

BISCAYNE

March 2012

Volume 10 Issue 1

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Times

The House That Flipper Built

pg 34

In the 1960s, Ivan Tors Studios in North Miami turned out some of America's favorite TV shows, and created a South Florida icon



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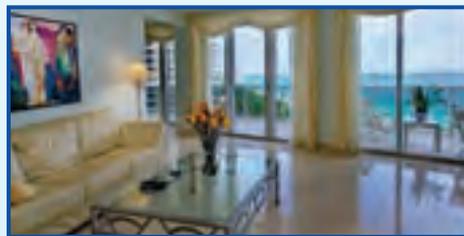
Modern Contemporary sleek waterfront residence in gated Sans Souci Ests, totally renovated, 4bd/3ba, pool, min to ocean, no bridges to bay. \$930,000



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



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



Mariners Bay Condo. Panoramic wide bay views, updated 2/2, lg terrace, priv. deeded dock, hurricane impact windows, dogs very welcome. \$425K



REDUCED!
Keystone Point Isl #5. Boater's Paradise. New dock w/ electric+davits, no bridges to bay. 4/3.5, 3,236sf as per owner, pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, 2 car gar. \$775K



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!
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| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY | |
|---|---|---------|---|---|---|--|---|
|  <h2>PILOBOLUS</h2> <p>EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED</p> <p>MARCH 2 & 3 AT 8 PM</p> | | | | 1 Miami City Ballet: La Valse/Symphonic Dances 7 PM  World Premiere of <i>Symphonic Dances</i> by Alexei Ratmansky and George Balanchine's <i>La Valse</i> MIAMI MADE FESTIVAL  | 2 Odysseo 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) The Cleveland Orchestra (TCO): Verdi and Prokofiev 8 PM  Pilobolus Dance Theatre 8 PM  MIAMI MADE FESTIVAL  | 3 Odysseo 3 & 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) Pilobolus Dance Theatre 8 PM  TCO: Verdi and Prokofiev 8 PM  MIAMI MADE FESTIVAL  | |
| 6 Odysseo 2 PM (At Bicentennial Park) From the creators of the hit show, <i>Cavalia!</i> MIAMI MADE FESTIVAL  |  <p>FLAMENCO FESTIVAL MIAMI 2012 MARCH 9-11</p> | | 7 Odysseo 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) This spellbinding show is a renewed tribute to the relationship humans & horses have forged over thousands of years. | 8 Odysseo 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) A journey into the imagination, a voyage through space and time, and an exploration of nature's greatest wonders. | 9 Odysseo 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) Flamenco Festival Miami 2012 8 PM  Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra 8 PM  | 10 Flamenco Festival Miami 2012 2 & 8 PM  Odysseo 3 & 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) Minnesota Orchestra & Midori 8 PM  | |
| 11 Odysseo 2 PM (At Bicentennial Park) Flamenco Festival Miami 2012 5 PM  Celebrate 5 years of the world's greatest flamenco artists from Spain! |  <p>COME FLY AWAY MARCH 20-25</p> | | 13 Odysseo 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) Surrounded by awe-inspiring projections and visual effects, some 70 horses and 55 artists embark together on an incredible journey. | <p>Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for contests, discounts and insider info!</p>   | 15 Odysseo 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) This new production will captivate audiences with its pristine beauty, bold acrobatic feats, and remarkable artistry. | 16 Odysseo 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) Experience the enormity of the new White Big Top that houses a 27,000-square-foot stage! | 17 Odysseo 3 & 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) <i>Odysseo</i> breaks the boundaries of equestrian arts, acrobatics, music, multimedia wizardry and special effects—the signature ingredients of a <i>Cavalia</i> show! |
| 18 Odysseo 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) Explore nature's greatest wonders—deserts, waterfalls, canyons, glaciers and more! |  <p>COME FLY AWAY MARCH 20-25</p> | | 20 Odysseo 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) Come Fly Away 8 PM  The new Broadway tribute to Frank Sinatra, fusing his unforgettable voice with the creative vision of Tony Award-winner Twyla Tharp! | 21 Odysseo 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) Come Fly Away 8 PM  A musical spectacle that will make you believe Ol' Blue Eyes is right offstage, mike in hand! | 22 Odysseo 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) Come Fly Away 8 PM  Featuring a score of beloved Sinatra classics including "Fly Me to the Moon," "My Way" and "New York, New York"! | 23 Odysseo 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) Come Fly Away (CFA) 8 PM  The Cleveland Orchestra (TCO): Beethoven's Pastoral 8 PM  | 24 Emilio and the Enchanted Cow 11 AM, 2 & 5 PM  CFA 2 & 8 PM  TCO & Tiempo Libre: ¡Música Fantástica! 2 PM  Odysseo 3 & 8 PM (At Bicentennial Park) TCO: Beethoven's Pastoral 8 PM  |
| 25 Come Fly Away 2 & 7:30 PM  Odysseo 2 PM (At Bicentennial Park) Emilio and the Enchanted Cow 2 PM  |  <p>MOSCOW MARCH 29 - APRIL 15</p> | | 29 Moscow 7:30 PM  From award-winning South Florida playwright Michael McKeever, author of <i>South Beach Babylon</i> and <i>Melt</i> . | 30 Moscow 7:30 PM  MCB: Program IV Coppélia 8 PM  Experience this classic romantic comedy and the sheer joy of its Delibes score! | 31 FREE Family Fest 11:30 AM  FREE Performance: MCB: <i>Coppélia</i> (excerpts) 2 PM  Moscow 2 & 7:30PM  MCB: Program IV Coppélia 8 PM  | | |

