela, lent her status last year to Sustainotopia, an emerging green festival in Miami scheduled to take place this year from April 19 to 25. Maybe they can get longtime Miami Beach resident and green activist Matt Damon to appear.

Matt Damon is considered one of the greenest celebrities on earth. He even supports World Toilet Day! Get him together with Gloria Estefan and we have the makings of "We Save the World," the follow-up to "We Are the World." (Also featuring Green Day!)

Back to reality... The beauty of coral reefs will soon engulf Miami International Airport. The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation awarded \$150,000 to the Miami Science Museum and local aquarium artists Coral Morphologic to create a new multimedia installation.

I've actually developed something called the South Beach Garbage Diet to help people reduce their level of waste, but I'm not sure the real diet doctor would appreciate the reference. Have his



Photograph by Manuel Correa

Luis Valenzuela gown from plastic bags.

lawyer call me.

Why does the environmental movement need more glamour? It doesn't, but people do. Much of cutting-edge environmental awareness is driven by science, and the scientists are too busy keeping up their end of the bargain to waste their time appearing on talk shows. So we need filmmakers, clothing designers, and musicians to step up their levels of awareness and infuse their work with it.

Style and celebrity will not save the planet, but they have the power to attract. The environmental movement needs to tap that renewable energy source, because the world's top celebrities will continue to get attention, and they can, in turn, reflect the spotlight onto someone who actually deserves it: Mother Earth.

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

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A Promising Year

Resolutions can benefit every member of the family

By Crystal Brewé
BT Contributor

Ah, January, so full of potential and optimism. It's time to look back on last year and make our list of promises to ourselves about how we are going to improve in the new year.

A good friend of mine told me that she had one resolution — to lose her baby weight by March. She is a textbook illustration of why our resolutions, even the most outrageous, seem to me the best possible way to start a new year. Let's eat more salad! Let's make it home from work in time to take our kids to the park! Let's compost and buy organic!

These promises to ourselves put us in a place where we can envision, and even attain, the better person inside us all. They pull us out of ruts, they reverse lingering bad habits, and, over and over again, they propel us into a new year full of hope.

The thing I've learned over the years is to not be too greedy with my resolutions. I know damned well I won't train for a marathon, yoga gives me a headache, and just because I shell out the monthly gym membership doesn't mean I'll emerge into 2012's swimsuit season with Megan Fox's bod.

Below are some ideas that might inspire your list of resolutions.

Memory Making: We all try to plan majestic adventures and big events, but

there is no way of knowing what will stick with our kids. We made a resolution to take a real family vacation a few years back. We planned for months, packed for days, and traveled 6000 miles to Australia.

We spent two weeks petting koalas and taking in all the Outback had to offer. When we returned, my mom asked our then two-year-old, Matilda, about her favorite part of the vacation. Her response, after three minutes of silent deliberation, was: "The airplane!" More than the vacations to Disney World and trips to the zoo, your kid's fondest memory might be of the box that the biggest gift came in, rather than the gift itself.

Stuff Editing: Now that the kids have a mountain of new holiday booty, it's the perfect time to prune the busted, armless, filthy, and offensively annoying toys at the bottom of the toy box and under the couch.

We went nearly a week last year trying to identify the covert location of a mysterious voice that erratically chanted, "Kentucky is the Bluegrass State!" Even though I knew it was an interactive puzzle that our kidless friends gave to the girls one Christmas past, the haunting, battery-drained voice still filled me with terror. How was the voice activated? What is she really trying to tell us?



Whether you tiptoe to the toy box under the cover of night, or wait till the kids are at a play date to break out the garbage bag, the broken crayons and gameless game pieces have to go. If a toy hasn't been played with in a year, it will likely not be played with again. There are hundreds of South Florida charities that would happily take gently used toys. Go to www.donationtown.org, where they will schedule a pick-up and deliver to charities of your choice.

Connect and Discuss: Talking to your kids seems like a sad resolution, but we are busy, dude! The other night, my neighbor, Susan, was driving home her four-year-old, Savannah, who proceeded to barrage her with questions: "Mommy, why do we have oatmeal for breakfast?" "Mommy, why do we have cats and not dogs?" "Mommy, why do we have to wear shoes?"

Susan was lost in thought about her own day and what to make for dinner and found herself on autopilot with her responses to the questions. "I don't know," she managed repeatedly. Out of nowhere, Savannah's voice broke through Susan's internal

rhetoric with: Mommy! You don't know *anything*, do you?"

Autopilot seems like a natural when our minds are jammed with a thousand things, our e-mail inbox is bursting at the seams, and we may be picking up the kids from school on our way to the grocery store, before heading back home to cook dinner before the neighborhood association meeting. This year we're going to vow to take one big yoga breath and ask, "What were the best and worst parts of your day?" I want specifics, you see. Asking the question this way solicits details.

This year we plan to include the kids in our resolution-making. If we share even our personal resolutions with each other, we can cheer each other on toward fulfillment of our goals. Let's face it, there's nothing more powerful than peer pressure from your three-year-old.

Happy New Year to you and your family. Here's to 2012 — the year I win that triathlon, write my memoirs, quit my day job, and open an organic winery!

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Life and Limb

Tips for assessing a tree's general health

By **Jeff Shimonski**
BT Contributor

About a year-and-a-half ago, while driving home from work on U.S. 1, I casually looked over in the direction of the access road on the other side of the Metrorail tracks. There was a pickup truck and a police car stopped in the middle of the road. Nothing unusual about that, except for the fact that the bed of the pickup truck had been smashed by a tree trunk that had broken off the base of a nearby tree.

I was glad no one appeared to be injured. It was very fortunate for the driver of the pickup truck, because if the trunk had fallen onto the cab, the outcome might have been very different. The funny thing is, I had made note of that particular tree several years earlier because of its size, species, and trunk structure.

Rather than a single trunk, the tree had several large trunks emerging from the base, and I often wondered how strong the basal trunk connections would remain as the canopy of the tree grew and got heavier. How would this tree deal with windy conditions as it grew above the Metrorail structure?

Recently I spoke in front of an audience of very prominent citizens and business owners on the general health of a certain group of trees that had been slated for removal by the city, to be replaced by newer and healthier trees.

These trees had already been inspected by a competent, certified arborist and I was just reconfirming the arborist's

conclusions, after having visually inspected the trees. Removal of mature trees is always a controversial issue. Usually they are in the way of a new development or expansion of infrastructure and the developer or municipality finds it cheaper to take down the trees or butcher them than to come up with another, better solution.

Many trees that are targeted for removal likely would have had many good years ahead of them, and almost all of us agree mature trees with character really make a neighborhood. But let's separate trees that appear healthy from those that do not.

I recently attended the conference of the American Society of Consulting Arborists, where I was able to hear some very interesting and informative lectures. One of those lectures was on the biomechanics of trees. How are trees able to deal with stress from wind and other environmental issues and still stand up? How do roots and branches adapt to resist injury from storms, car accidents, or poor pruning?

Today there is a lot of published material that addresses tree stress, and arborists who keep abreast of these publications are in a better position to judge the general health of a tree. There are standards and best-management practices that should be followed not only by arborists, but by municipalities, homeowners' groups, and property owners who put trees and the maintenance of them out for bid.

Most of the trees I inspected that were marked for removal had poor branch structure, which they brought with them from the nursery. They all



BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

The red arrow shows how a root is crossing the end of a buttress on a ficus. The bulge above the root is an indication of a crushed vascular system that will eventually cause the tree serious problems.

had very poor pruning cuts, most of which had developed into large pockets of decay. And they had been planted into holes that were too small and would never support their root systems as they grew. There are published tree-planting standards to follow, and these were obviously not followed when the trees were first planted. (Beware the lowest bid!)

There are also recommendations and best-management practices for the evaluation of risk in trees. Methodical visual inspections and, if warranted, invasive internal inspections that may involve excavation of a root system, different methods of drilling into the roots, branches, or trunk of a tree, even sonar, can be used to determine the risk a tree may pose to life and property.

The next time you speak with an arborist or landscape architect, ask them if they are aware of "Euler's Buckling," an engineering concept that can be used to describe and anticipate the buckling of tall trees owing to excessive height and thin trunks with poor taper.

Ask about how trees can often escape dangerously large oscillations due to high wind loads, unless the tree has been pruned of all its lower branches (a practice called lion-tailing). Yes, there is an inherent risk with all trees, but there is also much science that allows us to better anticipate the failure of trees or branches.

Not everyone gets this concept. After the hearing, when I was walking out to my car with a friend, an elegant woman dressed in a very recherché style came screaming at us. Oh, how we had sold the trees out! She was going to chain herself to them so they could not be removed!

I remarked to my friend: "Prudence does not seem to be her strong suit." She didn't get my joke, either.

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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Dirt-Cheap Reds Can Surprise You

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

By Bill Citara
BT Contributor

I pulled my MasterCard from my wallet and it burst into tears. Then I went on my computer to find out the balance in my checking account and the hard drive crashed. So I went to the bank and asked the teller to check how much I had in savings. She laughed.

The holidays will do that to you. Or more specifically, to your finances. After Thanksgiving and Christmas and New Year's and gifts and parties and dinners and traveling, I'm busted. Broke. Flat. Terminal. Deader than Mitt Romney's personality.

