

BISCAYNE

February 2012

www.BiscayneTimes.com

Volume 9 Issue 12

IN THIS ISSUE
9 Sunny Isles Beach restaurants.
Dining Guide total = 309! p. 86

Times



Trapped in a tech web that won't let go?
Answer: Unplug. Float. Exhale.

By Tristram Korten

pg 34


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opendoor *by Bonnie & Ilene*



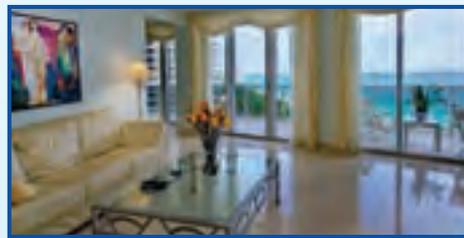
Bay Harbor Islands. Award winning architect Barry Sugerman's home. Featured in HGTV, Florida Design, Casa & Estilo & more. 4bd/2.5ba, Open floor plan. Magnificent views. Wide Bay. \$2,975,000



Modern Contemporary sleek waterfront residence in gated Sans Souci Ests, totally renovated, 4bd/3ba, pool, min to ocean, no bridges to bay. \$875,000



Totally renovated Mediterranean style hm on 1 & a 1/2 waterfront lots in the heart of Surfside. 5bd/5ba, marble flrs, high ceilings, gourmet kitchen, huge master suite w/ fireplace. Heated pool, Jacuzzi, 85' of water frontage w/ concrete dock for up to an 85' yacht. Min. to the ocean, world famous Bal Harbour Shops, houses of worship & Bay Harbor A rated school. \$2,100,000



Majestic Tower at Bal Harbour. Spectacular ocean views, 2/2.5, 2160sf, resort style amenities, private elevator, Across from Bal Harbour Shops. \$2.1M



REDUCED!

Great waterfront family home in gated Keystone Point. Open floor plan, 3bd/2ba, updated kitchen, 2 car gar, pool & dock. Great for entertaining. \$725K



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



REDUCED!

Turnberry Isle South, Aventura. 3,426sf hm in the sky, enormous living space, marble flrs, Wrap-around terr. overlooking ocean, Intracoastal & golf course. \$549K



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



REDUCED!

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

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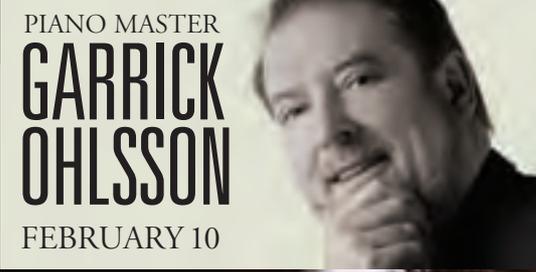

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FEBRUARY

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FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

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

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		 <p>PIANO MASTER JEAN-IVES THIBAUDET FEBRUARY 1</p>	<p>1 Jean-Yves Thibaudet TSCHAIKOWSKI ST. PETERSBURG STATE ORCHESTRA Liszt: Piano Concert No.2 8 PM </p> <p>Florida Grand Opera: La rondine 8 PM </p>	 <p>3 Decadance Theatre 7:30 PM "The pioneering all-female hip-hop group... a fearless coalition of b-girls!" <i>The New Yorker</i></p> <p>Florida Grand Opera: Rigoletto 8 PM </p>	<p>4 Free Adrienne Arsht Center Tour 12 PM </p> <p>Decadance Theatre 2 & 7:30 PM </p> <p>Florida Grand Opera: La rondine 8 PM </p>	
<p>5 Florida Grand Opera: Rigoletto 2 PM Starring Michael Fabiano, "who must now be recognized as a fully invested member of the fraternity of great Danizetti tenors!" <i>Examiner.com</i></p>	 <p>PIANO MASTER GARRICK OHLSSON FEBRUARY 10</p>	<p>8 Florida Grand Opera: Rigoletto 8 PM The tale of a father's revenge!</p>		<p>10 Garrick Ohlsson WROCLAW PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Chopin: Piano Concert No. 2 8 PM </p>	<p>11 Free Adrienne Arsht Center Tour 12 PM </p> <p>Florida Grand Opera: Rigoletto 7:30 PM </p> <p>Raul Esparza in Concert 8 PM </p>	
<p>FREE TOURS MONDAYS AND SATURDAYS AT NOON! Your Backstage Pass to the Adrienne Arsht Center!</p>	 <p>RAÚL ESPARZA FEBRUARY 11</p>			<p>FEBRUARY 3</p>	<p>17 Blues & Soul 8:00 PM Jazz Roots brings together two magnificent artists, Robert Cray and Shemekia Copeland!</p> <p>Miami City Ballet: Giselle 8 PM </p>	<p>18 Miami City Ballet Carnival for the Animals 2 PM </p> <p>Miami City Ballet: Giselle 8 PM </p> <p>New World Symphony: From Russia with Love 8 PM </p>
<p>19 Miami City Ballet: Giselle 2 PM The captivating story of a young peasant girl who comes back from the grave to rescue her lover!</p>				<p>23 Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater 8 PM "One of the nation's most successful dance troupes!" <i>The New York Times</i></p>	<p>24 Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater 8 PM "A must-see!" <i>The Wall Street Journal</i></p> <p>Reggae Jam THIRD WORLD & INNER CIRCLE 8 PM </p>	<p>25 Free Adrienne Arsht Center Tour 12 PM </p> <p>Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater 2 & 8 PM "Spectacular dancing that thrills you to your marrow!" <i>San Francisco Chronicle</i></p>
<p>26 Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater 2 PM "A national treasure!" <i>The Philadelphia Tribune</i></p> <p>Free Gospel Sunday 4 PM</p>	 <p>ALVIN AILEY FEB. 23-26 AMERICAN DANCE THEATER</p>			<p>BLUES & SOUL ROBERT CRAY & SHEMEKIA COPELAND FEBRUARY 17</p> 		

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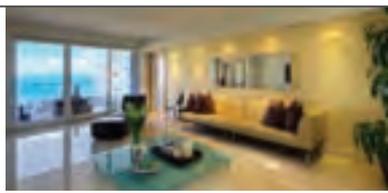




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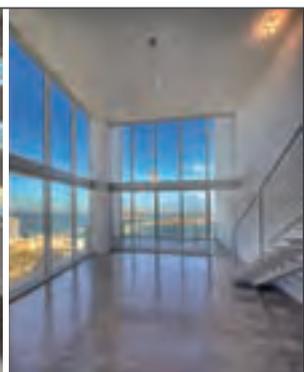



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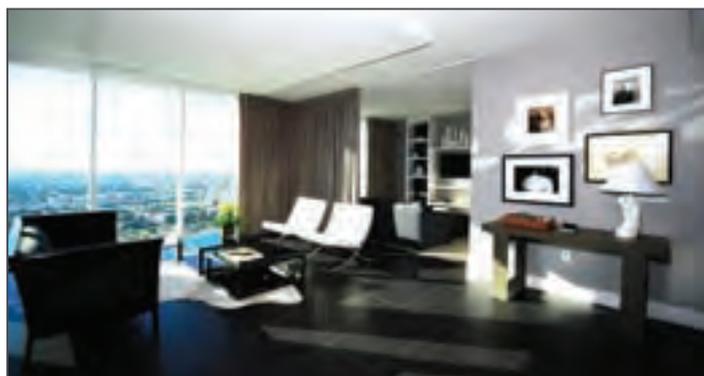






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The innocent, young woman
whom he violates

The angry father who
vows revenge



Michael Fabiano



Nadine Sierra



Mark Walters

VERDI'S

Miami Herald "Best Bet" For 2012
Rigoletto

www.FGO.ORG NOW - FEB 11 Adrienne Arsht Center FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY 800.741.1010

Also see Puccini's *La rondine* starring Cuban-American soprano Elizabeth Caballero now thru Feb 4!

Rigoletto is made possible by a generous gift from Stephen A. Keller and Lesleen Bolt in loving memory of Stephen. Fort Lauderdale performances sponsored by Mrs. Rose Miniaci. Photos © Richard Zendarski for Florida Grand Opera.



Courtyards Townhome

3079 NE 183rd Lane, Aventura. Completely upgraded 3 bed, 2.5 townhome offering incredible urban appeal and artistic flair. Volume ceiling, spiral staircase, fireplace, 3 terraces, new kitchen & more! \$399,000

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Williams Island

7000 Island #2409, Aventura. Exquisite offering featuring 2 properties combined in to 1 showplace! 3 bed, 5 bath with over one million dollars in upgrades. Stunning & sophisticated. Breathtaking ocean views. \$3,500,000.

www.deniserubin.com/A1542958



Brittannia Penthouse

2401 S. Ocean Drive, PH 2807, Hollywood. Luxury abounds in this 2 bed, 2 bath palace with open concept living. Compl. renovated with modern high-end finishes throughout. Unobstructed views from 3 terraces. \$899,999

www.deniserubin.com/A1534890



Porto Vita Town Home

19991 NE 39th Place, Aventura. 4 bed, 5 bath residence with wide water views. The ultimate setting for entertaining with multi-story window wall, chef's kitchen, multiple living areas, stately dining and more. \$3,500,000.

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Olympus

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www.deniserubin.com/A1545540



Hidden Bay

3370 Hidden Bay Dr., 3211, Aventura. 32nd floor!!! Floor-to-ceiling windows offer ocean, bay, city & marina views from 2 sides in this stunning residence. Incredible upgrades throughout! No expense spared. \$1,399,000

www.deniserubin.com/A1570057



Eastern Shores

3160 164th St., N.M.B. Spectacular spacious waterfront home. Huge dock & lift for yacht & jet ski. Contemporary remodel. Stunning wood floors, lge. new kitchen, baths, lighting & more. This home has the wow factor! \$990,000

www.deniserubin.com/A15861597



Peninsula Penthouse

3201 NE 183rd St., GS 3102, Aventura. Extraordinary grandsuite with 3-4 bedrooms, 3 baths, media rm & roof top deck! Designed by Luis Cohen. Venetian plaster, marble floors, exquisite built-ins, Chamberly crystal chandeliers, private elev. \$1,899,000

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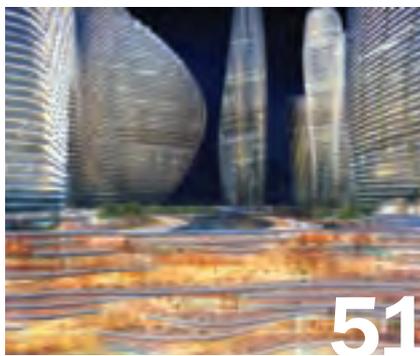
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BISCAYNE *Times*

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"CONTEMPORARY" BISCAYNE BAY GEM NEWER CONSTRUCTION ANGLE BAYVIEWS

OWNER WILL FINANCE

4bdr/3.5bth, pool 5 car garage, detached guesthouse. Completely remodeled, new 2011, roof, granite floors, kitchen w/SS appliances. 15' high ceilings. 1/3 acre w/102' of full power dockage. 1.59M



NEW CONSTRUCTION BEAUTIFUL BAYVIEWS 174' ON WATER

OWNER WILL FINANCE

30' High ceilings 6bdr/5bth, pool, 2 car garage, 7052 sq ft. Oversized 1/3 acre pie-shaped point lot. Gourmet gas thermador kitchen, giant master suite, home theatre + additional media rooms, boat lift plus protected dockage for mega yacht!!! 3.1M



MIAMI BEACH!!! WIDE BAYFRONT 80' OF DOCKAGE

4bdr/3bth, pool, new seawall with 80' of dockage, boatlift. Exotic, custom, freeform, resort-style pool with in-water bar seating & chickee hut WOW!! 1.69M



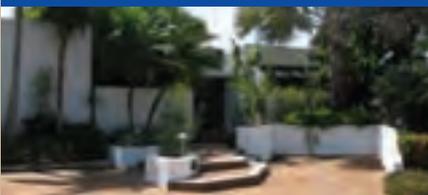
HARBOR ISLAND WATERFRONT WITH OCEAN ACCESS NEWER CONSTRUCTION 30' HI CEILINGS

OWNER WILL FINANCE

3bdr/2.5bth, pool, 2 car garage, 65' of dockage. Gorgeous Appointments thruout, huge master suite, bidet, jacuzzi, the works! Fabulous granite open island kitchen owner will finance, good terms. 1.49M



CONTEMPORARY MODERN KEYSTONE POINT OWNER WILL FINANCE W 300K DN



Keystone Point ocean access 4br/3ba, pool, 3153 sq ft. Custom built-in wet-bar, new sea wall, and brand new custom dockage for 75' vessel. Owner will finance with 300K down. 699K

WIDE BAY VIEW POINT LOT 1/3 ACRE SANS SOUCI ESTATES



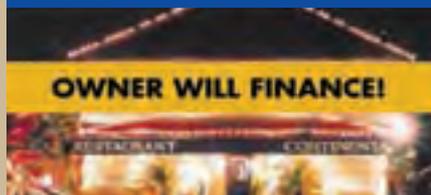
Located 1 lot off the wide bay on cul de sac. Lot size 112' x 125' approx 14,000 sq ft. New seawall 90' of dock (112' on water) 25,000 lb boatlift, park your yacht while you build your dream home! Owner will finance with 30% down \$1.4M

KEYSTONE POINT "CUL DE SAC LOT" 1/2 ACRE - 156' ON WATER



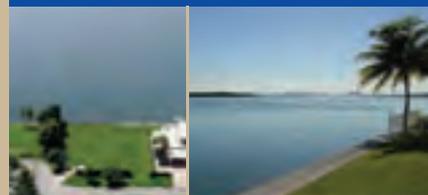
Island #5 with angle views to the bay! Build your dream home in this 24 hr gaurd gated community surrounded by multimillion dollar homes! 156' on the water with new seawall, owner financing, 1.49M

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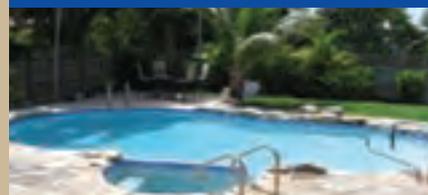
Price includes Business / Bldg. & 1/2 Acre of land. Located in South Ft. Lauderdale on US1, 4COP Lic. included. Great location, only 20% down @ 6% fixed int.!!! Priced at land value. Only 1.2M

VACANT BAY FRONT LOT BUILD YOUR DREAM HOME IN PRESTIGIOUS SAN SOUCI ESTATES



1/3 acre 15,000 sq ft. on the bay. You can see forever! Wide open views! Owner will finance! 2.4M with only 30% down @ 6% fixed int!!

SANS SOUCI ESTATES NONWATERFRONT 24 HR GATED COMMUNITY



4bdr/2.5bth, 2 car garage, pool w/jacuzzi, 24 hour gated community, large family home. Great location "across the street from multi-million \$\$ bayfront homes"!! 499K

KEYSTONE POINT ISLAND #5 CORNER LOT 175' ON WATER



SOLD BY JEFF!
Call Jeff to place your ad here

5bdr/3.5 bth, pool, 2 car garage, 4125 sq ft. Completely remodeled, brand new huge cherry wood/granite eat-in kitchen w/subzero and thermadore appliances. Cul-de-sac lot, huge master suite, jacuzzi, waterfall, pool. \$925K mortgage, \$899K cash

SANS SOUCI ESTATES WIDE BAY VIEWS AT A CANAL PRICE 1.1MIL



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COCONUT GROVE 2-STORY HOME
2260 Tequesta Lane | Miami

2,023 SQ. FT. | 3 BD / 3 BA | OFFERED @ \$598K

Open kitchen with custom cabinets, S/S appliances, and chef-quality hood. Baths with marble flooring/walls and custom designer tiling. A must see.



CITE ON THE BAY

2000 N. Bayshore Drive #520 | Miami

1,303 SQ. FT. | 2 BD / 2 BA | OFFERED @ \$375K

Direct water views from both bedrooms and living/dining. Condo features high ceilings, dark-oak stained wood floors and crown molding throughout as well as granite counters and S/S appliances in an extra spacious kitchen. Only \$287/SF for waterfront!



QUANTUM ON THE BAY

1900 N. Bayshore Drive #4204 | Miami

OFFERED AT \$400K WITH 2 PARKING & FURNISHED
Direct water views from 2BD/2BA on 42nd floor. New remodels include designer fixtures, hard-wood-like floors throughout, customized closet cabinetry, porcelain tile in baths & double sinks. Enjoy Margaret Pace bayfront park yet be min from South Beach. Only premium 04-line available.



BRIAN CARTER, P.A. BROKER ASSOCIATE

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SKY HOME WITH GREAT VIEWS
1800 North Bayshore Drive | Miami

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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
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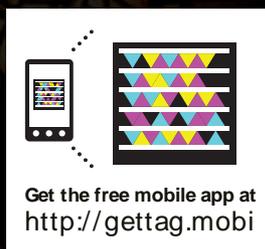
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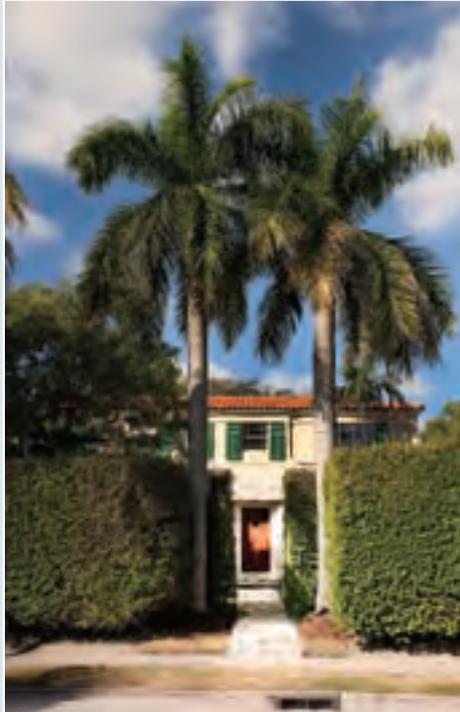
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Commentary: LETTERS

Soffer: Greenspan, Danté, Haraam, and Hubris

Erik Bojnansky's article "Family & Fortune" (February 2012) was an interesting recap of the Soffer family's development debacle and its place within the larger U.S. real estate bust.

As a newcomer here, I wasn't familiar with the family name or its connection to Aventura Mall, and the article was a good introduction to Donald Soffer's swamp-dredging success and philanthropy.

The article also underscores the notion that if you grow up in a family business, you can indeed learn the family business — but you'd do well to be educated about the economic forces at work in the larger sector.

Back in 2007, while son Jeffrey Soffer was throwing himself that \$2 million birthday party, there were plenty of public warnings — including from Alan Greenspan — of an impending real-estate-bubble collapse that was already under way in places like Ireland. That it happened for Soffer so conspicuously in Las Vegas, that epicenter of glamour gone grotesque, feeds right into his storyline.

It would appear that ambition, greed, hubris — and maybe a dash of showing his old man what a community college dropout could do — pushed him to take his father's business empire to what he calls a "whole new level" — but I'll bet he hadn't read much Danté.

Still, he must get credit, if that's what to call it, in one area. Did Jeffrey Soffer anticipate a push to bring gambling to South Florida once he set up shop in the Las Vegas development arena years ago? How could he not?

It may not even matter in the long run that he has lost the Fontainebleau project there; if and when he gets his gambling license for the Fontainebleau Miami, he'll probably just have to plug in the machines and open the doors.

It would have been interesting to learn more Nakheel Leisure, Soffer's investment partner in Fontainebleau Miami Beach. As the property investment arm of the state-run Dubai World, Nakheel took a big hit in the 2008 real estate crash and received a multibillion-dollar bailout from the Dubai government.

Perhaps as long as its funding remains assured, Soffer need not worry. But why, inquiring minds want to know, if gambling in Dubai considered *haraam* (forbidden), does the Islamic government invest in gambling enterprises? Does it have to do with joint-partnership exceptions?

A follow-up on all the limbs of the Soffer business family tree would be a welcome read.

*D.L. McNichols
Aventura*

Soffer: Old-Timer Would Have Told It Like Is Was — If Only We'd Called Him

Some friends told me that a story about Aventura and Donny Soffer was in the works. I was very curious about that because the complete story about that has never been told. I knew about *Biscayne Times* but didn't know the writer, Erik Bojnansky.

Apparently he didn't know about me either, because he never called to interview me. From what I hear, he didn't interview a few other people who, like me, have been around forever and remember the early days up here in Aventura. How early? Early enough that Donny Soffer wasn't even in the picture yet.

When *Biscayne Times* was delivered to my building, I grabbed it and went right back upstairs to read "Family & Fortune."

The story was good as far as it went, but without interviews with Donny and some of us old-timers, it couldn't be what I would call the be all and end all on the subject.

Here are a couple of things I mean by that. I'm not the only one who thinks Donny has been a little too quick to take a credit for the basic idea to "drain the swamps" and develop a big shopping center and maybe later a community with people who would shop there.

Erik's story makes just a passing mention of the fact that Donny's dad, Harry, came up with the original idea. He's the one who had the "vision" to build something out of nothing. Yes, Donny did grab the idea and he ran with it, and everyone recognizes that. But Harry saw the future, and it's a shame he has again been overlooked.

Another person who should have been given more credit was George Berlin. He's not around today, so Erik couldn't have interviewed him. But some of us could have steered him straight about George, who was as important to the success of the shopping center and Aventura as Donny was himself.

And no mention at all of Bob Swedrow, the architect who is a creative genius and gave the city its look, which still stands today.

I also wish there'd been more about the celebrities back in the early days and how Donny used them to help sell the

.....
Continued on page 22

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Commentary: LETTERS

Letters

Continued from page 20

place, and how they many times they got so out of hand you'd think the police would get involved. But of course the police never got in the way of a Donny Soffer party. That's part of the story, too.

These days I still see Donny now and then when he's strutting around the mall. Sometimes we say hello. It's all friendly.

But I don't want my name used because, who knows, I still might get chance to tell it like it really was, and I don't think Donny would be 100-percent happy about that.

*Name Withheld by Request
Aventura*

Soffer: Out of Control Extreme Greed

I enjoy reading the *BT* every month. The cover stories and community news are always interesting, even though I don't live in Miami.

In the February issue, I read with fascination about "Family & Fortune," written by Eric Bojnansky, of the Soffer family creating Aventura and then almost ruining it. I hope the Aventura Mall and the Fontainebleau continue to thrive.

Just goes to show what can happen when extreme greed gets out of control.

*Pat Burke
Bonsall, California*

Welcome to Belle Meade, Inc., Miami's Fortress

The article "Criminals Only Past This Point!" (February 2012) was a good story on how public land, with its public streets, cannot be closed off to the public.

I don't have enough facts as to how many homes and total acreage are affected the Belle Meade neighborhood, but nonetheless, putting up a security fence with

unlocked gates will not achieve security. Wouldn't it be grand if Belle Meade privatize and form one big home owners association? Then the homeowners' dues, in part, could erect real security fences with locked gates and entry codes, and even locked pedestrian gates where owners would have a key to enter and exit.

Just wondering.

*Amanda Osorio
Highland Lakes*

Gusman: At Last Some Good News!

I always read with interest your professionally documented publication, and I'm very pleased that your senior writer, Erik Bojnansky, wrote a well-researched piece about the Olympia Theater at the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts ("New Life for a Grand Old Theater," February 2012).

With so many financial problems in the city due to the difficult times our nation faces, most of our work in favor of art and culture in Miami flows unnoticed under the door.

The Olympia Theater had been underutilized and subsidized by the city for many years, so we decided to create a nonprofit trust that would take over the theater and preserve that valuable asset for the residents of Miami.

The trust, Olympia Center, Inc., committed to a set of conditions, among them that it be led by culturally committed individuals who demonstrate the ability to raise the funds necessary to run the theater properly.

On their side, the trustees set just one condition to take responsibility of the Olympia: To receive the keys without a deficit in its accounts.

We abided by the request.

It is indeed satisfying that Miami residents, as noted in the article, will soon be able to "enjoy free concerts" and that the trust members "have risen to the challenge.

*Mayor Tomás Regalado
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Five Questions for Marc Sarnoff

Miami's District 2 commissioner on the state of the city

By Jack King
BT Contributor

In its December issue, the *BT*, published a story called "The People Have Spoken (Okay, Call It a Whisper)." It was about the election for the City of Miami's District 2 commission seat, won by incumbent Marc Sarnoff. The story, by senior writer Erik Bojnansky, seemed to question whether Sarnoff had actually won.

An example: "Even with a divided opposition, Sarnoff captured less than 50 percent of the vote in 14 of the 37 precincts in District 2."

What? Why not say that he captured more than 50 percent of the vote in 23 of 37 precincts? It just depends on what kind of point you're trying to make.

The point I'd like to make is that Sarnoff got 53 percent of the vote. Granted there was only an eight-percent turnout, but that's not relevant in election vote-counting. It is relevant, however, in philosophical discussions about democratic processes.

The story groused about why there is not an Upper Eastside District 2 commissioner and hasn't been one for the past 30 years. This despite the fact that there are more registered voters in the Upper Eastside than in the Grove.

With that said, I thought it might be time for another sit-down with the

commissioner. So here goes:

Thoughts about the state of the city?

I think everybody is worried about every municipality financially. We have made some very big structural changes in 2011 that are more long-term, but we still have some short-term issues facing us, like pensions. We need to get into a two-tiered pension system so new hires have a different pension system. We'll still fulfill our obligations to the current employees.

And then we need to discuss whether an employee should have a defined contribution plan or a defined benefit plan. The rationale behind a defined benefit plan was "we can't pay you now, so we will pay you later," and that's how cities got in this situation. We pay employees what they are worth now, but we're still in the "pay you later" mode also, and government can't afford that.

What about the parking garage that the leaseholders of the Rusty Pelican and Rickenbacker Marina were supposed to build?

This is probably one of three most disappointing planning functions for me in the city. We brought the city a paid-for garage and we're still fussing about what it should look like and where it should be. The money is in the leases, but I can't get the city to stop arguing over the details. The mayor has had an active role in this

and doesn't seem to want the garage.

Where is the Flagstone hotel and marina project on Watson Island? In ten years nothing has happened.

I'm very hopeful for this project. It would be a great way to bring back the marine industry from Fort Lauderdale. The developer is on schedule to build the docks and water-borne amenities in the next three years. Also they are current in their lease payments.

They have some deadlines they have to meet in the next few years on the upland development. One holdup was a lawsuit that took three years to resolve.

That seems to be the M.O. for doing business in the City of Miami. As soon as one guy wins an RFP, the litigation begins and projects that everyone wants and needs are held up for years.

How about the selection process for the police chief? Was that a shell game?

I was certainly in favor of a national search, and thought the final candidates were all good. The new police chief [Manuel Orosa] is far different than the previous chief. He's more "an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure" person.

He likes to have officers on the ground with a visual presence. In the next three to four months, we'll see how well it works. Our problem right now is we are short about 50 officers. And



because of arcane civil-service rules, we have to hire from a list of applicants from 2008, many of whom are not even around now. And then we go to the 2009 list. This all takes weeks and weeks.

The city commission is planning a resolution to ask the civil service board to change the rules. We need to hire officers now and the county may let 150 officers go due to budget problems and we could hire them right now. [The layoffs were averted.]

What about downsizing government?

We have more work to do and it includes looking at all positions, and making pay adjustments for many positions. Also we need to study department budgets to bring them more in line with what the job or the productivity is worth. We need to do this with a scalpel rather than a spatula, and right now we are using the spatula a bit too much.

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The Future of Downtown Lives in the Past

Making a case for Miami's historic buildings

By Christian Cipriani

BT Contributor

As I traipsed around an ever-changing downtown Miami last month, I wondered about its beautiful stock of early 20th-century buildings. So this month I met up with Ricardo Lopez, an architect and urbanist with the firm Florez Lopez Architects. A native Miamian, he specializes in custom residential architecture and urban design, and teaches at the University of Miami's School of Architecture.

We sat in his office inside the historic 1920s Huntington Building — also known as the Consolidated Bank Building — on SE 1st Street, thumbed through archival photos, and discussed the history of Miami and the future of its urban core.

"Downtown Miami used to be Key West on steroids," he said. In the days when it was nothing more than Henry Flagler's pioneer village of boaters and adventurers, industrialists and outlaws, what is now downtown was indeed an untamed jumble of wooden houses and boatyards.

This was an era when daily life took people only as far as their feet could carry them, and commercial and residential structures evolved on a focused grid. Only later, when urban development sprawled outward — in Miami's case, father into the Everglades — did "downtown" come to connote a high-rise commercial center to which one commuted. This sprawl would eventually hurt downtown real estate values, even for in-demand, high-tech buildings like the steel-framed Huntington.

Historic preservation is still a relatively new concept in America. European countries, for example, have reused buildings for centuries. Yet even here, in the capital of all things new, preservation is gaining value, from South Beach's Art Deco District to the MiMo District in Miami's Upper Eastside.

"Historic preservation exists to protect the cultural heritage of a community and create value, and for a young city like Miami, it's a way of *defining* our history," said Lopez. "This is now a national movement tied in with the United States Green Building Council, the LEED program, and a general move toward green design."

Depression-era masterpieces like the DuPont and Ingraham buildings still stand, but Miami has lost some gems along the way. Among them: the city's main library in Bayfront Park and, more recently, the Urmey Hotel. Once the oldest building in Miami, the Urmey fell into disrepair before being razed to make way for Loft 4, an unrealized downtown condo project from The Related Group.

A decade ago, financing flowed like champagne; local government embraced developers with tax incentives, public land deals, and lenient zoning; and a mind-boggling condo boom ensued. Developers could scoop up old buildings, knock them down, and build three times as high. Few of them saw value in renovating and reusing.

The market asked for new construction, so local government aided and abetted.

In the face of vanishing history, federal incentives such as tax credits and special financing have stepped in to make

restoration a more competitive option. Even with South Florida's limited supply of trained craftsmen, and the costs and surprises often involved, Lopez believes renovation is a worthy economic and cultural investment.

From his window, he pointed to two standout historic projects. Flagler First Condominiums, on E. Flagler between the Seybold Building and the Gusman Center (the last downtown theater still standing), was developed by Rok Enterprises. They painstakingly restored the 1923 structure to its former glory, breathing life back into the Corinthian columns from its days as the First National Bank of Miami.

Capitol Lofts, on NE 1st Avenue, is another high-quality renovation. Lopez guessed that if the developers had opted for tear-down and new construction, they could have built the project four times over — and "to the moon," thanks to no height limits or density restrictions.

He also spoke excitedly about the Shoreland Arcade on NE 1st Street, the only remaining historic arcade in downtown and a site close to Lopez's heart. He had his class at UM document the building and submit drawings to the Library of Congress for the Historic American Building Survey. The Arcade's gilded, cavernous hallway, tucked behind the subdued interiors of Soya & Pomodoro restaurant, was also the site of his wedding reception.

Lopez remains unequivocal in his view of urban development: "American cities



Downtown Miami, 1933: In right foreground is the First National Bank of Miami, painstakingly restored as today's Flagler First Condominiums.

Romer Collection, Miami-Dade Public Library

suffered through 50 years of Modernism, a cancer that destroyed traditional urban centers. There was a cultural backlash against all things traditional, but that's now changing." Solid materials have allowed Depression-era buildings to live long enough for our romance with them to rekindle.

Like a lot of buildings from the last half of the 20th century, the products of our condo boom seem so transitory in both their usefulness and appeal that the public's relationship to them in 100 years will be uncertain.

If Lopez is right, those buildings left standing could become dated relics from a period of overarching hubris, when short-term gains blinded our vision for the future of Miami's urban center.

For his part, Lopez is going to keep reminding us that it is possible to build on the past without burying it.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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REAL ESTATE MARKET UPDATE



23 | Biscayne Bay

La Playa Properties continues to be the leader in South Florida's real estate with over \$200 million dollars in sales in 2011. LPP continues to expand their business relationships with buyers and sellers from all continents. Their business portfolio includes assisting investors offering them exceptional property management services.

BEST DEALS



WIND DOWNTOWN MIAMI
350 S MIAMI AV # 3403
OFFERED FOR SALE AT \$295,000



BENTLEY BAY MIAMI BEACH
540 WEST AV # 1613
OFFERED FOR SALE AT \$415,000

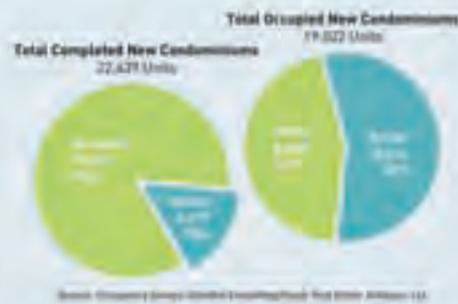


OCEANSIDE MIAMI BEACH
5555 COLLINS AV # 10V
RENT: \$1900 FOR SALE: \$369,000

DOWNTOWN MIAMI

Downtown Miami is business-ready and merchant friendly. Home to more than 71,000 full-time residents and almost 150,000 daytime workers, this urban residential neighborhood and commerce center has the pedestrian and commuter traffic businesses need to thrive.

SOURCE: MIAMI DDA



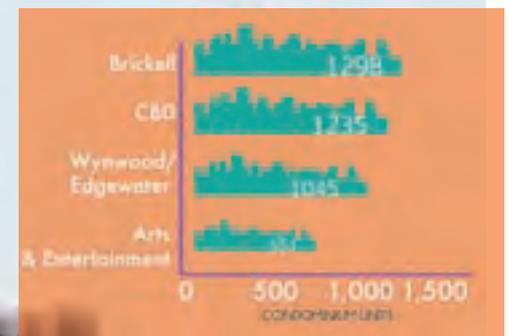
Melo DEVELOPER

23 Biscayne Bay has topped off in only eight months after commencing construction. Melo Group started construction in June 2011 and only after 8 months, they have reached the last floor of the construction; La Playa Properties, the Exclusive Broker, launched sales in March 2011, and after a record time of 7 months we are 100% SOLD. 23 Biscayne Bay was the first crane to go up in Dade County after nearly three years of the condo crash. Miami's Condo market is the first to come around at full speed in the nation. Occupancy May 2012.