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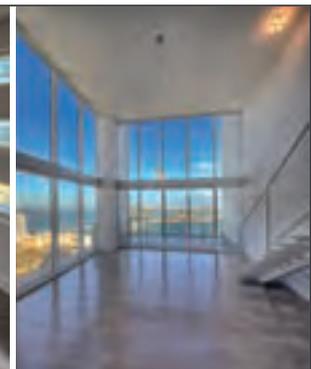
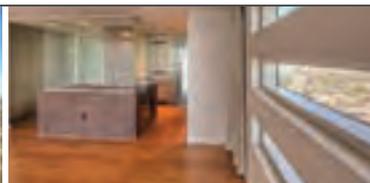
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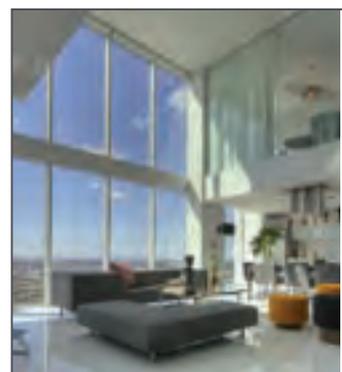
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PUBLISHER & EDITOR

Jim Mullin
jim.mullin@biscaynetimes.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Erik Bojnansky Senior Writer
erik.bojnansky@biscaynetimes.com

Anne Tschida, Arts Editor
anne.tschida@biscaynetimes.com

Pamela Robin Brandt, Crystal Brewé,
Terence Cantarella, Christian Cipriani,
Bill Citara, Karen-Janine Cohen, Wendy
Doscher-Smith, Gaspar González,
Margaret Griffis, Jim W. Harper, Lisa
Hartman, Jen Karetnick, Derek McCann,
Frank Rollason, Silvia Ros,
Shari Lynn Rothstein-Kramer, Mark Sell,
Jeff Shimonski, Melissa Wallen

BUSINESS MANAGER

Sal Monterosso
sal.monterosso@biscaynetimes.com

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

Marc Ruehle
marc.ruehle@biscaynetimes.com

Nancy Newhart
nancy.newhart@biscaynetimes.com

Lynn Bové
lynn.bove@biscaynetimes.com

ART DIRECTOR

Marcy Mock
marseadesign@mac.com

ADVERTISING DESIGN

DP Designs
production@biscaynetimes.com

CIRCULATION
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2nd LOT FROM BAY
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| Address | Beds | Baths | Yr Built | Sq Ft Liv | List Price | Sale Price |
|--------------------|------|-------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| 600 SABAL PALM RD | 5 | 5 / 1 | 1947 | 5,408 | \$5,450,000 | \$4,425,000 |
| 11550 NE 103 ST | 5 | 5 / 1 | 1958 | 4,456 | \$1,795,000 | \$1,500,000 |
| 1051 NE 89 ST | 6 | 5 / 1 | 1939 | 6,125 | \$1,795,000 | \$1,690,000 |
| 1350 NE 101 ST | 3 | 4 / 0 | 1953 | 2,823 | \$1,495,000 | \$1,292,50 |
| 1066 NE 94 ST | 5 | 4 | 1939 | 4,071 | \$1,059,000 | \$900,000 |
| 510 NE 56 ST | 4 | 4 / 0 | 1934 | 3,021 | \$899,000 | \$815,000 |
| 531 PIGEON PLUM LN | 4 | 3 / 0 | 1957 | 3,977 | \$885,000 | \$925,000 |
| 490 NE 96 ST | 5 | 4 / 1 | 1941 | 3,893 | \$849,000 | \$740,000 |
| 8530 NE 10 AV | 3 | 3 / 1 | 1941 | 3,854 | \$699,000 | \$500,000 |

AREA 33160-33180

| Address | Beds | Baths | Yr Built | Sq Ft Liv | List Price | Sale Price |
|----------------------|------|-------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| 401 OCEAN BLVD | 4 | 4 / 1 | 1940 | 6,323 | \$9,995,000 | \$6,000,000 |
| 550 N ISLAND DR | 7 | 6 / 1 | 1995 | 6,634 | \$3,150,000 | \$2,500,000 |
| 546 GOLDEN BEACH DR | 6 | 5 / 1 | 1955 | 5,141 | \$2,195,000 | \$1,400,000 |
| 3720 NE 201 ST | 5 | 5 / 1 | 1997 | 3,929 | \$1,500,000 | \$1,280,000 |
| 18920 N BAY RD | 3 | 2 / 1 | 1950 | 2,298 | \$1,499,999 | \$1,050,000 |
| 475 CENTER ISLAND DR | 3 | 2 / 0 | 1959 | 2,249 | \$1,350,000 | \$1,150,000 |
| 16421 NE 34 AV | 3 | 3 / 0 | 1992 | 3,518 | \$1,199,000 | \$1,095,000 |
| 20825 NE 32 PL | 4 | 4 / 1 | 2000 | 3,286 | \$985,000 | \$918,000 |
| 3951 194 TR | 4 | 3 / 1 | 1997 | 3,693 | \$895,000 | \$845,000 |