And when the going gets tough, the tough turn to strong drink. At least, whatever strong drink we can afford. Which brings up the subject of this month's VINO: good wine for the economically challenged and financially impaired.

I think that covers just about all of us.

So what we did about it was to go looking for inexpensive, food-friendly reds. We even knocked two bucks off our price limit, meaning all of this month's wines retail for \$10 or less, which is about as cheap as strong drink gets before sliding down the slippery slope of rubbing alcohol, formaldehyde, Drano, and beer.

What's really encouraging about our selections isn't just their penny-pinching affordability, but their quality. In fact, four of our seven wines — two from California, one from Chile, and one from Argentina — are wines I'd happily buy a case of and drink throughout the year.

For example, the surprisingly elegant, full-flavored **2009 Nieto Senetiner Reserva Malbec**, a wine that drinks a lot better than its \$10 price tag. It starts off with a complex blast of aromas — black and blue fruit, toast, cloves, mint, leather — cradled on the palate by soft tannins and a tangy cherry acidity. If you're looking for a wine to go with your grilled *vacio* with chimichurri, this is it.

Just as Malbec is the iconic grape of Argentina, Carmenère is the same in Chile. At a saintly \$8, the **2010 Anakena** from Chile's Rapel Valley is even cheaper than its Argentine counterpart, but it doesn't pinch pennies in terms of flavor. It, too, is an aromatic wine, giving off whiffs of blueberries, blackberries, and cassis, with the grape's characteristic earthy-dusky qualities. Relatively low alcohol (13 percent) helps keep its dark, ripe fruit in check; pour it at your next barbecue or with a hearty tomato-sauced pasta.

Inexpensive California wines can be very hit and miss, but reds from Castle Rock and Gnarly Head were smack on. **Castle Rock's 2009 Central Coast Pinot Noir** delivers an astonishing taste of true Pinot character for a quite reasonable price. In the nose it's all raspberries, strawberries, and cherries, with a pronounced whiff of tea. On the palate it adds a touch of spice and approachable tannins and acidity.

I approached the **2010 Gnarly Head Old Vine Zinfandel** with more than a little caution. Even pricey, old-vine Zins can be bloated, overwrought fruit bombs with enough alcohol to spontaneously combust. But this low-cost endeavor

showed off the balance and drinkability so many of its competitors lack. True, there's not much subtlety to its intense blackberry-plum fruit and thick, almost viscous texture. But if you taste really hard, you'll get notes of cloves and white pepper giving nuance to all that luscious, ripe fruit.

Of course, there always is one outlier, and this time it's the **Hoya de Cadenas 2007 Reserve Tempranillo**. Age has not been kind to this puppy, whose fruit has withered into an aggressively tart, puckery palate, leaving behind unpleasant flavors of oak, earth, tobacco, and leather. You might smoke it or wear it, but you don't want to drink it.

Thankfully, that was the only stinker. A pair of reds on the leaner, lighter side were the **La Tancia 2009 Chianti** and **2010 Cave de Rasteau Ortas Cote du Rhone**. The La Tancia tasted younger than its years, with candyish red cherry and raspberry fruit, hints of black pepper and mint, and the elusive smoky quality of Chiantis. The Ortas opens with a shot of candy apple-plum-red cherry fruit, but then a bracing acidity bearing faint traces of pepper and



The superlative Nieto Malbec and not-so-superlative Hoya de Cadenas Tempranillo can be found at the North Miami Crown Wine and Spirits (12555 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-9463) for \$9.95 and \$7.99, respectively. Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270) in North Miami carries the Anakena Carmenère for \$7.99 and the Cave de Rasteau Ortas Cote du Rhone for \$9.99. At ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525) in North Miami Beach, both the La Tancia Chianti and Castle Rock Pinot Noir cost \$9.99, while the Gnarly Head Zinfandel also goes for \$9.99 at the Biscayne Commons Publix (14641 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-2171).

cloves kicks in. Stiff acidity and a long, tangy finish will cut through the richness of fatty meats and lusty sauces.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I think I hear my MasterCard crying.

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Dining Guide

Restaurant Listings

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 298.

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

Acqua
1435 Brickell Ave., 305-381-3190, Four Seasons Hotel
Originally an Italian/Mediterranean restaurant, this comfortably elegant, upscale spot switched chefs in 2006, resulting in a complete menu renovation. Thailand's famed sense of culinary balance is now evident throughout the global (though primarily Asian or Latin American-inspired) menu, in dishes like yuzu/white soya-dressed salad of shrimp tempura, a tender pork shank glazed with spicy Szechuan citrus sauce, or lunchtime's rare tuna burger with lively wasabi aioli and wakame salad. For dessert few chocoholics can resist a buttery-crust tart filled with sinfully rich warm chocolate custard. \$\$\$

Area 31
270 Biscayne Boulevard Way, 305-424-5234
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 windows showcase Biscayne Bay. But diners prefer ogling the raw-bar-fronted open kitchen, where globetrotting chef Joel Huff crafts imaginative, often multi-part dishes – some Asian-inspired (like oysters with fresh wasabi, hibiscus granita, and Asian pear), as one would expect from the Mandarin Oriental's top eatery. But most of Huff's dishes are strongly European-influenced, primarily by New Spanish cuisine. Elegant, playfully molecular gastronomy-accented almond gazpacho with foie gras "snow," or "eggs, bacon & toast" (suckling pig, tempura duck egg, truffled potato, and speck "air") tell the story. \$\$\$

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

Banana & Leaf
234 NE 3rd St., 786-431-5548
Ever get tempted by the convenience of supermarket sushi boxes, but feel uneasy about freshness and disgruntled about sparseness of fillings? In the grab-and-go containers here, raw fish glisters and makis like a plump snow crab roll have a satisfying seafood-to-rice ratio. If you'd rather, dishes on the larger custom menu arrive almost as fast. There is also limited, tasty Southeast Asian fare. Most unbelievable: Prices beat supermarket sushi by far. \$

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. \$\$\$

Bento Sushi & Chinese
801 Brickell Bay Dr., 305-603-8904
Hidden in the Four Ambassadors Towers, this tiny spot (which specializes in sushi plus Japanese small plates, but also serves limited Chinese and Thai-inspired dishes of the mix-and-match, pick-your-protein-then-preparation sort) has been mostly an insider's secret delivery joint for Brickell residents. But it's actually a pleasant place to relax outside, enjoying a bay view and budget bento box specials that include miso soup, ginger-dressed salad, California roll, and fresh orange sections, plus two mini-entrées (the nigiri assortment sushi and lacy-battered tempura especially recommended). Bubble tea, too! \$\$-\$\$\$

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/jalapeno 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 brisket/gruyere sandwich with dipping juice. Breakfast, too, from 6:30 a.m. \$\$-\$\$\$

Bon Fromage
500 Brickell Ave. #106, 786-329-5632
Though independently owned instead of a chain cog, this cheese and wine café/shop is like a pint-size version of Midtown Miami's Cheese Course, right down to being officially self-service. But it is staffed by accommodating employees who, unofficially, do their best to double as servers for eat-in diners. The cheese (plus charcuterie) menu of garnished platters, salads, and crusty baguette sandwiches features numerous high-quality, imported favorites, but don't miss more unusual domestic treasures like Wisconsin bread, a cooked cheese that, like halloumi, doesn't melt but tantalizingly softens when heated. \$\$

Bryan in the Kitchen
104 NE 2nd Ave., 305-371-7777
This quirky café-market's chef/owner is a former smoothie-swilling model who is now into fresh whole foods, and though his eclectic "green gourmet" menu does uniformly reflect his dedication to ecological consciousness, it otherwise could only be described as intensely personal. Offerings are an odd but appealing saint/sinner mix, ranging from healthy pasta/grain salads and homemade-from-scratch snacks (beef jerky, granola) to unique cupcakes featuring not-too-sweet adult flavors and irresistible sticky buns. If we had to choose just one category, we'd sin. But luckily, you can have it all. \$\$

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 Guereande salt), salmon with lentils and fennel salsa, or a very affordable skirt steak au poivre make it possible to resist. \$\$-\$\$\$

Café Samba
500 Brickell Key Dr., 305-913-8358
Though the Mandarin Oriental Hotel describes this space as its "casual hotel restaurant," many consider it a more spectacular dining setting than the upscale Azul, upstairs, owing to the option of dining outdoors on a covered terrace directly on the waterfront. The food is Asian-inspired, with a few Latin and Mediterranean accents. For the health-conscious, the menu includes low-cal choices. For hedonists there's a big selection of artisan sakes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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 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. \$\$\$

MIAMI

BRICKELL / DOWNTOWN

Cavas Wine Tasting Room
900 S. Miami Ave. #180, 305-372-8027
Like South Miami's predecessor (now closed), this Cavas is mainly an upscale, high-tech tasting lounge for the wine-curious. Patrons buy prepaid cards to sample ounce, half-glass, or full-glass portions from more than 50 self-service dispensing machines. But there's an extensive selection of tapas/pintxos small plates, flatbread "pizzas," sandwiches, plus fully garnished charcuterie and cheese platters specially selected to pair well with vino. Additionally, more substantial dishes have been added, including a daily three-course lunch special and some tasty, bargain-priced soups (carrot cream with Gouda particularly recommended). \$\$-\$\$\$