Residential Stats Downtown Trade Area

Residential Units (Total)	34,475
Population (2011 Estimate)	72,500
Median Age	40
Per Capita Income	\$32,500
College Educated	53%

Source: CSRI | Focus Real Estate Advisors



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LA PLAYA
PROPERTIES

The Brickells: Miami's First Land Barons

A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami

By Paul George
Special to the *BT*

The Brickell family came to the untamed wilderness of Miami at the outset of the 1870s. They quickly purchased and homesteaded land south of the Miami River until, by the 1890s, they possessed thousands of acres of the subtropical hammock and pineywoods that comprised the Miami of yesteryear.

The Brickells also traded with the Seminoles and Miccosukees at their

Indian trading post near the mouth of the river on the south bank.

When Henry M. Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway entered Miami in 1896, the Brickells saw their holdings dramatically increase in value. By the early 1900s, they were wealthy, having begun to sell and develop their properties. The home seen here was emblematic of that wealth.

Located in the 500 block of Brickell Avenue near the warm waters of Biscayne Bay, on the site of today's Icon Brickell condominium complex, this neo-Classical



Photo courtesy of Miami News Collection, HistoryMiami, #1982-023-4

mansion stood until the mid-1960s, when, abandoned and decaying, it was razed.

The home had served the large, clan-nish Brickell family for more than 50 years. Seen here, in this circa 1905 photograph, are several Brickell siblings and a few unidentified men standing and sitting around and above the patriarch, William Brickell. Missing from the photograph is

Mary Brickell, who was the most prominent member of the family.

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

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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545 NE 59TH STREET

Magnificent and architecturally stunning 1925 2-story Old Spanish home on double lot in Morningside. 4-bedroom main house and two 1-bedroom guest houses. Original wood floors, fire-place, beamed volume ceilings, large wood/granite/stainless steel eat-in kitchen, formal dining room, foyer, library. Fenced yard with 8-foot privacy wall. Property has much potential as it is residential on tree-lined street in gated neighborhood but zoned for office. In the Upper Eastside and close to shops and restaurants. **\$1,095,000**



790 NE 72ST

Beautiful 1927 Mediterranean Revival two-story corner pool home w/separate guest house. Located in the Historic Bayside neighborhood. Featured in films, TV and print ads. Restored to perfection. Gourmet kitchen w/top of the line appls including Sub-Zero, Thermador, Fisher Paykel, and Ann Sacks/Herbeau sinks and faucets. Grand living areas. Full-size generator in backyard. Double French doors lead to lush gardens which enhance this gated 10,000SF property. Walk to bay and Upper Eastside restaurants and shops. **\$1,250,000**



5600 N. BAYSHORE DRIVE

Mid-Century Modern home featured on HGTV, numerous print ads and photoshoots in guard-gated Morningside Historic District, across the street from the bay and in the heart of the hot Upper Eastside. Black terrazzo flooring, one-of-a-kind sculptural den, indoor koi pond, walls of glass to allow lots of natural light, all built around screened-in slate pool area for indoor/outdoor tropical living. High-end gourmet kitchen w/concrete flrs. Luxurious master suite w/spa-like bthrm. Home is a work of modern art. **\$1,395,000**



3141 N. BAY ROAD

Estate Sale! Mid-Century Modern home located next to celebrities' mansions on most prestigious street in Miami Beach. Oversized 10,533SF lot with an additional gated entrance through Alton Road. Foyer, large great room, formal dining room w/adjoining kitchen, Florida room and porch w/expansive garden views. Great split floor plan, 4 spacious bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, 1-car garage + carport, gated for privacy. **\$900,000**



Kimberly O'Mahony
 EWM Realtors

419 Arthur Godfrey Road
 Miami Beach, FL 33140
 305.970.6000 (cell)
 305.674.4143 (office)
 305.672.1499 (fax)



BizBuzz

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

By Pamela Robin Brandt
BT Contributor

By now, one month into 2012, you've paid off your holiday bills and implemented all your New Year's resolutions about getting your life together. (Right...) Or else you've barely managed to get over your New Year's Eve hangover.

That's why, despite all this month's famous holidays — Valentine's Day (2/14), Presidents' Day (2/20), Super Bowl Sunday (2/5), Cow Milked While Flying in an Airplane Day (2/18, and no, we didn't make it up), plus more — we think all of February should just be designated this way: But Seriously, Now We Really Mean It Month.

Fortunately, *BT* advertisers have deals and discounts to make all this month's special events and improvement projects doable, even if your budget and/or motivation levels are low.

Have you resolved to get your taxes done before the last minute this year, but even the mention of the dread T-word, deluging you from TV commercials, has you freaked? Let the specialists at new advertiser **TaxStation** (286 NE 2nd Ave., 305-798-3289) take over. Their mission is to maximize your return in a relaxed atmosphere. Until March 24, mention the *BT* or bring in this issue's ad coupon for a \$10 discount on services completed at the office. Or for those wanting the online service, go to TaxStationToday.com and file simple returns for free.

Getting your life together means planning ahead for any possibilities. But

extended medical care is a scary subject for most of us, which is why only about 3% of adults have a private, long-term care policy, according to the LTC and life insurance specialists at **Jeff Hackmeier & Associates** (12000 Biscayne Blvd. #407, 305-893-4488). The bad news: Carriers are increasingly pulling out of this market, and those that stay are increasing their rates. The good news: Jeff Hackmeier and his staff know all the current options.

People do tend to put off dental work, too. But February's special from **José D. Alvarez, DMD, and Associates** (3483 NE 163rd St., 305-948-5002) for full-arched, fixed-acrylic teeth, screw-retained with six implants, makes this a good month to improve your smile. The bridge's \$9890 price isn't valid with other offers or insurance.

For those seeking a spiritual boost but unable to attend weekend worship services, First United Methodist Church (400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-371-4706; free parking on the church's northwest side) invites all to Wednesday night Prayer & Praise meetings at 6:30 p.m. The informal gathering features singing, praying, and a brief Bible study about Sunday's scripture.

If it's your living situation that needs improvement, take a look at the waterfront, four-bedroom Belle Meade house in this issue's ad from new advertiser **Peter Goldsmith** (305-751-7185). With everything from a gourmet kitchen to a black stone pool and spa on the marble terrace bordering the 48-foot seawall, it's the very definition of a dream home.

Buyers of the above paradise won't need new flooring, but owners of homes that do will want to know that **Endura Hardwood Flooring** (1942 Tigertail Blvd., Dania, 954-410-3981)

just made a major purchase of exotic Sapele hardwood and is selling it at huge discounts. Call Charlie for details.

For a firm that fixes and maintains just about everything from floor to ceiling, call new advertiser **South Florida Restoration** (305-651-9660), a licensed general contractor in business since 1985. It's unusual in these parts to find businesses operating that long, but SFR's handymen have something even rarer: an old-fashioned work ethic instilled by owner Jay Pilch. His crews arrive at jobs on time and do them right. They even clean up when they're done!

To renew your home sometimes all that's needed are a few striking décor accents. Your home will compare to the most fashionable today with the brand-new contemporary furniture designs in walnut finish — very popular currently — at **Beau Living** (8101 Biscayne Blvd., 305-751-1511). The showroom has new leather bedroom designs, too. And all new collections have a 15% discount this month.

Welcome to new advertiser **Herval Furniture USA**, one of Miami's leading producers and distributors of contemporary and classic Brazilian furniture. Two



showrooms (1730 Biscayne Blvd., 305-377-1221 and 2666 NE 189th St., 305-935-4506) make browsing convenient for customers throughout *BT* territory.

Meanwhile **The Collection German Furniture** (15400 Biscayne Blvd.) announces the opening of its nearby new showroom/warehouse at 15455-R W. Dixie Hwy. Be sure to call (305-944-3727), as browsing through the unique stock of handcrafted furniture, made in Germany, is by appointment only.

You never know what you may find at the weekly Tuesday auctions at **Wilton Theatre Auction Gallery** (1444 NE 26th St., Wilton Manors, 954-530-4396), which, in its 30 years in business, has staged items from a Rolls Royce to a life-size Ronald McDonald figure. An informative interview with owners Bonnie and Paul Stanford is featured in February's *Plantation Town Times* (www.plantationtowntimes.com).

There are new surprises at **360 Furniture Consignments** (18340 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-627-3148) every day but Sunday, when the clean, uncluttered showroom of quality used and new

Continued on page 32

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Miami**

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off** Tax Preparation
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Jeff Rose

Broker Associate

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\$379,000

40FT DOCK
SPACE INCLUDED

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

EASTERN SHORES TH 2 BR 2 1/2 BTH

Great opportunity-Renovated 2 story townhome. 40FT boat dock space included. Direct Intracoastal location and views. 24/7 guard-gated. Just minutes to the beaches of Sunny Isles. Pet friendly building.



\$599,000

NORTH MIAMI

SANS SOUCI ESTATES

Updated 2 story waterfront 5 Bedroom / 3 Bath home with 2 car garage located in Eastern Shores. Large dock for upto 80FT yacht. Wood and marble floors thru-out. Large Master suite with sitting room, gym and a large terrace facing the water. Ocean Access - No fixed bridges



\$629,000

NORTH MIAMI

KEYSTONE POINT 3 BR 3 BTH

Great Opportunity - Owner will hold first mortgage with 30% down. 6% interest only for 5 years. Updated waterfront pool home with 75ft on the water. Private Boat Dock - Direct Ocean Access. No fixed bridges to Haulover Inlet. One car garage.



\$499,000

SHORT SALE A/P

SUNNY ISLES BEACH

POINCIANA ISLAND 3 BR 2 1/2 BTH

Totally renovated waterfront townhome located on private island in guard-gated community just across from the ocean. Private deeded dock space included behind unit. Ocean Access with no fixed bridges to Haulover Inlet. 1 Car garage attached. A must see!!



\$1,450,000

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

EASTERN SHORES 5 BR 3 BTH

Beautiful updated 2 story waterfront home with 2 car garage and dock space for upto 80 FT yacht. Wood and marble floors thru-out. All new marble patio and remodeled pool. Large master suite with sitting room. Ocean access and no fixed bridges to Haulover.

Eastern Shores - Direct Wide Water



\$2,995,000

5 Bedroom / 7 1/2 Bath
Plus Maids Quarters

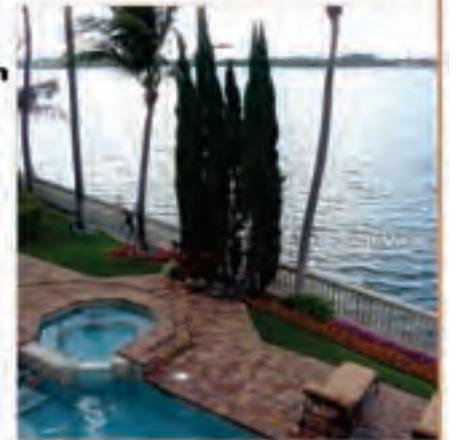
Over 6,300 SF LA

220FT Waterfront

80FT Dock Space

Ocean Access

No Fixed Bridges
to Haulover Inlet



Large point lot waterfront Mediterranean style home in guard-gated community. Over 6,300 sq ft under air. 5 bedrooms plus maids quarters and 7 1/2 bath. 220 FT of waterfront. High Ceilings, Game Room, Wet Bar and Large Master Suite. Heated pool & Spa. Great Wide Water Views.

Biz Buzz

Continued from page 30

furniture (plus art and accessories) is closed. The ever-growing business also offers estate sale and auction services.

Getting your own new business off the ground, or a flagging old business turned around, is a cinch with help from new advertiser **PrintDocs** (1564 Ives Dairy Rd., 305-999-0245). This family firm handles everything from custom digital printing to Internet marketing and web design. Mention the *BT* for 15% off your first printing order.

If one of your resolutions was to lose weight, make tracks to **Hiperfit** (7120 Biscayne Blvd., 305-762-6600) on February 11 at 11:00 a.m. for the free seminar "How to Eat to Lose Weight." Founder and fitness champion Jeff Seidman will discuss how the personal-training facility made the meals for Mark Wylie, one of the biggest winners (129 pounds lost) on TV's *Biggest Loser*.

Now, that made us darned hungry. How 'bout some free food, courtesy of **Gauche Ranch Grill Boutique** (7251 NE 2nd Ave. #113, 305-751-0775)? On February 10, the purveyor will host a tasting of wood fire/charcoal grilled grass-fed beef at Iron Side Café, a few blocks away at 7600 NE 4th Ct. Call the Ranch for an invite.

No invitations are necessary for February's free Saturday wine tastings at **Laurenzo's Italian Center** (16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381). Drop in from 1:00-5:00 p.m. on February 4 for wines from small-family Argentine wineries, on February 11 for artisan Chilean wines, and February 18 for organic wines from Argentina.

Just opened, in the space formerly housing Chef Allen: a classic New York Italian-American family-style eatery, **Luca Bella** (19088 NE 29th Ave., 305-792-2222). Stop by to welcome Mickey (former owner of Matteo's in Hallandale Beach) and his family to the neighborhood, and mention the *BT* for 15% off your check.

Don't forget your hungry pets. Keep them healthy as well as happy with this month's offer from **By Nature** dog and cat food: Buy a 3.5-4 lb. bag and receive a rebate coupon for your money back. In other words, the bag is free. For a list of local outlets featuring By Nature's all-natural and organic products, consult www.bynaturepetfoods.com.

More news for animal lovers: **The Humane Society of Greater Miami** (16101 W. Dixie Hwy.) is the recipient charity of this year's Original Miami

Beach Antique Show, at the Miami Beach Convention Center till February 6. Save \$5 off show admission and help animals by entering the promo code HSGM at www.originalmiamibeachantiqueshow.com. Additionally, all funds from a February 5 raffle will go to Founding Fosters, which opens temporary shelter homes for animals. For raffle tickets, contact Ricki Diamond at ricki@humanesociety.org or 305-749-1814.

Just in time for Valentine's Day, certified hypnotist and life coach **Catherine Patrick** offers "Attracting Love," a workshop on February 12, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at her cozy cottage/sanctuary The Chi Spot (565B NE 69th St., 786-277-9835). The event, she says, "is for independent single women who want to get off the treadmill of meeting deadbeat guys and attract a long-lasting love."

For a Valentine's Day that truly lasts all day (any weekday through April 6, actually), treat yourself and a friend to a spa package at new advertiser **Turnberry Isle Resort** (reservations: 305-933-6930). The \$242 package includes two 50-minute massages, lunch at Cascata Grille, all-day pool privileges, and valet parking.

Though a romantic dinner is the classic way for couples to celebrate Valentine's Day, it's too often less about romance than about jacked-up prices. But not at **Trio on the Bay** (1601 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1234), where February 14th's "Treat for Two" dinner special (shared appetizer, two entrées, shared dessert, and a bottle of wine) is only \$105 per couple. An à la carte menu is also available.

Every day looks like a holiday at the always festively decorated **Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus** (1085 NE 79th St., 305-754-8002), but genial host Alex Richter will be going all out on February 14, with a repeat of last year's wildly popular \$95 "Exotic Valentine's Menu" for two.

Valentine's Day brings two different special dinner menus at perennial Italian-American favorite **Mama Jennie's** (11720 NE 2nd Ave., 305-757-3627). One is in Mama's new outdoor dining garden. Another, those in a retro "That's Amore" mood, is in the old-fashioned dining room. Reservations are required. And on Super Bowl Sunday, Mama's will be throwing a party with 2-4-1 draft specials, giveaways, and more.

Tuna's (17860 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-932-0630) gets the jump on V-Day with a deejayed "Red Party" on February 11 at 11:00 p.m. Oh, and there's a prize for the hottest red dress. On the day itself, diners



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FAULTS

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can choose from two lavish five-course-plus-champagne Silver or Gold dinner packages, for \$100 or \$150 per couple.

To get yourself looking good for the big night, take advantage of the Valentine's Day special offered by Bill Makley at artsy and award-winning **Control Salon & Gallery** (2814 N. Miami Ave., 305-573-6910). Bring a friend for a cut and style and get half off on your own.

Body Well Therapy (888-929-9355, www.bodywelltherapy.com), whose licensed mobile massage therapists travel to you, has two special offers for *BT* readers: Valentine's Day gift certificates for 10% off, or 15 free extra minutes per person for Valentine's Day appointments that are booked at least five days in advance.

Pamper yourself with hair, nails, or skin/body treatments and, at the same time, help less pampered people this month at new advertiser Salon Dahlia (9472 NE 2nd Ave., 305-290-0028). Every Monday in February, the friendly salon is donating 20% of sales to Smile Train, a charity providing free cleft palate surgery to needy children throughout the world.

Inner Balance Mind Body Studio (12579 Biscayne Blvd., 786-383-3088) has February offers for both children and adult *BT* readers. A kids' yoga program, on Fridays from 4:00-5:00 p.m., will kick off on February 10 with a complimentary open-house class. And on February 11, there's a Yoga Arm Balance and Inversion workshop. Price is \$40, but mention the *BT* for 10% off.

Need something striking to wear? **Joseph Ribkoff**, the Canadian ladies apparel manufacturer responsible for dressing Miss America in her travels, has just added a new Miami outlet to their family of fine boutiques that carry the brand: On My Own, at 18060 Biscayne Blvd., 305-932-0032).

How Presidents' Day came to be associated with getting the year's best car deals we don't know. We do know where to get a great car, though: new advertiser **Prestige Imports** (14780 Biscayne Blvd., 877-275-7737). The company has served luxury-vehicle owners for more than three decades, and is the country's top-selling Audi dealership.

To warm up for the Dominican Republic's Independence Day (2/27), **Club Tipico Dominicano** (1344 NW 36th St., 305-634-7819) invites readers to a pre-celebration concert on February 18, featuring famed Dominican merengue singer Fernandito "El Mayimbe" Vilalona. Tix are now on sale.

For classical music lovers, February brings several opportunities to catch

performances of **Florida Grand Opera**, now celebrating its 71st season. At the Arsht Center, *Rigoletto* will be presented February 3, 5, 8, and 11. *La Rondine* takes the stage on February 1 and 4. For all you *BT* readers up Aventura way, catch *Rigoletto* at the Broward Center on February 16 and 18. Later this spring: *Romeo e Juliette*. Purchase all three productions and get 10% off single-ticket prices. Go to fgo.org for info and to order a free preview CD.

Those who enjoy non-classical classics (marches, big band music, more) should get on over to the Gwen Margolis Community Center (1590 NE 123rd St.) at 2:00 p.m. on February 19 for a performance by the **North Miami Community Concert Band** — which features some very talented musicians, including *BT* contributor Cathi Marro. There's a mere \$5 donation for adults, and kids are free.

The fifth annual "Fall in Furniture Love" art event at **Scan Design** (3025 NE 163rd St., 305-944-8080) isn't until March 3. But February 18 is the last day to submit entries — your own artistic interpretations of furniture love — for a chance to win a Scan leather chair, plus have your work displayed in showrooms and ads. For more info and entry forms: www.fallinfurniturelove.com.

And now, arguably the most important February holiday: my birthday! We'd never be so crass as to hint that you celebrate by sending a pizza to the *BT* offices, but should it seem like a great idea, it'd be easy with three new pizzeria advertisers this month.

At **Best Friends** (4770 Biscayne Blvd., 786-439-3999) pies are brick-oven beauties, but the unusual burgers, hefty half-pounders that come stuffed rather than topped, are so tempting it's hard to choose.

At **Slices Pizza & Pasta** (13750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-5588), choosing isn't necessary. As at a rodizio joint, circulating servers offer several dozen varieties of pizza (plus ten pastas) on an all-you-can-eat basis, till diners cry uncle.

And the newest pizzeria of the trio, **Pizza Fiore** (9540 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-1924) has a familiar address: the space occupied for ages by the Village Café. If the name sounds familiar, it should. The original PF was a Miami pie pioneer back in the mid-1990s, when quality pizza was nearly as rare here as snow. To all three, a warm — or rather, hot and cheesy — welcome.

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

ONE QUESTION Could Make All the Difference...

When you're not sure what to do, whether it's a bank loan or an insurance claim or a home foreclosure or an accident or serious injury... When you're uncertain, you need expert legal advice.

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No escape from the wired world?

Lucky for us. This is Miami. Relief is as close as Biscayne Bay.

By Tristram Korten



BT photos by Tristram Kortzen and Steve Rhodes

Four miles offshore the water is stippled by a light breeze, but otherwise it is so flat and clear I can see the bottom of Biscayne Bay beneath my kayak. I float equidistant between the mainland and my destination, Elliott Key.

Both are mere pencil-thin ribbons of green on the horizon, too far to make out anything distinct or specific. Often, as I stare straight ahead, the land melts into the water in a shimmery haze. Other than my kayaking partner, Steve, there is no one within sight. It's unnerving to sit a few inches above the water and not see land (or at least not see it very well) or any evidence of other humans. But it's also the reason we're out here.

And at that point in my reverie, Steve points. Before I see anything, I hear it — a loud *huff*, like a bull's snort, and I see the gleaming gray back of a large bottlenose dolphin arc out of the water, followed by another...and another.

They are not far, maybe 30 feet away, so close I can see the ripple of their muscles as they flick their tails. They are clearly not scared of us. Why should they be? We're nothing more than two slow-moving, slightly nervous mammals clumsily maneuvering through their watery world. As the big beasts — they must be 500 pounds or more — swim around us, I feel smaller and even more insignificant, which is also the point of being out here.

Most days are a blur and hum of noise and information. I read and write and listen and talk throughout the day. I drive over the causeways, up or down Biscayne Boulevard to the store, the gas station, the post office. At day's end I answer my two little girls' questions and listen to their stories. Then to relax, I stare at a TV show or movie as people talk, run to the store and the gas station, all while getting shot at.

But then, when night has descended and the kids are in bed, the computer and TV are off, and the cell phone is slumbering — when I've put down the magazines and books, when nothing is hijacking my attention and I've crawled into bed, I almost always rifle through a series of fantasies I keep on mental file to ease me into sleep.

Invariably they involve me in a very lonely setting. Sometimes I'm in a teepee on a frozen tundra as a snowstorm blows in. Sometimes I'm by the fire on the beach of an unpopulated tropical island. And

sometimes I'm making my way through a desolate urban rubble after some cataclysmic event, war, or natural disaster.

This is the only time of day when my thoughts are truly my own, my mind not contaminated by anyone else's words or images. Cranked up and humming, my imagination has the universe at its disposal.

Forget teepees, I could be lying in a cushioned hammock sipping champagne by my seaside mansion. I could conjure up a harem of women feeding me grapes and massaging my temples with exotic oils. I could imagine a life of tremendous fame or power.

Instead I choose the apocalypse. What the hell?

Apparently solitude is the more precious commodity for me these days. Probably for you too. It's certainly at odds with the *wiredness* of our lives, the ubiquity of communication, and the expectation that we will talk at a moment's notice with anyone who wants us to. But the saving grace is that we live in Miami, and the wildly remote is a lot closer than we think. All you need is something to float on, and in my case, an indulgent spouse.

Biscayne Bay stretches along our coastline for approximately 35 miles. Many of us stare out at it for a good part of the day, or drive over it heading to or from Miami Beach. And of course we take it for granted. We shouldn't. The bay is what gives Miami its shine. It's what gives us all that waterfront on which to build our homes.

No matter what your income level, you can live on or near a huge body of glistening water that, despite being located in a major metropolitan area, is clean enough that you see dolphins and sharks swimming in it.

Researchers have divided the bay into three sections. The North Bay, beginning at Dumfoundling Bay in Aventura, is part of the urban landscape, bordered by the mainland and the barrier islands of Sunny Isles and Miami Beach. Central Bay runs from Key Biscayne's Rickenbacker Causeway south to Blackpoint Park, in Homestead. And South Bay continues south to Card Sound.

The southern two-thirds of the bay is the protected area known as Biscayne National Park. Elliott Key, where we planned to visit, is the northernmost of the Florida Keys, part of the same chain of islands that stretches down to Key West.

.....
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Although I've gone on a few overnight kayaking excursions, I'm not a thorough planner. I'll look at a map and a weather forecast, then wing it from there. I suppose I feel that true diligence might lead to discouragement — too many contingencies. In this case, we looked at the map, picked Blackpoint to launch from, and figured we'd aim for the part of Elliott Key where the park ranger's station is located.

We arrived at the marina later than we wanted on a Tuesday morning, with two sit-on-top ocean kayaks and a car full of gear. We brought the requisite tent, sleeping bags, knives, along with provisions for at least three days — Starbucks instant coffee, sugar, salt, avocados, oranges, bananas, fresh rolls, tins of smoked oysters, energy bars, wine, and some ribeye steaks. The nice thing about kayaking is that, unlike hiking, you can bring real food. No dehydrated stew reconstituted in a foil pouch for us.

We froze bottles of water the night before to scatter on the floor of the



BT photo by Silvia Ros

We picked Blackpoint to launch from, and figured we'd aim for the part of Elliott Key where the park ranger's station is located.

kayaks, where they would melt slowly. That way they would stay nice and cool to drink on the journey. It's a clever trick and I was feeling pretty proud of myself until we started packing the waterproof bags we would stuff inside the kayaks.

What we forgot was almost as essential as what we hadn't — any kind of cooking utensils, plates, mugs for the coffee, a wine opener, and matches. Most important, Steve forgot the rum. But I've learned over the years that while

it's nice to aim for perfection, it's more important to soldier on, rum or no rum.

Both of us had been distracted. I blame the symptoms of the modern life we were

Continued on page 38

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Continued from page 36

trying to remedy with this trip. The morning I left, I had to get my oldest ready for school, finish a couple of pressing e-mail messages, and return a phone call before loading the car. When I arrived at Steve's house, he was on the phone in some protracted business negotiation.

"The world is too much with us," Wordsworth wrote. "Getting and spending we lay waste our powers." Forgetting the matches was simply a casualty of our overworked minds. No matter, we scrounged around the car and found a half-empty lighter. "Little we see in Nature that is ours." I wanted to prove the old poet wrong.

Once the waterproof bags were inside the kayak, we were ready to launch. In the cockpit, we had our lifejackets, four bottles of water, two oranges, and an energy bar. But before carrying the kayaks to the water, I performed what can only be considered a small miracle in the context of modern life — I turned off my cell phone and put it in the car's glove box.



Other than my kayaking partner there is no one within sight. It's unnerving to sit a few inches above the water and not see land.

Then we hauled the kayaks down the ramp, slid them into the dark green water, and eased into our seats. The first push of my paddle set me gliding easy

and free into the mangrove channel. As we nosed out to the bay, the magnitude of the trip revealed itself. We were heading eight miles across open water and

had no idea where we would land. I told Steve we'd be able to see the park ranger station as we drew close, but I really had no idea what we'd see.



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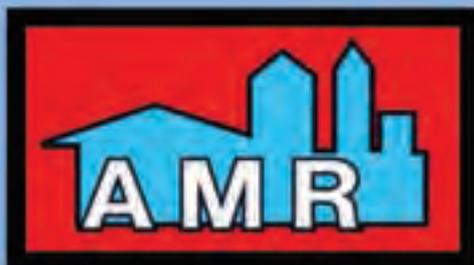
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Thirty minutes into our paddling, and it dawned on me that I'd be in this same position, sitting with my knees bent, for the rest of the day. And although I've done this dozens of times, I couldn't help wonder whether this was sustainable. That's all it took.

Suddenly I began to question everything — was that an ache in my back? Was my shoulder cramping? A panic akin to claustrophobia at the possibility that I would never get comfortable flickered across my mind. Four or five hours of this? Really? I had to calm down. This was just my brain playing tricks on me. I had to find my rhythm. I had to embrace the journey.

A few deep breaths later and I was able to make my motions more instinctual. Whatever discomfort I was feeling faded from my overt consciousness. I pushed and pulled on the paddle and felt the kayak shoot forward, I concentrated on just feeling — the sun on my cheeks, the light breeze, the occasional splash of



We couldn't see anything like a ranger station. So we set course for a horizontal line that was so straight it could only be manmade.

cool water on my arms and legs.

Talking to Steve helped. We paddled next to each other and chatted,

maybe for an hour, maybe for hours. I lost track. Eventually we both realized that talking slowed us down. We had

to make sure we arrived with enough time before sunset to pitch the tent and start the fire. So we drifted apart and concentrated on paddling. That's when the seclusion I fantasized about became a distinct reality.

"Solitude is out of fashion," writes Susan Cain, author of a new book titled *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*.

"Our companies, our schools, and our culture are in thrall to an idea I call the New Groupthink, which holds that creativity and achievement come from an oddly gregarious place. Most of us now work in teams, in offices without walls, for managers who prize people skills above all else."

"But," she continues, "research strongly suggests that people are more creative when they enjoy privacy and freedom from interruption." She even debunks that pillar of the corporate strategy session: brainstorming. Citing various studies, Cain states that this "is one of the worst possible ways to stimulate creativity." And that creativity leads to

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more innovation and more productivity.

Of course, that freedom from interruption is now a near impossibility, given the technological revolution. We make our way through whole tropospheres of cell phone and wireless signals. Between mobile smart phones and portable computers with wifi, we are constantly logged on. I'm not complaining. Having all the world's information at the ready has made life infinitely more convenient.

My problem is that I don't have the discipline to turn it off. Nor do many of us. I have a friend who was writing a book on deadline. He needed long blocs of uninterrupted time. But he had just bought a new smart phone, and the temptation to press a button and see the latest headlines or football scores was too strong. His solution was not only to turn the phone off, but to put it in his mailbox outside for days at a time. He met his deadline.

So I was definitely prepped and ready to appreciate the quiet around me as I bobbed on the water's surface. At



Ahead is a crescent of bone-white sand and a cove of gin-clear water. We'll share the beach with the noseums and the mosquitoes.

first I made an effort to think — to make plans and go over schedules, to ponder my relationships, the future, my ambitions, and what makes me happy. Then,

as I relaxed, I let the thoughts tumble freely. *I have a deadline next week. My daughter needs new shoes for school. It would be cool to see a shark.*

After that, in direct proportion to the exertion of paddling, I gradually stopped

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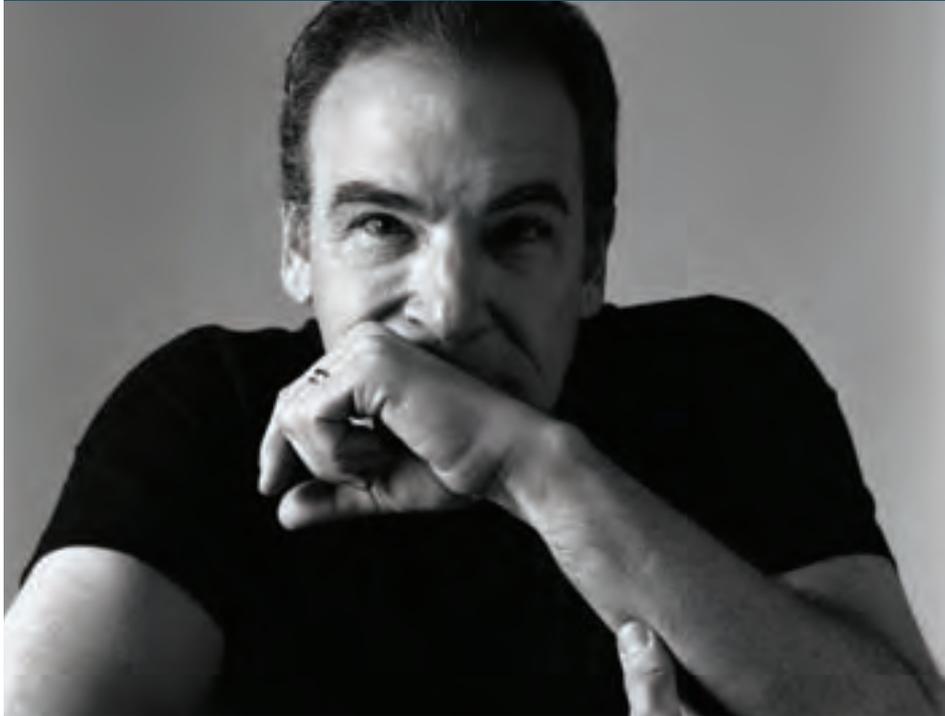
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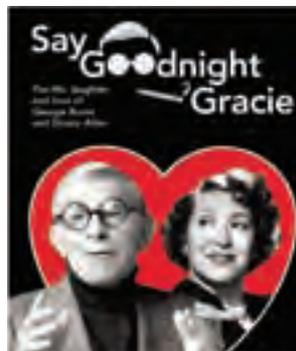
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Continued from page 42

having any thoughts at all. I breathed, grunted, paddled, felt, and watched. And my appreciation grew for this clear water and these mangrove islands that are, more or less, right outside my front door.

When Florida first began rising to the surface about 23 million years ago, and slowly formed into the peninsula it is today, there was no Biscayne Bay. Miami to Miami Beach was one solid land mass. But starting about 4000 years ago, gradually rising sea levels filled in low-lying areas, while barrier islands and sandbars formed to the east to create a natural bulwark against the open ocean.

The result is a vast, shallow lagoon carpeted by seagrass and coral reefs, fed by rivers and streams from the mainland, and cleaned by the rush of sea water. It became a natural nursery for lobsters, shrimp, and numerous species of fish. In days past, large herds of manatee would slowly make their way along the shore, grazing on mangrove



We have about an hour before sunset and we need to pitch the tent and collect firewood. We made the trip in about five hours.

leaves and turtlegrass. The bottom was thick with oyster beds.