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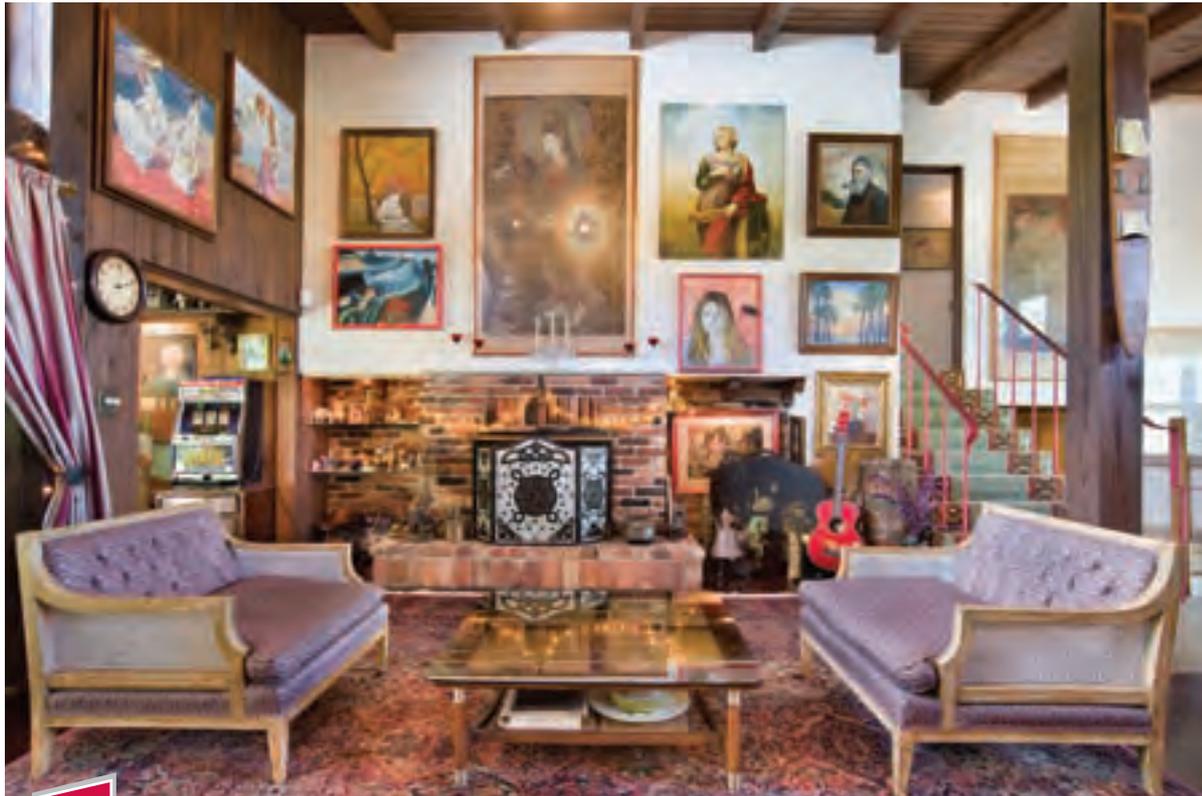
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Commentary: LETTERS

Roughing It 2.0: Starbucks, Ribeyes, Smoked Oysters, and a Fine Cabernet

I enjoyed "Trapped in a Tech Web that Won't Let Go? Answer: Unplug, Float, Exhale," by Tristram Korten (February 2012). But I couldn't shake off a couple of questions that seemed to undermine the whole enterprise: Did he pitch the trip as a story idea? And if so, doesn't that make him even more ripe for Wordsworth's scold ("The world is too much with us") about concentrating too intensely on material gain?

I also had to smile — because I can well identify — at how people "get back to nature" in this day and age: with frozen water bottles, Starbucks coffee, energy bars, a bottle of Cabernet, smoked oysters, and ribeye steaks cooked over a blaze next to a tent for two.

Imagine Proteus rising from the sea to wrestle with these two urban professionals, one of whom is hiding from mosquitoes in his tent and the other basking in the Great Outdoors, wine glass in hand.

I really do admire their resolve to chuck the cell phones and the familiar, and remove themselves from all things "hijacking" their attention.

Regaining focus and embracing the journey remind me of Homer and a paraphrase of Shakespeare: Even if one is crossing just four miles of bay, the journey's still the thing.

I'd like to see more stories leading us to the remote areas in our backyard.

*Roberta Cummings
Miami*

Roughing It: We Don't Need No Stinking Reservations

Being an avid paddler and camper, I read with great interest your cover story "Unplug... Float... Exhale..." I know that eerie feeling when you get a couple of miles offshore. You're sitting so low in your kayak that all you see is water, an unbroken horizon. You might as well be in the middle of the Atlantic.

Maybe some details were left out of the article for space purposes, but I couldn't help take note of the fact that the author did not mention anything about making a reservation for a camping spot on Elliott Key. The National Park Service really would prefer it if you did as they ask and make a reservation and camp only in approved areas.

Seems the author and his friend ignored that and simply went ashore at the first place that caught their fancy.