Fado Irish Pub
900 S. Miami Ave. #200, 786-924-0972
Unlike most Miami "Irish" pubs, which serve mostly American bar food, rarely foraging past fish and chips or shepherd's pie, Fado (pronounced "f'ado") has a menu reflecting the pub grub found today in Ireland, including solid standards. But most intriguing are dishes mixing classic and contemporary influences, particularly those featuring boxty, a grated/mashed potato pancake. Try corned beef rolls (boxty wraps, with creamy mustard sauce and cabbage slaw), or smoked salmon on mini-boxty "blini," with capers and horseradish sauce. There's a seasonal menu, too. \$\$

Hibachi Grill
45 NE 3rd Ave., 305-374-2223
Imagine a mini-express Benihana. This place specializes in tepanyaki cuisine – minus the thrilling (or terrifying) tableside knife theatrics, true, but the one-plate meals of seasoned steak slices, chicken, shrimp, or salmon plus dipping sauces, fried rice, and an onion/zucchini mix come at bargain prices. There are also hefty

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. \$\$

Damn Good Burger
20 Biscayne Blvd., 305-718-6565
At restlounge MIA, the hip, high-tech nightclub component remains the same, as does much of the restaurant space's mod décor. The liquid nitrogen tanks are gone from the kitchen, however, and the atmosphere aims for a retro all-American feel to match the fare: burgers (from a hormone/antibiotic-free ground Angus chuck/brisket/short rib blend), with choice of housemade sauce plus customizable toppings ranging from pickles to pork belly. Also available: veggie burgers, dogs, salads, Buffalo chicken sandwiches, and standard sides. Rich malts and shakes come regular or adult (spiked). \$\$

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: 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 panpano 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 dill (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

soups or Japanese, Thai, and Singapore-style noodle and rice bowls loaded with veggies and choice of protein (including tofu). The limited sides are Japanese (shumai, plump chicken gyoza) and Chinese (various egg rolls). Fancy? No, but satisfying. \$\$-\$\$

NORTH MIAMI

Alaska Coffee Roasting Co.
13130 Biscayne Blvd., 786-332-4254
When people speak of the West Coast as the USA's quality coffeehouse pioneer territory, they're thinking Seattle – and then south through coastal California. North to Alaska? Not so much. But owner Michael Gesser did indeed open this hip place's parent in Fairbanks back in 1993, after years of traveling through every coffee-growing country in the world. Brews like signature smooth yet exotic Ethiopian Yirgacheffe don't even need cream or sugar, much less frappe frou-frou. All beans are house-roasted. There's solid food, too: brick-oven pizzas, salads, sandwiches, and pastries. \$\$\$

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

Tania's Table
18685 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-932-9425
A location at the tail end of a tiny, tired-looking strip mall makes this weekday lunch-only kosher eatery easy to miss. But the cute bistro, an extension of chef Tania Sigal's catering company, is well worth seeking for its unusually varied daily-changing menus – not just familiar Eastern European-derived dishes (chicken matzoh ball soup, blintzes, etc.) but numerous Latin American specialties (zesty ropa vieja), Asian-influenced items (Thai chicken/noodle salad), lightened universal Ladies-Who-Lunch classics (custardy quiches, grilled trout with mustard sauce), and homemade baked goods. \$\$\$

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 croquettes, a spinach/leek tart with Portobello mushroom sauce, or shrimp-topped eggplant timbales. The best seats are on the glume rooftop. \$\$\$

Elwoods Gastro Pub
188 NE 3rd Ave., 305-358-5222
Cordial English owners, classic rock music (sometimes live), and updated classic pub fare make this hangout a home. Made from scratch with artisan ingredients, traditional Brit bites like fish and chips can't be beat – thick pieces of crispy beer-battered moist cod, served with hand-cut fries and "mushy [mashed] peas," plus housemade tartar sauce and ketchup. All desserts are also made in-house, including a deliriously rich (but worth it) sticky date pudding with toffee sauce. Tie down your dental implants. They're in for a wild ride. \$\$

Eternity Coffee Roasters
117 SE 2nd Ave., 305-609-4981
Normally we list only full restaurants, but even a (not so) simple cuppa joe from Chris Johnson and Cristina Garces's sleek micro-roastery will convince anyone possessing taste buds that fine coffee can be as complex as fine wine, and as satisfying as solid food. A changing selection of superior single-origin beans (many varieties from the Garces family's Colombian farm; most others from Ethiopia and Kenya), roasted in-house, produces "slow-pour" regular brews with amazing nuances of fruits, chocolate, and more. The espresso is so smooth sugar isn't necessary. Other treats: flaky chocolate-stuffed "cigars" and other locally baked pastries. Free parking. \$

Eos
485 Brickell Ave. (Viceroys 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. \$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

First Hong Kong Café

117 SE 2nd St., 305-808-6665
Old Hong Kong saying: If it walks, swims, crawls, or flies, it's edible. And nowhere is this truer than in this historically international trade port's "cafés" – meaning fast-food restaurants. Typical menus present hundreds of items that are local interpretations of dishes from all China, and most other nations. So believe us: At this café, whose head chef is from HK, the Indian-style curries, sambal-spiked Indonesian chow fun, even the borscht (a tomato/beef, not beet-based version of the Russian soup) are as authentic as the kung pao whatever, and as tasty. \$\$

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 focaccia or crunchy ciabatta; even the vegetarian version bursts with complex and complementary flavors. During weekday dinners, try generous plates of risotto with shrimp and grilled asparagus; homemade pastas like seafood-packed fettuccine al scoglio; or delicate Vitello alla Milanese on arugula. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Fresco California Bistro

1744 SW 3rd Ave., 305-858-0608
This festively decorated indoor/outdoor bistro packs a lot of party spirit into a small space, a large variety of food onto its menu. To the familiar Latin American/Italian equation, the owners add a touch of CalMex (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-boggling assortment of skewered beef, chicken, lamb, pork, sausages, and fish. And included in the price (dinner \$47, lunch \$34) is the traditional belly-busting buffet of hot and cold prepared foods, salad, cold cuts, and cheeses. A pleasant, nontraditional surprise: unusual sauces like sweet/tart passion fruit or mint, tomato-based BBQ, and mango chutney, along with the ubiquitous chimichurri. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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 snackery'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. \$

Hawa Jade

1331 Brickell Bay Dr., 305-905-5523
When thinking "fusion" cuisines, Japanese and Lebanese don't instantly spring to mind. But taking the medieval Spice Route connection as inspiration, the Hawa family makes the mix work at both its original Coral Gables Hawa and this new location in the Jade Residences. Golden Pockets (tofu crêpes encasing macadamias, avocado, and tuna, crab, shrimp, or Kobe-style beef) are musts. Plus there are unique combos containing makis plus substantial salads, like crunchy tuna enoki rolls with falafel salad – not the usual green garnish. Housemade desserts with a French twist are also a pleasant surprise. \$\$

Il Gabbiano

335 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-373-0063
Its location at the mouth of the Miami River makes this 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 offspring 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. \$

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

Kork Wine & Cheese Bar

2 S. Miami Ave., 305-377-8899
From the owner of Transit Lounge, a hip hangout long before the downtown/Brickell revival, this more upscale-cool venue is worth checking out for its almost medieval dimly lit décor alone, including a subterranean wine cellar/party room, formerly a WW II-era bomb shelter. Comestibles are limited to wine and cheese plus accompaniments. Both are available to go. Kork is as much market as lounge. But with a stock of roughly 5000 bottles, and a selection of roughly two dozen perfectly ripe artisanal cheeses – curated by a cheese sommelier who'll create perfect pairings – who needs more? \$\$

Largo Bar & Grill

401 Biscayne Blvd., 305-374-9706
Sure, Bayside Marketplace is touristy. But it can be fun to spend a day playing visitor in your own city. If you do, this waterfront place overlooking Miamarina is a superior food choice. Expect nothing cutting edge, just tasty, familiar favorites solidly prepared. You won't go wrong with stone crab claws and Cajun mustard dip; inauthentic but delicious fish tacos in hard blue corn tortillas with two sauces (cilantro and chipotle), generously portioned fish sandwiches (grouper, mahi, snapper, or daily catch), and festive cocktails. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

La Loggia Ristorante and Lounge

68 W. Flagler St., 305-373-4800
This luxuriantly neo-classical yet warm Italian restaurant was unquestionably a pioneer in revitalizing downtown. With alternatives like amaretto-tinged pumpkin agnolotti in sage butter sauce and cilantro-spiced white bean/vegetable salad dressed with truffle oil, proprietors Jennifer Porciello and Horatio Oliveira continue to draw a lunch crowd that returns for dinner, or perhaps just stays on through the afternoon, fueled by the Lawyer's Liquid Lunch, a vodka martini spiked with sweetened espresso. \$\$\$

La Moon

144 SW 8th St., 305-860-6209
At four in the morning, nothing quells the munchies like a Crazy Burger, a Colombian take on 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 and the bread basket, many believe, indicate a great meal to come. But when Miamians encounter such bread – crackling crust outside; moist, aromatic, aerated interior – it's likely not from a restaurant's own kitchen, but from La Provence. Buttery croissants and party-perfect pastries are legend too. Not so familiar is the bakery's café component, whose sandwich/salad menu reflects local eclectic tastes. But French items like pan bagnats (essentially salade Nicoise on artisan bread) will truly transport diners to co-owner David Thau's Provençal homeland. \$\$

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. \$\$\$

Le Boudoir Brickell

188 SE 12th Terr., 305-372-2333
At this French bakery/café, mornings start seriously, with choices ranging from quality cheese, charcuterie/pâté, or smoked salmon platters to chic Continental and complete American breakfasts. At lunch, generously salad-garnished, open-faced tartines are irresistible. But sophisticated salads and homemade soups make the choice tough. And do not skip dessert. Superb sweets include rich almond/fresh raspberry or properly tangy lemon tarts, traditional Madeleines, airy layered mousses, and addictive mini-macaroon 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.)