There doesn't appear to be a conclusive history for the bay's name. Spanish explorers may have named it

after the Bay of Biscay in the north of Spain, or after some nobleman from the king's court. My favorite speculation is that it was named after a Spanish sailor known as El Biscayno

because he came from the Bay of Biscay, after he was shipwrecked in the bay in the 16th Century.

As Miami developed, the northern part of the bay suffered. Sewage was discharged directly into its waters, and the construction of seawalls and bridges inhibited water flow. Pollution from runoff became a problem all down the shoreline. Some of that has been remedied. A sewage treatment plant was built on Virginia Key in the mid-1950s to treat wastewater and pipe it out into the ocean.

Still, Biscayne Bay has been remarkably resilient over the years.

"It may not look the same as it did 50 or 100 years ago, but the water is clear the majority of year, and we do have a lot of seagrass," says Diego Lirman, marine biology and fisheries associate professor at University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science.

Over the past ten years, Lirman has been sampling the bay's bottom as part of his research. "At more than 90 percent of the sites we sample we find healthy seagrass and macroalgae and no

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February 2nd to 5th

The Last Summit

Directed by Juan Manuel Coto



Pablo Dominguez was a Priest that knew two things: he was going to die young and on a mountain. He gave his life to God and God accepted his offer. Yet, some say he is still alive. Pablo was known and loved by countless people and his influence lived on in them after his death. A box office success in its native Spain that remained in theaters for 6 months, *The Last Summit* shows the profound impact that this good Priest left on people and provokes in the viewer a challenging question: Could I live like this?

The Dark City

Directed by Ian Cheney



The film follows filmmaker and amateur astronomer Ian Cheney, who moves to New York City from Maine and discovers an urban sky almost completely devoid of stars. Posing a deceptively simple question—"What do we lose, when we lose the night?" The film leads viewers on a quest to understand how light pollution affects people and the planet. Weaving science with meditative sequences reflecting the human relationship to the sky, *The Dark City* shines new light on the meaning of the dark.

February 9th to 12th

Everyday Sunshine: The Story of Fishbone

Directed by Lev Anderson and Chris Metzler



Everyday Sunshine is a documentary about the band Fishbone, musical pioneers who have been tocking on the margins of pop culture for the past 25 years. Laurence Fishburne narrates this entertaining cinematic journey into the personal lives of this unique Black rock band from California and their quest to reclaim their musical legacy while debunking the myths of young Black men from urban America. **Featuring Fishbone, Flea, Ice-T, Gwen Stefani, Perry Farrell, Bob Forrest, Branford Marsalis, and George Clinton.**

Happy

Directed by Roko Belic



Does money make you happy? Kids and family? Your work? Do you live in a world that values and promotes happiness and well-being? Roko Belic, director of the Academy Award® nominated "Genghis Blues" now brings us *Happy*, a film that sets out to answer these questions and more. Taking us from the bayous of Louisiana to the deserts of Namibia, from the beaches of Brazil to the villages of Okinawa, *Happy* explores the secrets behind our most valued emotion.

February 16th to 19th

UltraSuede: In Search of Halston

Directed by Whitney Smith



A fascinating portrait of the rise and fall of America's first celebrity designer — Halston — the man who was synonymous with fashion in the 1970s, became the emperor of NYC nightlife and a staple of the famed Studio 54. Interviews with friends include Liza Minnelli, Diane Von Furstenberg, André Leon Anjelica Huston, Billy Joel and more round out this glittering evocation of the man who defined the most beautiful and decadent era of recent memory. A mesmerizing story about Sex, Drugs, Fame and Fabric.

Eames: The Architect & The Painter

Directed by Jason Cohn & Billy Jersey



The husband-and-wife team of Charles and Ray Eames are widely regarded as America's most important designers. Perhaps best remembered for their mid-century plywood and fiberglass furniture, the Eames Office also created a mind-bending variety of other products, from splints for wounded military during World War II to graphics, games, films and toys. Narrated by James Franco, *Eames: The Architect and the Painter* is the first film since their death dedicated to these creative geniuses and their work.

February 23rd to 26th

Crazy Horse

Directed by Frederick Wiseman



Acclaimed documentary filmmaker Frederick Wiseman explores one of the most mythic and colorful places dedicated to women, the *Crazy Horse* — a legendary Parisian cabaret club founded in 1951 by Alain Bernardin and home to the most famous nude dance show in the world. Over the years it has become the Parisian nightlife 'must' for visitors, ranking alongside the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre. Wiseman's impeccable eye finds the *Crazy Horse* a uniquely French showcase, with an emphasis on elegance, perfectionism and a grueling schedule (2 shows a night and 3 on Saturdays, 7 days a week). The film shows us the rehearsals for and the unveiling of the brand new show — *Désir* — created by the renowned French choreographer Philippe Decoufle.

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Continued from page 44

large dead spots within the bay. There is a healthy sponge population, a healthy coral population. It's a fairly stable and productive system."

Part of the reason for this, Lirman says, is the bay's hydrodynamics — the flow of ocean water flushes the bay regularly, so there are no long-term stagnant pools of high salinity.

And while the oyster population may have declined, the bay is still an important breeding ground for lobsters, shrimp, snapper, and in turn an important food source for tarpon, snook, sharks, and of course, dolphins.

I'm exhausted. The ache in my back is real this time, and we still have a long way to go. Suddenly Steve stops paddling and points, and that's when I hear, then see, the dolphins. As they dive and surface around me, I notice that one, the biggest, is shiny black. Another dives under my kayak. I stare down and see it turn and look straight up at me. Stunned, not knowing



The fire is lit now. Soon we'll cook our steaks to tender perfection on sharpened sticks. The setting sun dusts the clouds a soft orange.

what else to do, I wave hello.

After the dolphins leave, I see Steve rocking in his kayak. I scoot over and realize he's trying to take a bathroom

break. This fell into the category of things we didn't think through very well. Steve was trying to get on his knees so he could relieve himself over the side.

Not a good idea. The kayak capsized and Steve plunged into the water. He flipped the craft back over and was inside almost as fast as he was out of it.

We spent a few minutes collecting loose water bottles and the life vest, the only casualties of the spill. Learning from his experience, I opted to use one of the empty water bottles with about a 50-percent success rate. Eh, salt water is salt water.

We were close enough now to make out the shoreline but we couldn't see anything that looked like a ranger station. So we set course for a gray horizontal line that was so straight it could only be manmade.

An hour later we pull up to an empty dock. There is no ranger station. There are no boats. The dock leads to a dirt path in the brush. The dirt path leads nowhere. I, for one, am relieved. Our seclusion remains intact. It's too late to go hunting for the station now. We have about an hour before sunset and we need to pitch the tent and collect firewood.

Anyway, I'm fatigued. We made the trip in just about five hours. I estimate

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Continued from page 46

we traveled two miles an hour with a couple of rest periods to eat and go to the bathroom, not to mention the rescue mission after Steve capsized.

My legs are wobbly from lack of use. My shoulders burn. But right next to this dock is a crescent of bone-white sand and a cove of gin-clear water. The only ones we will share the beach with are the noseeums and the mosquitoes.

The fire is lit now, and we've cooked our steaks to tender perfection on sharpened sticks. The setting sun has dusted the clouds a soft orange. An egret stalks the shoreline to the north and we hear a splash as some fish jump, either in joy or fear.

Bugs come out to feast on us, prompting Steve to head inside the tent. I brave them for now, although they are intense. The swarm of mosquitoes is so dense that I hear their buzzing in a layered chorus of want and need. Some are close to my ears, others are a few inches out, others are out a few inches more, and so on. It gives their buzzing an unnerving depth.



The return trip will go beautifully. Dolphins will dance around us, and a school of ballyhoo will jump up and skitter across the water.

I move downwind of the fire's smoke to ward off the bugs, allowing me to finish the last of my wine and absorb more of the stillness. There is a slight glow from the

mainland. I can handle the bugs because this is a marvel not to be missed. To live in a big city and have this wilderness available seems almost unfair to the rest of the

world. It sure beats a walk in Central Park. I take a sip of my wine.

The return trip will go smoothly, beautifully in fact. Dolphins will dance around us again, and a school of ballyhoo will jump out of the water and skitter across the surface on their tails trying to flee some predator. We'll see an osprey with a silver fish in its talons, and a big lumbering manatee at the entrance to Blackpoint. I'll arrive home in due time, bitten and tired, happy to be in the cacophony of family again.

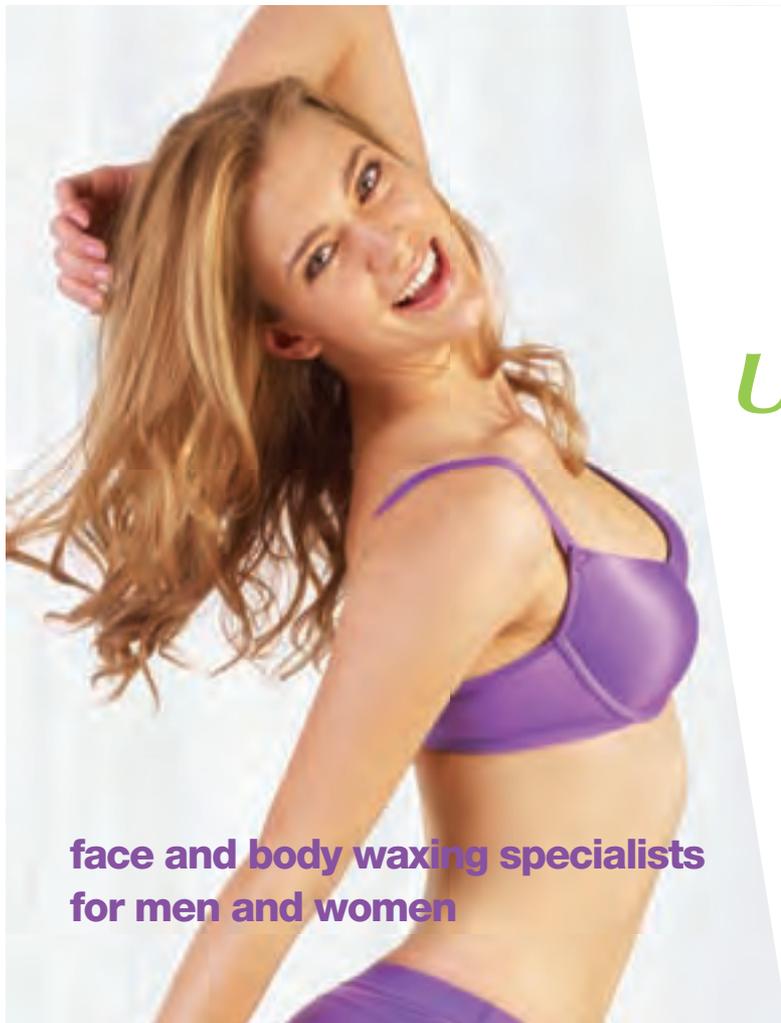
But right now I'm savoring this scene, drinking it up like the Cabernet in my glass. I recall those feelings of being the last man on a lonely planet. I want to have this feeling ready when I've climbed back into the hamster wheel and need some perspective.

"Without great solitude, no serious work is possible," Picasso said. That sounds about right.

I don't know how serious my work will be, but if I can keep this sense of peace alive, I might get a little more of it done.

This, of course, will require spending more time on the water.

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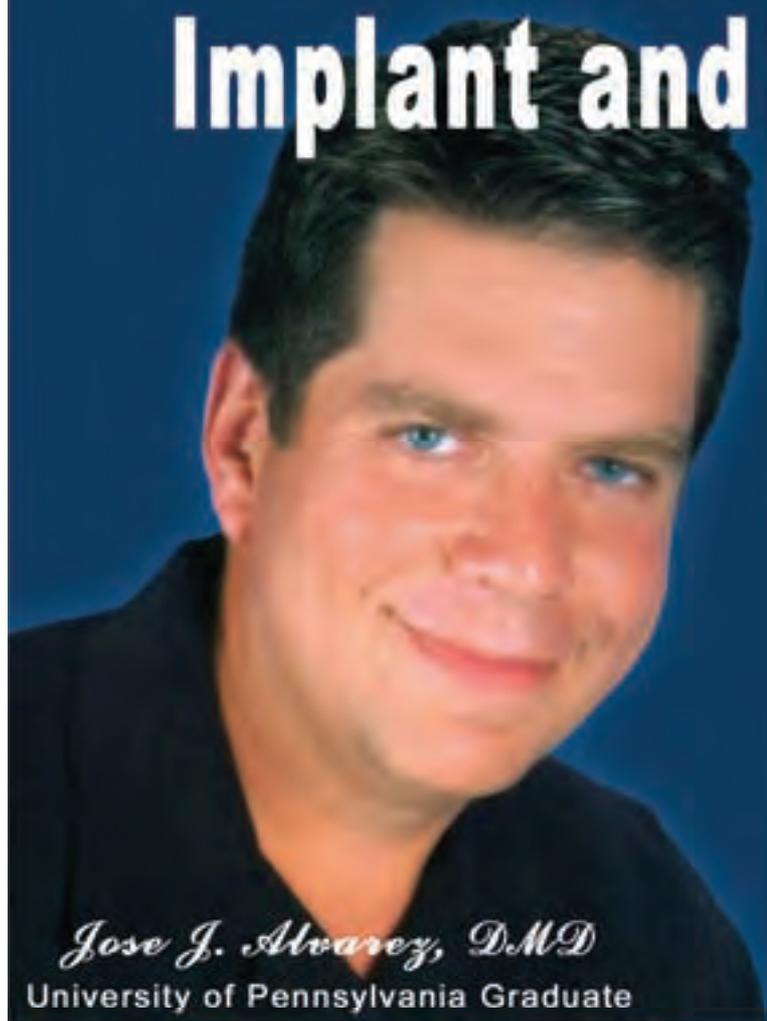
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Office Depot Out, Whole Foods In

Live south of Aventura? Tired of fighting traffic to get your organic arugula? Take heart!

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Senior Writer

The long wait and endless speculation is over. Whole Foods Market will open a new store in North Miami as early as this year.

“We don’t have a scheduled opening date, but we’re looking at late 2012 or sometime in the first half of 2013,” says Russ Benblatt, executive marketing coordinator for Whole Foods Market’s Florida region. “We’re really at the very early stages here.”

The Whole Foods store will be built at 12100-12190 Biscayne Blvd., where a 31,583-square-foot strip mall now stands. This past December the strip mall’s new

owner submitted site plans to the City of North Miami to demolish the 1967-era, two-story retail center (which housed Office Depot) and replace it with a 35,614-square-foot store, a 4036-square-foot bank, and a 196-space parking lot.

Jeff Tomlinson, a Realtor who specializes in selling waterfront homes in the area, believes the location is the perfect spot for a new Whole Foods store. “They couldn’t find a better location,” he says. “It’s where Aventura intersects with Bal Harbour.” The property is also in close proximity to Miami Shores, Biscayne Park, and the gated communities of Keystone Point and San Souci Estates.

Founded in Austin, Texas, in 1980, Whole Foods has 310 markets in the



Photo-illustration by Marcy Mock

United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. One such store already operates in Aventura at 21105 Biscayne Blvd., but getting there is difficult for most residents to the south, particularly during rush hour.

“Aventura is more gridlocked, so anybody who happens to be closer to the new store will [go there] rather than the store in Aventura,” says North Miami City Councilman Scott Galvin, an Arch

Continued on page 54

And the Bands Played On

It’s taken 32 years, but Churchill’s Pub finally has a claim to worldwide fame

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

In the sunny city of Transientville (a.k.a. Miami), restaurants come. Then, invariably, they go. The survival rate is even more grim for nightclubs and bars. So how do you make it to your 32nd birthday as a British pub in Miami? Not by bangers and mash alone.

Take Churchill’s as an example. The Little Haiti pub began in 1976 when owner Dave Daniels, now 71 years old, hopped the pond to stay in Miami, after many years of visiting. “I decided

I wanted to have a go at something in America,” Daniels says simply.

An economist from Leek (population 20,000, about 30 miles from Manchester), Daniels arrived here armed with a background in entertainment, a fair share of pluck, and a talent for booking bands.

In Britain, Daniels was booking bands even before he graduated from university with an economics degree. When he landed in Miami, he worked as a food manager aboard cruise ships and helped out at a friend’s bar. Once he obtained citizenship, he quickly opened not one but two bars: the Knotty Pine and Sir



BT photo by Silvia Ros

Churchill’s owner Dave Daniels: “It seems to be a consensus that we’ve had more bands perform here than anywhere.”

Winston Churchill’s Pub. Eventually he dissolved the Knotty Pine and operated only Churchill’s, as that place, despite

its location in a dicey part of town, had “better pool tables and more room.”

Continued on page 52

The Casino Effect

According to professor John Kindt, it is destructive — always and without exception

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Senior Writer

According to John Warren Kindt, a professor of business and legal policy at the University of Illinois, the City of Miami will experience a burst of economic activity if the Genting Group, a Malaysian-based corporation, wins the right to build Resorts World Miami, a \$3.8 billion casino complex where the Miami Herald building and Omni Mall now stand.

“Generally there is a bump lasting about two to three years,” says Kindt, who has studied casinos for two decades. “There are new construction jobs and a lot of activity as money is coming in.”

But Kindt warns that the bump won't last: “Once the project is completed, and slot machines come in, [the casino] takes everything.”

After that Miami will lose jobs as businesses within a 35-mile radius of casinos like Resorts World Miami see their profits shrink, says Kindt, thanks to local residents gambling away their wages, mainly at slot machines.

Crimes committed by gambling addicts will increase nine percent every year while sales-tax revenues decline. Casinos will hire vast armies of lobbyists and contribute generously to the campaigns of pro-casino politicians, enabling them to lower taxes charged on their slot machines and to rewrite legislation to fulfill their needs. Casinos, Kindt contends, may even get local government to seize private property through eminent domain, just as they have in Atlantic City and Las Vegas, in order to expand their operations.

“You are going to find that they [casino owners] will have the power,” says Kindt. “They change things to their benefit. Initially there will be all these restrictions, but they will drop away.

In most states [with casinos], it takes a couple of years.”

Kindt issued such dire warnings to a Miami audience this past December, during a forum on casino resorts. The gathering was hosted by the Beacon Council, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the economic development of Miami-Dade County.

A faculty member of the University of Illinois's School of Business since 1978, Kindt has written numerous papers on antitrust, tax, commercial, environmental, and international law. However, his main expertise is the economics of gambling — from Internet poker games to lavish casinos.

He became a critic of casinos in 1992, after the gambling industry invited him and other economists to analyze their proposal for a casino in downtown Chicago. The plan, which was supposed to create thousands of new jobs and a lucrative tax source, seemed wonderful at first, Kindt remembers. But upon closer examination by the economists, the casino industry's assertions were revealed to be wrong.

“This is all about taking money out of Florida — and not even back to Nevada, like most casinos, but to Malaysia.”

“Within ten days,” says Kindt, “all my economic colleagues determined that this was a con game.”

“Certainly Kindt is a wealth of knowledge on this issue,” says Brad Swanson, vice president of corporate and strategic policies for the Florida Chamber of Commerce, an organization that has opposed casino gambling for the past 20 years. Swanson fears Miami could become another Atlantic City, where



Courtesy Resorts World Miami

View from Biscayne Bay: Resorts World Miami would have at least 5000 slot machines, each of which, Kindt says, will generate a minimum of \$100,000 annually.

some 40 percent of independently owned restaurants closed down during the first decade of gambling in that city.

Frank Nero, executive director of the Beacon Council, is familiar with Atlantic City's 1978 foray into gambling. He was New Jersey's regional representative to the U.S. Department of Labor when casinos were being proposed.

As a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives, Nero backed the proposal, but eventually saw that the gambling industry's promises of prosperity fell short. The experience has given him an appreciation for some of Kindt's findings: “A lot of what he says is valid. I think some of the same kind of promises that I saw at Atlantic City are being replicated here.”

(The Beacon Council is officially neutral on casinos.)

Nero and Swanson are worried about a pair of bills sponsored by state Sen. Ellyn Bogdanoff (R-Fort Lauderdale) and state Rep. Erik Fresen (R-Miami) that would allow three “destination resorts” in

Florida counties where such complexes are approved by voters. The bills would also lower the taxes charged to existing and new operators of slot machines from 35 percent to 10 percent, legalize 24-hour gambling, and remove existing prohibitions on serving complimentary alcohol to casino patrons. Bogdanoff's bill also enables more pari-mutuels to obtain slot machines and other Las Vegas-style games such as blackjack or roulette.

If resort casinos are allowed to open their doors in Florida, Kindt predicts they will make local economies worse. “And not just worse, *enormously* worse,” he warns. “This is all about taking money out of Florida — and not even back to Nevada, like most casinos, but to Malaysia.”

Christian Goode counters that the Genting Group is not like American casino companies. Goode, who is president of Resorts World Miami, claims that Genting, which operates “destination resort” casinos in Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, England, and New York City, aims to attract wealthy tourists, not poor locals. “Resorts World Miami's revenue model is built on attracting new-to-market tourists from around the world to Miami,” Goode says. “All told, we expect approximately 70 percent of our guests to be from outside the local market.”

Indeed, if Resorts World Miami is anything like the Resorts World Sentosa in Singapore, the casino will be only part of the operation. That complex includes five resort hotels, a luxury condo, a Universal Studios theme park, the Maritime Experimental Museum and Aquarium, a marine-life park, more than 60 bars and clubs, 45 stores, and beachfront villas.

Current plans for Resorts World Miami include four luxury hotels with 5200 rooms, two condo towers with 1000 units, an expansive rooftop lagoon, a sandy beach, more than 50 restaurants and clubs, 700,000 square feet of convention meeting

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Churchill's

Continued from page 50

Churchill's was attracting a fair number of nighttime customers, when, in the 1980s, Daniels added one of those big, hulking satellite dishes so he could air soccer and rugby matches from the U.K. At the time, it was rare to have access to these games. Result: a *lot* more customers.

Meanwhile, the lunch business was going strong with traditional British fare, especially fish and chips. Churchill's also had a decent catering operation. Then Daniels decided to knock down a wall to make room for bands to play — and with that, a legend was born.

Some big names got their start at Churchill's, including Marilyn Mason, the Mavericks, and Social Distortion. U2 dropped by to watch a soccer championship. REM came to see local guitar star Charlie Pickett, a Churchill's regular.

Churchill's found its groove at 5501 NE 2nd Ave. and never lost it, even as the neighborhood and people's drinking habits changed over the years. "There were 20 bars within two miles of here 20 years ago," Daniels recounts. "Some

have become churches."

In a city that caters to the meticulously manicured and perfectly polished, where live-music venues long ago succumbed to DJs and lounges, Churchill's has survived and thrived as a hole-in-the-wall, sit-down-and-have-a-pint dive. The cover charge is cheap, you can order something called a Scottish Egg (a hard-boiled egg wrapped in sausage and breadcrumbs, fried, and eaten with hot mustard), and perhaps most important, new bands are always welcome.

And many a new band has taken the stage. Make that a *lot* of bands. Although it's not officially quantified, Daniels is pretty sure that more bands have played on Churchill's stage than any other venue — *on the planet*. By his reckoning, the number currently stands at 20,000-plus. And more bands are added to the calendar each month — some 20 to 30. "It seems to be a consensus," he says, "that we've had more bands perform here than anywhere."

Guitar-slinger and Boynton Beach attorney Charlie Pickett, who has played Churchill's for years, thinks it's feasible. "I wouldn't be too surprised if he's had more bands play there than anyone in the

world," Pickett says. "Especially if you consider Dave's been running music five nights a week all these years."

Pickett began at Churchill's in the early 1980s, and Daniels credits the popular and respected rocker with drawing higher-caliber bands to the stage.

For his part, Pickett has toured the country and says Churchill's is one of the best places to play anywhere in the U.S.A., mostly because Daniels is always at the helm as a competent and interested owner/operator. "I seriously see Dave as a figure from a Dickens novel," Pickett says. "He's the inn keeper, the pub keeper. You talk to him and it's low pressure. It's 'Let's have a bite, and let's talk.'"

Unlike some Dickens characters, though, Daniels is widely known for his generosity, says Pickett, adding that he's helped many people. One of them is Miami attorney Henk Milne.

Milne, like Pickett a musician in addition to being a lawyer, first played at Churchill's in the 1980s, before it had a stage. Once when Milne was broke, in what he calls his "impecunious years," he told Daniels he'd run out of money. "He pulled \$1000 out of

the till," Milne recalls. "I told him: 'I can't pay you back.' And Dave said, 'If you ever make a go of this thing, just remember me.'"

In addition to helping musicians survive, Churchill's has helped to shape Miami's music scene. Says Charlie Pickett: "The scene in 1981-83 would go from club to club, and some clubs would last for six or eight months. There were different club owners, and excluding Dave, they were usually erratic or in it for the short haul. Until Dave, there was no genuine stability. But once it started at Dave's, it stayed there. It was stable, and Churchill's became the home for original music."

Lauren "Lolo" Reskin is another Miami music-oriented business owner. She runs Sweat Records. Churchill's, she says, is "a beacon in Miami." In fact it guided her to current location. In late 2005, after Hurricane Wilma forced Sweat out of its previous location, Reskin moved into a temporary space behind Churchill's. Two years later she opened a bigger and better store next door to Churchill's.

Continued on page 57

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Casino Effect

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space, and a multimedia center.

So far Genting has invested more than \$400 million buying up 30 acres of property along the Biscayne Corridor, according to the *New York Times*. That figure includes the \$236 million Genting spent last year for 14 acres of waterfront land, including the *Miami Herald's* building.

Genting also paid \$206 million to gain control of the 900,000-square-foot Omni Mall, a 2300-space parking garage, and the adjoining 525-room Hilton hotel.

Aside from the land purchases, Genting has given \$10,000 each to political action committees aligned with Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez and Miami-Dade Commission Chairman Joe Martinez, the *Miami Herald* reported. Genting also funneled \$628,320 to the state Republican and Democratic parties and hired at least two dozen lobbying firms, the *New York Times* reported.

Goode assures that a "world-class destination-resort experience with a gaming amenity" will attract between two and three million people to Miami



Professor John Warren Kindt: "When billions of dollars are going into slot machines, those dollars are no longer buying cars, refrigerators, or even food and clothing."

each year. "We chose to invest in Miami because of what's already here," Goode says. "Our 'export business model' thrives because the resort is integrated within a city that already has strong

tourist appeal and a diverse business base. That will bring new tourists here — and bring them back." Goode, who previously worked at Genting's New York City operation, promises that

"destination resorts" based on Genting's model will create up to 100,000 new jobs.

Kindt argues that most of the jobs available to local residents will pay less than \$30,000 per year. He also scoffs at the notion that Genting's casino will attract large numbers of gamblers from abroad, particularly Asia: "Who in the world is going to fly from Malaysia to Miami when they have all those gambling operations in Hong Kong and Macau?"

More likely, Kindt says, is that Resorts World Miami will seek to keep as many tourism dollars as it can for itself. Since the resort's amenities and attractions will be subsidized by gambling revenue, restaurants and hotels outside of Resorts World Miami will find it difficult to compete. "They [destination resorts] will offer free meals and free hotel rooms," Kindt says. "The existing hotels can't compete with free."

Kindt also says that casino games such as poker, blackjack, and roulette are merely "window dressing" designed to draw in players. Slot machines, which include video poker and other electronic gambling machines, are at the heart of

Continued on page 55

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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR

Whole Foods

Continued from page 50

Creek East resident whose district includes the future Whole Foods site.

Benblatt says it was "customer demand" from North Miami residents that led to the development of a Whole Foods store in that city. "We read every e-mail that comes from customers, we look at every comment card," he says. "If there is demand for a store in a particular neighborhood, chances are it's going to do well."

The *BT* first reported in 2010 that Whole Foods was looking at sites in North Miami. "Originally, Whole Foods was going to go to the land across the street from LA Fitness," Tomlinson says, referring to the four-acre vacant parcel at 1850 NE 123rd St., owned by developer Irwin Tauber.

Instead Whole Foods opted to sign a 20-year lease with Biscayne Partners LLC on October 31. Biscayne Partners LLC is owned by Aria Mehrabi, co-founder of a Los Angeles-based real estate investment firm that claims a retail and office portfolio worth \$570 million.

Mehrabi didn't own the three-acre site where he plans to build a Whole Foods until July 22, when he bought it from Illinois-based Westway, Inc. for \$7 million. (The land and building combined assessed value was \$4 million last year, according to the Miami-Dade Property Appraiser.)

That same day, Mehrabi bought a 6681-square-foot plot of land behind the strip mall that includes a small, 70-year-old office building owned by David Caserta, a lobbyist and former North Miami city councilman, for \$545,000. (Caserta bought the property, located at 12121 NE 16th Ave., in 2003 for \$198,750.)

Four days later, Mehrabi secured a \$7 million mortgage from the U.S. National

Bank Association to pay for acquisition and development of the properties. (Mehrabi did not return phone calls for comment.)

Mehrabi's project is not the only Whole Foods planned within the Biscayne Corridor. MDM Development will build a 37,000-square-foot store on the ground floor of Met 3, a 440-unit condominium located at 200 SE 2nd St. in downtown Miami. That store is scheduled to open at the end of 2013, according to the *South Florida Business Journal*.

Galvin says the construction money spent redeveloping the property will help North Miami's economy. He admits, however, that he was surprised at how fast Mehrabi moved to evict the tenants on site after the city council approved the property's replatting on December 13.

The day after Christmas, Office Depot, the strip mall's main tenant, slashed prices at the North Miami store by 50 percent, Tomlinson notes. By January 11, Office Depot's inventory was nearly sold out. Office Depot's neighbors, a coin laundry/dry cleaning service, a restaurant, an insurance office, and a beauty salon, were either already closed or preparing to move out.

"I don't have nothing," grumbled the owner of El Cafetín, who declined to give her name, as she cleaned the countertops before shutting down her restaurant. "I close everything!"

Her friend Fred Grandal, a North Miami resident, says El Cafetín operated for three years just south of Office Depot, but much of the equipment is less than a year old. "She put a lot of money into the restaurant," he told the *BT* as he visited with his friend. "This is bad for the local economy. They're putting a lot of people out of business."

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Casino Effect

Continued from page 53

all casinos. “Every slot machine brings in a minimum of \$100,000 a year,” he asserts. “Slot machines don’t create jobs — you just dust them off. And that’s 90 percent of the money.” According to Kindt, most of that slot-machine money comes from middle-class and poor individuals living near casinos.

Each slot machine costs the surrounding community one job per year, Kindt says. In a 2003 article for the *Ohio Law Review*, he reported that within a newly established casino’s “feeder market,” business and personal bankruptcies increase between 18 and 42 percent, while “impulse” business transactions in the area decline by 65 percent.

“When billions of dollars are going into slot machines, where are those billions of dollars coming from?” Kindt asks. “They are no longer buying cars, refrigerators, or even food and clothing.”

South Florida is already feeling the effects of casinos and slot machines, which were approved by Broward voters in 2005 and Miami-Dade voters in 2008. Calls to the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling have increased 57 percent over the past five years, according to an October 2011 report from the nonprofit organization.

Thirty-five percent of callers admitted to committing crimes in order to finance their gambling. Individuals who were unemployed and/or receiving public assistance made up 25 percent of the callers, a hike of 12 percent from five years ago. Potentially suicidal callers increased from 11 to 16 percent in one year. The largest chunk of callers, 46 percent, named slot machines as their primary gambling vice.

“Slot machines are known as the crack cocaine of new gamblers,” Kindt says. “When you bring in [thousands of slots] in

a big place like Miami, you are going to hook tens of thousands of people, many of whom have never gambled before.”

Kindt doesn’t think slot machines are fair, either. “There needs to be a hearing under oath, investigating how the slot machines work, what the odds are, how they are regulated, if people are treated fairly or not, and if the machines can be tampered with,” Kindt says. “You need to have hearings where they actually haul in these machines and show how they work. Nobody has ever had these hearings.”