In one of the photographs, I saw something interesting. It appeared on page 42 and

showed one of our paddlers approaching the shore where they were going to camp. In the upper-left corner of the photo, you can clearly see a sign on a post, aimed in the direction of anyone approaching in a watercraft.

I couldn't make out the sign's message, but I could guess: "Camp in Designated Areas Only."

Shame on them for thumbing their noses at the very people who make their "wilderness" experience possible.

*Thomas Elrod
Midtown Miami*

Enrique to Pols: Stop Playing Poker with Our Economic Well-being

Congratulations on Erik Bojnansky's eye-opening article "The Casino Effect" (February 2012) and for providing some alarming statistics from Professor John Kindt on the devastation that large-scale casino resorts inevitably wreak on local economies.

When will state and local politicians get that there's no such thing as easy money, and that the odds are especially bad when it comes to organized gambling enterprises? Our elected officials may think they can control the outcomes, but they'll never win against the house, so to speak — and as other cities have already learned, they'll be no match for the massive casino machines once they've steamrolled into town.

Years ago the State of Florida commissioned months-long economic studies to find remedies to its stagnant economy. And guess what? Those studies don't mention gambling. They talk about investing in education, life sciences, new medical schools, technology transfer, industry and manufacturing clusters, flourishing spin-offs, start-ups, and collaborations. It's not easy money, but it's the kind that builds on itself.

Those studies warn that an economy based on service jobs has nowhere to go but down, especially in a state with Florida's complex demographics. When most of your residents are in low-paying service jobs, and the rest are (1) the nonworking elderly, (2) seasonal residents who contribute little to the tax base, (3) tourists here for short stays, and (4) the nonworking poor and/or poor immigrants who face severe barriers to assimilation, the prognosis is seriously bad.

The corporate cabals investing billions of dollars in buying up Miami — its prime waterfront land, hotels and parking garages — likely don't care one whit about making Florida a more livable place. They're thrilled to have a poor, turn-key

.....
Continued on page 22

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Commentary: LETTERS

Letters

Continued from page 20

service economy in which to set up shop.

They want tax dollars to go toward widening the streets to their front doors, not toward empowering university and business research or building sustainable and growing sectors that will attract investment that leads toward real innovation and wealth.

And the politicians in Tallahassee? Every year they put off voting on the casino bills is another year they can haul in lots more PAC money from the gambling special interests. Want to speculate about other financial benefits ahead for them, in or out of office?

It's time to stop playing high-stakes poker with our economic well-being.

*Enrique Valladares
North Miami*

I'm a Tiger Mother and Proud of It!

In her "Kids and the City" column, Crystal Brew makes the case for parents relaxing the grip on their young children's lives ("The Activity Addiction," February 2012).

She seems to roll her eyes at those who believe structure and discipline are an essential part of learning and growth for youngsters.

And she implies that those "Tiger Mothers" who invest enormous amounts of time and money guiding their children through a world of frivolous distractions are simply driven by ego.

I could not disagree more.

I proudly call myself a Tiger Mom. I am one of those who is convinced beyond a doubt that America is sliding into irreversible mediocrity because assertive parenting has become politically incorrect.

*Barbara Hollingsworth
Aventura*

George Berlin: There at the Creation of Aventura

Erik Bojnansky's article "Family & Fortune" (January 2012) was really interesting to me as a North Dade resident.

I was touched personally by the references to my late friend Mr. George Berlin, and to the great contributions he made toward the development and the growth of the City of Aventura.

His work will never be forgotten.

*Gerard G. Moss
Aventura*

I Dare You to Check Out My YouTube Exposé on Highland Village!

I just read Jim W. Harper's "Park Patrol" article about Highland Village ("A Park

in Need Is a Park Indeed," December 2011), and then North Miami Beach Councilwoman Barbara Kramer's letter to the editor in response (January 2012).

Every tax-paying citizen has a right to know the goings-on in Highland Village because of state and federal funds and more.

Councilwoman Kramer wrote very defensively, like she was afraid truths were going to come out about City of North Miami Beach and Highland Village.

I have some videos posted on YouTube of conditions and situations in the city generally and Highland Village specifically. Jim W. Harper didn't even scratch the surface.

Very interesting!

*Gary Chadwick
North Miami Beach*

Corrections

Editor's Note: In Erik Bojnansky's article "The Casino Effect" (February 2012), Frank Nero's job title was misstated. Nero is president and CEO of the Beacon Council.

Also in the February issue, two photographs accompanying our "Galleries + Museums" listings carried the wrong captions. Below are the two artworks with the correct captions.



Francesca Woodman, *Horizontale*, silver gelatin print, 1976, at Gallery Diet.



L. Tomasello, *Object Plastique N. 874*, acrylic on wood, 2007, at Ascaso Gallery.

In the January issue, the catalogue number for the HistoryMiami photograph below was not accurate. Anyone interested in purchasing a copy of the photo, which depicts the mouth of the Miami River in 1897, needs the catalogue number. Here it is: Miami News Collection, HistoryMiami, #X-0129-1.



Needless to say, we regret the errors.

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City Hall Dynasties

Between the old pols and their family members, Miami just never changes

By Jack King
BT Contributor

A few weeks ago I looked up at the television during a Miami City Commission meeting and immediately the thought of The Who's song "Won't Get Fooled Again" ran through my mind. For those of you not familiar with the song, the last phrase is: "Meet the new boss. Same as the old boss."