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

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

named, come from Nice. You'll be transported, too, by dishes like lamb shank with flageolets (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 niçoise. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Martini 28

146 SE 1st Ave., 305-577-4414
This stylish little lunch-only spot, a labor of love from a husband-and-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 you. \$

Miami Art Café

364 SE 1st St., 305-374-5117
For businessfolk on the go, this breakfast/lunch-only French café serves up evocative baguette sandwiches (like camembert loaded, if you like, with greens, olives, and more. For those with time to sit, we'd recommend the savory crêpes, garnished with perfectly dressed salad, or sweet crêpe like the Bonne Maman (whose sugar/salted butter stuffing brings Brittany to downtown). And quiches are nicely custardy. But there are surprises here, too, including just a few full entrées, with correctly made traditional sauces one wouldn't expect at a luncheonette – except, perhaps, in Paris. \$\$\$

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. \$

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

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 mouthwatering finger food, shared among friends. \$\$\$

neMesis Urban Bistro

1035 N. Miami Ave., 305-415-9911
Truly original restaurants are hard to find here, and harder to describe in standard sound bites. But they often are the attention-grabbing people-magnets that spark revivals of iffy neighborhoods. That's our prediction for this quirkily decorated bistro, where the kitchen is helmed by Top Chef contestant Micah Edelstein. The intensely personal menu of creative dishes inspired by her global travels (plus her fascination with unfamiliar ingredients) changes constantly, but scrumptious signatures include South African smoked veal bobotie, and Peruvian pinoli pancakes with housemade chicken/apple sausage, hibiscus syrup, and maple granules. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Novocento

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 entrées 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. \$\$\$

Ozi Sushi

200 SE 1st St., 786-704-8003
Since its 1958 invention, conveyor-belt sushi has been the most fun form of Japanese fast food, but problematic. Who knew how long plates had been circulating on the sushi-grounds? Happily, this sushi-boat spot avoids sanitation issues with clear plastic covers, and as for freshness, low prices ensure a steady stream of diners grabbing makis, nigiri, and more as they float by. Highlights include glistening ikura (salmon roe) in a thin-sliced cucumber cup, a sweet-sauced mango/guava/crab roll, and a festively frosted strawberry Nutella dessert maki. \$\$\$

Peña Grill

15 E. Flagler St., 305-808-6666
From Thasios 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 (particulary 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 floccini 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. \$\$

Pieducks

1451 S. Miami Ave., 305-808-7888
If you can overlook a name as unenlightening as most in-jokes (it evidently refers to a favorite character of owner Claudio Nunes's kids – we assume the Pokemon Psyduck), you'll experience pretty perfect pizza. Sadly, not all brick ovens turn out perfectly char-broasted crusts, crisp outside and airy/chewy inside, but that's what you'll consistently find here and a newer take-out/delivery-only Midtown branch. And unlike many artisan pizzerias, Pieducks doesn't get cheesy with cheese quantity (though we like that extra cheese is an option). Elaborate salads complete the menu. \$

Prelude

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

Puntino Downtown

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

effusively warm Neapolitan. The food too is mostly contemporary rather than traditional. But in true Italian style, the best stuff stays simple: an antipasto platter of imported cold cuts with crostini and housemade marinated veggies; crisp-fried calamari and shrimp; airy gnocchi with sprightly tomato sauce, pools of melted bufala 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 soffrito butter, chorizo, and manchego. There's also thoughtful wine list and numerous artisan beers on tap. \$\$\$

Rosa Mexicano

900 S. Miami Ave., 786-425-1001
This expensive 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 Coppino and Sardinia. The main fare is imaginative sandwiches on fresh breads; an especially delicious creation features slow-braised short ribs, caramelized onions, and melting munster 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. \$

Scalinia

318 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-789-9933
Comparisons between this new Tom Billante venture and the other (slightly pricier) Italian eatery in the same building are inevitable, especially considering similarities like key personnel from NYC's Il Mulino, Mulino-style abundant free appetizers, and a power-dining crowd. But why focus on competitive nonsense when you can relax on the river-view terrace enjoying chef Enrico Giraldo's specialties, including an elaborate take on Venice's famed fegato (calf's liver and onions), upscaled with Lucanica sausage and a balsamic reduction. Or maybe an even more evocative Roman ice cream tartufo? Mangia! \$\$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 ambience 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 silvered 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 straight-forward 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-cut 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, Carolina-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 scallion 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 fileted) in tamarind sauce. The young chef has a heavenly hand at food, 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 "bistolounge." The food is mostly modernized Italian, with Latin and Asian accents: a prosciutto-and-fig pizza with Brazilian catupiry cheese; gnocchi served either as finger food (fried, with calamata olive/truffle aioli), or plated with orange-ginger sauce. But there are tomato-sauced meatballs with ri'gawt 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! \$\$

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. \$\$\$

Basani's

3221 NE 2nd Ave., 786-925-0911
Despite this tiny place's modern décor, the family-run ambience and Italian-American comfort food evoke the neighborhood red-sauce joints that were our favored hangouts growing up in NJ's Sopranos territory. And low prices make it possible to hang out here frequently. Pizzas with hand-tossed crusts, not wood-oven but resembling honest bread, for less than fast food pizzeria prices? It's an offer you don't refuse. Don't refuse garlic rolls, either, or sinful zeppole (fried dough) for dessert. There's more complex fare, like chicken à la Francese, too. And they deliver. \$\$

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. \$\$\$

Best Friends

4770 Biscayne Blvd., 786-439-3999
On a restaurant-starved stretch of Biscayne Boulevard, this spot serves the same sort of simple but satisfying Italian fare (antipasti, soups, salads, pizzas) as its older sibling, South Miami's Blu Pizzeria, plus burgers. The thin-crust, pliable pizzas, though lacking burr blisters, are brick-oven cooked, as are "blues," unusual calzons (like the blu oceano, fatty filled with mozzarella, prosciutto crudo, arugula, and fresh tomatoes). Hefty half-pound burgers come similarly stuffed rather than topped. A sheltered patio and full bar make the place a pleasant neighborhood lounge, too. \$\$

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 served 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 figucutto: 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 rataouille, or many changing blackboard specials. Portions are plentiful. So is free parking. \$\$

Buena Vista Deli

4590 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-3945
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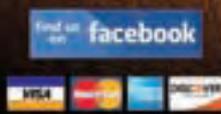
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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 homemade 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 antichuchos, 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. \$\$

City Hall the Restaurant

2004 Biscayne Blvd., 305-764-3130
After 30+ years spent guiding other owners' restaurants to success, Miami Spice program creator Steve Haas has opened his own expansive, two-floor place, on a stretch of Biscayne Boulevard that's suddenly looking fashionable. The vibe is a mix of power-dining destination and comfy neighborhood hangout, and chef Tom Azar (ex-Emeril's) has designed a varied menu to match. Highlights: an astonishingly thin/crunchy-crust pizza topped with duck confit, wild mushrooms, port wine syrup, and subtly truffled béchamel; crispy calamari (rings and legs) with light, lemony tomato emulsion; and tuna tartar that is refreshingly free of sesame oil. Big portions and a full bar to boot. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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 ("Mrs. 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. \$

Crumb on Parchment

3930 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-9444
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 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. \$\$-\$

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. With fresh sandwiches named after national and local news papers, including Biscayne Times, giving diners something to chat about. Sandwiches and salads can also be do-it-yourself projects, with an unusually wide choice of main ingredients, garnishes, breads, and condiments for the creatively minded. \$

Delicias Peruanas

2590 Biscayne Blvd., 305-573-4634
Seafood is the specialty at this pleasant Peruvian spot, as it was at the nearby original Delicias, run by members of the same family. The food is as tasty as ever, especially the reliably fresh traditional ceviches, and for those who like their fish a little 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. \$\$

Egg & Dart

4029 N. Miami Ave., 786-431-1022
While co-owners Costa Grillas (from Maria's, a Coral Gables staple) and Niko Theodorou (whose family members have several Greek islands restaurants) describe their cuisine as "rustic Greek," there is surprising sophistication in some dishes: an especially delicate taramasalata (cod roe dip); precisely crisp-fried smelts (like a sardine) in glectobunio, an often heavy and cloyingly vanilla-saturated dessert, here custardy and enlivened by orange flavor. Extensive lists of mezze (snacks) and creative cocktails make the expansive, invitingly decorated space ideal for large gatherings of friends who enjoy sharing. \$\$\$