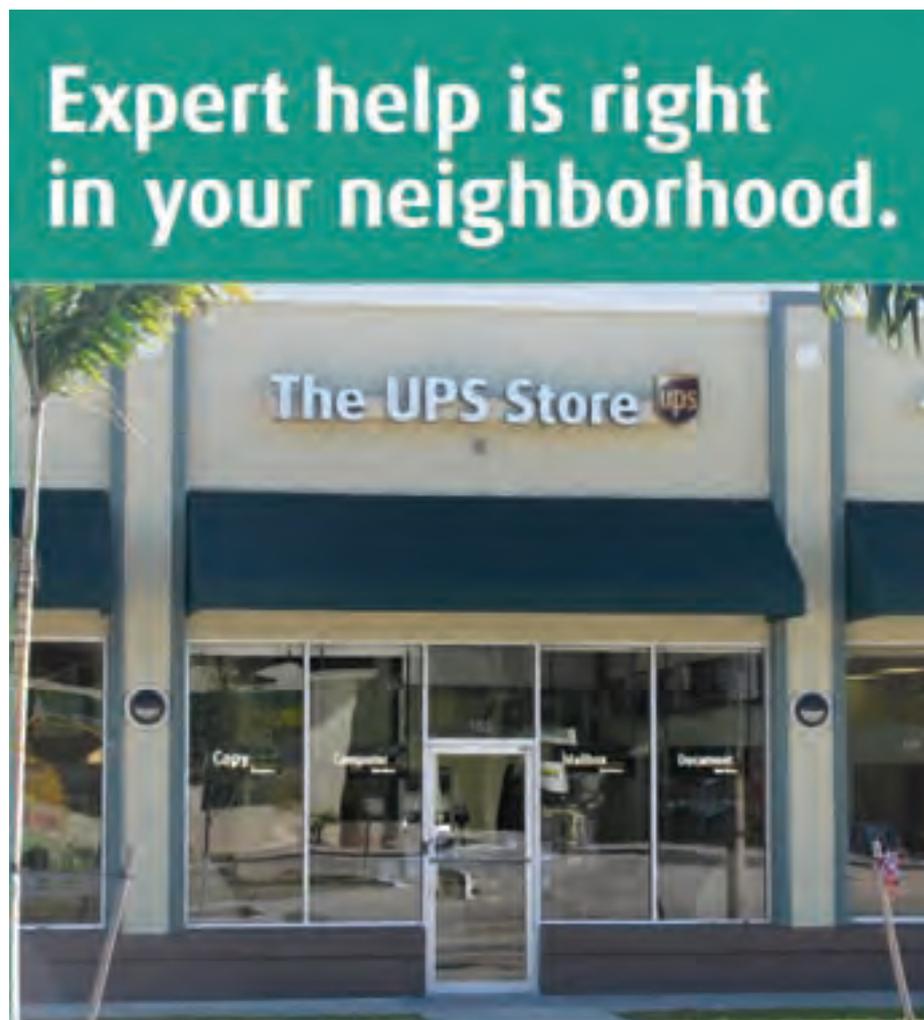
So how many slot machines will Resorts World Miami have? Goode declines to say: “We are still very early in the design stage, so it would be premature to project a count.”

This past October, Sergio Bakas, senior vice president of Arquitectonica, the Miami architecture firm tasked with designing Resorts World Miami, told the *Miami Herald* that the Genting resort would be among the largest casinos in the world, with 800,000 square feet of gaming and at least 8500 slot machines. Floor plans published recently by the local blog Crespo-Gram Report depicted 344,645 square feet of gaming on the first three floors of the old Omni mall alone, which could be open for business late this year if a gaming license is obtained.

Arquitectonica later said Bakas had misspoken, and that casino will have between 5000 and 6000 slot machines. Goode adds that the total gaming area for Resorts World Miami will be less than 300,000 square feet.

Even with 5000 slot machines, Resorts World Miami will dwarf the local competition. Two pari-mutuels operating in Miami, Magic City Casino and the recently reopened Casino Miami Jai-Alai, have a combined 1850 slot machines.

Continued on page 56



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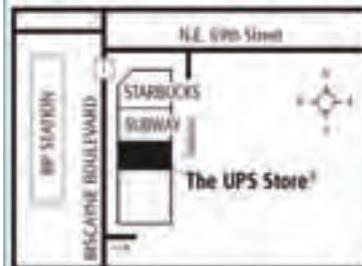
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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR

Casino Effect

Continued from page 55

Gulfstream Park in Hallandale has 850 slots. Calder Casino and Race Course in Miami Gardens has 1200. In west Miami-Dade, the Miccosukee casino also has 1200, while in Hollywood, the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino has 1500.

Resorts World Miami is not the only entity wanting to build a destination resort in Miami-Dade. Las Vegas Sands, a company headed by Newt Gingrich presidential campaign financier Sheldon Adelson, is interested in developing a destination resort on nine blocks of Park West land assembled by Miami Worldcenter investors. Steve Wynn, former CEO of Mirage Resorts, hopes for a casino in Miami Beach. In Miami Gardens, Dolphins owner Stephen Ross also wants to build a casino on land surrounding Dolphins Stadium.

"The scope of what Genting is proposing, and what would be allowed under the legislation, is an order of magnitude that is far greater than anything that exists here or anywhere else in America," writes John Swinski, an Orlando political consultant who heads NoCasinos.org, in an e-mail to the *BT*. "Comparing slots at a dog track, or even limited tribal gambling, to what is being proposed is like comparing a 7-Eleven the Mall of the Americas. Literally."

In spite of the tax breaks and gambling opportunities the new bills offer to existing casinos and racetracks, the pari-mutuels and tribes have joined with churches, theme parks, restaurants, and hotels in an effort to defeat the legislation. That's because the new resorts will cannibalize existing casinos, Kindt explains: "When a new casino comes up with flash, the other casinos tend to have liquidity problems."

So why is Singapore still a prosperous city-state with two mega-casinos located within its borders? Because only

foreigners can patronize casinos for free. Citizens and permanent residents must pay a \$70 entrance fee or a \$1400 annual pass to enter a casino. The hefty admission price, which is collected by the government, "discourages impulse gambling," a Singapore official told *Time* magazine two years ago. To fill the casinos, promoters ferry in high-stakes gamblers, known as "whales," from neighboring countries.

In Florida's case, Kindt believes the tax rates charged on slot machines should be increased to at least 50 percent to help pay for the social costs he asserts will come with compulsive gambling. Moreover, he argues that the state should receive 100 percent of the slots' revenues, as in Canada, where casino operators only collect a management fee.

The license fees contemplated for casinos are also too low, Kindt says. Under the pending legislation, a casino company wishing to build a destination resort would pay a \$1 million, nonrefundable application fee, a \$125 million one-time license fee (which is refundable entirely or in part if the application is rejected), and a \$5 million annual fee thereafter.

License fees for pari-mutuels will be lowered from \$3 million per year to \$2 million.

Kindt, however, maintains that the license for a casino with more than 500 slot machines is worth at least \$500 million in the open market. "If a casino has 500 slot machines, they will make a pure profit of at least a half-billion dollars in one year," Kindt claims. "In the case of a casino in Miami, they will make a billion dollars in half a year."

The best thing Florida could do, Kindt asserts, would be to not only scrap the destination resort bills, but also remove slots and legalized gambling entirely. When Russia closed down thousands of casinos in 2009, that nation's economy improved,

Continued on page 57

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Casino Effect

Continued from page 56

says Kindt. “Crime, bankruptcy, and gambling addiction were on the rise,” he notes. “That’s why Russia shut down the casinos. And most important, they [casinos] were killing their economy.”

If the United States were to ban casinos, Kindt believes \$300 billion a year would be infused into the nation’s troubled economy.

But eliminating gambling after it has taken root is nearly impossible, Kindt concedes. “Once the gambling interests are in,” he says, “it’s like an economic cancer on the body politic. You can’t get them out. They will want to move in whatever they can, as fast as they can get in. Then, once they have their foot in the door, they will continue to push for more

and more and more. You have to slam the door shut and, if you’re smart about it, cut their foot off while you’re at it.”

With or without gambling, the Genting Group is still interested in turning its new Miami property into a resort, says Goode, the company’s Miami executive. But with a gaming component, development could be achieved at a much faster pace.

“The timeline for development is significantly accelerated should a destination resort bill pass,” Goode says. “A 20-year project delivered in stages, in line with market demand, could be fully realized in three to five years if we are licensed as a destination-resort operator. That means the necessary construction and permanent jobs for Floridians can be created almost immediately.”

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Churchill’s

Continued from page 52

“Because it’s been there for 30-plus years, people know it as a landmark,” says Reskin, “so it’s easy for us to say, ‘You know Churchill’s? We’re right next door.’ I love that it’s here. A lot of young people live in this area and it’s a great place to come for a drink, even when there’s not a show.”

These days it’s not often there’s no show. Monday nights are given over to jazz, a long-standing tradition. But pick any other night, and the musical genre is up for grabs — from punk to metal to rockabilly and more. In Miami, there’s simply no musical competition.

There is, however, some serious daytime competition — in the form of seemingly endless roadway construction along NE 2nd Avenue. The disruptive work was supposed to have been

completed this past November. Now it’s anyone’s guess. Daniels has one particular reason he wants it to stop soon, though all business owners along NE 2nd Avenue have been complaining.

Once the heavy equipment has moved out and the newly paved street glistens and traffic returns to normal, Daniels plans to upgrade the Churchill’s menu. He’s held off because he doesn’t want to buy more expensive food only to have it spoil for lack of customers. It’s been frustrating. But he smiles at the thought of some sweet additions — maybe cherry trifles or bread pudding with 13 Island rum and ice cream.

Sounds like a perfect accompaniment to the ear-splitting, headache-making “noise band” screech of local musical luminary Rat Bastard, also a Churchill’s regular.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Postcard from Safe City

Criminals never come into the Shores — a least that's what we hear

By **Jen Karetnick**
BT Contributor

When we first moved into Mango House, my husband and I feared being a target of crime. Regardless of genteel appearances, Miami Shores had a lot of break-ins and car theft; the crime index in 2000 was more than five for the village, while the national average was about three. (The higher the crime index number, the greater the chance of a crime.)

Then there was the house itself, which had been empty, for the most part, for several years while it was under construction. The acre of land where it sat appeared

unguarded. Though fenced, it wasn't lighted, and the hedges only made it darker. The striking features of the property, both architectural and natural (what had first attracted us), combined with the fact that we are located on a corner with a stop sign, causing cars to linger and occupants to stare, made us constantly feel like we were being scoped out.

As we expected, we did have a few problems at first. Passersby were comfortable with walking onto the property and helping themselves to mangos; dog owners would let their pets run in the yard. It took a little while for trespassers to get used to the idea that the house was occupied again. Adding an alarm system, motion-detection



lights, and our own three dogs — small but fiercely protective, especially the unpredictable rescue mutt, Rolo — helped.

We gradually let down our guard. Therein lay our problem. Last month our cars were burgled twice while parked in our driveway, when the dogs were crated and it was so late at night not even a Tumblr-addicted teenager would be awake. Plus it was pretty easy for the thieves to help themselves: We left the cars unlocked. Either that, or the thieves

have those alarm-cracking clickers that randomly unlock doors. (Hey, we've all seen those Tom Cruise movies. It's not that far-fetched.)

The crooks are pros, or at least criminals who know what they're doing. They didn't take the designer shoes I left in one car, my sheaf of CDs, the change we keep for tolls, or the random sports equipment that's always in the trunks. They only pocketed my GPS (a real disaster, that) and my husband's portable

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Yet the officer who came to the house to take a statement didn't want to report it, on the grounds that it "looks bad for the Shores."

Similarly, a friend of mine, Rebecca Kollaras, who lives on 97th Street and NW First Avenue, relayed that her neighbor's vehicle was broken into and his wallet stolen. (Yes, like not locking your car's doors, leaving a billfold in the car is like waving a lollipop in front of a toddler: an unnecessary temptation.) The reaction from the police when the neighbor went to file his report? Denial. Did he know *for sure* that the crime had happened in the Shores?

Another neighbor of Rebecca's recently had a bicycle stolen from the driveway — at 5:30 p.m. — and still another's house was burgled twice in one month. As for Rebecca herself, she had her jewelry taken last July. The officer seemed "mostly concerned about who had a key to the house... because there was no forcible sign of entry, except that the back door had been jacked and left wide open," she e-mailed me, somewhat sarcastically, adding

that "the CSI guy was very thorough — came back to me two months later with my boyfriend's fingerprints."

Two more jewelry heists in the Shores have identical tell-tale signs: The jewelry was laid out on the bed and examined before the good stuff was lifted, apparently concealed inside women's bras, which were also stolen. Allegedly, both victims received the same advice from the police — to consider the household help, family members, and close friends as suspects.

Why the patrician gloss on an issue that lately — now that street barricades have become a part of the permanent, satellite-navigated landscape and are no longer such a deterrent — seems more in need of redress than ever? After all, while much property crime, including burglary (unlawful entry of a building or house) and robbery (theft from a person), has been steadily decreasing for the past decade or so in the Shores, larceny, driven largely by its subcategory, vehicle burglary, is on the rise.

This attitude seems, to me, a hold-over from the village's country club days, when crime was like a sexually

transmitted disease — spoken of, when it was discussed at all, in stage whispers. Crime in the Shores is more readily acknowledged than that these days, but still a lot of the conversation is anecdotal, more along the lines of "Did you hear?" than based on actual knowledge.

Still, if "inside job" seems to be the police's official line of the moment, it does turn out to be true much of the time. And we should also note that we're lucky to have a police force at all, given a village as small and as hard hit by the housing downturn, as ours. In fact, according to notes from a November Neighborhood Watch meeting overseen by Mayor Jim McCoy, "municipality is \$1 million upside-down, [and] right now, property tax revenue is \$5.1 million versus a \$5.6 million police budget."

That the police respond as readily as they do — and they *are* very quick to show up, provided you call the village police department's direct line (305-759-2468) — is something we probably don't appreciate as much as we should.

And while the population of the Shores has climbed over the years, the entire department has varied only from 43 to 44 staff members (34 officers and

10 department employees, not including police dogs). So they're protecting more people with essentially the same personnel.

To really decrease the rate of property crime and address the growing number of larcenies, we have to help the police help us. The west side of town does an excellent job of this, forming Neighborhood Watch groups that meet with Chief of Police Keith Lystad and Mayor McCoy for updates and suggestions. To form a Neighborhood Watch, contact Carmen Caldwell from Miami-Dade County Crime Watch.

Or volunteer for the village's Mobile Patrol (305-756-5767), headed up by John Stokesberry. Currently, Chief Lystad says, anywhere from 20 to 25 volunteers assist in patrolling the village in two-hour shifts.

Finally, residents like myself should stop being so naive as to leave our cars unlocked and think we'll be safe. Or maybe we should enclose them in giant condoms after we park for the night. After all, as with an STD, the key to fighting crime is prevention.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Dishing the Dirt

The great cleanup begins at Biscayne Landing

By **Mark Sell**
BT Contributor

It's time to dish the dirt on North Miami. But this time, we'll defy normal journalistic rules and bury the lead.

By dishing the dirt, I don't mean exploring the motivations behind the recent shouting matches and deepening fissures within the North Miami City Council or the state criminal investigators snooping around for possible corruption.

Nor do I mean the latest cause célèbre, in which Councilman Michael Blynn, at the January 10 North Miami Council meeting, had the nerve to mention that Mayor Andre Pierre's nephew, Ricardo Brutus, was arrested for allegedly

accepting a \$4000 bribe from a local businessman to ensure passage of an ordinance to privatize garbage collection. (True, the arrest happened.) To which Pierre made an Evel Knievel-style rhetorical leap and replied: "What if I called your daughter a prostitute?" (The Blynn family is "exploring legal options.")

And guess what? The garbage ordinance passed 3-2 on first reading that night! (Council members Blynn and Scott Galvin, who appear to be shut out from some folks in the present city administration, were the holdouts).

Here's the real dirt, and the buried lead: In the past few weeks, crews have been mobilizing at Biscayne Landing, about 1700 feet southeast of the Oaks



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

Biscayne Landing view to southeast: Beneath the surface, some nasty stuff.

Tower, assembling equipment and thick PVC pipe, getting ready for the big burial of ammonia and methane. The contract was signed December 27, the "remediation" was scheduled (as of this writing) to start January 29, and between now and September, crews will dig 32 shallow, 7-to-18-foot wells to draw out any nasty stuff and shoot it one kilometer into the earth through a 3300-foot injection well.

You can get a free ringside seat from the south end of the Oaks South Tower. Digging the shallow wells along 3700 linear feet on the border with the wetlands should take nine months, and the process should be in operation by January 2013. You can consider it the first step in building the best available coffin for the old Munisport Landfill, which has been poked, prodded, and studied to death for the past 30 years. Google it and

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What buried treasures await the digging crews? Garbage, for sure. Six million cubic yards of it, with a particular concentration about 1000 feet south of Tower II. The really nasty stuff, such as medical waste, was carted away long ago, before the Environmental Protection Agency removed Biscayne Landing from its hit list in 1999, declared it no longer a hazard to human health, and transferred supervision to the State of Florida. Crews will compact and move the garbage and "cap" it with asphalt, concrete, or buildings. The rest of the land will get a fresh, two-foot coat of soil.

Ammonia and methane remain in relatively small and declining amounts. The average content of ammonia in the Biscayne Landing property groundwater is 17 parts per billion. The peak, with the greatest depth of garbage, is measured at 80 parts per billion. The low range is 10 parts per billion. The target range after cleanup is 0.5 to 2.8 parts per billion.

Methane, an explosive gas when concentrated, is already monitored through sensors in perforated PVC pipe under the Oaks Towers. The sensors have never

detected enough methane to set them off, and the air escapes and disperses through a line of white, candy-cane-shaped open PVC pipes lined up along the Oaks parking lot. You can expect such sensors and passive escape vents in every building that ultimately goes up on the 184-acre Biscayne Landing site in the next decade, starting with the big-box retailers you should begin seeing sometime in 2014.

Ammonia and methane as chemical compounds are natural byproducts of decomposing matter. Every landfill has them. The amounts in the groundwater of Biscayne Landing are actually declining with each passing year because people stopped dumping garbage there in 1981. Neither compound is officially at a toxic level, but the contamination level is still unacceptably high for environmental authorities.

The real potential risk lies in the contaminants' effect on Biscayne Bay, roughly 2000 feet away as the crow flies, and the Biscayne Aquifer — the source of South Florida's drinking water, about 150 feet underground amid highly permeable limestone, sandstone, and sand.

It appears that little ammonia is leaching from the site into the bay.

Environmental authorities limit the ammonia entering the bay to five parts per billion, but barely a trace is getting that far. Some leaching could occur on the western end of the wetlands near the Biscayne Landing boundary, where ammonia in small quantities can act as a fertilizer promoting plant growth.

There's plenty of birdlife in the mangrove, with ospreys, wood storks, pelicans, and egrets feeding at sunrise, plenty of raccoons, and the occasional rabbit. On summer evenings after a rain shower, the wetland is filled with grunts and chirps, a symphony of frogs and crickets. In winter, in the estuaries by the Arch Creek East Nature Trail, you can even spot the occasional manatee around sunrise.

There is some concern that the brackish water from the wetland could seep into the groundwater under Biscayne Landing, a process called saltwater intrusion.

Crews will dig a curtain to minimize that saline intrusion while digging the wells, which will run along the work site's east side, from the Biscayne Landing Oaks Towers in North Miami south to Highland Village in North Miami Beach.

(Municipal borders are such a jumble that Highland Village is North Miami Beach sandwich meat in a North Miami roll).

The wells will keep operating until the Miami-Dade Department of Permitting, Environment, and Regulatory Affairs (PERA, formerly known as DERM, the Department of Environmental Resources Management) determines that the ammonia is reduced to target levels, or .5 to 2.8 parts per billion.

This won't be the end of the permitting. Among other things, the developer will need permits to fill two lakes in the property's southwestern corner. The big hurdle will be getting state permission to build a 143rd Street flyover bridge across the wetlands to give Florida International University a coveted second entrance.

There's plenty to learn, and lots of information available, but you need a sharp eye to find it. A good place to start is www.northmiamifl.gov. Go to Biscayne Landing and, on the left side of the screen, you'll see "Frequently Asked Questions." Click on that, go to the report, explore the links, and start digging for dirt.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Total Tech Trip

After computer meltdown, a search for a carrying case leads to light-headedness and luxury

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

After writing a column for this publication every issue for the past 17 months, I was pretty upset that I missed the start of 2012. “How could that happen?” you might ask. Well, it goes something like this...

For the first time in more than two years, I decided to take a real vacation (husband included). We packed up five huge suitcases, dropped the pooch with our trusted friends, Sheera and Charley, and off to Port Everglades we went.

My article was set; I was ready to push send when “it” happened — the meltdown. Let me digress for a minute.

Remember the TV show where there’s a whole group of superheroes with special powers? Some can fly or turn you into ice; others can read minds or stop bullets by blinking. Well, I’m proof that you don’t need to be a superhero to have a special power. Mine is sucking the energy out of all things technological.

So with that said, my computer died on the spot, leaving me story-less! It was agony to know that an issue would hit the streets without me in it. But thanks to my quick-thinking *BT* editor, I was spared that fate; he ran a reprint of my very first column.

Flash forward. It is now mid-January and I have a brand-new Sony Vaio laptop. I am treating it with kid gloves — as though



it could explode at any moment, and the way I handle it will make all the difference.

That prompted me to start looking at cases, covers, and ways to protect my livelihood and, in essence (melodramatic pause), my life. Being that I live seconds away from the mall, I decided that would be my best bet to find what I needed. Although I don’t love shopping in the mall, there really isn’t any independently

owned local store that I know of that specializes in protective gear for laptop computers. So at the height of the post-Christmas shopping season, in I went.

Now, let me once again digress for a minute to share an observation. I believe that the street traffic this past Christmas and New Year’s was the worst it has been since I moved to Aventura in 2005. It took close to 15 minutes to drive from



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NOTICE OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE**

Please take notice that on February 28, 2012 at 7:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as may be reached on the agenda, in the Village Hall of El Portal, located at 500 Northeast 87th Street, El Portal, Florida, the proposed ordinance with title stated below will be considered for enactment by the Mayor and Village Council of the Village of El Portal.

The proposed ordinance may be inspected by the public at the Village Hall and interested parties may appear at the meeting and be heard in respect to the proposed ordinance,

**ORDINANCE NO. 2011-004 Noise Ordinance Amendment
Chapter 13**

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND VILLAGE COUNCIL OF THE VILLAGE OF EL PORTAL, FLORIDA OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA AGREEING TO AMEND THE EXISTING NOISE ORDINANCE, CHAPTER 13, OF THE VILLAGE OF EL PORTAL CODE OF ORDINANCES; PROVIDING FOR INCORPORATION OF RECITALS; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT AND REPEALER; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY AND CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

February 14, 2012 Albertha W. Patterson, MSM, MMC
Clerk

188th Street to the front entrance of the mall on Biscayne Boulevard. I think my biggest mistake was actually trying to take the main roads instead of utilizing those less traveled. The crazy part is that, with the enormous amount of traffic congestion caused by the seasonal swell in concrete jungle dwellers, even the hidden routes were jam-packed.

But that didn't deter me. There was nothing that could come between me and protecting "my loved one," as the Vaio has come to be known around my house. And so I waited at red lights, drove at two miles per hour, swerved out of the way of random lane-changers and those who needed to make their left turn before I made my right, and dodged those hell-bent on getting to a parking spot before me. Finally, after parking so far away that it might have been a good idea to have walked in the first place, I was there.

The fun was really about to begin. There's something about the air in the mall that makes me spacey. I can't put my finger on it; it just happens. (I grew up in Long Island — a fact that I do not often talk about — but Long Island and

malls go hand-in-hand; probably the reason I don't care much for malls now.) Anyway, the spaced-out feeling doesn't impede my ability to shop. It just kind of makes me wander more.

I never really took care of my computer equipment before. Cases were purely for fun and decorative purposes, but this time it was different. I went into Michael Kors first. Lots of pretty things (if you are a Kors fan). I love his style, but his stuff isn't exactly designed with laptop safety in mind. So I moved on.

Next stop: Kipling. With all the backpacks they have in there, I thought maybe there'd be *something*. Nope. There was some padded thing, but not for me. So I walked on. I went to Macy's, followed by Bloomingdale's. Everything I saw was either practical and ugly, or useless. Perhaps I was being too picky, but is fashionable and functional too much to ask for?

I went to Macy's, followed by Bloomingdale's. Everything I saw was either practical and ugly, or useless. Perhaps I was being too picky.

Then I had a eureka moment. I wandered over to the kiosk in the middle of the mall where they love to overcharge for blinged-out iPhone and iPad cases. I thought maybe they'd have a super over-priced computer case that would suit my purposes. I looked. There were tons of Swarovski crystal-studded phone cases, rubber iPad covers, keyboards, and more. No computer anything. Seriously? I never thought it would be this tough.

I know this sounds totally mundane, but I'm asking you to imagine the trauma of my having lost the tool

that enables me to make a living. It's like a surgeon losing his hands or a singer losing her voice. I am a writer — and I lost my *computer*. (Wow, I may have just outdone my melodramatic self.) Okay, so it may not have been life or death, but it was a huge inconvenience.

Getting back to my plight, I continued searching: in and out of Tumi, Fossil,

Nordstrom. And then I saw the Coach store. I'm always about small, unknown brands and prefer to shop at mom-and-pop stores, but I was at my wits' end, so I walked in.

I looked around at the bags I'd seen on every woman, everywhere. I was about to leave when I realized there is no such thing as the "perfect" computer case. Again, it sounds so trite, which I realize, but please, indulge me.

As long as you really like something, it can work. Profound, I know, but it's the truth. I wound up buying a Coach diaper bag. It had all the elements I needed. The bag is made from a thick, protective material, it has a ton of pockets, it's stylish, and most of all, my computer fits comfortably into it. I can carry it all over and not worry about damage.

I'm not proud that I caved and bought "mall goods," but it was a means to a necessary end. I love my new computer bag and, if it truly serves its purpose, I will be writing my column for the *BT* for years to come.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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It Was the Campaign, Stupid

Why the commission election turned out the way it did

By **Gaspar González**
BT Contributor

I didn't intend to write a post-election column, dissecting this past December's contest for village commission. One reason is, I generally detest the "horse race" approach to elections, in which the obsession with who might win or did win, and how, overwhelms any consideration of what the candidates actually represent.

The other reason I don't particularly like election analysis (pre or post) is that I'm not much better at it than the know-it-all pundits who consistently get it wrong on the national level.

But what can I say? People apparently want to know my thoughts regarding

our most recent election, specifically, why it turned out the way it did. I've been asked about it while playing with my son in the park, jogging in the neighborhood, shopping at the supermarket, even mowing my lawn.

I'll begin by reporting the results, since there are still some folks out there who may not know: Barbara Watts received the highest number of votes (317), followed by incumbent Bob Anderson (278), Noah Jacobs (254), Supreme Dorvil (228), and incumbent Al Childress (225). The top two vote getters will serve four-year terms. As the third leading vote getter, Mr. Jacobs, who was subsequently elected mayor by the new commission, will serve two years. The



three join Commissioner Bryan Cooper and former Mayor (now Commissioner) Roxanna Ross on the dais.

That's who won. But why did the winners win? That's more difficult to discern. The candidates' records would seem to have had very little to do with the outcome. Incumbents Anderson and Childress — the only two candidates with a paper trail — had a nearly identical voting record on ordinances the past two years, yet one finished in second

place while the other came in last.

Also having little to do with the outcome, thankfully, was insidious speculation on the part of some of our more "imaginative" neighbors regarding what might happen if candidates Jacobs and Watts prevailed. Namely, that a "secret deal" would make Commissioner Cooper (whom they intensely dislike) mayor, that the new commission's first order of business would be to fire the current village manager (plunging our community into



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disarray), and that Biscayne Park would sign a pact with the planet Zenoplubus, requiring our children and wives to be sent there for re-education.

The first didn't happen, the second has never been anyone's stated goal, and the third, well, I made up the third, but I'm sure something like it was bandied about as a possible talking point.

So what *did* the election turn on? Are you ready for my earth-shaking insight? The candidates who won were the ones who... drum roll, please... ran the best campaigns. And by "best," I mean they worked harder than their opponents, did a better job of getting across their message, or both.

Take Commissioner Anderson. He essentially launched his re-election bid in the summer, walking the streets, putting his business card on residents' doors. By the time the election rolled around, he was a ubiquitous presence. One neighbor told me he dropped by her house on three separate occasions. Commissioner Anderson didn't sneak in through an open window, throw on an apron, and welcome a family of voters home from work with a delectable pot roast — I

haven't heard that, anyway — but you got the sense that, if that had been what was necessary to win, he would have done it.

By comparison, Commissioner Childress was practically invisible. Yes, he had some signs up and he did send out a mailer the weekend before the election, but that was about it. It makes one wonder if Commissioner Childress ran more out of a sense of obligation than any real desire to stay on the commission. (For some, it can get old quick; Commissioner Steve Bernard, after only one term, declined to run at all.)

Then there was Mr. Dorvil, who proved to be a very personable young man; at the candidates' forum in late November, he came close to stealing the show. Mr. Dorvil, though, never displayed much of an appreciation for the complexities of village government, nor did he have a lot to say other than he wanted a commission that got along. That's a nice sentiment, but it can hardly be called a platform.

Perhaps Mr. Dorvil figured that, in an election largely perceived to be between two opposing "tickets" (Anderson/

Childress vs. Jacobs/Watts) — and in which voters could select up to three candidates — someone who kept quiet and avoided being identified with either side would scoop up votes left and right.

If that was the theory, it wasn't a bad one. Except two things went wrong: One, a significant number of voters opted to name fewer than three candidates on their ballots. Two, to the degree that there was a "crossover" candidate in the election, the vote tally would suggest it was Commissioner Watts, who, like Mayor Jacobs, ran a strong campaign based on bringing greater transparency and accountability to government. (And Mayor Jacobs knocked on almost as many doors as Commissioner Anderson.)

Some people were concerned about the low voter turnout, roughly 27 percent. Did it somehow influence the final outcome? Probably not. And there are a couple of different ways to look at that number. In absolute terms, it *is* low. I'd love to see 60 percent or more of the village come out for a commission election. On the other hand, 27 percent of registered voters is a much higher participation rate than for similar elections

across the county. In last year's special contest for Miami-Dade mayor, for example, only 16 percent of registered voters voted.

There's been talk for a while now of moving the village election to even-numbered years and combining it with county, state, and national elections, a move that would save money and undoubtedly bring more people out. However, that doesn't necessarily mean that voters would be any better informed about local issues and candidates. They might just be showing up to vote for president or governor and decide to pencil in some names for Biscayne Park commission while they're at it, the way most voters do with judges they've never heard of who are on the ballot.

All of which is to say, I think our system works pretty well the way it is, and the voters of Biscayne Park got it right this past December, at least by one measure: We elected the candidates who understood that running is a verb.

Will it result in *better* government? Ask me in a few months.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Go Figure

Our correspondent finds herself modeling for an art class and hating the whole “sit still” thing

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

“You’re a brave woman,” says my husband. And I suppose I have to agree. No, I didn’t challenge any machismo-charged dragons to a duel, climb a mountain in subzero conditions equipped solely with dried fruit and a putty knife, drive on I-95 during rush hour (the fact that many of you do it every day does not diminish its bravado!), or even, perish the thought, watch Fox News.

So what did I do? I stood in glorified, skimpy-ish underwear with a spotlight trained right smack on my rump for... oh, how long was *that* pose? Five minutes?

I bared my aging cheeks to a room full of strangers, who then proceeded to draw my ass. Or watercolor it. Or pen-and-ink it. Or pencil it. Or charcoal it. Or immortalize it in bronze. (Okay, that didn’t happen.)

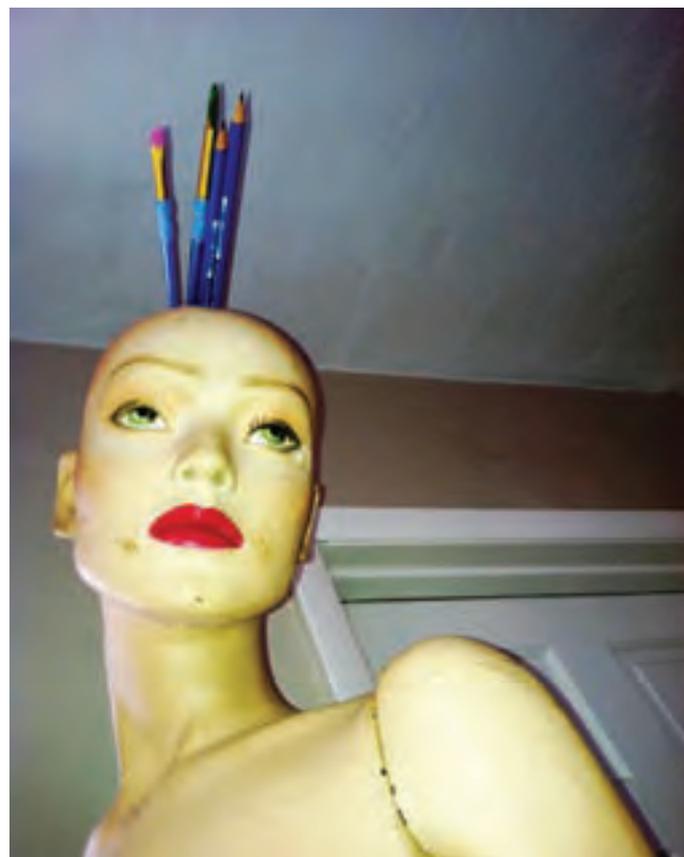
In my seemingly endless pursuit of vanity, physical affirmation (ass-irmation?), and interest in all that is “ahhrt,” I volunteered to pose for an atypical figure-drawing class. At a small bar-slash-lounge in Broward. On a Thursday night. For three hours.

Now, when I say three hours, I do not mean to imply that I stood in one position for three hours. Because that’s just crazy talk. Although I’ve heard of people holding a pose for one hour.

However, I’ve never seen it, so perhaps those “people” were not people at all, but aliens posing as people...for a figure drawing class. Yes, I watch too much of the Sci-Fi network.

Anyway, after holding a series of poses for anywhere between 5 and 20 minutes each, I can tell you that anyone who does remain in one spot in excess of 20 minutes is probably an alien posing as David Blaine posing for a figure-drawing class, because that sort of stillness would require Zen master skill. Patience. Inner peace. The ability to astrally project one’s ass off a hard chair

and onto a grainy mound of warm, sandy beach. What’s needed to hold still for extreme lengths of time is a calm inner child, if you will.



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith



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Well, as you may have guessed, I don't possess any of that peaceful nonsense in my toolbox of coping mechanisms. Neither do I, er, inhale. This is unfortunate. I was told by someone who used to model for art classes that smoking pot was a great warm-up. I can imagine. I mean, stoned people regularly just stare at walls for extended periods of time, anyway. So it seems like the perfect herbal modeling companion. Except... except there is that off chance that one could randomly become paranoid and *freak out suddenly!*

See, all you're allowed to do while sitting completely frozen is move your eyes. This option is good and bad. It's good because you can remain a distracted and entertained, yet unmoving, thing. It's bad if you see something uncool. Because you're stuck. And if you're stoned and you see, say, a flower painting suddenly morph into a giant, winged creature who jumps off the canvas and flaps in your direction, well, you're screwed. Because you can't move, remember?