The current city commission is composed of people who've been around for a long time, or whose families have. Mayor Tomás Regalado did multiple terms as a city commissioner before being elected mayor three years ago.

Then there's Willy Gort, another multi-term commissioner who once ran for mayor and lost. So what the hell, he ran again for commissioner and won again.

And Michelle Spence-Jones? Although she hasn't been in office that long, her term has been really exciting. She was charged with crimes, and then a year later, reinstated when the principal witness refused to testify. Spence-Jones follows right in line with her district's history, as the previous two elected commissioners were also ethically challenged, notwithstanding the Rev. Richard Dunn, who served as interim commissioner two times.

Spence-Jones should have been indicted for being felony stupid when she sold her vote on the Marlins' stadium deal in exchange for \$50 million the city owed her district's community redevelopment agency. She voted for the stadium and then the city stiffed her, saying the money just wasn't there. Brilliant move.

Marc Sarnoff seems like he's been there for years, but he's actually only in his third term, and the first one was short. However, he's been adept at keeping his name in the press, both good and bad.

Finally we have what I like to call our "legacy commissioners," Francis Suarez and Frank Carollo. Suarez is the son of Miami's first Cuban-American mayor, Xavier Suarez, also the only Harvard-educated one. He was elected mayor three times, and during his first two terms was considered one of the best mayors in the city's history. Then things got weird.

The younger Suarez has worked quietly, but recently has advocated for a strong-mayor form of city government. Wait a minute. Don't we have a strong-mayor form government now? Many people thought we did when we changed the city charter 15 years ago.

What happened was that the *county*, not the city, changed Miami-Dade government to a strong-mayor system.



Whoever wrote the city charter change got it horribly wrong, but nobody challenged it, including the voters.

Enter former Mayor Joe Carollo, who was having his problems with the city commission, so he thought the best way to handle it was to marginalize the commission. Unfortunately it didn't work, and again nobody noticed.

That brings us to the final commissioner, Frank Carollo, Joe's much younger brother. When Frank was elected, there was a concern that he would be just like Joe, who was not so affectionately referred to "Crazy Joe" because he came up with some of the most outlandish ideas city hall had ever seen.

One of them was an idea to resolve the north-south traffic problem from Miami to South Dade. On a trip out of town, Joe had seen an expressway built atop a river, supposedly because the land along the river wasn't available. So he proposed, with a straight face, to build an expressway in Biscayne Bay from Homestead to Miami. The idea didn't go far.

So Frank, in honor of his brother, proposed that the city should put baby-changing stations in all city men's rooms. They already are in most ladies' rooms. The reason is that Frank likes to change diapers on his own young child. The project would cost about \$40,000, not a great

sum, but a sum that would help only one person — Frank Carollo. Hey, Frank, use your desk. It works fine. I've done it!

A couple of unrelated things have also been on my mind: I had to laugh when the contraception flap came up a few weeks ago, especially with the position that the Catholic Church is taking on the issue. A caveat here: I was raised Catholic, but was expelled from religion class because I had more questions than they had answers. I still do.

Catholics in America — both men and women — almost universally use some form of birth control at some point in their lives. The church has been unable to change those numbers over the past 30 years.

So the bishops force the federal government to remove all contraception from healthcare programs for Catholic institutions. To me it looks like they were trying to get the government to do what they themselves have been unable to do: stop Catholics from using contraception.

Those bishops are wily.

And locally, motorists are hitting bikers at an alarming rate. As drivers get older, bikers are harder to see. I know. I've been hit and it is not fun. The next biker you don't see might be me. Scary thought.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Strangers Next Door

The perils of Miami's new condo lifestyle

By Christian Cipriani

BT Contributor

If I asked you to sink your money into a project but couldn't tell you much about your co-investors, you'd walk away laughing. But this is exactly what buying into a condominium means: a group of strangers in a shared investment, with few guarantees about what they're buying and who they're buying it with.

The new Miami lifestyle is synonymous with condos — a type of living that brings staggering risks and endless headaches. The most basic risk is overpaying, which so many did, and by eye-watering percentages, thanks to speculators and salivating lenders.

Another major risk is quality. Our building boom was a veritable race to the top-off, and plenty of developers maximized profits with corner-cutting construction.

Jeremy Bedor is an experienced construction manager who recently left South Florida for Washington, D.C. He worked on some of our city's most famed developments. Overall he's positive about the advantages of multi-family living — especially when it comes to conveniences and amenities — but as the guy who gets sent in to deal with after-the-fact problems, he's also seen the downsides.

"Historically," Bedor says, "Florida condominium owners were subjected to unscrupulous developers and contractors who often disappeared after a property was completed, leaving the residents

with an expensive mess to clean up. The 1970s saw the addition of construction warranties to the Florida Condo Act, placing more post-construction responsibility on developers and contractors."

Big developers with a proven track record are more likely to stick around in case something goes wrong, and Florida laws have evolved to protect new-construction buyers, but buying into condos past their decade mark — or more — ups your risk. If a building hasn't had a major assessment in the past five years, then beware, says Bedor.

After ten years, most developers are off the hook, and thereafter owners will face mounting issues, most notably Miami's stringent 40-year recertification standards. The aging Surfside building Bedor just left faced a \$5 million assessment for common-element upgrades.