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, 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., 305-572-9091
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 pillow-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 Grrrr of Sandwich

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

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

Harry's Pizzeria

3918 N. Miami Ave., 786-275-4963
In this humble space (formerly Pizza Volante) are many key components from Michael's Genuine Food & Drink two blocks east — local/sustainable produce and artisan products; wood-oven cooking; homemade everything (including the ketchup accompanying crisp-outside, custardy-inside poiana fries, a circa 1995 Michael Schwartz signature snack from Nemo). Beautifully blistered, ultra-thin-crust pizzas range from classic Margheritas to pies with house-smoked bacon, trugole (a subtly flavorful — fruity, not funky — Alpine cheese), and other unique toppings. Rounding things out: simple but ingenious salads, ultimate zepoles, and Florida craft beers. \$\$\$

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? \$\$\$

Jimmyz 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 tripetta 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/yauffed ambiance, encouraged by an expansive, rustic wooden deck. \$\$\$

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

Shops at Midtown Miami
Buena Vista Avenue, 305-576-5463
Like its South Beach predecessor, this Lime was an instant hit, as much for being a hip new Midtown hangout as for its carefully crafted Tex-Mex food. The concept is "fast casual" rather than fast food – meaning nice enough for a night out. It also means ingredients are always fresh. Seafood tacos are about as exotic as the menu gets, but the mahi mahi for fish tacos comes from a local supplier, and salsas are housemade daily. Niceties include low-carb tortillas and many Mexican beers. \$

Limón y Sabor

3045 Biscayne Blvd., 786-431-5739
In this dramatically renovated space, the room is now light and open, and the food is authentic Peruvian, with seafood a specialty. Portions are huge, prices low, quality high. Especially good are their versions of pescado a lo macho (fish fillet topped with mixed seafood in a creamy, zesty sauce), jalea (breaded and deep-fried fish, mixed seafood, and yuca, topped with onion/pepper/lime salsa), and yuca in hot yet fruity rocoto chili cream sauce. \$\$

Lost & Found Saloon

185 NW 36th St., 305-576-1008
There's an artsy/alternative feel to this casual and friendly Wynwood eatery, which, since opening as a weekday-only breakfast and lunch joint in 2005, has grown with its neighborhood. It's now open for dinner six nights a week, serving Southwestern-style fare at rock-bottom prices. Dishes like piñon and pepita-crusted salmon, chipotle-drizzled and olive stuffed with lump crab, or customizable tacos average \$5-\$8. Also available: big breakfasts and salads, hearty soups, housemade pastries like lemon-crusted wild berry pie, and a hip beer and wine list. \$

Maitardi

163 NE 39th St., 305-572-1400
Though we admired the ambitious approach of Oak Plaza's original tenant, Brosia, this more informal, inexpensive, and straightforwardly Italian concept of veteran Lincoln Road restaurateur Graziano Sbroggio seems a more universal lure for the Design District's central "town square." The mostly outdoor space remains unaltered save a wood-burning oven producing flavorfully char-bubbled pizza creations, plus a vintage meat slicer dispensing wild boar salaminio, bresaola (cured beef), and other artisan salumi. Other irresistible: fried artichokes with lemony aioli; seafood lasagna with heavenly dill-hobster 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 mezze: a Greek sampler of creamy tzatziki yogurt dip, smoky eggplant purée, and airy tarhana 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 restorlounge, festooned with graffiti-style murals designed to evoke a bustling Mexican street market, just for the dangerously smooth margaritas. But the main must-haves here are tacos, encased in a rarity: genuinely made-from-scratch corn tortillas, small but fatty-stuffed. Of 11 varieties, our favorite is the carnitas (juicy braised pork, spicy chili de arbol slaw, toasted peanuts). A close second: the hongos, intensely flavorful huitlacoche and wild mushrooms, with manchego and salsa verde – a reminder that vegetarian food need not be bland. \$\$\$

Michael's Genuine Food and Drink

130 NE 40th St., 305-573-5550
An instant smash hit, this truly neighborhood-oriented restaurant from chef Michael Schwartz offers down-to-earth fun food in a comfortable, casually stylish indoor/outdoor setting. Fresh, organic ingredients are emphasized, but dishes range from cutting-edge (crispy beef cheeks with whipped celeriac, celery salad, and chocolate reduction) to simple comfort food: deviled eggs, homemade potato chips with pan-fried onion dip, or a whole wood-roasted chicken. There's also a broad range of prices and portion sizes to encourage frequent visits. Michael's Genuine also features an eclectic, affordable wine list and a full bar. \$\$\$

Ming Yuan

3006 NW 2nd Ave., 305-576-6466
What this tiny (three booths plus counter seats) Wynwood place serves isn't authentic Chinese cuisine. It's Chinese immigrant cooking: America's original Cantonese-based chop sueys and egg foo youngs plus later, spicier but also Americanized Szechuan/Hunan-inspired 1970s inventions like Mongolian beef and General Tso's this-or-that. But all the above (ordered extra-spicy if you like heat), plus crab rangoons and treat-packed special fried rice, are truly tasty. And since almost everything on the menu comes in several sizes, with even "small" being substantial, prices are unbeatable. \$\$\$

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; shoe-string frites that rival Belgium's best; mouthwatering maple-basted bacon; miraculously terrific tofu (crispy panko-crusted and

apricot/soy-glazed); even a "voluptuous grilled cheese sandwich" – definitely a "don't ask, don't tell your cardiologist" item. \$\$\$

NoVe Kitchen & Bar

1750 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-503-1000
At NoVe, the restorlounge at the Opera Tower condo in NoVe (new nickname for the bayfront neighborhood north of the Venetian Causeway), the food is East-West. Meaning you can get burgers, pasta, and so on, or try the inventive Asian small plates and sushi specialties Hiro Terada originated at his past posts. Doraku and Moshi Moshi: the Atlantis roll (tempura conch with asparagus, avocado, scallions, and curry sauce); spicy, crunchy fried tofu atop kimchi salad; much more. Open 6:00 a.m. for breakfast to 3:00 a.m., it is kid-friendly and dog-friendly, too. \$\$\$

Orange Café + Art

2 NE 40th St., 305-571-4070
The paintings hanging in this tiny, glass-enclosed café are for sale. And for those who don't have thousands of dollars to shell out for the local art on the walls, less than ten bucks will get you art on a plate, including a Picasso: chorizo, prosciutto, manchego cheese, baby spinach, and basil on a crusty baguette. Other artfully named and crafted edibles include salads, daily soups, several pastas (like the Matisse, flocchi pouches filled with pears and cheese), and house-baked pastries. \$

Pasha's

3801 N. Miami Ave., 305-573-0201
(See Brickell/Downtown listing)

Pieducks

3500 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-5550
(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 pasta also please: diners' choice of starch, with mix-and-match sauces and extras. And the price is right, with few entrées topping \$20. The caper: 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 specialty 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.

Salad Creations

2001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-5333
At this fast-casual restaurant, diners can enjoy a wide variety of chef-created salads and wraps, or go the DIY route, choosing from one of four greens options; four dozen add-ons (fresh, dried, or pickled veggies and fruits, plus cheeses and slightly sinful pleasures like candied pecans or wonton strips); a protein (seafood or poultry); and two dozen dressings, ranging from classic (Thai and Island, bleu cheese) to creative contemporary (spicy Asian peanut, cucumber wasabi, blueberry pomegranate). Additionally, the place creates lovely catering platters, plus individual lunchboxes – perfect picnic or plane food. \$\$\$

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 chef 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 restorlounge. Among the seafood offerings, you won't find exotic or local catches, but all the usual sushi/sashimi favorites, though in more interesting form, thanks to sauces that go beyond standard soy – spicy sriracha, garlic/ponzu oil, and many more. Especially recommended: the yuzu hamachi roll, the lobster tempura maki, and panko-coated spicy shrimp with hot-and-sour 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 lounges in NYC and Las Vegas, but more informal than the former and more

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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 restorolounge, 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." \$\$\$

Tapas y Tintos
3535 NE 2nd Ave., 305-392-0506

With about 50 different generously sized traditional tapas plates, from simple (imported Spanish cheeses and cured meats; varied crispetas, including beautifully smooth spinach) to sophisticated (crisp-fried soft-shell crab with aioli dip; the witty Popeye y Olivia, garlicky wine-sauced chickpeas with spinach and olive oil) plus complex salads, paellas, and charbroiled meat and seafood entrées, all add up to entertaining eating even without this tapas/wine bar's live entertainment. This second T&T feels less nightclub and more neighborhood than the South Beach original. Great for dates, business lunches, or very happy hours. \$\$\$

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

The exterior is eye-popping enough, with murals from world-famous outdoor artists, but it's the interior that grabs you.