I mean, technically, you *can* move. But the outcome won't be pretty. I was in a room with about 40 people who paid to

see me sit or stand as long as I produced "angles." Once you commit to a pose, you must...be...still. If you move, you mess up the artist's drawing.

Not moving is difficult for anybody. So it's really a form of torture for your more animated, loud, ADD, gesticulating types. Like me. After the first five-minute pose, I asked the collective if I fidgeted. A universal head-bob and "Yes!" roared back at me.

Huh? What? Did I blink? Shocked, I wondered if air-conditioning blowing on my hair constituted fidgeting. Thankfully, after that initial scare, the poses became a bit more — I wouldn't say easier — tolerable. So did the crowd. In the beginning, there was a sour guy sitting right in front of me. *ThisClose.*

I caught him sketching Crack Head, a mannequin bust I brought with me to use as a prop. This pissed me off. I mean, Crack Head wasn't suffering! She doesn't have to work at not moving. A few tables beyond the Sour Patch Kid sat two older men. Oddly, one had a painted self-portrait propped up next to him. They reminded me of the hecklers from the *The Muppet Show*, Statler and Waldorf.

They drew, but rather than appearing focused, they looked grumpy. At the five-minute mark of one 20-minute pose (we were all given a heads-up as to the time remaining on each pose), one complained to the other: "Five minutes! We only get five minutes?"

The other answered: "No! Five minutes *left!*" They exited after the first few poses. I found out later that they didn't like the music.

Traditionally, figure models pose in the nude. For this venue, nudity was not permitted, but being almost nude was. I invested way too much time trying to decide what to wear to complement my "Creepy Doll" theme. The problem I wrestled with was how could I bare skin and be one with the dolls? The old-fashioned dolls are bundled up in frumpy dresses.

Finally I decided to act as their whoring alter ego and wore sequins, booty shorts, and a sparkly bra. And tall boots and heels. Oh, I also brought along a stuffed animal shaped like a very big snake, an old rotary phone, a stuffed-animal lemur, one of my best porcelain-faced creepy dolls, and of

course, Crack Head, who sports a long, jagged crack on the side of her head, above sleepy green eyes.

I spent so much time obsessing over what I was going to wear and bring that I didn't have time to do one very important thing: practice.

In researching how to be a good little figure model, I wrote to my friend (not the one who was stoned during sessions) and asked for tips. This friend has experience modeling for art classes at Florida State University. She recommended I practice poses in front of a mirror and to not hold my arm above my head because my arm would fall asleep. That was all good advice, but I didn't follow it.

After the first few poses, I started to get the hang of it. Counterbalancing your weight is essential, and my hand only fell asleep once. Apparently I did well and the students showed me their artwork, which looked to me to range from Comic Book Villain to Bottom Heavy Serial Killer. But hey, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, right?

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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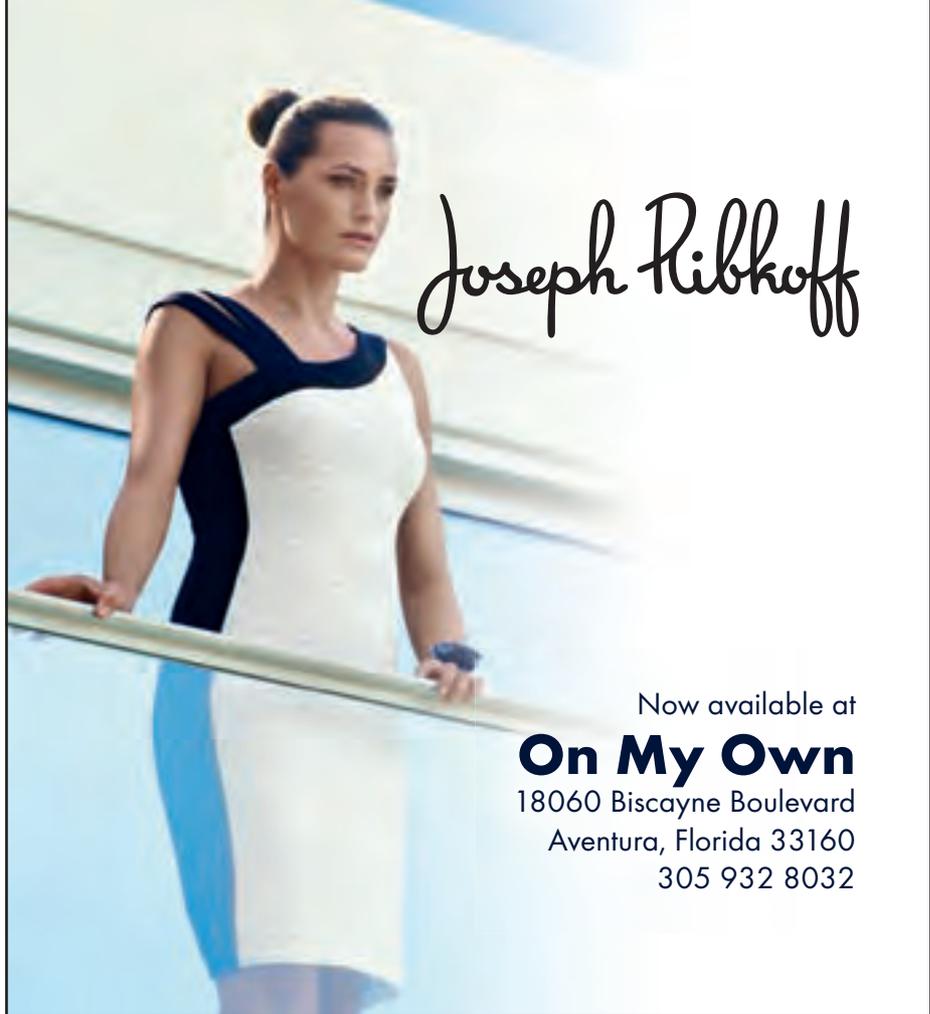


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Tales From the Firehouse

Our correspondent shares a couple of hot ones from the good ol' days at Station No. 2

By Frank Rollason
BT Contributor

Back on January 2, an article appeared in the *Miami Herald* noting that Miami's old Fire Station No. 2, located on N. Miami Avenue and 14th Street, was being renovated and rebuilt by the Omni Community Redevelopment Agency to be utilized as an office for the CRA and perhaps restaurant space in the city's fledgling "Entertainment District."

There was a comment that caught my eye from Deputy Fire Chief Freddie Fernandez, who mused, "What a pleasure it would have been to work in this fire station."

Well, on this topic, I can certainly confirm that it was a wonderful place to work. Although I was a rookie fire-fighter at the time, in the mid-1960s, I had the distinct pleasure and honor to work with some of the true legends of the Miami fire service: Captain Campbell, Lieutenant Conway, Jimmy Dasher, Booty Bryan, Ted "Bug-eye" Calvert, Young Andy Sixkiller, Buddy Robinson, Tom O'Neil, Tom Eckman, and Emory Couch, to name a few.

As in most jobs, it is the people who make work a pleasure, not the structure, and that was particularly true of Station 2. First, a little background. Prior to World War II, firemen were assigned to two 24-hour shifts. The saying was: "If you wake



Miami Fire Station No. 2, circa 1926.

up at home, you go to work, and if you wake up at work, you go home!"

Anyway, shortly after the war, the department added a third shift and the

captains on the two original shifts had to identify firemen to go to the new shift. Of course no captain would send any problem children to the new shift, would

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they? I remember being told one story of the fire chief calling one of the captains and asking him if he was sending some good people to the new shift. The captain responded, "Absolutely," and the fire chief told him: "Good, because you're going with them!"

Anyway, the new shift became "the B shift," and it was full of misfits and agitators, as practical jokers were known back then. When I joined the department in 1966, I was assigned to the B shift and thus became acquainted with and indoctrinated into this, to say the least, band of overzealous beings — and I loved every minute of it.

My starting pay was \$390 per month. Yes, per *month*. I couldn't wait to get to work each day. I was assigned to Station No. 6, up on NW 36th Street and 7th Avenue, and it, too, was a glorious old station. It had the trucks on the ground floor and an open dormitory on the second floor, with a fireplace in the lobby.

I spent many a night sitting around that old fireplace in the winter, enjoying the tales of the old-timers, occasionally tearing myself away to respond to fires in small wood-frame house. Since I was

a rookie, I'd "swing" from Station 6 to Station 2 now and then to fill in whenever a veteran fireman was off. That's how I got to know the old-timers there as well.

Members of this group had mostly come into the department after the war and now were seasoned firemen with 20-plus years of experience. There was Joe Ferrell, an accomplished musician and piano player who also had a bar in Opa-locka. He once wrote a song for Perry Como, but wasn't sure that Como would pay any attention to it, so the guys said: "Why not burn it into a sheet of plywood with a torch and ship it to him?"

That's what they did, and Como had the plywood sheet on his TV show and sang the song, to the thrill of Joe and the boys. Then there was Johnny Cisco, who was one hell of a firefighter, but he would do stupid, spur-of-the-moment things. Like the time he was headed back home from the lake after a day of duck hunting in his brand-new Chevy pickup with his trusty Labrador retriever, Sam, sleeping by his side on the front seat. Johnny wondered what would happen if he put the truck in reverse while doing 60 on Highway 27.

So he did, with disastrous results.

He blew the transmission and Sam went flying off the seat and into the firewall under the dashboard. Johnny had the truck towed to the dealer and told them he had no idea what happened. He was just driving down the road when the transmission blew up. Since the truck was under warranty, the dealer put in a new transmission. Funny thing, though, Johnny said that Sam would never get back in that truck. Not a dumb dog!

We had "racing roaches" at that old fire station, too. The way it worked was, you caught a roach, painted a number on its back, and turned it loose at the rear of the station. Then we'd wait to see whose roach made it to the front of the station first. We'd be sitting out in front of the station on a warm summer night and suddenly a roach with a "4" on its back would run past us onto the sidewalk.

We also had a pack of feral cats that lived at the station; they were our rat patrol. We'd hang a bell from the phone line that connected to the station, running above a row of garbage cans. We'd also tie a rope to that line. When a rat

would run across the phone line — because it was in close proximity to the garbage — the bell would ring and the firemen would run out and shake the line by the attached rope. The ringing bell would bring the cats, who would wait for the rats to fall from the line as the firemen frantically pulled the rope to dislodge the unlucky rat.

All the cats had names. Jump Cat would always get the first rat, since he could jump higher than the rest of the pack as a rat fell from the line. There was Slinky, who was always walking slow and slinking around, and Fan Cat, who got caught in the fan belt of Bug-eye's truck one morning and had to have the tip of his ear sliced off to set him free. He healed up fine, and earned a new moniker to boot.

Most of those firemen have long since passed on, but they lived in a time when, as Captain Campbell would say, "Men were men and women were proud of it!" Those were good old days, and I'm proud to have been a B-shifter.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Sculptures in the Garden

The Deering Estate becomes the latest green space to take the contemporary art plunge

By **Anne Tschida**
BT Contributor

Maybe it was the full foliage in Miami-Dade's historic parks that for years covered up the art they attempted to exhibit. Or perhaps it was because art was never the focal point — and selling point — it is today. Whatever the reason, area parks and art never seemed to mix. Until recently. As public art has flowered, our parks have begun to double as exhibition spaces.

Like Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, which planted magnificent Dale Chihuly glass sculptures throughout the park several years ago to much applause. During this previous Art Basel, Fairchild brought in giant rose and insect sculptures from another well-known artist, Will Ryman.

Vizcaya Museum and Gardens has ratcheted up its visual arts program as well, giving space to intriguing conceptual artists such as Ernesto Oroza ("Mapping Vizcaya," April 2011) and, most recently, Naomi Fisher.

Now this month, the Deering Estate is also opening up its art program to include an adventurous embrace of 21st-century work. As part of its SoBay Festival of the Arts, the estate will feature works from members of its residency program, including Aurora Molina and Christina Pettersson, along with artists

from the first two years of LegalArt's residency, such as Jiae Hwang, Manny Prieres, and the TM Sisters — a talented group of compelling, contemporary Miami artists. But outdoors is where some boundaries really will be pushed.

For the first time, the Deering Estate is letting artist and teacher Ralph Provisero curate an exhibition that somewhat defies traditional notions of a sculpture show. Called "Wedding Crashers," the show includes site-specific sculptures from 12 well-known local artists who, indeed, crashed the grounds and made works that would interact with the unique location and history of the estate.

That history starts with agriculture mogul Charles Deering, the Chicago businessman behind the International Harvester Company, who later in life dedicated himself to collecting art and amassing mansions. In the early 20th Century, he built the manor and cottages comprising his estate on Biscayne Bay, along what is now Old Cutler Road. (Some interesting connections between Deering and the previously mentioned garden parks of Miami: Charles had botanist David



Deering Estate at Cutler

The Charles Deering Estate, 444 acres of lush foliage — the perfect artist's playground.



Artist Felecia Chizuko Carlisle and her floating gold bricks.

Photos courtesy of Ralph Provisero

Fairchild work on his grounds; and his brother, James Deering, built Vizcaya.)

After his last heir died and most of the art collection was donated or sold off, the property was turned over to the state and Miami-Dade County in 1985. Today the 444-acre estate is a nature preserve and encompasses hammocks, mangroves,

salt marshes, and a new, burgeoning art collection.

Like its sister mansion, Vizcaya, the Deering Estate may be best known as a wedding, birthday, and *quince* party destination, which is why Provisero named this exhibition what he did. Last year he installed an outdoor sculpture at the estate — he has had a number of outdoor commissions and shows with the Dorsch Gallery — and they

asked him back to produce an entire show for the annual festival.

Provisero says he invited artists he knew would be creative and self-guided in their projects. He asked them to visit the expansive property and decide how they would interact with it, not in a blatantly obtrusive way, but also not in a traditional way. He didn't want them

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Ralph Provisero's sculpture on the Deering Estate grounds.

bringing in pre-made sculptures and plopping them down. He also wanted them to make work that would intrigue the next wedding party that passed through.

"I want to bring some communities together [that may not have interacted in the past]," he says. "The point was not to be over the top, but to break down barriers." Many of the people in South Miami may not be regulars at Wynwood art walks, just as artists and their colleagues from the county's northern reaches may have no idea that a place like the Deering Estate exists.

Provisero also wanted to riff on the inherently conservative event that is a wedding reception, where everything is coordinated and little is left to chance. So he decided the artists "would respond to a given area by creating an altered space through an alternate sense of reality."

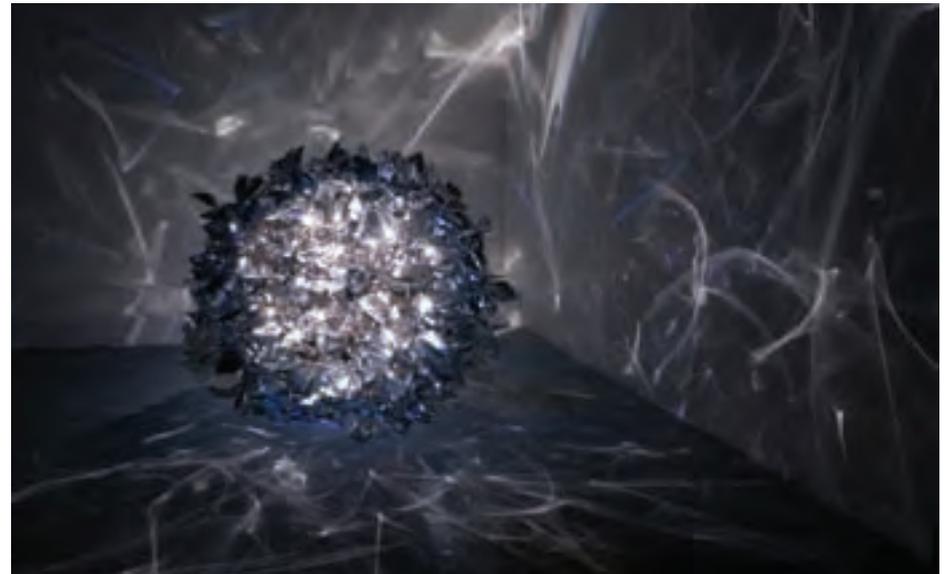
In the end, the 12 artists came up with proposals that Provisero thought fit well, and which would be scattered all over the grounds; another part of Provisero's

mission is to get visitors to explore the property, by drawing them through with specifically placed artwork. So while avoiding, for the most part, the main reception areas, the artists targeted various nooks and crannies and got to work.

Jason Hedges built a cooking spit, as he has done in the past, in a vertical teepee form. After the opening "cooking" performance, the scaffolding of the spit will remain, like the remnants of a wedding reception.

Felecia Chizuko Carlisle will float gold cubes on the water, maybe a reference to the fortune that it took to build the massive estate. The cubes will be made from actual bricks, with floating pontoons keeping them above water.

Robert Chambers devised a sculpture out of old shelving that resembled bleachers, perhaps reminiscent of a place from which to watch a wedding. Cheryl Pope wanted to bring in an antique phone booth, where people could walk in



Model for Wendy Wischer's light sculpture.

and listen to somebody's history. Bhakti Baxter was interested in taking over two positions that straddle a waterway, joining them with an architectural intervention, while Frances Trombly will set up caution tape, suggesting a designated area for something special or foreboding; the tape is actually the artist's woven, handmade piece of cloth. Wendy Wischer will provide a light sculpture tucked into the grass.

Clifton Childree took a special liking to the wine cellar of the main house, where he was told ghosts live. Childree is known for sets and sculptures that relate to the history of a particular era or figure, so this basement, which still holds 3000 bottles from an illegal distillery of the Prohibition era, inspired him to make an era-specific "sculpture machine."

The exhibit technically only runs through March 10, but Provisero hopes the pieces will be invited to stay. In fact, while some of the works will be performance-based and therefore fleeting,

such as a dance on a boat from Pioneer Winter, Provisero wants everyone to leave something behind. (Winter will leave his boat.) Ideally, he says, these works will form the foundation for building an ultra-contemporary sculpture collection.

Whether or not that happens, just the fact the Deering Estate was open to "Wedding Crashers" is progress, pushing the envelope a little, and in an area of town that has been off-the-beaten art path.

The SoBay Festival of the Arts kicks off on Valentine's Day, with the official reception the night of February 18. Along with the performances and indoor and outdoor art, Dinorah de Jesus Rodriguez will project her alt-cinema on the trees and landscaping near the entrance on opening night. The evening is free.

"Wedding Crashers," through March 10, the Deering Estate at Cutler, 16701 SW 72nd Ave., Miami, 305-235-1668; www.deeringestate.org.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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www.101exhibit.com
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"Undertow" by Jason Shawn Alexander
February 11 through March 3:
"Flesch and Blood" by Heather Nevay

12345 WEST DIXIE STUDIO AND GALLERY

12345 West Dixie Hwy., North Miami
305-895-2553
www.dixieimageworks.com
Through February 12:
"Rust and Resurrection" with Irene Torruella Munroe,
Paul Morris, and Randy Burman

ABBA FINE ART

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

ACND GALLERY OF ART

4949 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
305-751-8367
www.acnd.net
February 24 through April 4:
"23 Degrees, Far from Paradise" by Benjamin Rusnak
Reception February 25, 7 to 9 p.m.

ALBERTO LINERO GALLERY

2294 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-587-0172
www.albertolinerogallery.com
February 8 through March 1:
"Amour" with Matachos Art, Pedro Sandoval, Nelly Del Rio, and Fred Mou
Reception February 11, 2 to 9 p.m.

ALEJANDRA VON HARTZ FINE ARTS

2630 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-438-0220
www.alejandravonhartz.net
February 10 through March 30:
"Things-in-the-Air" by Pachi Giustinian
Reception February 10, 6 to 9 p.m.

AMY ALONSO GALLERY

750 NE 124th St., North Miami
305-975-6933
www.alonsored.com
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ART FUSION

1 NE 40th St., Miami
305-573-5730
www.artfusiongallery.com
Through March 19:
"Odyssey 2012" with various artists

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 February 12:
"Collector's Delight" with Carlos Cruz Diez, Fernando Botero, Jesus Soto, Alexander Calder, Alejandro Otero, Cornelis Zitman, Nicolas Shoffer, Oswaldo Vigas, Victor Valera, Alirio Palacios, James Mathison, Luisa Richter, Arturo Correa, and Jorge Segui
February 24 through May 1:
"Visible Structure and Reflected Color" by L. Tomasello, curated by Serge Lemoine
Reception February 24, 7 to 10 p.m.

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561 NW 32nd St., Miami
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February 10 through March 2:
"INTERACTION I" with Stefan Eins, Richmodis DM, and Gunilda Woerner

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BERNICE STEINBAUM GALLERY

3550 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-573-2700
www.bernicesteinbaumgallery.com
Through February 29:
"This Is Not Taxidermy" by Enrique Gomez de Molina

BLACK SQUARE GALLERY

2248 NW 1st Pl., Miami
786-999-9735
www.blacksquaregallery.com
Through February 27:
"Levitation" by Victor Sydorenko

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
February 12 through March 25:
"Sherri Tan, 1992-2012: A 20 Year Survey" by Sherri Tan
Reception February 12, 6 to 9 p.m.

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
February 24 through April 22: "Full Spectrum Dominance" with Conor McGrady and Roberto Visani
"A Little Window Inside My Head" by Ana Albertina
Reception February 24, 7 to 10 p.m.



Vera Iliatova, *Practice*, oil on canvas, 2011, at David Castillo Gallery.

CARIDI GALLERY

758 NE 125th St., North Miami
786-202-5554
www.caridigallery.com
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CENTER FOR VISUAL COMMUNICATION

541 NW 27th St., Miami
305-571-1415
www.visual.org
Through February 14:
"Travelers in Time" by Lluís 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.chirinosanchez.com
Ongoing:
"Group Show" with various artists

CURATOR'S VOICE ART PROJECTS

2509 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
786-357-0568
www.curatorsvoiceartprojects.com
Through February 18:
"Show Me the Money" by Rubem Robierb

DANIEL AZOULAY GALLERY

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Store # 120 Buena Vista Blvd., Miami
305-576-1977
www.danielazoulaygallery.com
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DAVID CASTILLO GALLERY

2234 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-8110
www.davidcastillogallery.com
February 11 through March 31:
Harumi Abe, Vera Iliatova, and Yui Kugimiya
Reception February 11, 6 to 9 p.m.



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DIANA LOWENSTEIN FINE ARTS

2043 N Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-1804

www.difinearts.com

February 11 through April 7:

"The Mantuana of Clemencia Labin" by Clemencia Labin

"archiTECTONICS" by Julie Davidow
Reception February 11, 6 to 10 p.m.

DIASPORA VIBE GALLERY

3938 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-573-4046

www.diasporavibe.net

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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dv@dimensionsvariable.net

Through February 18:

"The Unit" by Alice Raymond

DINA MITRANI GALLERY

2620 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
786-486-7248

www.dinamitrani-gallery.com

February 9 through March 30:

"Short Stories" by Guillermo Srodek-Hart
Reception February 9, 6 to 8 p.m.

DORSCH GALLERY

151 NW 24th St., Miami
305-576-1278

www.dorschgallery.com

February 10 through April 7:

"The Politics of Time" by Kyle Trowbridge
"1001 Dreams of Occupation — What's in It For Me?" by Magnus Sigurdarson
"Magnetic Poetry" by Carlos Rigau
Reception February 10, 6 to 9 p.m.

DOT FIFTYONE ART SPACE

51 NW 36th St., Miami
305-573-9994

www.dotfiftyone.com

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ELITE ART EDITIONS

2732 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
754-422-5942

www.elitearteditions.com

February 11 through March 5:

"Gift Boxes" by Fabiana Peña
Reception February 11, 6 to 10 p.m.

ETRA FINE ART

50 NE 40th St., Miami
305-438-4383

www.etrafineart.com

February 11 through March 11:

"Ecstatic Visions" by Andrea Dasha Reich
Reception February 11, 7 to 10 p.m.

FREDRIC SNITZER GALLERY

2247 NW 1st Pl., Miami
305-448-8976

www.snitzer.com

Through February 4:

"Speed of Life" by Mauricio Gonzalez

February 17 through March 17:

Michael Vasquez

GALERIE HELENE LAMARQUE

125 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-582-6067

www.galeriehelelamarque.com

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GALERIE SCHUSTER MIAMI

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www.galleryschuster.com

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786-431-1957

www.gallery212miami.com

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GALLERY DIET

174 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-571-2288

www.gallerydiet.com

Through February 11:

"Hysterical Sublime" by Richard Høglund

February 17 through March 31:

"The Woodmans" with Betty Woodman, Charlie Woodman, Francesca Woodman, and George Woodman

Reception February 17, 6 to 9 p.m.

GARY NADER FINE ART

62 NE 27th St., Miami

305-576-0256

www.garynader.com

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GIOVANNI ROSSI FINE ART

2628 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
561-251-1375

www.giovanrossifineart.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

February 11 through March 3:

"Games in the Dark" by Gladys Triana
"Cinetique" by Nicolas Felizola

"Untitled" by Consuelo Castañeda
Reception February 11, 7 to 10 p.m.

HAROLD GOLEN GALLERY

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



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

www.haroldgolengallery.com

Through February 11:

"Encyclopedia of Hallucinations East" by Rob Reger

IDEOBOX ARTSPACE

2417 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-9878

www.ideobox.com

Through February 26:

"Astilla en el Ojo" by Rodrigo Echeverri Calero

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www.jgplatform.com

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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 20:

"Black Collection" by Salustiano

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50 NE 29th St., Miami

305-447-3888

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600 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
305-237-7700

Through May 4:

"Minimum/Maximum" with various artists

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11380 NW 27th Ave., Miami
305-237-1532

www.mdc.edu

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MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, HOMESTEAD ART SPACE

500 College Terr., Homestead
305-237-5000

www.mdc.edu/homestead

Call gallery for exhibition information

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, KENDALL GALLERY

1110 SW 104th St., Miami
305-237-2322

www.mdc.edu/kendall

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1800 N. Bayshore Dr., Miami
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www.ninatorresfineart.com

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"Monumental: Here and Now" with Rodolfo Sanchez Lalinde, Henry Bermudez, Eduardo Agelvis, and José Antonio Zarate

Reception February 3, 7 to 10 p.m.

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305-573-3572

www.norman-liebman-studio.com

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www.oascaniogallery.com

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2450 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-2400

www.panamericanart.com

Through February 4:

"Urbanitas" with Gustavo Acosta, Luis Cruz Azaceta, Tony Berlant, Luis Camejo, Carlos Estevez, José Manuel Fors, Carlos Gallardo, Milton George, Gory, Santiago Porter, Magnus Sigurdarson, and Tracey Snelling

February 11 through March 31:

"The Naked Truth: Nudes and Erotica in Art" with various artists

Reception February 17, 6 to 9 p.m.

PAREDES FINE ARTS STUDIO

2311 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-534-2184

www.miguelparedes.com

Ongoing:

"Elements of an Artist" by Miguel Paredes

PRIMARY PROJECTS

4141 NE 2nd Ave., Suite 104, Miami
www.primaryprojectspace.com

info@primaryflight.com

February 11 through March 31:

"Bad As I Wanna Be" by Jessy Nite

Reception February 11, 7 to 11 p.m.

SAMMER GALLERY

82 NE 29th St., Miami
305-441-2005

www.artnet.com/sammerglassery.html

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www.spinelloprojects.com

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www.tonywynn.com

Ongoing:

"Patriotica" by Tony Wynn

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305-407-8131

www.thelunchboxgallery.com

Through February 25:

"Isolations" with Lilly McElroy, Dana Meilijson, Rodolfo Vanmarcke, and Missy Nuzzo

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201 NE 39th St., Miami
305-576-6960

www.wrpfineart.com

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NW 2nd Avenue between 25th and 26th Street

305-573-0658

www.thewynwoodwalls.com

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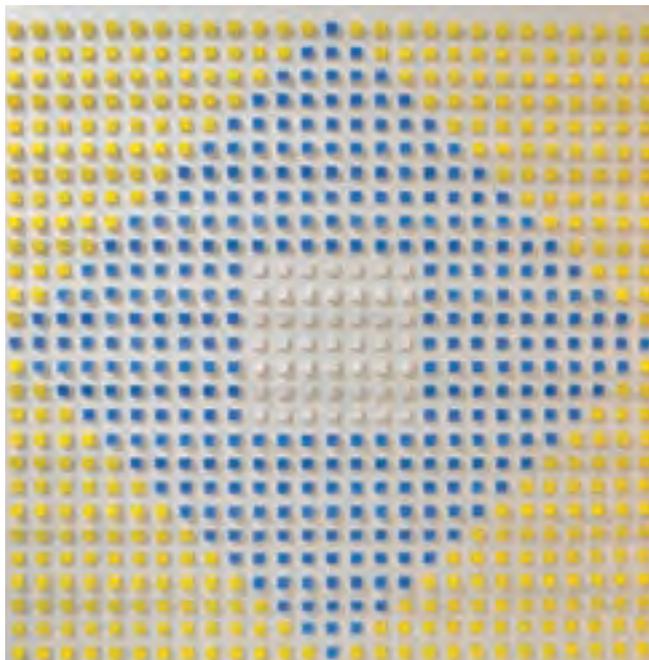
Through February 19:

"Potential Amendments" with Jenny Brillhart, Vincent Hemphill, and Moira Holohan

February 24 through April 1:

"Mapping: Time and Space" with Jake Margolin and Nick Vaughan, Amanda Serrano, Rosa Naday Garmendia, Lucinda Linderman, Regina Jestrow, and Carrie Sieh

Reception February 25, 7 to 10 p.m.



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

BASS MUSEUM OF ART

2100 Collins Ave., Miami Beach
305-673-7530

www.bassmuseum.org

Through February 12:

Laurent Grasso

Through March 4:

"Beauty Business" by Erwin Wurm

CIFO (Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation)

1018 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-455-3380

www.cifo.org

Through March 4:

"Frames and Documents, Conceptualist Practices: Selections from the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection" with various artists

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

Reception February 11, 7 to 10 p.m.

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FROST ART MUSEUM

10975 SW 17th St., Miami
305-348-2890

thefrost.fiu.edu

Through February 19:

"Color on Color" with various artists

Through March 18:

"Tour de France/Florida: Contemporary Artists from France in Florida's Private Collections"

Through March 18:

"West Wind East Water" by Qin Feng

Through April 1:

"A Thought for the Planet / Un Pensamiento por el Planeta" by Annette Turrillo

"Offerings" by Maria Thereza Negreiros

Through April 15: "Metropole/Colony: Africa and Italy" with various artists

LEGAL ART

1035 N. Miami Ave., Suite 200, Miami
www.legalartmiami.org

Call gallery for exhibition information

LOWE ART MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

1301 Stanford Dr., Coral Gables
305-284-3535

www.lowemuseum.org

Through March 25: "From the Vault: Building a Legacy, Sixty Years of Collecting at the Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami" with various artists

Through April 22: "Women, Windows, and the Word: Diverging Perspectives on Islamic Art" with various artists

Through September 23:

"Sainted Blessings: A Gift of Mexican Retablos from Joseph and Janet Shein" with various artists

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 February 26:

"If the Face Had Wheels" by Dana Schutz

Through March 18: "Focus Gallery: Marcel Duchamp" by Marcel Duchamp, curated by Rene Morales

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

THE MARGULIES COLLECTION

591 NW 27th St., Miami
305-576-1051

www.margulieswarehouse.com

Through April 28: "New Exhibitions" with various artists

THE RUBELL FAMILY COLLECTION

95 NW 29th St., Miami
305-573-6090

<http://rfc.museum>

Through July 27:

"American Exuberance" with various artists

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Through February 11:

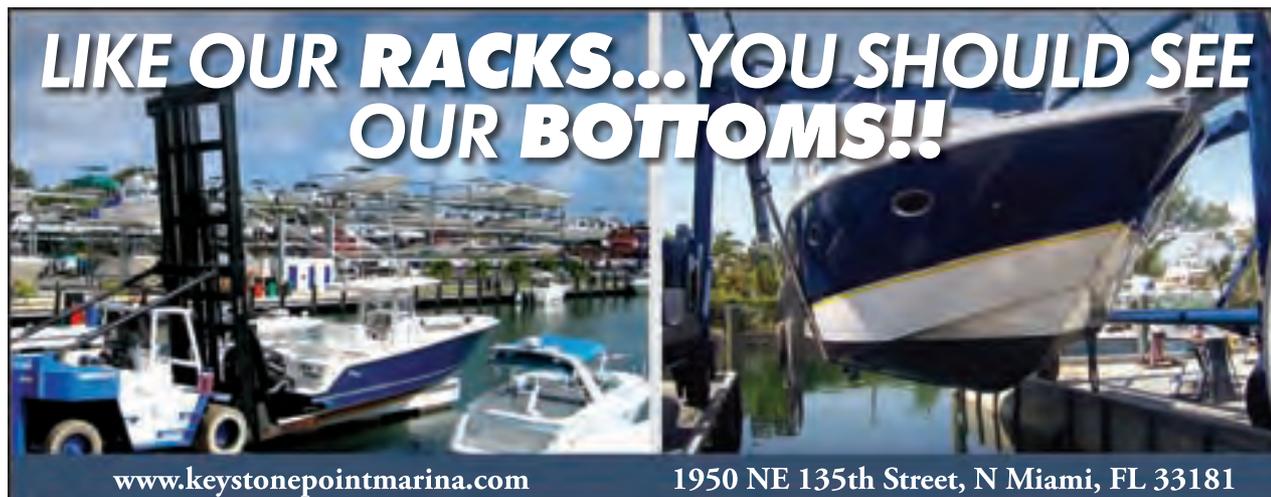
"Love Trips: A Triptych on Love" by Jillian Mayer

Compiled by Melissa Wallen

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Here and Now Forever

Some milestones are just worth celebrating — like the fact that Miami Light Project's **Here and Now** festival has been going strong since 1999.