Yep, that's right. A multimillion-dollar tab. Just because you can cobble together a down payment and cover your mortgage, taxes, and association dues doesn't mean you can afford the long-term hidden costs of communal living.

Countless Miami condos have faced worst-case scenarios since the financial crisis. Tensions run high, board meetings become battlegrounds, and aggressive creativity has been the only means of survival for many. I know because I've been on my condo board for four years, in a building where an embarrassing percentage of my neighbors — sorry, co-investors — are thousands of dollars behind on their association fees. Florida laws are weighted heavily in favor of lenders, and



associations end up recovering a pittance of each foreclosed unit's back dues.

To compensate, my association has cut costs in every way imaginable, from getting out of a ten-year deal with Comcast to floating the idea of leasing rooftop space for a cellular tower.

The financial risks of condo living are just the beginning. Residents also face a whole host of social and managerial issues. A typical Miami condo building will have tenants of all ages, professions, and socioeconomic backgrounds — a 25-year-old woman living in her first studio will share awkward elevator silence with an executive who snagged the multimillion-dollar penthouse. People like this, who would otherwise never meet, will live stacked up like Jenga blocks.

In fact, they could be neighbors and *never* meet, owing to the odd isolation bred by condos. How many people don't know who lives above, below, or beside them? My guess is lots, especially here in the land of the transient.

It's from this diverse pool of strangers that a condo board forms to maintain the health of their real estate organism, and again Bedor offers some advice:

"Under no circumstances should someone

view the property value and location, or the income bracket of the residents, as an assurance of a condo board operating in the best interest of the residents."

He also warns of a pattern he's seen in association managers: They're hired to protect owner interests, but pressure to give the board what it asks for can quickly turn a manager who wants to keep his job into a yes-man for counterproductive ideas.

My own condo board is brilliantly dysfunctional, partly because volunteer boards tend to attract both the best and worst people for the job. A go-go professional eager to donate time and expertise will meet face-to-face with a retired spinster who memorizes bylaws and gets her kicks busting people for walking their dogs in the wrong spot. But I digress...

For Miami condo owners, these are strange times indeed. If you're thinking of buying into this game, think long and hard about how badly you need a pool or a gym. If you're already in condolandia and beyond saving your sanity, then at the very least save your money.

Anything can happen when you live with strangers.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Miami's Main Drag 116 Years Ago

A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami

By Paul George
Special to the *BT*

Miami was still a wilderness as the year 1896 dawned. But in April of that year, Henry M. Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway steamed into town, and suddenly a new city was born.

This photograph shows the first street in Miami, Avenue D, today's N. Miami Avenue, which was laid out in early 1896. The buildings here stretched from the

Miami River northward for a few blocks.

From left, and barely visible, stand John Sewell and Brothers Shoe Store and John B. Reilly's real estate office, a tailor shop, the Lobby Pool and Billiard Parlor, Raulerson Brothers Meat Market, and Florida Western Meats.

One block north of these structures stood buildings housing the *Miami Metropolis*, the city's first newspaper, and the Bank of Bay Biscayne.

On July 28, 1896, local residents met on the second floor of the Lobby



Photo courtesy of HistoryMiami, Claude Matlack Collection, #matlack_245-12

building and voted to incorporate as a city. John Reilly became the City of Miami's first mayor. Sadly, Julia Tuttle and Mary Brickell, the two people besides Henry M. Flagler who were most responsible for the city's creation, were barred from voting because of their gender.

Most of the buildings pictured here, as well as others, burned in the

fire of December 26, 1896.

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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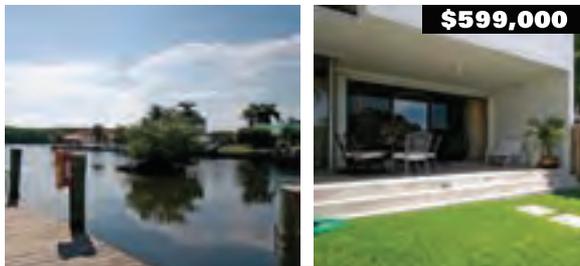
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NORTH MIAMI BEACH

EASTERN SHORES 5 BEDROOMS

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.

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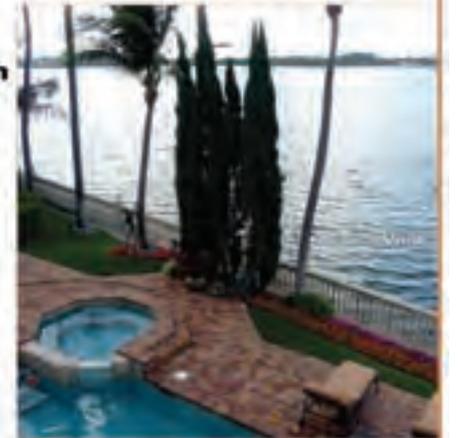
Over 6,300 SF LA

220FT Waterfront

80FT Dock Space

Ocean Access

No Fixed Bridges
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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.

BizBuzz

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

By Pamela Robin Brandt
BT Contributor

Compared to winter months, packed with major holidays, March may seem like a minor player. But it is the month when spring officially begins (on March 20 this year), with all that season's sometimes just symbolic yet hopeful hints of fresh new beginnings.

Whether your spring-cleaning hopes are aimed, most traditionally, at your home or at yourself, *BT* advertisers have offers and events this month to transform your hopes for renewal into reality.