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Colorful and exotic work by Shepard Fairey, Christian Awe, and other acclaimed artists makes it one of the most striking restaurant spaces anywhere. As for food, the original menu has been replaced with Spanish/Latin/Mediterranean-inspired favorites from chef Miguel Aguilar (formerly of Alma de Cuba): gazpacho or black bean soups; shredded chicken ropa vieja empanadas with cilantro crema; grilled octopus skewers with tapenade; plus fingerling potato-chorizo hash and other seasonal farm-to-table veg dishes. \$\$\$

Upper Eastside

Andiamo
5600 Biscayne Blvd., 305-762-5751

With brick-oven pizzerias popping up all over town the past few years, it's difficult to remember the dark days when this part of Mark Soyka's 55th Street Station complex was mainland Miami's sole source of open-flame-cooked pies. But the pizzas still hold up against the newbie pack, especially since exec chef Frank Crupi has upped the ante with unique-to-Miami offerings like a white (tomato-free) New Haven clam pie. Also available: salads, panini, and a tasty meatball appetizer with ricotta. There's a respectable wine and beer list, too. \$\$\$

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

Since the owners of this rustic riverbank spot are the husband/wife team behind Ouzo's, it's not surprising that Greek food and festivity are the main lure for locals. But Anise's expanded menu, centering on meze (the Middle Eastern term for shareable small plates) though not neglecting Big Food like lamb shank or whole grilled fish, also includes dishes from other Mediterranean countries: Italy's spaghetti with bottarga (tuna roe); spicy Moroccan merguez sausage with fava purée; whole sardines with fennel vinaigrette, evoking Portugal. Frequent special events make for added fun. \$\$\$

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

Le Café
7295 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-6551

For anyone who can't get over thinking of French food as

intimidating or pretentious, this cute café with a warm welcome, and family-friendly French home cooking, is the antidote. No fancy food (or fancy prices) here, just classic comfort food like onion soup, escargot, daily fresh oysters, boeuf bourguignon (think Ultimate Pot Roast), Nicoise salad, quiche, and homemade crème brûlée. A respectable beer and wine list is a welcome addition, as is the housemade sangria. Top price for entrées is about \$14. \$\$\$

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

Since Frankie and Priscilla Crupi took over this hot dog stand, the menu has changed significantly, with some items eliminated (any vegetarian hot dogs, salads, chichi toppings like avocado). But choices have expanded to include new dog choices (brats, Italian sausage, more) plus burgers and other classic eastern U.S. regional urban street foods: New England lobster rolls, New Orleans po'boys, Jersey shore cheese Tylors (pork roll), Baltimore crab cake sandwiches, and naturally, Philly's of all sorts – cheese steak and beyond. \$\$\$

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. \$

Europa Car Wash and Café
6075 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-2357

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



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 meat loaf with homemade BBQ sauce – sin-free comfort food. Food is available à la carte or grouped in multi-meal plans customized for individual diner's nutritional needs. \$\$

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 healthy 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. \$-\$\$

La Cigale

7281 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-0014
"Bistro" can mean almost anything these days, but with owners who are a husband/wife team recently arrived from Marseille, it's not surprising that this neighborhood wine bistro is the classic kind found in France – a home away from home where the contemporary but cozy space is matched by the southern French comfort food coming from the open kitchen. Drop in for drinks and snacks such as artisan cheeses and charcuterie, or enjoy full meals ranging from classic (wine-poached mussels; a boldly sauced steak/frites) to creative (Parma ham-wrapped tuna loin). \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 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 restorlounge, or like anything else in Miami. Forbidding from the outside, on the inside it's like a time-trip to a cabaret in pre-WWII Berlin: bordello-red décor, romantically dim lighting, show-tune live piano bar entertainment, and to match the ambiance, elegantly updated retro food served with style and a smile. For those feeling flush, home-style fried chicken is just like mom used to make – in her wildest dreams. \$\$\$

Metro Organic Bistro

7010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-751-8756
Big changes have come to Karma the car wash, the first being a separate new name for the revamped restaurant: Metro Organic Bistro, an all-organic fine-dining restaurant where simple preparations reveal and enhance natural flavors. An entirely new menu places emphasis on grilled organic meat and fish dishes. Try the steak frites – organic, grass-fed skirt steak with organic chimichurri and fresh-cut fries. Vegetarians will love the organic portabella focaccia. Dine either inside the architect-designed restaurant or outdoors on the patio. Beer and wine. \$\$\$

Michy's

6927 Biscayne Blvd. 305-759-2001
Don't even ask why Michele Bernstein, with a top-chef résumé, not to mention regular Food Network appearances, opened a homey restaurant in an emerging but far from fully gentrified neighborhood. Just be glad she did, as you dine on white almond gazpacho or impossibly creamy ham and blue cheese croquetas.

Though most full entrées also come in half-size portions (at almost halved prices), the tab can add up fast. The star herself is usually in the kitchen. Parking in the rear off 69th Street. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Mi Vida Café

7244 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-6020
At this indoor/outdoor vegetarian and raw-food vegan café, culinary-school-trained chef/owner Daniela Lagamina produces purist produce-oriented dishes that are easy to understand, like sparkling-fresh salads and smoothies, plus more technique-intensive mock meat or cheese items, based on soy proteins, that satisfy even confirmed carnivores. Particularly impressive on the regular menu: a superior Sloppy Joe made with mushroom confit, braised homemade seitan, spinach, and rich almond romesco sauce; and cannelloni de verdura, homemade crepes stuffed with spinach and cashew "ricotta." Do check the daily specials, too. \$\$-\$\$\$

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

Revalas 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 al fume (with pancetta, tomato, garlic, basil, and a touch of cream) or yellowtail française (egg-battered, with lemon-caper wine sauce) are the must-haves here. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus

1085 NE 79th St., 305-754-8002
With Christmas lights perpetually twinkling and party noises emanating from a new outdoor Biergarten, this German restaurant is owner Alex Richter's one-man gentrification project, transforming a formerly uninviting stretch of 79th Street one pils at a time. The fare includes housemade sausages (mild veal bratwurst, hearty mixed beef/pork bauernwurst, spicy garlicwurst) with homemade mustard and catsup; savory yet near-greaseless potato pancakes; and, naturally, schnitzels, a choice of delicate pounded pork, chicken, or veal patties served with a half-dozen different sauces. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Soyka

5556 NE 4th Court, 305-759-3117
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 culinary revival for this neighborhood focal point. The concept is still comfort food, but a revamped menu emphasizes fresh local ingredients and from-scratch

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 focaccia). Dinner features a range of small plates (poached figs with Gorgonzola cheese and honey balsamic drizzle) and full entrées like sake-marinated salmon with boniato mash and Ponzu butter sauce, and crisp 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 lechón sandwiches and flaky-crust Cuban pastries are legend. But she also crafts treats not found at average Cuban bakeries, like pizzas using housemade Indian naan bread. Additionally Bernardo carries unique treats produced by a few friends: candies, cupcakes, and exotically flavored flans. \$

NORTH BAY VILLAGE

Bocados Ricos

1880 79th St. Causeway, 305-864-4889
Tucked into a mall best known for its Happy Stork Lounge, this little luncheonette services big appetites. Along with the usual grilled churrascos, there's bandeja paisa, Colombia's sampler platter of grilled steak, sausage, chicharron, fried egg, avocado, plantains, rice, and beans. Don't miss marginally daintier dishes like sopa de costilla, if this rich shortrib bowl is among the daily homemade soups. Arepas include our favorite corn cake: the hefty Aura, stuffed with chorizo, chicharron, carne desmechada (shredded flank steak), plantains, rice, beans, and cheese. \$\$\$

The Crab House 1551 79th St. Causeway, 305-868-7085

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

Japanese Market and Sushi Deli 1412 79th St. Causeway, 305-861-0143

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

Mario the Baker 1700 79th St. Causeway, 305-867-7882 (See North Miami listing)

Oggi Caffè 1666 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1238

This cozy, romantic spot started back in 1989 as a pasta factory (supplying numerous high-profile restaurants) as well as a neighborhood eatery. And the wide range of budget-friendly, home-made 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 fare (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 created the original menu, and among his dishes still available is the filet mignon atop surprisingly pistachio-studded béarnaise sauce. Now there is a range of Mediterranean offerings as well, from grilled calamari steaks to mahi piccata. \$\$\$

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 ravioletti 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. \$\$\$

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 stand-out 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

The Wine Market 908 71st St., 305-865-6465

This rustic-chic wine shop, tapas bar, and restaurant is the sort of place that every emerging neighborhood needs. The wine stock isn't huge but the selection is thoughtful, with many bottles priced from \$10 to \$20. Take it home or pay a small corkage fee and drink on-premises over a meal centered on typical Parisian bistro entrées like steak or moules frites (the latter regularly available all-you-can-eat). If you'd prefer going the tapas bar route, highlights include a silky cognac/truffle chicken liver mousse and battered shrimp with romulade sauce to make your own po'boy croutons. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 briki (buttery phyllo pastry stuffed with tuna, onions, potatoes, and tomatoes) with a mesclun side salad. But everything is homemade, including all breads, and prepared with impeccable ingredients, classic French technique, and meticulous attention to detail, down to the stylish plaid ribbons that hold together the café's baguette sandwiches. \$\$\$



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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. \$\$

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 ajaco. 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 platters. 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Bulldog Burger