On two successive weekends, from **Thursday, February 2 through Saturday, February 4, and from Thursday, February 9 through Saturday, February 11**, new and experimental works commissioned by Miami Light will get an airing at the Lightbox at Goldman Warehouse (404 NW 26th St.). On the program: Cabaret stylist Natasha Tsakos will debut a 3-D enhanced performance called *Omen*; Carlota Pradera and Priscilla Marrero will test out a dance-theater number, *Aquarius Juice*; and more. Shows are at 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$20, with student discounts available. Call 866-811-4111 or go to www.miamilightproject.com.

Hit the Roads, Jack

Winter is the time for wandering outdoors, maybe discovering a little something about our surroundings. Historian Paul George can help you with that, during his **Roaming the Roads Walking Tour**, sponsored by HistoryMiami. On **Saturday, February 4** from 10:00 a.m. to noon, garrulous George will lead a stroll through Miami's central district, which is also one of its most historic. It's that pedestrian-friendly area tucked just off Brickell, which includes such old and unique houses of worship as the St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church and the Beth David Congregation. Cost is \$20 for members; \$30 for nonmembers. To RSVP, call 305-375-1621 or go to www.historymiami.org.

Step Lively into the Street

Street fests should always be held downtown. Something about the tall buildings and the people packed into a small area makes everything seem more exciting.

Which is why the **10th Annual Flagler Fest**, to be held on **Saturday, February 4**, is special. Taking place along downtown Miami's closed-to-traffic-for-this-one-day main street (between Biscayne Boulevard and NW 1st Avenue), Flagler Fest will feature a petting zoo for the kids and, for the adults, a vintage automobile show. For anyone who hasn't ventured downtown for a while, there might be added interest in seeing the people-friendly life that has sprung up in what once was a dead zone. From 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Admission is free.

Mapping Fun

Okay, so the **19th Annual Miami International Map Fair** at HistoryMiami (101 W. Flagler St.) may scream "nerd party," but cartography holds a fascination for people the world over. Maps, after all, are vehicles of discovery, pointing the way to new adventures. From **Saturday, February 4 to Sunday, February 5**, antique maps and rare books will be on display, and the world's top map dealers will be on hand. Admission will also serve a good cause, as the small fee of \$5 is a direct donation to the upkeep of the museum. Hours are 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more information, go to www.historymiami.org.

All's Fair in Miami

Miami is the "Home of the Art Fairs," tons and tons of them. So why shouldn't February get one? From **Thursday, February 16 through Monday, February 20**, Midtown will host **Art Wynwood**. Not to be confused with the Wynwood Art Fair or Art Miami, this will be Art Wynwood's inaugural unveiling, with about 70 international galleries represented, including Miami's Bernice Steinbaum and Pan American Art Projects. As a standalone fair, it is hoped that Art Wynwood will bring attention to those galleries and artists that might otherwise get lost in the December shuffle. The fair will take place in a tent at 3101 NE 1st



Ave., Midtown Miami. Hours are from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Day passes cost \$15. Go to www.art-wynwood.com.

Blues in the Night

Robert Cray isn't your granddaddy's blues artist. While steeped in the blues of the Deep South, Cray also incorporates rock, jazz, even hints of reggae into his sound. After forming the Robert Cray Band in the 1970s, the guitarist and vocalist has produced one acclaimed record after another, and racked up five Grammys. As part of Black History Month, he arrives at the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts on **Friday, February 17** for **Blues and Soul**. Sharing the bill with Cray will be new-generation blues belter Shemekia Copeland. Tickets range from \$25 to \$125. Go to www.arshtcenter.org.

Mandy the Magnificent

Everyone remembers Mandy Patinkin from the cult-movie hit *The Princess Bride*, in which he delivered the classic line: "My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die." Although Patinkin seems to be fine with that particular claim to fame, don't expect to hear him say anything of the sort when he shows off his famed Broadway chops with the premiere of *Let Go*, a medley of songs for his "American photo album," featuring compositions by the likes of Sondheim, Bernstein, Berlin, and Tom Waits. Patinkin will be at the Aventura Arts and Cultural Center from **Thursday, February 23 through Sunday, February 26**. Showtimes are 8:00 p.m., with 2:00 p.m. matinees on the weekend. Tickets are \$75. Go to www.aventuracenter.org.

New and Sharp Sounds

Anyone familiar with the avant-garde and experimental music scene will know how integral the laptop computer has become to performance. That wasn't the case when guitarist **Elliott Sharp** pulled his out for a New York City show in the 1980s. No one had really done it before. Now, thanks to Tigertail Productions,



Homecoming Dance

The legendary **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** returns to the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts from **Thursday, February 23 through Sunday, February 26**, but this year will be different. Robert Battle, only the third director of the company since Alvin Ailey founded it in 1958, will make his directorial and curatorial debut. Oh, and he's a Miami native. The New York press has already praised his leadership as invigorating. In the Ziff Opera House at 8:00 p.m., with weekend matinees at 2:00 p.m. Tickets range from \$20 to \$120. Go to www.arshtcenter.org.

the musical innovator and pioneer will be turning up at the Miami-Dade County Auditorium's On Stage Black Box Theater (2901 W. Flagler St.) on **Saturday, February 25** at 8:30 p.m. Classically trained as a pianist, Sharp mixes genres from speed metal to jazz in his guitar compositions, and has teamed up with musicians, performers, and artists alike. Tickets cost \$30, with student and senior discounts available. Go to www.tigertail.org.

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

Through the Looking-Glass, Anew

The tale of Alice after she falls down the rabbit hole and encounters all sorts of nonsense — literally — has become legendary. But that doesn't mean Lewis Carroll's classic can't use some updating once in a while. The Playground Theatre (9806 NE 2nd Ave.) has had Stephanie Ansin and Fernando Calzadilla refashion that rabbit hole as a 21st-century one, replacing the English countryside with a tropical setting and adding original new music, costumes, and surreal happenings, Miami-style. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* runs **Wednesday, February 1 through Saturday, March 11**. For showtimes, tickets, or to set up a field trip, go to www.theplaygroundtheatre.com.

Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Maybe He Came Over for a Cup of Sugar

500 Block of NE 64th Street

People are conditioned to the unseemly sight at home: spilt milk on the floor, the occasional roach, or dust bunnies in the corner. What about Boulevard scum hanging out your window? A homeowner was shocked to see a mystery man climbing in through the kitchen window. He tried to push him out, but the intruder brandished a nine-inch knife. As the victim backed off, the would-be burglar made his escape. During this very pleasant winter weather, please be careful when airing out the apartment; open windows invite all sorts of things.

UR Stuff is GR8, LOL

1100 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Victim received text message from an acquaintance letting her know that she was in possession of victim's designer bag and dress, valued at \$5000. Victim asked for the items back, but only received veiled threats and profanity. Victim has no idea how the items went missing. As to when the items would be returned, the suspect said she would return them to a mutual friend "in time." Guess she needs it for that hip party that she's going to. Text messages have been entered as evidence, as the mutual friend needs to really go through that Facebook friends list.

Does This Qualify as Petite Larceny?

2000 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Victim came home and heard noises in her apartment. Suddenly, her front door slammed. When she peered through the peephole of her door, she saw a short man — five feet, four inches — walking away from the apartment. He carried a book bag. She can't describe him any better than that, save for commenting on his short stature, which she was somehow able to pinpoint to the inch. There have been no arrests and no items were taken. Bad things can come in small packages.

An Apple a Day Keeps Crook Happy

160 NE 79th St.

Victim was surfing the Web on his iMac laptop right in front of this Miami-Dade



Library branch. A man approached, produced a small, black handgun, and declared, "Give me the Apple computer." Victim complied and the suspect ran off. Police canvassed the area, but to no avail. Publicly surf the Web at your own peril in Miami, folks. Those online games could set you back a grand or two.



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Ex-Girlfriend Goes Clubbing — For Real

N. Miami Avenue and 71st Street

The auto-theft deterrent “The Club” has been with us for about two decades, stopping car thieves cold in their tracks. (Yeah right.) But now there’s evidence to suggest it has created a whole new genre of crime. Victim’s girlfriend came to his apartment and was incensed to find another female there. She chased her rival out of the complex and lectured her beau about infidelity. He agreed to drive her home, but in the middle of the drive, she grabbed his Club and exited the vehicle. She then went bat-crazy, striking the car repeatedly with the Club, destroying the vehicle’s reflectors. The victim drove off, bearing the pain of cracked reflectors and a broken heart, not to mention the loss of his beloved Club.

One More Reason to Feel Less Safe

12700 Block of NE Miami Court

The Department of Homeland Security was set up to protect us. This Homeland Security employee parked her vehicle, leaving her handbag inside. In a North Miami minute,

someone smashed her vehicle window and took the bag, which contained cash, credit cards, and — wait for it — her Homeland Security badge. The victim advised police that she saw a “suspicious” man in the area of the vehicle shortly before she left her bag unattended — but still left her bag in the car. These are the people protecting us from terrorist masterminds?

Stop Us If This Sounds Crazy

13300 Block of NE 7th Avenue

A man placed an ad on Craigslist advertising his iPhone for sale. He received a call from an interested buyer who arranged to meet him at North Miami High School. While the seller sat in the parking lot of the school, the buyer came up to the seller’s Mercedes-Benz and asked to see the phone. Once satisfied, the buyer pulled out a gold-plated Glock (just like a James Bond movie) and told him to, “Get the f*** out of the car.” The suspect then drove off. Inside the stolen Mercedes were an iMac and two iPhones, as well as credit cards. We could point out how many elements of this story make no sense, but it would literally take us the next two pages.

Reverse Home Improvement

2000 Block of NE 122nd Road

An unknown suspect entered a home by breaking the bedroom window. The suspect, feeling creative, then vandalized the entire home by spray-painting every wall, the appliances, and the kitchen countertop. He also defecated on the carpet and left a dead fish to rot. (Nice added touch). We’re going to go out on a limb here: Ex-boyfriend, perhaps?

Victim Ventures Outside, Asks for Trouble

NE 2nd Avenue and 82nd Street

Suspect approached a woman and asked if she could give him change for \$10. The woman told him she did not have it. He asked her for a dollar instead, which the woman refused to give him. He then ripped her purse off her shoulder and ran off. This happened at a bus stop, in broad daylight. Please remember: When you live in Miami, walking out of your front door is considered a risky act. Be aware of your surroundings.

Cardio Crook Strikes Again

NE 5th Avenue and NE 79th Street

In another brazen robbery, a man was walking to a store via an alleyway. A

male suspect approached him and demanded money. The suspect pulled out a knife and held it at waist level. The victim gave the creep his wallet and wristwatch. The suspect, in lieu of running away with the items, proceeded to merely “jog” west on NE 79th Street, according to the victim. Next time you see one of those pesky joggers while driving, try to get a good look. He may have just left the scene of a crime.

Taking Credit for Old Times’ Sake

900 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

An ex-employee liked to frequent his old workplace, to socialize and converse with the owners and his former coworkers. You know, just to see how everybody was doing. As an ex-employee, he was trusted with access to the business’s computer system, so with every purchase he made while visiting, he also gave himself a credit. The owner eventually figured out why his former employee was so fond of dropping in, and contacted police.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Island Adventure on Biscayne Bay

Three prime destinations for boaters and kayakers, provided the tide is right

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

Pirates of Biscayne: A play in three islands.

Island One: A group of giddy schoolgirls huddles together on a spit of sand, screaming at the sight of pinkish moon jellies. Jellyfish! One girl seizes the day, scampers back to the island's center, and assumes the throne on a singular blue folding chair. The other girls quickly form her court. Around them a black dog, the jester, runs in sandy circles. At the water's edge, King Dad anxiously fiddles with his powerboat. On this Friday, he is guilty of letting the girls play hooky. Off with their headbands!

Neither this escape from reality nor the setting itself can last. When the tide comes in, this temporary island — a sandbar, really — sinks underwater. The entire Haulover sandbar is nothing more than a shallow area near the inlet and marina of the same name, but on weekends it becomes something else. For the boating crowd, Haulover sandbar is Margaritaville.

Island Two: A family of four arrives by canoe to a circle of green. They have the whole island to themselves. Two boys attempt to fish while the adults get their relaxation on. Slightly more than an acre in size, the island of Little Sandspur sits smack dab in the center of Biscayne Bay. You can see everything and hear nothing. You found the Black Pearl.

Island Three: Guys on the beach playing football with a coconut. Boys raising a tent for their weekend of freedom. Fishers making a first cast from their boat and reeling in a sizable jack. Raccoons raiding trash cans and getting drunk off discarded beer containers. Welcome to (Big) Sandspur Island, otherwise known as Beer Can Island.

It's a shame to use that epithet, because the big island appears much cleaner than in years past. If anything, call it *Beer Bottle Island*, as the littering crowd seems to have switched to green-tinted Heinekens. Watch out for broken glass.

But forget the stereotype. Big Sandspur is where the action both is and isn't. At 15 acres, this is the largest island in northern Biscayne Bay, and it's a



BT photos by Jim W. Harper

On the two Sandspur islands, you can see everything and hear nothing, at least on weekdays.

relatively easy paddle from Oleta River State Park. For the truly adventurous and thrifty, camping is free. But be forewarned: There's nothing here, except what partiers have left behind.

On weekends the action is obvious, as most visitors arrive by powerboat and anchor along the beach that faces North Miami. Sandspur's beach offers easy access and fun for the whole family, but most of the island is too woody to penetrate. The inner hammock's growth is so thick that even the raccoons carry mini machetes.

Island hopping between these three locations is probably the most fun to be had in North Bay. Those without a boat can rent a kayak or canoe in Oleta River State Park and paddle to Sandspur in half an hour. The other two islands lie on either side of Sandspur. Three islands in three hours — no problem in fair weather, except that Haulover's "island" reveals itself only at low tide, so let's put that one aside.

Every time I visit the two Sandspurs, I discover new wildlife. Dolphins and manatees; herons aplenty. My latest encounter, looking from the surface into clear shallows near a tree trunk, was a shockingly beautiful, three-foot long, tube-shaped fish that was staring back at me. The fish's turquoise spots glowed against its sandy-colored, very elongated body. The bluespotted cornetfish is listed as "uncommon" in my *Reef Fish Identification* guide, but it seemed right at home here by the shore. Gorgeous.



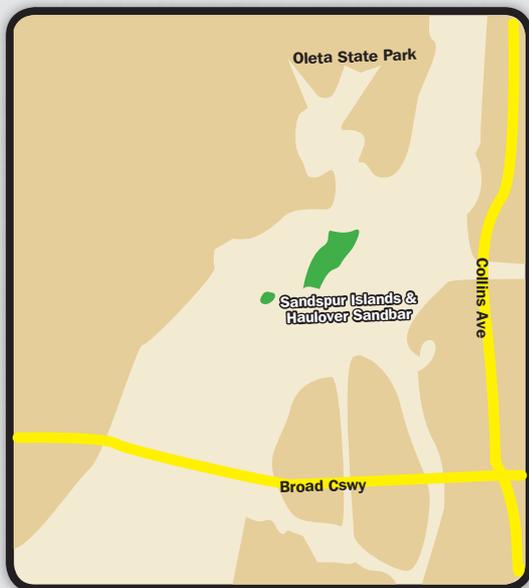
The Haulover sandbar appears and disappears with the tide.

The Sandspur islands are success stories of something manmade becoming natural. Lying within Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve and known as spoil islands — because they're derived from the spoils of dredging projects — these islands used to be overgrown with exotic and invasive vegetation. In the 1990s, Miami-Dade County coordinated the task of reinforcing the islands' shorelines and replacing the exotics with native plants. Today the islands are thriving, surprisingly diverse ecosystems. Given their urban context, they may never be pristine, but they appear to be improving with age.

The renovation of Little Sandspur in 1999 cost \$170,000, a little less than a third of the \$531,000 that big Sandspur's make-over cost in 1993. Little Sandspur has a large blue sign commemorating the project near its beach, but it isn't easy to find; tree limbs have practically devoured it.

Both islands boast similar features. The shores facing the ocean have rocky, non-scalable limestone boulders to resist

SANDSPUR ISLANDS & HAULOVER SANDBAR



Park Rating



North Biscayne Bay
via Oleta River State Park
305-919-1844

Hours: N/A

Picnic tables: Not really

Barbecues: Not really

Picnic pavilions: No

Tennis courts: No

Athletic fields: No

Night lighting: No

Swimming pool: No

Playground: No

Special features: Treasure hunting. Good luck finding the picnic bench and abandoned grill.



Strolling the beach at Little Sandspur Island, which is a bit more than once acre in size.



Big Sandspur is good for camping and exploring the interior, including a stream and pond.



On both Sandspurs, boulders line the eastern shores to protect against erosion from waves.

erosion caused by waves washing in from Haulover Inlet. Heading south, you glimpse what appears to be a telephone pole, but it's really a nesting platform for osprey. Nests are not readily apparent, but the large, brown-and-white raptors do perch there. Be patient and you may see an osprey make a landing with the day's catch in its talons.

You could try snorkeling offshore here, but it's not recommended, owing to very shallow conditions and low

visibility. The boat traffic makes wandering into deeper water a hazard. Kayaking offers the best views.

But also get onshore, because both islands harbor an inner secret. Hike toward the southern edge, near the osprey platforms, and search for a small opening in the woods. "Paths" are not marked, and are at times so overgrown as to be nonexistent. Hunching becomes necessary.

On Big Sandspur Island, a small creek connects to a serene, shallow pond.

In the creek I found a living blob, the listless aplysia, or sea slug, looking like two fistfuls of slimy seaweed. In the pond area is a heron reflected perfectly in the still water. Another moment of sheer gorgeousness.

Tent camping is possible, but purely DIY, as there are no facilities. Bring everything and leave nothing.

Yes, Beer Can — I mean Sandspur — Island's beach area is trashy, but whose fault is that? To its visitors, I say leave

the place more beautiful than you found it. Don't dump your charcoal in the water. If raccoons scatter the trash, pick it up.

And take your beer cans and bottles home with you. There may be plenty of plastic trash bins on the island, but you and your drinking buddies can do better than that, and outsmart the crafty coons while you're at it. Recycle.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Don't Worry, He's Friendly!

Why do some dog owners think the world belongs to them and their hyperactive pets?

By Lisa Hartman
BT Contributor

Recently a blog post — I think it was titled “Tales of a Dog Walker” — went viral on Facebook. It was a tribute to an ongoing struggle between two “gangs” of dog owners. While animal professionals have written about this issue before (in my case, ad nauseum), new terms referring to these two gangs are now being thrown about as a result of this wonderful article.

The mellow of the two gangs are the “DINOS,” which stands for “Dogs in Need of Space.” This is the group that calls me for training, but it’s also *my* gang; I’m a member.

It consists of dogs that — owing to the fact that they were possibly rescued and thus lacking early socialization — want to be left alone, and dog owners who just want to have a quiet, enjoyable walk with their pet.

You can spot them immediately by the obvious telltale signs. For starters, the dogs are wearing a necklace or brassiere-type apparatus with a cotton or leather line tethering the animal to its owner. This is commonly known as a leash. These dogs and owners usually keep to designated walkways and steer clear of other dog-walkers. They give everyone their space and merrily go about their way.

But there is a more aggressive and powerful gang out there, fighting for the



same territory. They’re wilder, louder, and claim other people’s space with reckless abandon. They are known as the MDIFs, or the “My Dog Is Friendly!” gang.

As with the DINOS, the MDIFs have their own culture and are, if anything, even easier to spot. The dogs and owners belonging to this gang are

usually unrestrained — not just excitable, mind you, but in the rare event these pups are on a leash, it’s usually a long, flexi-style one. This gang scoffs at any laws, especially leash laws! The MDIF gang feels entitled to claim all land as theirs. But as this blog post mentioned, the clearest indication that a

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member of this tribe is accosting you is their battle cry: "My Dog Is Friendly!" (Hence the gang's name.)

They chant it as their dog shamelessly runs up to you and your dogs. You are now forced to deal with this other animal, suddenly and rudely up in your dog's grill. He is followed by his bumbling owner, who is smiling widely as she assures you, "Oh, don't worry. My dog is friendly!"

Meanwhile, as a DINOS member, you're doing all you can to hold your tongue, create space for your dog, or perhaps untangle the MDIF dog's flexi-leash, now wrapped around you, your pet, and whatever innocent bystander has happened onto the scene. Of course, your dog may be barking or scuffling with the MDIF dog. This can be especially harrowing when there is a substantial size difference — the DINOS dog small and fragile, the MDIF dog big and brutish.

Oddly, this is about the time when the "My Dog Is Friendly" owner looks at you in sheer horror. They can't believe *your* dog's behavior!

I will never forget scheduling a meeting with a client years ago at

Pinecrest Park to work on a DINOS dog's reactivity and desensitize him to other dogs and people. (Naturally, as a dog trainer, I work with many dogs with issues; sadly, most dog owners don't call me until after there's a problem in place.) I chose Pinecrest because there was a dedicated, fenced-in dog park there, surrounded by another park. Our mission was to start the dog off far from other animals and people, while working on different desensitization exercises and techniques.

I wanted to work just outside the dog's "threshold," or level that he can work without stressing or reacting. Imagine my horror as dog after dog came running up to us. Of course, the owners of these loose dogs assured us that their dogs were friendly, and that makes it perfectly acceptable in their eyes to let their animals bombard the space of others. And here I was, with a client! Not fun.

So who is safe from the MDIFs? No one, it seems. Many of us have dogs with issues we are trying to work on. Some

dogs are ill or old, and would just rather not have to deal with a juvenile delinquent dog in their face or jumping on their backs.

What if you or your dogs just don't feel like being sociable? Is that a crime? I love dogs, but that doesn't mean I want to deal with other people's animals — friendly or not — every time I'm in public.

Sometimes you're just out for a quick-relief walk with your dogs and want them to focus on the matter at hand so you can get back to work. Or maybe

Some dogs are ill or old, and would just rather not have to deal with a juvenile delinquent dog in their face or jumping on their backs.

you're dressed to go to a party and don't want muddy paws on your ensemble, or you're not in the mood to deal with strangers or untangling flexi-leashes.

Whatever the reason, leaving your home should not elicit fear and the stress associated with the possibility of having

to deal with a rival gang. There is nothing wrong with desiring a little personal space, either for canines or humans.

The MDIF gang has other well-known battle cries, too. A popular one is, "Aw, he just wants to play!" As if by intuition, their dog always tends to jump on a dog that is injured.

Regardless of the rationale, these gang members have taken away the right of other owners to choose with whom their dogs will interact, regularly derailing attempts at training and all but outlawing the possibility of a peaceful walk outside.

Having a friendly dog is great, but having a friendly dog with a conscientious owner who shares public space fairly with other dogs and dog owners is better. Much better.

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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The Activity Addiction

With not-a-moment-to-spare schedules, when do kids get to be kids?

By Crystal Brewé
BT Contributor

Sara, my neighbor's four-year-old, loves ballet. Every Saturday she suits up in leotard and ponytail. They *petit jeté* to the local dance studio for practice from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. What do they do with their beautiful Saturday once ballet is over? Enjoy the beach? Take a nap? Have a play date? No, Sara goes home for a quick lunch and then heads to karate.

Sara (I've changed her name here) is also in preschool during the week. "She has gymnastics on Tuesdays, too," her mother boasts.

I understand wanting to keep your kids busy, but what about giving them time to daydream or just time to use their imagination? Recent studies have revealed that unstructured playtime has declined by 12 hours a week over the past two decades. Outdoor activities like bike riding and swimming are down 50 percent. What's happening to childhood?

My friend Izzy is adamantly opposed to enrolling her kids in more than one activity a year. She uncharacteristically opened up to me a few months back about her own childhood. "My parents insisted on violin, chess, gymnastics, and swim team," she recalled. "I didn't do sleepovers, boyfriends, or even school dances. We were so focused on my

success that I became socially awkward and über-competitive."

Izzy's story got me thinking about how extracurricular activities can be taken too far.

How many hours of our child's time should be consumed with structured activity? The time we invest in our children's extracurricular activities is exhausting for both us and our kids, and that's not to mention the financial pounding we take.

I met some of my best friends in Miami when, as parents, we bonded over the experience of being ripped off by the ballet class our toddlers attended. We were consistently charged for added expenses like "professional" photos, the mandatory school leotard, recital fees, and costumes (and I stress the plural). Our kids were just three and four, but were clearly seen as a get-rich-quick vehicle for the dance-school owners.

But back to the present. I got a call the other day from my seven-year-old's school. The choir teacher introduced himself and quickly started gushing about how Matilda's voice has untapped potential. While my rose-colored lenses and I wholeheartedly agreed with him, I couldn't help wondering what this conversation would cost me.

Turns out, he's interested in Matilda joining his exclusive singing group. They meet on Sundays. His assistant is going to contact me to discuss fees.



A family whose child attends school with my three-year-old has three kids who all partake in activities that run more than \$500 per month. Their mother told me one day that they intend to contribute toward the cost of their children attending college, but they haven't started saving yet. "We can't really afford to save right now," she said. "We'll think about that later."

There are private voice lessons because she has potential, karate because it increases his self-confidence, Boy Scouts because it helps teach ingenuity, piano because it stimulates spatial-temporal ability, and pageants because... well, they just make good TV.

I was a Girl Scout. This was a great way to dip my proverbial toe in different activities in order to find which ones interested me the most. I pimped cookies, wore green knee-highs, and got a horse-back riding patch, a performing arts patch, a cooking patch, a sewing patch, a bowling patch, and a "finance is fun" patch. (You name it, I got the patch.)

When I outgrew scouting, I gravitated toward the performing arts. As my childhood friends began to join cliques and dabble in sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll, my mom insisted I occupy myself with this interest. As a result, I was too busy to join in

the teenage wasteland behavior at any dangerous level. After all, I had cheerleading at 6:00 a.m. and rehearsal for our school play at 4:00 p.m. Don't get me wrong. I partook in a normal level of experimentation, but never had enough idle time to wallow in it.

While structured activities allow children to explore interests and increase self-confidence, too much controlled recreation can lead to a lack of imaginative play. We've had several good experiences with the recreation programs in Miami Shores and Morningside. A big motivator here has been not to turn our girls into the next Mary Lou Retton, but to take advantage of the sense of community these programs encourage.

Extracurricular activities are good things, but so are water-balloon fights with the neighbors and camping in the backyard. Your kid may have moves like Mick Jagger and lungs like Barbra Streisand, but it can't hurt to ask them which activities they *want* to pursue.

She may want to quit piano and take up origami, but at least it opens up a dialogue, and hey, who doesn't need a paper swan to decorate the top of that dusty piano?

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My Big Fat Green Funeral

Eco-friendly services are an option for those who don't want to harm the environment when they go

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

At the end of your life, what will be your final act? How do you want to be remembered?

So help me, God, do not bury me in a casket from Costco. I don't even want a casket. I wish to be buried at sea. Splash, splash, I'll be taking an eternal bath.

In Cuba, they practice another technique, whereby graveyard space is reduced, reused, and recycled. The unembalmed body is placed inside an aboveground vault that is tightly sealed — but not too tightly, because eventually it will be reopened.

When a new body moves into the vault, the old, decomposed remains are stored in a box in the corner. That way, the entire family's remains are kept together.

That system sounds pretty eco-friendly to me. But the funeral industry in this country would not appreciate it, because its profits would dramatically decrease.

Natural burials tend to cost much less than modern, materials-intensive burials. A typical, modern funeral will run a family about \$10,000. By comparison, at the Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery in Gainesville, the rate for burial is \$2000.

A green or natural funeral should be the right of every individual. After all, every other living thing that dies away from human contact has a natural burial. Dead whales sink, dead trees fall, and living decomposers recycle them. That's

the circle of life. The decomposers get us, too, but we tend to slow down the process with formaldehyde.

You don't have to be embalmed. You don't have to purchase a casket. You don't have to use a funeral home.

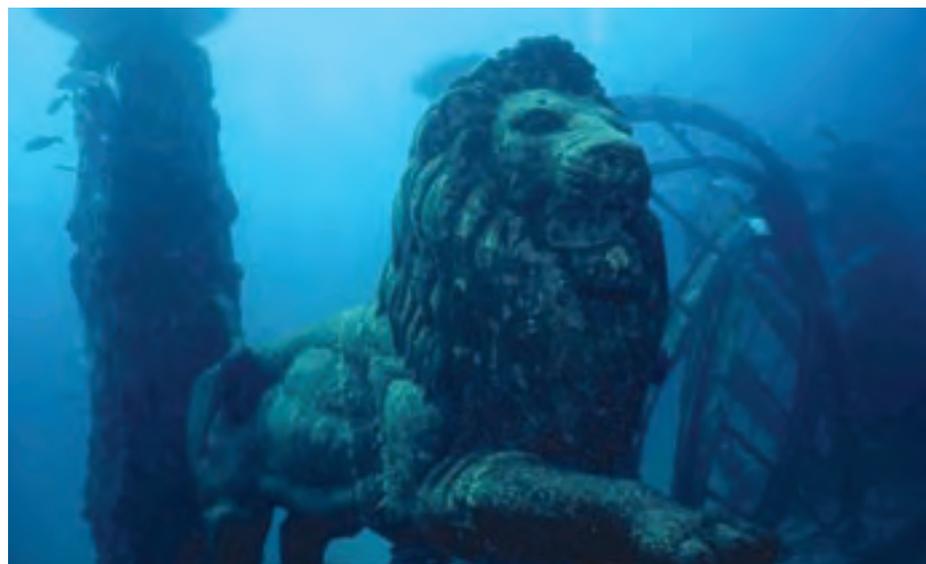
Religion dictates how a deceased human body must be handled, and these traditions must be respected. Interestingly, they tend to be much greener than industrialized methods. Traditionally, Jews and Muslims practice quick burials, thereby avoiding the need for unnatural preservation. They also tend to dispense with caskets. It's just a body, wrapped in a shroud, put into a hole in the ground. Simple and pure.

Viewers of the HBO series *Six Feet Under* will recall the natural burial of Nate. Despite running a funeral home, Nate preferred to go low-tech. His final resting place was underneath a tree.

But how natural is natural? The Green Burial Council website (www.greenburialcouncil.org) defines it as "a way of caring for the dead with minimal environmental impact that furthers legitimate ecological aims such as the conservation of natural resources, reduction of carbon emissions, protection of worker health, and the restoration and/or preservation of habitat."

The council offers a free online burial planner. This document complements a living will, which itself is a good idea.

Cremation, which conserves space, falls into the questionable category. The process is energy-intensive and produces large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions.



Memorial Reef photo courtesy of Neptune Society

Perhaps levels of pollution will be reduced in the future with better practices.

A new form of low-energy, liquid cremation pioneered in Europe was brought to the U.S. this past year by the Anderson-McQueen Family Tribute Center in St. Petersburg. Called resomation, the process uses a large boiler and additives to separate liquids from solids. The fact that it uses large amounts of water, however, could be considered wasteful.

For people choosing cremation, you can go low-tech and scatter the ashes by hand, or you can go high-tech and travel to almost any place on earth (and in the future, surely outer space). For those who prefer inner space, or the ocean, one of the most spectacular choices exists right here in Miami. Located just outside state waters, roughly three miles off Key Biscayne, is the Neptune Society's Memorial Reef.

Memorial Reef is the world's largest artificial reef, and an underwater cemetery. It has giant lions and pearly gates and benches for fish. Cremated remains are mixed in concrete and attached to the existing structure. Eventually it will cover 16 acres and house the remains of more than 100,000 people. This diving site is open to the public.

A company with a similar concept is Eternal Reefs, based in Georgia. The company's main business is manufacturing reef structures, so concrete reef balls with cremated remains are placed in various artificial reef locations.

Even if you opt for a modern burial, try to minimize your impact on the earth. Request green options, and pick a cemetery that has been certified or that offers green practices. Choose an urn or casket that is relatively biodegradable, or make your own. To offset the impact of a burial, purchase some trees and make a donation to a conservation organization.

A natural funeral is an American tradition. Before the Civil War, when Americans were not embalmed, home viewings of the dead and do-it-yourself burials were common.

Don't wait to make this choice. Write down today what you want to happen at your funeral, because, if you don't, tomorrow you might be forced into a casket from Costco.

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Clinging to Kill

Don't let these parasites become attached to your plants

By Jeff Shimonski

BT Contributor

I often get many queries from visitors to Jungle Island about the orchids, ferns, and bromeliads growing on the trunks of trees and palms. Many wonder if these small plants are parasites, taking water and nutrients from the trees to which they are attached.

I explain that these plants collectively are called epiphytes, plants that grow on top of other plants or trees, but are not otherwise parasitic to their hosts. These plants have evolved specialized roots, leaf cells that can absorb water and nutrients, and perhaps other characteristics enabling them to take advantage of the height and a place in the sunshine that taller plants offer them.

That said, there are many species of parasitic plants that *do* grow on other plants. When traveling through Malaysia, I often had the opportunity to see various species of *Rafflesia*, a parasitic plant with the largest flower in the world, an amazing sight to see.

Other species of clingy parasitic plants are found in South Florida. Mistletoe, of the holiday kissing tradition, is one of them. It's rare here, but I've been watching and photographing one that is growing in the canopy of a native tree close to where I live.