Looking to start afresh in a new home or office? Call Patrick Duffy at **Duffy Realty** (9718 NE 2nd Ave., 305-904-4803), a new advertiser who's actually a returning vet — one of the *BT*'s earliest advertisers back in the bad old days. The longtime Miami Shores resident, and expert in realty for the Shores and adjacent areas, represents properties in all price ranges, so don't be intimidated. Welcome back, Pat!

Welcome, too, to Aventura's **Turnberry International Realty** (20445 Biscayne Blvd. #H-8, 305-767-3182), a new advertiser whose mission is to be the area's premier boutique real estate company — meaning the company not only provides personalized services covering clients from search through closing table, but will help you find insurance, a doctor, and almost any other need in the neighborhood.

To freshen up the look of your present home, check out the stock of striking

Brazilian furniture, both contemporary and classic, at **Herval Furniture USA**. You won't have to look far. The company conveniently covers *BT* territory with two showrooms (1730 Biscayne Blvd., 305-377-1221 and 2666 NE 189th St., 305-935-4545). Mention "spring cleaning" this month for a 10% discount on purchases over \$1000.

If you haven't checked out **The Collection German Furniture** (15400 Biscayne Blvd. #112, 305-944-3727 in a while, this is the season to do it. The company has supplemented its famed selection of high-end German furniture with Steel Land, a fun young collection for modern households, and will be receiving new sofas from the line's Free Wind and Kandinsky series (inspired by the artist credited with the first purely abstract paintings).

Don't forget **Scan Design's** fifth annual "Fall in Furniture Love" art event on March 3, from 6:00-9:00 p.m. (4150 N. 28th Terr., Hollywood; RSVP at fallin-furniturelove.com or 954-874-3888). Actually, a visit to Scan's local showroom (3025 NE 163rd. St.) is something of an art event in itself, but doesn't include the evening's special perks: musical entertainment, fine wines and spirits, hors d'oeuvres, and interactive painting, plus a silent auction and raffle. All donations benefit Broward's Habitat for Humanity.

Isn't it great when doing something good for yourself also helps do good for others? That's what'll happen if your March visit to **Salon Dahlia** (9472 NE 2nd Ave., 305-290-0028) happens on



the first Monday of the month, when the friendly neighborhood place is donating 20% of all proceeds to Smile Train, a charity providing free cleft-palate surgery to needy children throughout the world.

Another opportunity to support a worthy cause while enjoying a fabulous night of food (including a vegetarian dinner option) plus terrific auctions and raffles: Pelican Party 2012, a fundraising dinner celebrating 32 years of care for Miami wildlife by the caring folks at **Pelican Harbor Seabird Station** (1279 NE 79th St. Cswy., 305-751-9840). The party isn't until April (specifically April 7 at Miami Shores Country Club, 10000 Biscayne Blvd.), but it's not too early to buy tix now, in person or online at www.pelicanharbor.org. Price is just \$45 for individuals or \$400 for a table of ten.

And dog lovers should mark March 25 (from 9:00 a.m. to noon) on their calendars. That's when **The Shops at Midtown Miami** (3401 N. Miami Ave.) will be hosting the fifth annual Miami Lighthouse Dog Walk, raising awareness for guide and other service dogs of all kinds. For more info: www.miamilighthouse.org.

By the way, pet owners: How does a meal of salmon with lentils in yogurt and lemongrass sauce sound? No, not for you. It's one of four new entrée varieties

from **By Nature**, makers of natural and organic — and, obviously, gourmet — dog and cat food. This month's offer for *BT* readers: Buy four cans and get one free, plus \$2 off any small bag of By Nature. For a list of local outlets carrying the healthful, tempting treats, consult www.bynaturepetfoods.com.

While spring cleaning traditionally means thoroughly reviving one's dwelling, it seems that the season inspires people to do the same for their personal selves.

Example: Last month's free weight-loss seminar at **Hiperfit** (7120 Biscayne Blvd., 305-762-6600) went so well that the personal-training facility is offering it again on March 17, at 11:00 a.m., says founder/fitness champion Jeff Seidman.

For those of you with kids, new advertiser **Bikram Yoga Central Miami** (5084 Biscayne Blvd. #101A, 305-231-3171) will be offering a class for children — featuring the same strength, flexibility, coordination, and balance improvement, and general body awareness, as the adult classes, but without the heat. It's scheduled for March 31 from 1:00-2:00 p.m. Call for more details.

Visits to the doctor can be traumatic even for us grown-ups. For kids... Well,

.....
Continued on page 32

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1900 N BAYSHORE DR # 4411

2BED / 2BATH 1,180 Sq.Ft.
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NIRVANA
750 64 ST # B215

1BED / 1BATH 723 Sq.Ft.
OFFERED AT: \$ 1,300/Month



SPACIOUS UNIT WITH SPECTACULAR VIEW. BRAND NEW BUILDING, EUROPEAN KITCHEN, 9 FT CEILINGS, OVERSIZED BALCONIES, GREAT AMENITIES: THEATER ROOM, LOUNGE AREAS, 2 POOLS, SPA. RIGHT ACROSS RECREATIONAL PARK WITH BASKETBALL COURT, SOCCER FIELD, BEACH VALLEY BALL, PETS PARK, AND MORE. MINUTES FROM DOWNTOWN, BAYSIDE, AND SOUTH BEACH.