15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-940-9655
Despite Miami's burger bar overload, this one from Howie Kleinberg, adjacent to his BBQ joint, stands out thanks to toppings like candied bacon, caramelized banana jam, and mayo that's flavored, like Southern red-eye gravy, with strong coffee. Bravehearts race for the infamous Luther burger's components — cheddar, bacon, fried onion, secret sauce, and a sweet-glazed mock (holeless) Krispy Kreme donut bun; calories are more than double a Big Mac's. And the thin-sliced, thickly crunch-crusted, deep-fried jalapeños will keep you coming back for more, should you live past the first order. \$\$

Canton Café

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

Captain Jim's Seafood

12950 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-892-2812
This market/restaurant was garnering critical acclaim even when eat-in dining was confined to a few Formica tables in front of the fish counter, owing to the freshness of its seafood, much of it from Capt. Jim Hanson's own fishing boats, which supply many top restaurants. Now there's a casual but pleasantly nautical side dining room with booths. Whether it's garlicky scampi, smoked-fish dip, grilled yellowtail or hog or mutton snapper, perfectly tenderized cracked conch or conch fritters, everything is deftly prepared and bargain-priced. \$\$

Casa Mia Trattoria

1950 NE 123rd St., 305-899-2770
Tucked away, off to the side on the approach to the Broad

Causeway and the beaches, this charming indoor/outdoor trattoria seems to attract mostly neighborhood regulars. But even newcomers feel like regulars after a few minutes, thanks to the staff's Italian ebullience. Menu offerings are mostly classic comfort foods with some contemporary items as well. Housemade pastas are good enough that low-carb dieters should take a break, especially for the tender 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 scorchier. 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. \$\$\$

Giraffas

1821 NE 123rd St., 786-866-9007
Festooned with eye-poppingly colored panels and giraffes — subtler but everywhere — this first North American branch of a wildly popular, 30-year-old Brazilian fast/casual chain is the flagship of a planned 4000 U.S. Giraffas. Given that the steaks, especially the tender, flavorful picanha, rival those at the most upscale rodizio joints — and beat the sword-wielding grandstanders for custom cooking (because staff asks your preference) — we'd bet on giraffe domination. Overstuffed grilled sandwiches, salads, even tasty veggie options are all here, too. The cheese bread is a must. \$\$

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 tasso 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

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 roadside ambience, 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 bistro fare: frisée salad with lardons, poached egg, and bacon vinaigrette; truite Grenobloise (trout with lemon/caper sauce); consommé with black truffles and foie gras, covered by a buttery puff pastry dome; perfect pommes frites, and equally perfect apple or lemon tarts for dessert. \$\$\$

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-kebab and must-o-mooseer (thick yogurt dips with herbéd cukes or shallots) are must-haves. \$\$

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. \$



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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 or 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 thickener, 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. \$\$

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

Bamboo Garden

1232 NE 163rd St., 305-945-1722

Big enough for a banquet (up to 300 guests), this veteran is many diners' favorite on the 163rd/167th Street "Chinatown" strip because of its superior décor. But the menu also offers well-prepared, authentic dishes like peppery black bean clams, sautéed mustard greens, and steamed whole fish with ginger and scallions, plus Chinese-American egg foo young. Default spicing is mild even in Szechuan dishes marked with red-chili icons, but don't worry; realizing some like it hot, the chefs will customize spiciness to heroic heat levels upon request. \$\$

Blue Marlin Fish House

2500 NE 163rd St., 305-957-8822

Located inside Oleta River State Park, this casual outdoor eatery is a rare surprise for nature lovers. The featured item is still the house-smoked fish this historic venue began producing in 1938, available in three varieties: salmon, mahi mahi, and the signature blue marlin. But the smokehouse now also turns out ribs and delectable brisket. Other new additions include weekend fish fries. Entry is directly from 163rd Street, not through the main park entrance. No admission fee. \$

China Restaurant

178 NE 167th St., 305-947-6549

When you have a yen for the Americanized Chinese fusion dishes you grew up with, all the purist regional Chinese cuisine in the world won't scratch the itch. So the menu here, containing every authentically inauthentic Chinese-American classic you could name, is just the ticket when nostalgia strikes – from simple egg rolls to pressed almond duck (majorly breaded boneless chunks, with comfortingly thick gravy). \$-\$\$

Chipotle Mexican Grill

14776 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-2779

Proving that national fast-food chains don't have to be bad for either diners or the environment, Chipotle serves what the company calls "food with integrity." The fare is simple, basically tacos and big burritos: soft flour or crisp corn tortillas stuffed with chipotle-marinated steak or chicken chunks, bolder shredded beef barbaço, or herb-scented pork carnitas. But these bites contain no evil ingredients (transats, artificial color/flavor, antibiotics, growth hormones). And the food, while not the authentic Mex street stuff dreams are made of, is darned tasty, too. \$

Cholo's Ceviche & Grill

1127 NE 163rd St., 305-947-3338

Don't be misled by the mini-mall location, or the relatively minimal prices (especially during lunch, when specials are under \$6). Inside, the décor is charming, and the Peruvian plates elegant in both preparation and presentation. Tops among ceviches/traditos is the signature Cholo's, marinated octopus and fish in

a refined rocoto chili sauce with overtones both fiery and fruity. And don't miss the molded causas, whipped potato rings stuffed with avocado-garnished crab salad – altogether lighter and lower-lip than the tasty but oily mashed spud constructions more oft encountered in town. \$-\$\$

Christine's Roti Shop

16724 NE 6th Ave., 305-770-0434

Wraps are for wimps. At this small shop run by Christine Gouvêla, originally from British Guyana, the wrapper is a far more substantial and tasty roti, a Caribbean 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. \$

Duffy's Sports Grill

Intracoastal Mall

3909 NE 163rd St., 305-760-2124

Located in a sprawling indoor/outdoor space at the Intracoastal Mall, Duffy's, part of a popular chain that identifies as the official sports grill of every major Miami team, features roughly a zillion TVs and an equally mega-size menu of accessibly Americanized, globally inspired dishes designed to please crowds: stuffed potato skins, crab Rangoon, coconut-crust fish fingers with orange-ginger sauce, jumbo wings of many flavors. Imagine a sports-oriented Cheesecake Factory. What makes this particular Duffy's different and better? Location, location, location – fronting the Intracoastal Waterway. There's even a swimming pool with its own bar. \$-\$\$\$

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

Genza Japanese Buffet

16153 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-2192

Highlighting the lunch and dinners spreads at this all-you-can-eat Japanese buffet are a hibachi station (where chefs custom-cook diners' choice of seafood or meat), plus many types of maki rolls and individual nigiri sushi, both featuring a larger variety of seafood than at many sushi bars – not just salmon and tuna but snapper, escolar, surf clam, snow crab, and more. But there are also steam-tabled hot Japanese and Chinese dishes; an array of cold shellfish and salads with mix-and-match sauces; and desserts. Selections vary, but value-for-money is a given. \$\$

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 beef 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 exotic like satkara, flavored with a Bangladeshi citrus reminiscent of sour orange. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Iron Sushi

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

(See Miami Shores listing)?

Jerusalem Market and Deli

16275 Biscayne Blvd., 305-948-9080

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

Kabobji

3055 NE 163rd St., 305-354-8484

This place makes a very good tahini sauce. In fact that alone is reason enough to visit. We prefer ours with this bright, cheery eatery's delightfully oniony falafel or a veg-garnished wrap of thin-sliced marinated beef shawarma. 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 1990s this restaurant, located in an unatmospheric mini strip mall but surprisingly romantic inside (especially if you grab one of the exotically draped booths) has been a popular destination for reasonably priced north Indian fare. Kormas are properly soothing and vindaloes are satisfactorily searing, but the kitchen will adjust seasonings upon request. They aim to please. Food arrives unusually fast for an Indian eatery, too. \$\$

King Palace

330 NE 167th St. 305-949-2339

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

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

14831 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-8800

(See Midtown / Wynwood / Design District listing)

Laurenzo's Market Café

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

It's just a small area between the wines and the fridge counters – no potted palms, and next-to-no service in this cafeteria-style space. But when negotiating this international gourmet market's packed shelves and crowds has depleted your energies, it's a handy place to refuel with eggplant parmesan and similar Italian-American classics, housemade from old family recipes. Just a few spoonfuls of Wednesday's hearty pasta fagiole, one of the daily soup specials, could keep a person shopping for hours. And now that pizza master Carlo is manning the wood-fired oven, you can sample the thinnest, crispiest pies outside Napoli. \$-\$\$

Little Saigon

16752 N. Miami Ave., 305-653-3377

This is Miami's oldest traditional Vietnamese restaurant, but it's still packed most weekend nights. So even the place's biggest negative – its hole-in-the-wall atmosphere, not encouraging of lingering visits – becomes a plus since it ensures fast turnover. Chef/owner Lily Tao is typically in the kitchen, crafting green papaya salad, flavorful beef noodle pho (served with greens, herbs, and condiments that make it not just a soup but a whole ceremony), and many other Vietnamese classics. The menu is humongous. \$-\$\$



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 potato (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. \$\$\$