Some other parasitic plants growing in our area are a bit more aggressive and certainly harmful to the trees they infest. They are very distinct, with masses of long twining stems that can

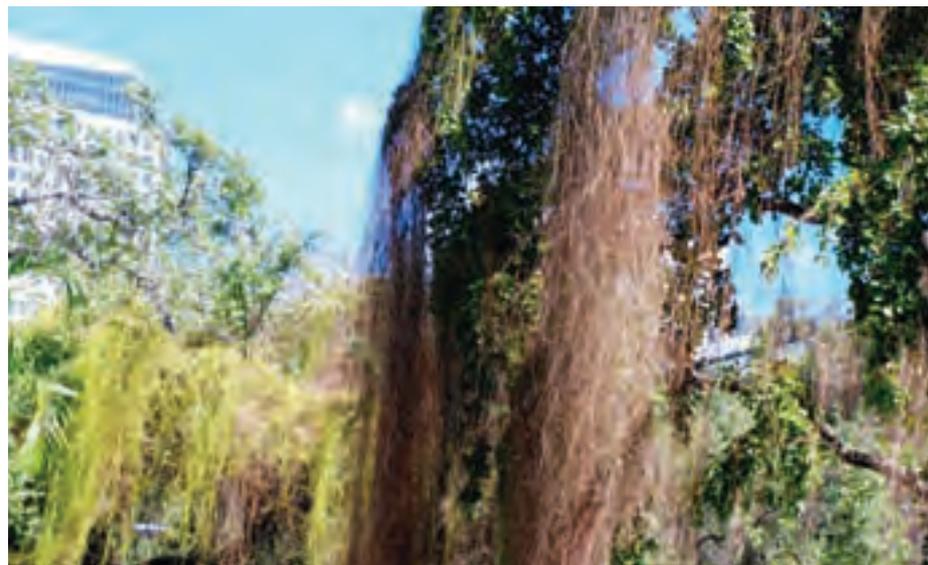
completely cover the canopies of trees and shrubs. (The accompanying photo was taken just off Brickell Avenue in downtown Miami.)

I recently took some samples of this particular parasite in an attempt to identify it, and tentatively came up with *Cassytha*, a species also called woe vine. This plant is very similar to another species of parasite called *Cuscuta*, with the more common name of dodder.

They are, in fact, very difficult to tell apart, but they cause the same type of damage to the plants and trees they inhabit. They literally suck the juices out of the leaves and branches they come into contact with, penetrating the host's tissue using structures called haustoria. They will live without having roots in the ground and can kill trees over time. They appear without any obvious leaves.

Dodder normally attacks herbaceous plants and woe vine tends to attack trees, but there are always exceptions. The dodder in the photo is covering live oak trees. It seems to have been on these trees for several years. This is often the case, and it can take many years for the tree to die, but it will eventually happen if the parasites are not removed.

Some tree species are genetically programmed to live a lot longer than others, and this longevity offers optimum conditions for pathogens and parasites to become established. Mature live oak trees can live well over 100 years, but in time their growth is not so vigorous and they become vulnerable to attack by various parasitic organisms.



BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

Dodder, a parasitic plant, is draining the life out of these live oak trees here in Miami.

I recently looked at another mature live oak that was infested with dodder. This tree appeared to be in decline, with sparse foliage and many old pruning cuts over the years that were no doubt debilitating to it. I looked closely and also found signs of a fungal infestation.

When trees are weakened, they become vulnerable to all types of pathogens. This specimen was a poster child for what can happen if a tree is not maintained properly. Chemical control of these insidious plants is very difficult. Usually the best control involves someone in a cherry picker carefully plucking off this aggressive plant from its host tree. This is likely the best control because chemical use is difficult on a large tree and it's my understanding that none of the chemicals available can be used systemically (taken up by the root system so it is translocated throughout the tree).

Anything sprayed on the tree will end up on whatever is below or around the tree. This is very important to remember. Years ago I had a friend who sprayed the

fronds of a large royal palm at a private residence and was not aware of the drift, the spray that had been carried by the wind. The next day the neighbors had some very expensive koi fish turn up dead in their pond. My friend ended up in a very uncomfortable situation.

These plants will kill your trees in time, so when you see the first signs of these green or orangey stringy plants, pull them off immediately and toss them directly into the garbage. If they happen to bloom, there will be thousands of tiny fruit and seeds produced. With dodder, the tiny fruit may also be dispersed by birds, so all the more reason to remove the parasite immediately when you notice it on a tree.

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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South American Scavenger Hunt

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

By Bill Citara
BT Contributor

The depth and diversity of South America's cuisine is really quite amazing. The gloriously fresh *tiraditos* and ceviches of Peru, the grilled beef and *matambre* of Argentina, the appetite-busting *feijoada* of Brazil, and the over-the-top *chivito* of Uruguay — they're not just popular in South Florida, but are making hungry mouths drool all over the country.

Unfortunately, even in South Florida, it's a lot easier to find a stellar *tiradito* or juicy, succulent *vacio* than it is to find varietals outside the usual oenological suspects from countries other than the continent's two biggest players, Argentina and Chile — especially within our \$12 price point.

Not that VINO didn't try.

Shopping on the white-wine side of the aisle, we were hoping to find sparkling wines from Brazil and still wines from Uruguay, perhaps some dry or off-dry Rieslings, a juicy Pinot Gris, or interesting blends of several different grapes. No luck. Amid an ocean of Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, we found a single Riesling, a Viognier, and a handful of Torrentes, all from Argentina and Chile.

Sigh...

Tasting results were kind of sighful, too, with a pair of wines exhibiting a distinct "petrol" aroma. One was the **Anakena 2010 Single Vineyard Riesling**. A noticeable petrol or "diesel" aroma is actually beloved by fanatics of aged German Riesling. In young Rieslings, however, even the grape's most devoted

fanciers say it represents a flaw in either the growing or winemaking processes.

And it wasn't just the aroma. The Anakena tasted of petroleum, too, though if you squinched your taste buds up really hard you could make out faint peach and apricot flavors. That's too much work for me; I'll have a beer instead.

The other petrol offender was the **2010 Trivento Torrontes**. At \$7.99 it was cheap, all right, though still more expensive than a gallon of unleaded. Which, in fact, is what it smelled and tasted like. I know there are people who say they enjoy this sort of thing and, well, God bless 'em. But I'd prefer my wine not to have the same characteristics as the stuff I put in my gas tank.

Thankfully, things got better after that. Another Torrentes, the **2011 Mendoza Station**, lulled you into thinking it would be a rich, creamy, tropical fruity wine with its lush, beguiling aromas of mango, papaya, and honeysuckle. But once in your mouth it was as crisp as a winter morning in Chicago, with only a hint of that floral-tropical character peeking up from beneath tart, fresh flavors of just-squeezed lemon and lime.

Same could be said of the **2010 Porto Reserva Viognier**, which hails from the Bio-Bio region, Chile's southernmost wine-producing appellation and one not often represented in local wine shops. With the area's cooler temperatures and fewer hours of sunshine relative to Chile's other wine regions, it's no surprise that this Viognier has much more muted, honied-floral-tropical aromas and flavors than is typical in Viognier made in warmer, sunnier climes. Still, like the Mendoza Station,

those characteristics, even muted, make it a willing partner for both seafood dishes and lighter meats like chicken and veal.

Of course, if you really want a great seafood wine, Chilean Sauvignon Blancs are the way to go. Curiously, though, both SBs in this tasting — the **2010 Veramonte** and **2010 Lapostelle Casa** — were actually a little fuller-bodied and a little less austere than either the Torrontes or Viognier.

The Veramonte is one of my all-time go-to wines. Well made and reliable vintage to vintage, easily available, and a pretty decent deal at \$11, it has the bright, crisp acidity to balance out a meal of rich fish and shellfish, yet enough body and texture not to get lost in the process. It's a very pale color, almost clear, with herbal aromas and flavors of citrus and green apple tweaked with an underlying limestone minerality.

The Lapostelle is a little richer and fuller bodied, its citrusy character mellowed by flavors of apricots, melons, and pears, finishing with lemon-lime, minerals, and a bit of spritz on the tongue.

Then there's the Chardonnay. There's always a Chardonnay. This one is the **2010 Montes Classic Series**, a very affordable



Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270) carries the **Montes Chardonnay (\$10.49)**, **Porta Viognier (\$9.99)**, **Mendoza Station Torrontes (\$5.99!)**, and, if you really want it, the **Anakena Riesling (\$11.99)**. **ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525)** has the **Lapostelle Sauvignon Blanc for \$6.99** and the regrettable **Trivento Torrontes for \$7.99**. And finally, get the reliable **Veramonte Sauvignon Blanc at the Biscayne Commons Publix (14641 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-2171) for \$10.99**. Also available at some other Publix stores.

wine (\$10.49) from a producer probably better known for more up-market offerings. Aged in new and old French oak, it hints at vanilla, pears, and tropical fruit, with a lush, creamy texture and citrus and minerals on the finish, perfect with one of those spicy *tiraditos* or ceviches, which sound pretty good right about now.

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Dining Guide

Restaurant Listings

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 309.

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
109 NE 2nd Ave., 305-358-5751
While Indonesian food isn't easy to find in Miami, downtown has secret stashes – small joints catering to cruise-ship and construction workers. This cute, exotically decorated café has survived and thrived for good reason. The homey cooking is delicious, and the friendly family feel encourages even the timid of palate to try something new. Novices will want Indonesia's signature rijsttafel, a mix-and-match collection of small dishes and condiments to be heaped on rice. Note: bring cash. No plastic accepted here. \$\$-

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 glistens 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 pintos. That's just the Basque word for tapas, but here there's nothing mere about the generously portioned small plates. They range from traditional items like cod fish equixada and saffron-sautéed Spanish artichokes to inventive inspirations like foie gras and goat cheese-stuffed empanadas. \$\$\$

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/jalapeño soup, a grilled-cheese BLT, airy chessecake, and a pint of beer) at bistro e, daytime name for Michael Psalakis' 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

SUNNY ISLES BEACH

Chef Philip Ho
16850 Collins Ave., 305-974-0338
Deep-pocketed diners who ate at the Setai when Jonathan Wright was executive chef already know chef Ho's work. His dazzling dim sum were the menu's highlight. Now they're affordable for all. Dumplings (chive and shrimp, green tea duck, truffle-spiked scallop, more) have skins delicate enough to see through; open shrimp dumplings with dried scallops are almost flower-like in appearance; steamed cheung fan (rice noodle crêpes) rolled around Chinese crullers are simply sinful, as are flaky-crust egg custard tarts. And the regular menu measures up to the small plates. \$\$\$-

Copper Chimney
18090 Collins Ave., 305-974-0075
At this family-owned (and kid-friendly), white-tablecloth Indian restaurant, prices are more upscale than average, but so is the food's elegant presentation – plus features like a full bar, live Bollywood/belly dancing on weekends, and, among familiar North Indian fare, dishes blending contemporary touches with traditional tastes. Especially enjoyable: starters inspired by street snacks, like bikaneri chaat (fried gram flour crisps, chickpeas, and yogurt) served with two chutneys; anything featuring paneer cheese, from classic spinach/cheese palak paneer to creative khazas-e-lazzat (sundried tomato-stuffed paneer/potato dumplings in smooth cream sauce). \$\$\$

Epicure Gourmet Market & Café
17190 Collins Ave., 305-947-4581
Who even knew that the late Rascal House had an ocean view? Diners may have to eat standing up to glimpse water over the dunes from the panoramic café windows of the gourmet market that replaced the Rascal, but you know you're on a tropical beach, not Brighton Beach. The big, bright café's menu, more global diner than Jewish deli, includes daily specials ranging from spa-grilled chicken to home-made Italian sausage and peppers. But it's worth seeking out items that made South Beach's original Epicure famous: sandwiches featuring housemade rare roast beef; shrimp or chunky smoked whitefish salads; fresh baked goods. \$\$\$

The H Restaurant
17608 Collins Ave., 305-931-9106
This friendly, family-owned bistro is the sort of home-away-from-home found every few blocks in France – here Gerard and Karin Harrison, plus chef son Julien, formerly had a restaurant – but they're rarely found in South Florida. Burgers, et al., are available, but with garlicky escargots, a savory/sweet-dressed salad of duck confit atop frisée, pan-seared foie gras with port/raspberry sauce, fish with an impeccable lemon beurre blanc, and a satisfying steak/frites (with peppery cognac cream sauce). We'd leave the American stuff to the kids. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Il Mulino New York
17875 Collins Ave., 305-466-9191
If too much is not enough for you, this majorly upscale Italian-American place, an offshoot of the famed NYC original, is your restaurant. For starters, diners receive enough freebie food – fried zucchini coins, salami, bruschetta with varying toppings, a

wedge of quality parmigiano, garlic bread – that ordering off the menu seems superfluous. But mushroom raviolis in truffle cream sauce are irresistible, and perfectly tenderized veal parmesan, the size of a large pizza, makes a great take-out dinner...for the next week. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Kitchen 305
16701 Collins Ave., 305-749-2110
Offering eclectic American fare, this resort restaurant room, despite its contemporary open kitchen, has the retro-glam look of a renovated discotheque – which is what it was. In fact, it's still as much lounge as eatery, so it's best to arrive early if you want a relatively DJ-free eating experience. A seductive mango-papaya BBQ sauce makes ribs a tasty choice any night, but most local diners in the know come on nights when the restaurant features irresistibly priced seasonal seafood specials (all-you-can-eat stone crabs one night, lobster on another). A spacious dining counter overlooking the cooks makes the Kitchen a comfortable spot for singles. \$\$\$

St. Petersburg Deli
17080 Collins Ave., 305-947-9696
Don't expect fancified stuff like menus, or the English language, at this informal market/café. If there's signage identifying the prepared foods behind the counters, it's in Russian, and daily dishes are pretty much what the cooks feel like making. So look and point. We'd suggest pointing at cold yogurt-based soups like tangy okroshka (with cukes, egg, scallions, potatoes, and dill) or holodnik (similar, with beets added); eggplant roulades, stuffed with spiced shredded carrots, are also a refreshing summer dish. Hot choices include meatballs in rich cream sauce and chicken Kiev. \$\$

Timo
17624 Collins Ave., 305-936-1008
Since opening in 2003, the inventive yet clean and unfussy Italian/Mediterranean-inspired seasonal food at this hot spot, created by chef/owner Tim Andriola (at the time best known for his stints at Chef Allen's and Mark's South Beach), has been garnering local and national raves. Don't bother reading them. Andriola's dishes speak for themselves: a salad of crisp oysters atop frisée, cannelloni bean, and pancetta; foie gras crostini with a subtle caramelized orange sauce; a blue crab ravioli with toasted pignolias and brown butter; or a wood-oven three-cheese "white" pizza. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Werner Staub's Peppermill
350 Bayview Dr., 305-466-2016
It'll likely be years until diners stop instinctively heading for the tropic-alpine chalet that formerly housed the Peppermill at the Waterways in Aventura. But this new indoor/outdoor space's bay views are much more spectacular. And the food is the same unique old-school stuff. Seafood is featured, and while there are contemporary preparations, you can't resist hard-to-find retro dishes like imported Dover sole almondine, Swiss-style poached trout with champagne-shallot sauce, an elaborate steak tartar, and for dessert, peach Melba or strawberries Romanoff. \$\$\$

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

numberous 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. \$\$



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

Café Sambal

500 Brickell Key Dr., 305-913-8358

Though the Mandarin Oriental Hotel describes this space as its "casual hotel restaurant," many consider it a more spectacular dining setting than the upscale Azul, upstairs, owing to the option of dining outdoors on a covered terrace directly on the waterfront. The food is Asian-inspired, with a 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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

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. \$\$\$

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 restolounge 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 pompano with garlic/parsley veloute. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

The Democratic Republic of Beer

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

The food here? Beer is food! The DRB serves 400 beers from 55 countries, ranging from \$2 Pabst Blue Ribbon to \$40 DeuS (an 11.5% alcohol Belgian *méthode Champenoise* brew). But for those favoring solid snacks, tasty global smallish plates include fried fresh zucchini with dip (cheese recommended); chorizo with homemade cilantro Mayo; or steak tacos, served Mexican-style with onions, cilantro, and spicy salsa. Sadly for breakfast-brew enthusiasts, the DRB isn't open that early. But it is open late – till 5:00 a.m. \$\$\$

Dolores, But You Can Call Me Lolita

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

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

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 crisply 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. (Viceroy Hotel), 305-503-0373

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

Fado Irish Pub

900 S. Miami Ave. #200, 786-924-0972

Unlike most Miami "Irish" pubs, which serve mostly American bar food, rarely foraying past fish and chips or shepherd's pie, Fado (pronounced "f doe") has a menu reflecting the pub grub found today in Ireland, including solid standards. But most intriguing are dishes mixing classic and contemporary influences,



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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. \$\$

Finnegan's River 401 SW 3rd Ave., 305-285-3030

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

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

Fresco California Bistro 1744 SW 3rd Ave., 305-858-0608

This festively decorated indoor/outdoor bistro packs a lot of party spirit into a small space, a large variety of food onto its menu. To the familiar Latin American/Italian equation, the owners add a touch of Cal-Mex (like Tex-Mex but more health conscious). Menu offerings range from designer pizzas and pastas to custardy tamales, but the bistro's especially known for imaginative meal-size salads, like one featuring mandarin oranges, avocado, apple, blue cheese, raisins, candied pecans, and chicken on a mesclun bed. \$\$\$

Garcia's Seafood Grille and Fish Market 398 NW N. River Dr., 305-375-0765

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

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

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

or an especially lavish chicken salad with pine nuts, golden raisins, apples, and basil, an Italian twist. \$\$

Grimpa Steakhouse 901 Brickell Plaza, 305-455-4757

This expansive indoor/outdoor Brazilian eatery is sleekly contemporary, but no worries. The classic sword-wielding gauchos are here, serving a mind-reeling assortment of skewered beef, chicken, lamb, pork, sausages, and fish. And included in the price (dinner \$47, lunch \$34) is the traditional belly-busting buffet of hot and cold prepared foods, salad, cold cuts, and cheeses. A pleasant, 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 cheese-burger, 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 ultra-upscale Italian spot (especially the outdoor terrace)

the perfect power lunch/business dinner alternative to steakhouses. And the culinary experience goes way beyond the typical meat market, thanks in part to the flood of freebies that's a trademark of Manhattan's Il Mulino, originally run by Il Gabbiano's owners. The rest of the food? Pricy, but portions are mammoth. And the champagne-cream-sauced housemade ravioli with black truffles? Worth every penny. \$\$\$\$

Hibachi Grill 45 NE 3rd Ave., 305-374-2223

Imagine a mini-express Benihana. This place specializes in teppanyaki cuisine – minus the thrilling (or terrifying) table-side 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 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. \$\$\$

Indigo / Table 40 100 Chopin Plaza, 305-577-1000

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

Iron Sushi 120 SE 3rd Ave., 305-373-2000 (See Miami Shores listing)

Jackson Soul Food 950 NW 3rd Ave., 305-377-6710

With a recently refurbished exterior to match its classy/comfy retro interior, this 65-year-old Overtown soul food breakfast institution now has only one drawback: It closes at 1:00 p.m. Never mind, night

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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 a trucker's burger: beef patty, bacon, ham, mozzarella, lettuce, tomato, and a fried egg, with an arepa corn pancake "bun." While this tiny place's late hours (till 6:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday) are surprising, the daytime menu is more so. In addition to Colombian classics, there's a salad Niçoise with grilled fresh tuna, seared salmon with mango salsa, and other yuppie favorites. \$\$-\$\$

La Provence 1064 Brickell Ave., 786-425-9003

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

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 named, come from Nice. You'll be transported, too, by dishes like lamb shank with flageolet (known as the caviar of beans), duck leg confit on a bed of mouthwatering green lentils from Le Puy, a classic moules/frites, a shared charcuterie platter with a bottle from the savvy wine list, and, of course, salade niçoise. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Martini 28 146 SE 1st Ave., 305-577-4414

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

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 commmeal 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

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

Novecento 1414 Brickell Ave., 305-403-0900

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

Oceanaire Seafood Room 900 S. Miami Ave., 305-372-8862

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

Ozzi 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-go-round? 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. \$\$

Pega Grill 15 E. Flagler St., 305-808-6666

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

Pasha's 1414 Brickell Ave., 305-416-5116

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

Peoples Bar-B-Que 360 NW 8th St., 305-373-8080

Oak-smoked, falling-off-the-bone tender barbecued ribs (enhanced with a secret sauce whose recipe goes back several generations) are the main draw at this Overtown institution. But the chicken is also a winner, plus there's a full menu of soul food entrées, including what many aficionados consider our town's tastiest souse. And it would be unthinkable to call it quits without homemade sweet potato pie or banana pudding, plus a bracing flop – half iced tea, half lemonade. \$-\$\$

Perricone's 15 SE 10th St., 305-374-9449

Housed in a Revolutionary-era barn (moved from Vermont), this market/café was one of the Brickell area's first gentrified amenities. At lunch chicken salad is a favorite; dinner's strong suit is the pasta list, ranging from Grandma Jennie's old-fashioned lasagna to chichi flocchi purses filled with fresh pear and gorgonzola. And Sunday's \$15.95 brunch buffet (\$9.95 for kids) – featuring an omelet station, waffles, smoked salmon and bagels, salads, and more – remains one of our town's most civilized all-you-can-eat deals. \$\$

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-blistered 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 giraffe, the food's actually more grown-up than at his original SoBe spot. The concept is prix fixe: Any three courses on the menu (meaning three entrées if you want) for \$39. Highlights include silky, tarragon-inflected corn/bacon chowder, beautifully plated beef carpaccio with horseradish/mustard and shallot olive oil dipping sauces; and over-the-top playhouse desserts, one with a luscious crème 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 sofrito butter, chorizo, and manchego. There's also a thoughtful wine list and numerous artisan beers on tap. \$\$\$

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

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

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Sandwich Bar

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

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

Scalina

315 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! \$\$\$

Soi Asian Bistro

134 NE 2nd Ave., 305-523-3643

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

Soya & Pomodoro

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

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

Sparky's Roadside Restaurant & Bar

204 NE 1st St., 305-377-2877

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

Sushi Maki

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

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

SuViche

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

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

Thai Angel

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

Inside a colorful courtyard that rather resembles Munchkinland, this downtown “insider's secret” serves serious Thai food till 9:00 p.m. daily. Tasty

classics like the four curries (red, green, panang, and massaman) come custom-spiced – mild to authentically brain-searing – and are so affordable there's no guilt in splurging on superb house specials like crisp-coated duck or fresh snapper (whole or filleted) in tamarind sauce. The young chef has a heavenly hand at tofu, too, so vegetarians are very well-served. \$\$

Tobacco Road

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

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

Tre Italian Bistro

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

“Bistro” actually sounds too Old World for this cool hangout, from the owners of downtown old-timer La Loggia, but “restolounge” sounds too glitzy. Think of it as a neighborhood “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 r'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 small-ish 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

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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 ambiance 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 burn blisters, are brick-oven cooked, as are "blues," unusual calzones (like the blu oceano, fatly 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 made from wine barrels). Cuisine is similarly geared to the area's smart new residents: creative sandwiches and salads at lunch, tapas and larger internationally themed Spanish, Italian, or French charcuterie platters at night. Though the place is small and family-run friendly, chef Alfredo Patino offers sophisticated snacks like the figciutto: arugula, gorgonzola dolce, caramelized onions, pine nuts, fresh figs, and prosciutto. Free parking behind the building. \$\$

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

Buena Vista Deli

4590 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-3945
At this casual café/bakery, co-owned by Buena Vista Bistro's Claude Postel, the day starts in authentic French fashion, with fresh breakfast breads, chocolate almond croissants, and other delights. At lunch cornichon-garnished baguette sandwiches (containing housemade pâtés, sinfully rich pork rillettes, superb salami, and other charcuterie classics) are irresistible, and a buttery-crust, custardy quiche plus perfectly dressed salad costs little more than a fast-food combo meal. As for Postel's 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 anticuchos, so buttery-rich we nearly passed out with pleasure. \$\$

Catch Grill & Bar

1633 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-536-6414
A location within easy walking distance of the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, in the extensively renovated Marriott Biscayne Bay, makes this casual-chic eatery, whose specialty is local and sustainable seafood, a great option for pre-show bites. Then again, enjoying lures like sweet-glazed crispy shrimp with friends on the outdoor, bayfront terrace is entertainment enough. It's worth calling to ask if the daily catch is wreckfish, a sustainable local that tastes like a cross between grouper and sea bass. Bonus: With validation, valet parking is free. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Cerviceria 100 Montaditos

3252 NE 1st Ave. #104, 305-921-4373
Student budget prices, indeed. A first-grader's allowance would cover a meal at this first U.S. branch of a popular Spanish chain. The 100 mini sandwiches (on crusty, olive oil-drizzled baguettes) vary from \$1 to \$2.50, depending not on ingredient quality but complexity. A buck scores genuine Serrano ham, while top-ticket fillings add imported Iberico cheese, pulled pork, and tomato to the cured-ham slivers. Other options revolve around pâtés, smoked salmon, shrimp, and similar elegant stuff. There's cheap draft beer, too, plus nonsandwich snacks. \$\$

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. \$\$

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Clive's Café

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

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

Crumb on Parchment

3930 NE 2nd Ave., 305-572-9444

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

The Daily Creative Food Co.

2001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-573-4535

While the food formula of this contemporary café is familiar – sandwiches, salads, soups, breakfast food, and pastries, plus coffee and fruit drinks – a creative concept differentiates the place. Signature sandwiches are named after national and local newspapers, including Biscayne Times, giving diners something to chat about. Sandwiches and salads can also be do-it-yourself projects, with an unusually wide choice of main ingredients, garnishes, breads, and condiments for the creatively minded. \$

Delicias Peruanas

2590 Biscayne Blvd., 305-573-4634

Seafood is the specialty at this pleasant Peruvian spot, as it was at the nearby original Delicias, run by members of the same family. The food is as tasty as ever, especially the reliably fresh traditional ceviches, and for those who like their fish tangy but cooked, a mammoth jalea platter. As for nonseafood stuff, Peru practically invented fusion cuisine (in the 1800s), such as two traditional noodle dishes: tallerin saltado and tallerin verde. \$\$

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 crisped smelts (like a freshwater sardine); galactobourico, 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 fowl, 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., 305-572-2901

This Italian café has been packed since the moment it opened. No surprise to any who recall owner Ken Lyon's pioneering Lyon Frères gourmet store on Lincoln Road (1992-97), another joint that was exactly what its neighborhood needed. The restaurant's artisan salumi, cheeses, flavorful boutique olive oils, and more are so outstanding that you can't help wishing it also had a retail component. Entrées include properly al dente pastas, plus some regional specialties like Venetian-style calves liver, rarely found outside Italy. \$\$\$

Gigi

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

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

The Grrrlz of Sandwich

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

305-374-4305

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

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 polenta fries, a circa 1995 Michael Schwartz signature snack from Nemo). Beautifully blistered, ultra-thin-crust ed 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? \$\$

Jimmy's Kitchen

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

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

Joey's Italian Café

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

The first new restaurant in the Wynwood Café District, this stylish indoor/outdoor Italian hangout is as casually cool as one would hope – and as affordable. There's a five-buck half-serving of spaghetti al pomodoro and respectable vino for under \$30. And few can resist delicately thin, crunchy-crust ed pizzas like the creative Dolce e Piccante or orgasmic Carbonara. Pastas are fresh; produce is largely local;

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

the mosaic-centered décor is minimalist but inviting. And no need to be wary of the warehouse district at night: Valet parking is free. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

La Provence
2200 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-8002
(See Brickell / Downtown listing.)

Latin Café 2000
2501 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-3838
The menu is similar to that at many of our town's Latin cafés, largely classic Cuban entrées and sandwiches, with a smattering of touches from elsewhere in Latin America, such as a Peruvian jalea mixta (marinated mixed seafood), or paella Valenciana from Spain, which many Miami eateries consider a Latin country. What justifies the new millennium moniker is the more modern, yuppified/yucafied ambience, encouraged by an expansive, rustic wooden deck. \$\$

Lemoni Café
4600 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-5080
The menu here reads like your standard sandwiches/salads/starters primer. What it doesn't convey is the freshness of the ingredients and the care that goes into their use. Entrée-size salads range from an elegant spinach (goat cheese, pears, walnuts, raisins) to chunky homemade chicken salad on a bed of mixed greens. Sandwiches (cold baguette subs, hot pressed paninis, or wraps, all accompanied by side salads) include a respectable Cuban and a veggie wrap with a deceptively rich-tasting light salad cream. \$-\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill
Shops at Midtown Miami
Buena Vista Avenue, 305-576-5463
Like its South Beach predecessor, this Lime was an instant hit, as much for being a hip new Midtown hangout as for its carefully crafted Tex-Mex food. The concept is "fast casual" rather than fast food – meaning nice enough for a night out. It also means ingredients are always fresh. Seafood tacos are about as exotic as the menu gets, but the mahi mahi for fish tacos comes from a local supplier, and salsas are housemade daily. Niceties include low-carb tortillas and many Mexican beers. \$

Limón y Sabor
3045 Biscayne Blvd., 786-431-5739
In this dramatically renovated space, the room is now light and open, and the food is authentic Peruvian, with seafood a specialty. Portions are huge, prices low, quality high. Especially good are their versions of pescado a lo macho (fish fillet topped with mixed seafood in a creamy, zesty sauce); jalea (breaded and deep-fried fish, mixed seafood, and yuca, topped with onion/pepper/lime salsa), and yuca in hot yet fruity rocoto chili cream sauce. \$\$

Lost & Found Saloon
185 NW 36th St., 305-576-1008
There's an artsy/alternative feel to this casual and friendly Wynwood eatery, which, since opening as a weekday-only breakfast and lunch joint in 2005, has grown with its neighborhood. It's now open for dinner six nights a week, serving Southwestern-style fare at rock-bottom prices. Dishes like piñon and pepita-crusted salmon, chipotle-drizzled endive stuffed with lump crab, or customizable tacos average \$5-\$8. Also available: big breakfasts and salads, hearty soups, housemade pastries like lemon-crust wild berry pie, and a hip beer and wine list. \$

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 tarama caviar spread; and a Turkish sampler of hummus, fava purée, and rich tomato-walnut dip. The meze of mussels in lemony wine broth is, with Mandolin's fresh-baked flatbread, almost a full meal in itself. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Mario the Baker
250 NE 25th St., 305-438-0228
(See North Miami listing)

Mercadito Midtown
3252 NE 1st Ave., 786-369-0423
Some people frequent this fashionable 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 friters that rival Belgium's best; mouthwatering maple-basted bacon; miraculously terrific tofu (crispy panko-crust and apricot/soy-glazed); even a "voluptuous grilled cheese sandwich" – definitely a "don't ask, don't tell your cardiologist" item. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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, fiocchi 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 pastas also please: diners' choice of starch, with mix-and-match sauces and extras. And the price is right,



Valentine's Day Specials

DINING ROOM MENU
(Seating based on availability. Regular menu available)

SALAD: Caesar Salad
APPETIZER: Mozzarella Marinara
ENTRÉE CHOICE: 14oz. New York Strip (grilled to your liking topped with fresh Mushrooms and a side of French Fries shoe string style) or a Seafood Pasta Feast (a wonderful array of Seafood Black Shell Mussels, Little Neck Clams, Jumbo Shrimp and Sea Scallops over linguini bathing in a light cream seafood broth).
DESSERT: Fudge Cake (shaped for the day and prepare to share).

LOVIN' IN THE GARDEN
(Reserved Seating. Call for reservations 305.756.7499)

Bruchetta
SALAD: Mixed Green Salad
APPETIZER: 3 Clams Casino
ENTRÉE: 8oz. Filet Mignon or Pan Seared Chicken Breast coated with Rosemary Champagne sauce (accompanied by 3 Stuffed Shrimp or a 4 oz. Lobster Tail).
DESSERT: Heart Shaped Chocolate Fudge Cake finished with a Chocolate-covered Strawberry.
WINE: Italian Red / Pino Grigio White (one glass)
COFFEE: Espresso, American regular/decaf

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

Primo Pizza Miami 3451 NE 1st Ave., 305-535-2555

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

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 (Thousand 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 concept takes on street-food favorites from all over Asia, housemade daily from quality fresh ingredients. French Culinary Institute-trained Richard Hales does change his menu, so we'd advise immediately grabbing some crispy Korean chicken wings and Chinese-inspired, open-faced roast pork buns with sweet chili sauce and homemade pickles. \$\$

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

Sake takes a back seat to sushi – and sophisticated décor – at this small but sleek restolounge. Among the seafood offerings, you won't find 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 food-oriented than the latter, as three kitchens – normal, raw bar, and robata charcoal grill – make clear. Chef Timon Balloo's LatAsian small plates range from subtle orange/fennel-marinated salmon crudo to intensely smoky-rich short ribs. At the daily happy hour, select dishes (like steamed pork buns with apple kimchi) are discounted. \$\$\$

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

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

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 croquetas, 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. 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. \$\$

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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 this rustic indoor/outdoor Brazilian restaurant and bar. Especially bustling on nights featuring live music, it's even more fun on Sundays, when the fenced backyard hosts an informal fair and the menu includes Brazil's national dish, feijoada, a savory stew of beans plus fresh and cured meats. But the everyday menu, ranging from unique, tapas-like pastéis to hefty Brazilian entrées, is also appealing – and budget-priced. \$\$

Le Café

7295 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-6551

For anyone who can't get over thinking of French food as intimidating or pretentious, this cute café with a warm welcome, and family-friendly French home cooking, is the antidote. No fancy food (or fancy prices) here, just classic comfort food like onion soup, escargot, daily fresh oysters, boeuf bourguignon (think Ultimate Pot Roast), Nicoise salad, quiche, and homemade crème brûlée. A respectable beer and wine list is a welcome addition, as is the homemade 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 Taylors (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 Technon. Snacks match the casual chicness: sandwiches like the Renato (prosciutto, hot capicola, pepper jack cheese, red peppers, and Romano cheese dressing); an elaborate almond-garnished Chinese chicken salad; H&H bagels, the world's best, flown in from NYC. And the car cleanings are equally gentrified, especially on Wednesdays, when ladies are pampered with \$10 washes and glasses of sparkling wine while they wait. \$

Garden of Eatin'

136 NW 62nd St., 305-754-8050

Housed in a yellow building that's nearly invisible from the street, the Garden has the comfortable feel of a beach bar, and generous servings of inexpensive Afro-Caribbean vegan food. Large or small plates, with salad and fried sweet plantains (plus free soup for eat-in lunchers), are served for five or seven bucks. Also available are snacks like vegetarian blue corn tacos, desserts like sweet potato pie, and a breakfast menu featuring organic blueberry waffles with soy sausage patties. \$

Gourmet Station

7601 Biscayne Blvd., 305-762-7229

Home-meal replacement, geared to workaholics with no time to cook, has been popular for years. But the Gourmet Station has outlasted most of the competition. Main reason: deceptive healthiness. These are meals that are good for you, yet taste good enough to be bad for you. Favorite items include precision-grilled salmon with lemon-dill yogurt sauce, and lean turkey meatloaf with homemade BBQ sauce – sin-free comfort food. Food is available à la carte or grouped in multimeal plans customized for individual diner's nutritional needs. \$\$\$

Go To Sushi

5140 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-0914

This friendly, family-run Japanese fast-food eatery offers original surprises like the Caribbean roll (a festively green parsley-coated maki stuffed with crispy fried shrimp, avocado, sweet plantain, and spicy Mayo), or a wonderfully healthful sesame-seasoned chicken soup with spinach, rice noodles, and sizable slices of poultry. Health ensured, you can enjoy a guiltless pig-out on Fireballs: fried dumplings of chicken, cabbage, and egg, crusted with quills – really a delectable crunchy noodle mix. \$

Jimmy's East Side Diner

7201 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-3692

Open for more than 30 years, Jimmy's respects the most important American diner tradition: breakfast at any hour. And now that the place is open for dinner, you can indulge your breakfast cravings for several more hours. There are blueberry hot cakes and pecan waffles; eggs any style, including omelets and open-face frittatas; and a full range of sides: biscuits and sausage gravy, grits, hash, hash browns, even hot oatmeal. And don't forget traditional diner entrées like meat loaf, roast turkey, liver and onions, plus burgers, salad platters, and homemade chicken soup. \$\$\$

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 grilled beef. Here the grill is also used for vegetables (an unusually imaginative assortment, including bok choy, endive, and fennel), two of which are paired with your protein

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

Revaes Italian Ristorante 8601 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-1010

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

Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus 1085 NE 79th St., 305-754-8002

With Christmas lights perpetually twinkling and party noises emanating from a new outdoor biergarten, this German restaurant is owner Alex Richter's one-man gentrification project, transforming a formerly uninviting stretch of 79th Street one pils at a time. The fare includes housemade sausages (mild veal bratwurst, hearty mixed beef/pork bauernwurst, spicy garlicwurst) with homemade mustard and catsup; savory yet near-greaseless potato pancakes; and, naturally, schnitzels, a choice of delicate pounded pork, chicken, or veal patties served with a half-dozen different sauces. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Soyka 5556 NE 4th Court, 305-759-3117

Since opening in 1999, Soyka has often been credited with sparking the Upper Eastside's revival. But the 2010 arrival of three Joe Allen veterans as executive chef, pastry chef, and sommelier signaled a culinary revival for the restorlounge, always a neighborhood focal point, now more food-focused. The contemporary comfort food menu ranges from fun small plates (deviled eggs with smoked salmon and dill, crisp-fried fiocchi pockets with gorgonzola sauce, oysters Rockefeller) to heftier items like burgers and steak au poivre. And don't miss the sticky date/toffee pudding. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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), masa-go (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

Formerly UVA 69, this casual-chic café/lounge, a MiMo neighborhood pioneer, has changed its name and original owners, but remains an all-day-to-late-night hangout. And menu strong points also remain, from fresh-baked pastries and breads to elegant cross-cultural sandwiches (particularly two Latin-inspired upgrades: a classic Cuban with French ham, cornichons, and a baguette; and la minuta, a beer-battered fish fillet on focaccia with cilantro aioli). Whether diners opt for full entrées or make a meal of small plates, the subtle global blending makes fusion make sense. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Yiya's Gourmet Cuban Bakery 646 NE 79th St. 305-754-3337

A true community jewel, this bakery is also a most welcoming café, serving lunch specials from chef Delsa Bernardo (who co-owns the place with attorney Abbie Cuellar) that are homemade right down to the herbs grown on the bakery's window sills. Bernardo's pan con lechon sandwiches and flaky-crust Cuban pastries are legend. But she also crafts treats not found at average Cuban bakeries, like pizzas using housemade Indian naan bread. Additionally Bernardo carries unique treats produced by a few friends: candies, cupcakes, and exotically flavored flans. \$

NORTH BAY VILLAGE

Bocados Ricos 1880 79th St. Causeway, 305-864-4889

Tucked into a mall best known for its Happy Stork Lounge, this little luncheonette services big appetites. Along with the usual grilled churrascos, there's



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bandeja paisa, Colombia's sampler platter of grilled steak, sausage, chicharron, fried egg, avocado, plantains, rice, and beans. Don't miss marginally daintier dishes like sopa de costilla, if this rich shortrib bowl is among the daily homemade soups. Arepas include our favorite corn cake: the hefty Aura, stuffed with chorizo, chicharron, carne desmechada (shredded flank steak), plantains, rice, beans, and cheese. \$-\$\$\$

The Crab House

1551 79th St. Causeway, 305-868-7085
Established in 1975, this Miami fish house was acquired by Landry's in 1996 and is now part of a chain. But the classic décor (knotty pine walls, tile floors, booths, outdoor waterfront deck) still evokes the good old days. Though the all-you-can-eat seafood/salad buffet (\$20 lunch, \$30 dinner) is a signature, freshness fanatics will be happiest sticking to à la carte favorites like the All-American fisherman's platters, or global specials like Szechuan shrimp, that change seasonally. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Japanese Market and Sushi Deli

1412 79th St. Causeway, 305-861-0143
Inside a small market that is widely considered Miami's premier source of Japanese foodstuffs, the "Sushi Deli" restaurant component is nothing more than a lunch counter. But chef Michio Kushi serves up some sushi found nowhere else in town. Example: traditional Osaka-style sushi – layers of rice, seasoned seaweed, and marinated fresh mackerel, pressed into a square box, then cut into lovely one-bite sandwich squares. While raw fish is always impeccable here, some unusual vegetarian sushi creations also tempt, as do daily entrées. \$

Mario the Baker

1700 79th St. Causeway, 305-867-7882
(See North Miami listing)

oggi Caffè

1666 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1238
This cozy, romantic spot started back in 1989 as a pasta factory (supplying numerous high-profile restaurants) as well as a neighborhood eatery. And the wide range of budget-friendly, homemade pastas, made daily, remains the main draw for its large and loyal clientele. Choices range from homey, meaty lasagna to luxuriant crab ravioli with creamy lobster sauce,

with occasional forays into creative exotica such as seaweed spaghetti, with sea scallops, shiitakes, and fresh tomatoes. \$\$-\$\$\$

Shuckers Bar & Grill

1819 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1570
"Cheap eats and a million-dollar view" is the sound bite manager Philip Conklin uses to describe this outdoor beach bar, hidden in back of a bayfront motel. The joint dates from South Beach's late 1980s revival, but the kick-off-your-shoes vibe couldn't be farther from SoBe glitz. The food ranges from classic bar favorites (char-grilled wings, conch fritters, raw or steamed shellfish) to full dinners featuring steak, homemade pasta, or fresh, not frozen, fish. \$-\$\$

Sushi Sam

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 raviolotti in lobster cream sauce, black squid ink linguini heaped with seafood. Though romantic enough for dates, the place is quite kid-friendly – and on the terrace, they'll even feed Fido. \$\$\$

K'Chapas

1130 Normandy Dr., 305-864-8872
Formerly the Peruvian restaurant Pachamama, this space is now both Peruvian and Venezuelan – but not fusion. The Venezuelan sisters who run the place keep dishes true to country. Most Big Food comes from Peru: fresh ceviches, classic cooked entrées. But it's the Venezuelan breakfast/snack items that keep us coming, especially signature cachapas, somewhat similar to arepas but harder to find in restaurants. These moist pancakes, made from ground corn kernels instead of just corn meal, are folded over salty white cheese for a uniquely bold balance of sweetness and savor. \$\$-\$\$

Lou's Beer Garden

7337 Harding Ave., 305-704-7879
"Beer garden" conjures up an image of Bavarian bratwurst, lederhosen, and oompah bands – none of which you'll find here. It's actually a hip hideaway in the New Hotel's pool-patio area, a locals' hangout with interesting eclectic fare and a perennial party atmosphere. Especially recommended: delicately pan-fried mini-crab cakes served with several housemade sauces; hefty bleu cheese burgers with Belgian-style

double-cooked fries; blackened "angry shrimp" with sweet/sour sauce; fried fresh sardines. And of course much beer, a changing list of craft brews. \$\$-\$\$\$

Tamarind Thai

946 Normandy Dr., 305-861-6222
When an eatery's executive chef is best-selling Thai cookbook author Vatcharin Bhumichitr, you'd expect major media hype, fancy South Beach prices, and a fancy SoBe address. Instead Bhumichitr joined forces with Day Longsomboon (an old Thai school pal who'd moved to Miami) at this unpretentious, authentic (no sushi) neighborhood place. Some standout dishes here are featured in the chef's latest tome, but with Tamarind's very affordable prices, you might as well let the man's impeccably trained kitchen staff do the work for you. \$\$-\$\$\$

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 remoulade sauce to make your own po'boy crostinis. \$\$-\$\$\$

MIAMI SHORES

Côte Gourmet

9999 NE 2nd Ave., #112, 305-754-9012
If only every Miami neighborhood could have a neighborhood restaurant like this low-priced little French jewel. The menu is mostly simple stuff: breakfast croissants, crêpe, soups, sandwiches, salads, sweets, and a few more substantial specials like a Tunisian-style brik (buttery phyllo pastry stuffed with tuna, onions, potatoes, and tomatoes) with a mesclun side salad. But everything is homemade, including all breads, and prepared with impeccable ingredients, classic French technique, and meticulous attention to detail, down to the stylish plaid ribbons that hold together the café's baguette sandwiches. \$\$-\$\$

Iron Sushi

9432 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-0311
With three Biscayne Corridor outlets (plus several branches elsewhere in town), this mostly take-out mini chain is fast becoming the Sushi Joint That Ate Miami. And why do Miamians eat here? Not ambience. 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, ambience 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

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. \$\$\$

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 non-carnivores there are several hefty seafood platters, made to order. \$\$

Bagels & Co.

11064 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2435
While this place is often referred to as GUNS & Bagels, one can't actually buy a gun here. The nickname refers to its location next to a firearms shop. But there's a lot of other stuff aside from bagels here, including a full range of sandwiches and wraps. Breakfast time is busy time, with banana-walnut pancakes especially popular. But what's most important is that this is one of the area's few sources of the real, New York-style water bagel: crunchy outside, challengingly chewy inside. \$

Bulldog Barbecue

15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-940-9655
The BBQ master at this small, rustic room is pugacious Top Chef contender Howie Kleinberg, whose indoor electric smoker turns out mild-tasting 'cue that ranges from the expected pulled pork, ribs, brisket, and chicken to hot-smoked salmon and veggie plates. There are also creative comfort food starters like BBQ chicken flatbread, salads, and sweets. Sides include refreshing slaw; beans studded with "burnt ends" (the most intensely flavored outer barbecue chunks); and sweet potato or chipotle-spiced fries. The cost is comparatively high, but such is the price of fame. \$\$-\$\$\$

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. \$\$\$

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 scorcher. There are even turkey and veggie variations. Other draws are hand-cut fries, beer-battered onion rings, a top-drawer beer list, budget-priced combo specials, conversation-friendly acoustics, and a South Beach rarity: free parking. \$\$\$

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 week-day lunch specials. But there are also delightful surprises, like grilled kawahagi (triggerfish) with seasoned Japanese mayonnaise. This intensely savory/sweet "Japanese home cooking" treat satisfies the same yen as beef jerky, except without pulling out your teeth. Accompanied by a bowl of rice, it's a superb lunch. For raw-fish fans, spicy, creamy salmon tartare (accompanied by hiyashi wakame seaweed) is a winner. \$\$\$

Here Comes the Sun

2188 NE 123rd St., 305-893-5711

At this friendly natural foods establishment, one of Miami's first, there's a full stock of vitamins and nutritional supplements. But the place's hearty soups, large variety of entrées (including fresh fish and chicken as well as vegetarian selections), lighter bites like miso burgers with secret "sun sauce" (which would probably make old sneakers taste good), and daily specials are a tastier way to get healthy. An under-ten-buck early-bird dinner is popular with the former long-hair, now blue-hair, crowd. Frozen yogurt, fresh juices, and smoothies complete the menu. \$\$\$

Le Griot de Madame John

975 NE 125th St., 305-892-9333

When Madame moved her base of operations from her Little Haiti home to a real restaurant (though a very informal one, and still mostly take-out), she began offering numerous traditional Haitian dishes, including jerked beef or goat tassot and an impressive poisson gros sel (a whole fish rubbed with salt before poaching with various veggies and spices). But the dish that still packs the place is the griot: marinated pork chunks simmered and then fried till they're moistly tender inside, crisp and intensely flavored outside. \$

Little Havana

12727 Biscayne Blvd. 305-899-9069

In addition to white-tablecloth ambiance, this place features live Latin entertainment and dancing, making it a good choice when diners want a night out, not just a meal. It's also a good choice for diners who don't speak Spanish, but don't worry about authenticity. Classic Cuban home-style dishes like mojo-marinated lechon asado, topped with onions, and juicy ropa vieja are translated on the menu, not the plate, and fancier creations like pork filet in tangy tamarind sauce seem universal crowd-pleasers. \$\$\$

Mama Jennie's

11720 NE 2nd Ave. 305-757-3627

For more than 35 years this beloved red-sauce joint has been drawing students and other starvation-budget diners with prodigious portions of lasagna, spaghetti and meatballs (the latter savory yet light-textured), veal marsala topped with a mountain of mushrooms, and other Italian-American belly-busters. All pasta or meat entrées come with oil-drenched garlic rolls and either soup (hearty minestrone) or a salad (mixed greens, tomatoes, cukes, brined olives, and pickled peppers) that's a dinner in itself. Rustic road-house ambiance, notably the red leatherette booths, add to Mama's charm. \$\$\$

Mario the Baker

13695 W. Dixie Highway, 305-891-7641

At this North Miami institution (opened in 1969) food is Italian-American, not Italian-Italian: spaghetti and meatballs, lasagna, eggplant parmigiana, and hot or cold subs. No imported buffalo, arugula, or other chichi stuff on the New York-style medium-thin-crust pizzas; the top topping here is the savory housemade sausage. And no one leaves without garlic rolls, awash in warm parsley oil and smashed garlic. New branches are now open in Miami's Midtown neighborhood and in North Bay Village. \$

Pastry Is Art

12591 Biscayne Blvd., 305-640-5045

Given owner Jenny Rissone's background as the Eden Roc's executive pastry chef, it's not surprising that her cakes and other sweet treats (like creamy one-bite truffle "lollipops") look as flawlessly sophisticated as they taste — perfect adult party fare. What the bakery's name doesn't reveal is that it's also a breakfast and lunch café, with unusual baking-oriented fare: a signature sandwich of chicken, brie, and caramelized peaches and pecans on housemade bread; quiches; pot pies; even a baked-to-order Grand Marnier soufflé. The pecan sticky buns are irresistible. \$\$

Petit Rouge

12409 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-7676

From the mid-1990s (with Neal's Restaurant and later with Il Migliore), local chef Neal Cooper's neighborhood-oriented Italian eateries have been crowd-pleasers. While this cute 32-seat charmer is French, it's no exception, avoiding pretense and winning fans with both classic and nouvelle 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-keyar and must-o-mooseer (thick yogurt dips with herbed 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. \$

Venezia Pizza and Café

13452 Biscayne Blvd., 305-940-1808

No frozen pizza crusts or watery mozzarella here. No imported designer ingredients either. The pies are New York-style, but the dough is made fresh daily, and the cheese is Grande (from Wisconsin, considered America's finest pizza topper). Also on the menu are Italian-American pastas, a large selection of hot and cold subs, simple salads, and a few new protein adds — grilled chicken breast, fried fish, or a steak. \$\$\$

Wong's Chinese Restaurant

12420 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-4313

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

Woody's Famous Steak Sandwich

13105 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-1451

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

Yes Pasta!

14871 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-1006

At this fast/casual Italian eatery, the specialty is mix-and-match. Choose one of seven fresh or dried pastas (whole wheat and gluten-free options available), then one of 15 sauces. Our personal pick is carbonara, correctly creamy-coated (via egg thickening, not cream overload); Bolognese is a wise choice for those who like sauces rich and red. Many options exist for vegetarians and pescatarians as well as carnivores, all clearly coded on the menu. \$\$

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,



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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 to fillings stuffed with chipotle-marinated steak or chicken chunks, bolder shredded beef barbacoa, or herb-scented pork carnitas. But these bites contain no evil ingredients (transfats, artificial color/flavor, antibiotics, growth hormones). And the food, while not the authentic Mex street stuff dreams are made of, is darned tasty, too. \$

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/tiraditos 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 lovelier than the tasty but oily mashed spud constructions more often encountered in town. \$-\$\$

Christine's Roti Shop 16721 NE 6th Ave., 305-770-0434

Wraps are for wimps. At this small shop run by Christine Gouvella, originally from British Guyana, the wrapper is a far more substantial and tasty roti, a Caribbean megacrepes 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

3969 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-crusted 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). \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Ginza 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

boeuf bourguignon in red wine sauce, iceberg lettuce and tomatoes, or a mushroom and squid salad with garlic dressing. For oysters Rockefeller/tuna-melt couples from Venus and Mars, it remains the ideal dinner date destination. \$\$-\$\$\$

Hiro Japanese Restaurant 3007 NE 163rd St., 305-948-3687

One of Miami's first sushi restaurants, Hiro retains an amusing retro-glam feel, an extensive menu of both sushi and cooked Japanese food, and late hours that make it a perennially popular after-hours snack stop. The sushi menu has few surprises, but quality is reliable. Most exceptional are the nicely priced yakitori, skewers of succulently soy-glazed and grilled meat, fish, and vegetables; the unusually large variety available of the last makes this place a good choice for vegetarians. \$\$

Hiro's Sushi Express 17048 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-949-0776

Tiny, true, but there's more than just sushi at this mostly take-out spin-off of the pioneering Hiro. Makis are the mainstay (standard stuff like California rolls, more complex creations like multi-veg futomaki, and a few unexpected treats like a spicy Crunch & Caliente maki), available à la carte or in value-priced individual and party combo platters. But there are also bento boxes featuring tempura, yakitori skewers, teriyaki, stir-fried veggies, and udon noodles. Another branch is now open in Miami's Upper Eastside. \$

Heelsha 1550 NE 164th St., 305-919-8393

If unusual Bangladeshi dishes like fiery pumpkin patee (cooked with onion, green pepper, and pickled mango) or Heelsha curry (succulently spiced hilsa, Bangladesh's sweet-fleshed national fish) seem familiar, it's because chef/owner Bithi Begum and her husband Tipu Raman once served such fare at the critically acclaimed Renaisa. Their menu's mix-and-match option allows diners to pair their choice of meat, poultry, fish, or vegetable with more than a dozen regional sauces, from familiar Indian styles to exotica like satkara, flavored with a Bangladeshi citrus reminiscent of sour orange. \$\$-\$\$\$

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

(See Miami Shores listing)?

Jerusalem Market and Deli 16275 Biscayne Blvd., 305-948-9080

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

Kabobji 3055 NE 163rd St., 305-354-8484

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

Kebab Indian Restaurant 514 NE 167th St., 305-940-6309

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

King Palace 330 NE 167th St. 305-949-2339

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

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill 14831 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-8800

(See Midtown / Wynwood / Design District listing)

Laurenzo's Market Café 16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381

It's just a small area between the wines and the fridge counters – no potted palms, and next-to-no service in this cafeteria-style space. But when negotiating this international gourmet market's packed shelves and crowds has depleted your energies, it's a handy place to refuel with eggplant parmesan and similar Italian-American classics, housemade from old family recipes. Just a few spoonfuls of Wednesday's hearty pasta fagiolo, one of the daily soup specials, could keep a person shopping for hours. And now that pizza master Carlo is manning the wood-fired oven, you can sample the thinnest, crispiest pies outside Napoli. \$-\$\$

Little Saigon 16752 N. Miami Ave., 305-653-3377

This is Miami's oldest traditional Vietnamese restaurant, but it's still packed most weekend nights. So even the place's biggest negative – its hole-in-the-wall atmosphere, not encouraging of lingering visits – becomes a plus since it ensures fast turnover. Chef/owner Lily Tao is typically in the kitchen, crafting green papaya salad, flavorful beef noodle pho (served with greens, herbs, and condiments that make it not just a soup but a whole ceremony), and many other Vietnamese classics. The menu is humongous. \$-\$\$

Mary Ann Bakery 1284 NE 163rd St., 305-945-0333

Don't be unduly alarmed by the American birthday cakes in the window. At this small Chinese bakery the real finds are the Chinatown-style baked buns and other savory pastries, filled with roast pork, bean sauce, and curried ground beef. Prices are under a buck, making them an exotic alternative to fast-food dollar meals. There's one table for eat-in snackers. \$

The Melting Pot 15700 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-2228

For 1950s and 1960s college students, fondue pots were standard dorm accessories. These days, however, branches of this chain are generally the only places to go for this eating experience. Start with a wine-enriched four-cheese fondue; proceed to an entrée with meat or seafood, plus choice of cooking potion (herbed wine, bouillon, or oil); finish with fruits and cakes dipped in melted chocolate. Fondue etiquette dictates that diners

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 Bennigan's) is clean, casual, and not kitschy. The all-you-can-eat fare is voluminous – scores of Chinese dishes (recommended: Mongolian pork, spicy garlic shrimp, and surprisingly authentic steamed fish with ginger and scallion); international oddities (pizza, plantains, pigs-in-blankets); plus sushi, salad, and pastry/ice cream bars. And the price is sure right. Lunch is \$6.75 (\$7.75 Saturday and Sunday). Dinner features more seafood, \$9.55. There's an inexpensive take-out option, too, and reduced kids' prices. \$

Oishi Thai

14841 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-4338

At this stylish Thai/sushi spot, try the menu of specials, many of which clearly reflect the young chef's fanatical devotion to fresh fish, as well as the time he spent in the kitchen of Knob: broiled miso-marinated black cod; rock shrimp tempura with creamy sauce; even Nobu Matsuhisa's "new style sashimi" (slightly surface-seared by drizzles of hot olive and sesame oil). The specials menu includes some Thai-inspired creations, too, such as veal massaman curry, Chilean sea bass curry, and sizzling filet mignon with basil sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Panya Thai

520 NE 167th St., 305-945-8566

Unlike authentic Chinese cuisine, there's no shortage of genuine Thai food in and around Miami. But Panya's chef/owner, a Bangkok native, offers numerous regional and/or rare dishes not found elsewhere. Plus he doesn't automatically curtail the heat or sweetness levels to please Americans. Among the most intriguing: moo khem phad wan (chewy deep-fried seasoned pork strips with fiery tamarind dip, accompanied by crisp green papaya salad); broad rice noodles stir-fried with eye-opening chili/garlic sauce and fresh Thai basil; and chili-topped Diamond Duck in tangy tamarind sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Paquito's

16265 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-5027

From the outside, this strip-mall Mexican eatery couldn't be easier to overlook. Inside, however, its festivity is impossible to resist. Every inch of wall space seems to be covered with South of the Border knickknacks. And if the kitschy décor alone doesn't cheer you, the quickly arriving basket of fresh (not packaged) taco chips, or the mariachi band, or the knockout margaritas will. Food ranges from Tex-Mex burritos and a party-size fajita platter to authentic Mexican moles and harder-to-find traditional preparations like albondigas – 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-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., 786-525-7071

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 crispy pork with crackling attached. \$\$\$

Shing Wang Vegetarian, Isee & Tea House

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

At this unique, mostly Taiwanese eatery, all seafood, poultry, and meats used to be skillfully crafted and delicious vegetarian imitations. These are still here, plus there's now a wider choice of dishes, some featuring real meat. Try the authentic-tasting Vietnamese banh mi sandwiches (available with a variety of meat and mock-meat fillings). Bubble tea is the must-not-miss drink. The cold, refreshing boba comes in numerous flavors, all supplemented with signature black tapioca balls that, sipped through straws, are a guaranteed giggle. \$

Siam Square

54 NE 167th St., 305-944-9697

Open until 1:00 a.m. every day except Sunday (when it closes at midnight), this relatively new addition to North Miami Beach's "Chinatown" strip has become a popular late-night gathering spot for chefs from other Asian restaurants. And why not? The food is fresh, nicely presented, and reasonably priced. The kitchen

staff is willing to customize dishes upon request, and the serving staff is reliably fast. Perhaps most important, karaoke equipment is in place when the mood strikes. \$\$\$

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 hang-out 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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. \$\$

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, muscels 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 uo 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 PBL (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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

The Palm

9650 E. Bay Harbor Dr., 305-868-7256
It was 1930s journalists, legend has it, who transformed NYC's original Palm from Italian restaurant to bastion of beef. Owners would run out to the butcher for huge steaks to satisfy the hardboiled scribes. So our perennial pick here is nostalgic: steak à la stone – juicy, butter-doused slices on toast, topped with sautéed onions and pimentos. This classic (whose carb components make it satisfying without à la carte sides, and hence a relative bargain) isn't on the menu anymore, but cooks will prepare it on request. \$\$\$\$

AVENTURA / HALLANDALE

Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza

17901 Biscayne Blvd., 305-830-2625
When people rave about New York pizzas' superiority, they don't just mean thin crusts. They mean the kind of airy, abundantly burn-bubbled, uniquely flavorful crusts that can only be consistently produced by a traditional coal (not wood) oven – like those at Anthony's, which began with one Fort Lauderdale pizzeria in 2002 and now has roughly 30 locations. Quality toppings, though limited, hit all the major food groups, from prosciutto to kalamata olives. There are salads, too, but the sausage and garlic-sautéed broccoli rabe pie is a tastier green vegetable. \$\$

Bagel Cove Restaurant & Deli

19003 Biscayne Blvd. 305-935-4029
One word: flagels. And no, that's not a typo. Rather these crusty, flattened specimens (poppy seed or sesame seed) are the ultimate bagel/soft pretzel hybrid – and a specialty at this bustling Jewish bakery/deli, which, since 1988, opens at 6:30 a.m. – typically selling out of flagels in a couple of hours. Since you're up early anyway, sample elaborately garnished breakfast specials, including unusually flavorful homemade corned beef hash and eggs. For the rest of the day, multitudes of mavens devour every other delectable deli specialty known to humankind. \$\$

Bella Luna

19575 Biscayne Blvd., Aventura Mall, 305-792-9330
If the menu here looks familiar, it should. It's nearly identical to that at the Upper Eastside's Luna Cafe and, with minor variations, at all the rest of Tom Billante's eateries (Rosalia, Villaggio, Carpaccio), right down to the typeface. But no argument from here. In a mall – a setting more accustomed to food court – dishes like carpaccio al salmone (crudo, with portobellos, capers, parmesan slices, and lemon/tomato dressing) and linguine carbonara (in creamy sauce with pancetta and shallots) are a breath of fresh, albeit familiar, air. \$\$\$

Bourbon Steak

19999 W. Country Club Dr., 786-279-0658 (Fairmont Hotel, Turnberry Resort)
At Bourbon Steak, a venture in the exploding restaurant empire of chef Michael Mina, a multiple James Beard award winner, steakhouse fare is just where the fare starts. There are also Mina's ingenious signature dishes, like an elegant deconstructed lobster/baby vegetable pot pie, a raw bar, and enough delectable vegetable/seafood starters and sides for noncarnivores to assemble a happy meal. But don't neglect the steak – flavorful dry-aged Angus, 100-percent Wagyu American "Kobe," swoonworthy grade A5 Japanese Kobe, and butter-poached prime rib, all cooked to perfection. \$\$\$\$

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 respite from shopping. In today's "Women Who Work" times, those restaurants (and privileged ladies) are anachronisms, but this room, hidden on Nordstrom's second floor, is a relaxing time-trip back. Enjoy creamy crab bisque, extravagant salads (shrimp with cilantro-lime dressing; pear, blue cheese, and candied walnuts with cherry balsamic vinaigrette), or a retro-modern club sandwich. Organic ingredients from local purveyors are emphasized. \$\$\$

Il Migliore

2576 NE Miami Gardens Dr., 05-792-2902
This attractive trattoria gets the food right, as well as the ambiance. As in Italy, dishes rely on impeccable ingredients and straightforward recipes that don't overcomplicate, cover up, or otherwise muck about with that perfection. Fresh fettuccine with white truffle oil and mixed wild mushrooms needs nothing else. Neither does the signature Pollo Al Mattone, marinated in herbs and cooked under a brick. And even low-carb dieters happily go to hell in a hand basket when faced with a mound of potatoes alla Toscana, herb-sprinkled French fries. \$\$\$

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 starch/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 pine-apple chutney, are particularly appealing, while those craving classic combinations like smoked salmon and cream cheese can enjoy them on a light-crusted 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

19501 Biscayne Blvd. (Aventura Mall), 305-466-7195
Ensclosed in a leather booth, with dark hardwood everywhere and a massive bar dispensing two-fisted drinks, you'd never know you were dining in a shopping mall – or in the new millennium. This upscale mini chain salutes America's great grill restaurants of yesteryear, with prodigious portions of charbroiled meats and seafood, plus classics like creamy chicken pot pie. New retro dishes are added quarterly, but our favorite remains Sunday night's prime rib special: a \$32 hunk of juicy beef that'll take care of Monday's meals too. \$\$\$\$

Mahogany Grille

2190 NW 183rd St., 305-626-8100
Mahogany Grille has drawn critical raves and an international clientele since retired major league outfielder Andre Dawson and his brother transformed this place in 2007. Today it's white tablecloths and, naturally, mahogany. The menu is a sort of trendy yet traditional soul fusion of food from several African diaspora regions: Carolina Low Country (buttery cheese grits with shrimp, sausage, and cream gravy), the

Caribbean (conch-packed fritters or salad), and the Old South (lightly buttermilk-battered fried chicken). The chicken is perhaps Miami's best. \$\$\$

Mo's Bagels & Deli

2780 NE 187th St., 305-936-8555
While the term "old school" is used a lot to describe this spacious (160-seat) establishment, it actually opened in 1995. It just so evokes the classic NY delis we left behind that it seems to have been here forever. Example: Lox and nova aren't pallid, prepackaged fish, but custom-sliced from whole slabs. And bagels are hand-rolled, chewy champions, not those machine-made puffy poseurs. As complimentary pastry bites suggest, and the massive size of the succulent, sufficiently fatty pastrami sandwiches confirm, generous Jewish Mo(m) spirit shines here. \$\$

Mr. Chef's Fine Chinese Cuisine & Bar

18800 NE 29th Ave. #10, 786-787-9030
Considering our county's dearth of authentic Chinese food, this stylish eatery is heaven-sent for Aventura residents. Owners Jin Xiang Chen and Shu Ming (a.k.a. Mr. Chef) come from China's southern seacoast province of Guangdong (Canton). But you'll find no glopily 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 Militello. He has been executive chef at Rumi, and cooked at NYC's James Beard House. Armed with those impressive credentials, Fredel and his wife launched Pilar (named for Hemingway's boat) aiming to prove that top restaurants can be affordable. Consider it proven. Floribbean-style seafood is the specialty: fresh hearts of palm slaw and Caribbean curry sauce, rock shrimp spring rolls with sweet soy glaze, yellowtail snapper with tomato-herb vinaigrette. Forget its strip-mall location. The restaurant itself is elegant. \$\$\$

Pizza Roma

19090 NE 29th Ave. 305-937-4884
Despite its name, this homey hidden eatery serves not Rome's wood-cooked, crunchy-crust pizzas but New York-style pies with medium-thick crusts pliable enough to fold in half for neat street eating. Unlike chains, though, this indie is accommodating, so if you want your crust thin and crisp, just ask. Also featured are Italian-American entrées like baked manicotti (that's "mani-goat", for those not from NJ) big enough to share, and sub sandwiches, here called "bullets," to put you in a Sopranos frame of mind. \$\$

Playwright Irish Pub

801 Silks Run Rd. #2597, 954-457-7563
The vintage Old World look and convivial atmosphere of this new pub, located in the Village at Gulfstream Park, are more traditionally Irish than most of the menu, which ranges from penne with marinara sauce to Thai-inspired spring rolls. But fish and chips are always crisp-coated and satisfying; potato leek soup is the real thing; and the crab cakes (crab meat mixed with just enough celery, onions, and peppers for interesting texture) are so good you'll be thinking Maryland, not Dublin. \$\$

Sushi Siam

19575 Biscayne Blvd. 305-932-8955
(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

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