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 fish 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: mook khem phad wan (chewy deep-fried seasoned pork strips with fiery tamarind dip, accompanied by crisp green papaya salad); broad rice noodles stir-fried with eye-opening chili/garlic sauce and fresh Thai basil; and chili-topped Diamond Duck in tangy tamarind sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Paquito's

16265 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-5027
From the outside, this strip-mall Mexican eatery couldn't be easier to overlook. Inside, however, its festivity is impossible to resist. Every inch of wall space seems to be covered with South of the Border knickknacks. And if the kitschy décor alone doesn't cheer you, the quickly arriving basket of fresh (not packaged) taco chips, or the mariachi band, or the knockout margaritas will. Food ranges from Tex-Mex burritos and a party-size fajita platter to authentic Mexican moles and harder-to-find traditional preparations like albóndigas – spicy, ultra-savory meatballs. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

PK Oriental Mart

255 NE 167th St., 305-654-9646
Unlike other Asian markets on this strip between I-95 and Biscayne Boulevard, PK has a prepared-food counter, serving authentic Chinatown barbecue, with appropriate dipping sauces included. Weekends bring the biggest selection, including barbecued ribs and pa pei duck (roasted, then deep-fried till extra crisp and nearly free of subcutaneous fat). Available every day are juicy, soy-marinated roast chickens, roast pork strips, crispy pork, and whole roast ducks – hanging, beaks and all. But no worries; a counterperson will chop your purchase into bite-size, beakless pieces. \$

Racks Italian Kitchen

3933 NE 163rd St. (Intracoastal Mall), 305-917-7225
The complexity of the Racks concept makes a sound-bite description impossible. It's part Italian market, with salumi, cheeses, and other artisan products plus take-out prepared foods; part enoteca (wine bar, featuring snacks like addictive Portobello fritti with truffle aioli, especially enjoyable on the waterfront deck); part ristorante (pastas and other Big Food); part pizzeria. What's important: All components feel and taste authentically Italian. Just don't miss the coal-oven pizza. Superior toppings (including unusually zesty tomato sauce) plus an astonishingly light yet chewy crust make Racks' pies a revelation. \$\$

Roasters & Toasters

18515 NE 18th Ave., 305-830-3354
Attention ex-New Yorkers: Is your idea of food porn one of the Carnegie Deli's mile-high pastrami sandwiches? Well, Roasters will dwarf them. Consider the "Carnegie-style" monster containing, according to the menu, a full pound of succulent meat (really

1.4 pounds; we weighed it), for a mere 15 bucks. All the other Jewish deli classics are here too, including perfectly sour pickles, silky hand-sliced nova or lox, truly red-rare roast beef, and the cutest two-bite mini-potato pancakes ever – eight per order, served with sour cream and applesauce. \$\$

The Rumcake Factory

2075 NE 163rd St., 786-525-7074
When ex-Louisianan (and ex-Dolphins player) Larry Robinson and his Cuban-American wife Elena started a catering company in Miami Lakes, their mouthwateringly moist Caribbean-style buttered rum/walnut-glazed rum cake instantly became the star attraction. But after relocating to a real (if tiny) restaurant space in BT territory, the Factory now features a small supporting cast of Cajun fare scrumptious enough to upstage the star. Always available: authentic remoulade-dressed New Orleans po-boy sandwiches (shrimp, catfish, fried turkey), and humongous house-smoked chicken wings. Rotating specials include hearty gumbo, jambalaya, and BBQ ribs. \$\$

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 shrimp pork with crackling attached. \$\$\$

Shing Wang Vegetarian, Isee & Tea House

237 NE 167th St., 305-944-4008
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. \$\$\$

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

17850 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-932-0630
www.tunasrawbarandgrille.com
The reincarnated Tuna's has gained new owners, a new name, a dazzling outdoor bar and dining area, and a new chef, Rolf Fellhauer, who spent 28 years at the famed La Paloma. He has added his touch to the menu, with delicacies such as Oysters Moscow, mussels Chardonnay, and Grouper Brittany. 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 neta – mixed with scallions and dressed with habit-forming honey-miso mustard sauce. Other favorites include goma ae (wilted spinach, chilled and dressed in sesame sauce), garlic stem and beef (mild young shoots flash-fried with tender steak bits), or perhaps just-caught grouper with hot/sweet/tangy chili sauce. Open till around 3:00 a.m. \$\$

Yes, Pasta! Trattoria Italiana

14872 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-1006
At Roman-native Flaminia Morin's casual, family-friendly eatery, the specialty is pasta yo ur way. Choose one of seven fresh or dried pastas (including gluten-free options), then one of 15 sauces ranging from traditional carbonara to inventions like Mozzarella Filante (creamy tomato sauce with melted cheese); à la carte meat, seafood, or veg add-ons are also available. Build a full Italian feast with antipasti, salads, six secondi (entrées), and desserts. Budget diner alert: Check out Monday-Friday lunch specials, two courses plus drink for \$8.

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. \$\$\$

Open Kitchen

1071 95th St., 305-865-0090
If we were on Death Row, choosing a last meal, this very chef-centered luncheon/market's PBLT (a BLT sandwich with melt-in-your-mouth pork belly substituting for regular bacon) would be a strong contender. Co-owners Sandra Stefani (ex-Casa Toscana chef/owner) and Ines Chattas (ex-Icebox Café GM) have combined their backgrounds to create a global gourmet oasis with a menu ranging from light quiches and imaginative salads to hefty balsamic/tomato-glazed shortribs or daily pasta specials (like wild

boar-stuffed ravioli). Also featured: artisan grocery products, and Stefani's famous interactive cooking class/wine dinners. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 hard-boiled 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 their 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 tyeface. But no argument from here. In a mall – a setting more accustomed to food court – dishes like carpaccio al salmone (crudo, with portobello, 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,"

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swoonworthy grade A5 Japanese Kobe, and butter-poached prime rib, all cooked to perfection. \$\$\$\$

Cadillac Ranch Village at Gulfstream Park 921 Silks Run Rd. #1615, 954-456-1031

It's hard to decide if the most fun interpretation of beef here is the weekend prime rib dinner special (with two sides and a meat hunk hefty enough for sandwiches the next day) or the mechanical bull. Party like it's 1980 at this all-American restolounge/sports bar, which includes two outdoor patios with fire pits and, sometimes, live rootsy music. If you miss out on the roast beef (it goes fast), there are burgers, steaks, meal-size salads, and classic bar bites. \$\$-\$\$\$

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 respites 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. \$\$\$

Il Migliore 2576 NE Miami Gardens Dr., 05-792-2902

This attractive trattoria gets the food right, as well as the ambience. 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. \$\$-\$\$\$

Fresko 19048 NE 29th Ave., 786-272-3737

Forget thick, dough-wrapped potato knishes and blintzes slathered with sour cream. As its name suggests, this kosher dairy eatery eschews the starchy/sugar-laden traditional favorites for salads, smoothies, and similar healthy fare as casual, clean, and contemporary as the restaurant's décor. Asian-influenced items, like wakame-topped tuna tartare with pineapple chutney, are particularly appealing, while those craving classic combinations like smoked salmon and cream cheese can enjoy them on a light-crust designer pizza. To drink, smoothies are supplemented by refreshing herbal infusions like green lemonade (with mint and basil). \$\$

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

La Estancia Argentina 17870 Biscayne Blvd., 305-932-6477

At this market/restaurant, there's a small but quality selection of Argentine grocery staples and wines, plus a butcher counter where backyard BBQers can find everything necessary for a Parrillada party. Alternatively, grab a table and let La Estancia do the cooking – anything from tapas and elegant miga mini-tea sandwiches to hefty grilled Parrillada plates. Most irresistible, though, are the savory and sweet baked goods, especially elaborately frosted layer cakes and delicately crusted empanadas plumply stuffed with hand-cut flank steak, mushrooms in onion sauce, much more. \$-\$\$

The Grill on the Alley 195017 Biscayne Blvd. (Aventura Mall), 305-466-7195

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

Mahogany Grille 2190 NW 183rd St., 305-626-8100

Mahogany Grille has drawn critical raves and an international clientele since retired major league outfielder Andre Dawson and his brother transformed this place in 2007. Today it's white tablecloths and, naturally, mahogany. The menu is a sort of trendy yet traditional soul fusion of food from several African diaspora regions: Carolina Low Country (buttery cheese grits with shrimp, sausage, and cream gravy), the Caribbean (conch-packed fritters or salad), and the Old South (lightly buttermilk-battered fried chicken). The chicken is perhaps Miami's best. \$\$-\$\$\$

Mo's Bagels & Deli 2780 NE 187th St., 305-936-8555

While the term "old school" is used a lot to describe this spacious (160-seat) establishment, it actually opened in 1995. It just so evokes the classic NY delis we left behind that it seems to have been here forever. Example: Lox and nova aren't pallid, prepackaged fish, but custom-sliced from whole slabs. And bagels are hand-rolled, chewy champions, not those machine-made puffy poseurs. As complimentary pastry bites suggest, and the massive size of the succulent, sufficiently fatty pastrami sandwiches confirm, generous Jewish Mo(m) spirit shines here. \$\$

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

Pilar 20475 Biscayne Blvd. 305-937-2777

Chef/owner Scott Fredel previously worked for Norman Van Aken and Mark Mittello. 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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