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1900 N BAYSHORE DR # 4308

1BED / 1BATH 837 Sq.Ft.
OFFERED AT: \$ 289,000

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1900 N BAYSHORE DR # 3519

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Designer Finishes | Direct Ocean Views
OFFERED AT \$1,799,000



Jade Beach

17001 Collins Av #905, Sunny Isles Beach
3BD/3.5BA | 2,105 sq ft | New Smart Bldg
Direct Ocean & City Views
OFFERED AT \$1,499,900



Trump Hollywood

2711 S Ocean Dr #1506, Hollywood Bch
3BD/3.5BA | 2,088 sq ft
Ocean, Intracoastal & City Views
OFFERED AT \$1,380,000



Chateaux Estates

1906 N Oak Haven Cr, N Miami Beach
3BD/2.5BA | 2,678 sq ft
Cathedral Ceilings | Oversized Bdrms
OFFERED AT \$690,000



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TURNBERRY
INTERNATIONAL REALTY

Biz Buzz

Continued from page 30

you remember. But returning *BT* advertiser **Kidstown Pediatrics** (4112 NE 1st Ave., 305-576-5437) is known as a doctor's office kids actually look forward to visiting — and as a place where kind, patient staff members and Dr. Margaret Okonkwo actually listen to them, not just their parents.

For *BT*-reading parents with children over age ten who have been diagnosed with ADD/ADHD or autism, **Dr. Lee Barbach**, DC (1717 N. Bayshore Dr. #240, 1-888-924-7664) has a special March offer: three free visits. Find a detailed explanation from this inventive practitioner about how his BBT (brain-based treatment) can help improve everything from your child's social behavior and academic achievement to his/her posture. Go to www.iWishiFeltBetter.com/special.

The new practice and new office suite of **Dr. Daniel Leon-Romain** (9999 NE 2nd Ave. #204, 786-497-4440), an internist and general practice physician (very reassuring for those of us who prefer to think of ourselves as *not* unrelated body parts — offers comprehensive care, specializing in preventive medicine. All new patients scheduling an appointment are eligible for a free cholesterol screening.

If what needs spring cleaning is your smile, **The Art of Dentistry** can brighten that up in just an hour with Zoom laser whitening. Mention the *BT* for a special price of \$289 (normally more than \$400).

If the renewal you seek is spiritual, welcome returning advertiser **Unity on the Bay** (411 NE 21st St., 305-573-9191), a diverse spiritual home where the message is unconditional love, acceptance, and healing. Check out www.unityonthebay.org for the full range of services and opportunities Unity offers.

Remember the New Testament story about Jesus washing his disciples' feet? Well, **First United Methodist Church of Miami** (400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-371-4706) has been remembering for more than 20 years with an annual pre-Easter Foot Washing for the Homeless, this year on March 24 from 1:00-4:00 p.m. Along with doctors and students from Barry University's School of Podiatric Medicine, who will attend to foot health care, about 100 volunteers are needed. Want to show some love? Contact the church prior to the March 17 training session.

For an alternative path to reviving your spirit, join certified hypnotherapist and life coach **Catherine Patrick**

(786-277-9835) at the Standard Hotel on March 14 at 7:00 p.m. for a fun and powerful group hypnosis workshop designed to increase your happiness and energy — and spark renewed passion for life. The \$30 fee includes the resort's indoor baths.

It's hard to feel spring's new promise with last year's taxes hanging over your head, but the experts at **TaxStation** (286 NE 2nd Ave., 786-319-4433) can relieve your worries as easily as possible. See this issue's ad for a \$10 discount on services done in-office, or file simple taxes for free at TaxStationToday.com. The company provides pick-up and delivery services to downtown and Brickell, too.

All ready to get out and enjoy life to its fullest? Good! Opportunities abound this spring.

Attention sports fans: Whether tennis or shopping is your sport of choice, you'll want to check out the just-opened fourth Florida retail location of new advertiser **Tennis Plaza** (15400 Biscayne Blvd. #110, 305-890-1808). The store's stock of racquets, grips, and other gear is perfect for those who play, and there's also a huge selection of athletic shoes for those who just like the look.

Do you have gold or fine jewelry to sell, but also have anxieties about where to sell it? Forget skulking into some questionable pawnbroker. At new advertiser **Global Jewelry** (18677 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-705-9600), South Florida's top-rated and largest gold buyer, the personal boutique service (including coffee or water served in crystal) is classy, and the sales experience first-class.

With *BT* territory finally recognized as a serious destination dining draw, it's time to draw attention to some of our area's serious support services — like new advertiser **Oves Restaurant Supply** (1940 NW 21st Ter., 305-326-8010). From sales to repairs of truly professional kitchen equipment, this company does it all.

Welcome also to attorneys **Michael Lubin and Steve Polisar**, new advertisers who offer new businesses, especially restaurants, a most vital support service: helping business owners navigate through the hassles of obtaining permits to sell wine and beer. Residents who lived in these parts during the South Beach renaissance may remember Steve as the original owner of Ocean Drive's Palace Bar & Grill (and several Lincoln Road-area restaurants after that), so you know that he and partner Michael are veterans at cutting through government red tape.

Now we're hungry. Fortunately this month's ad for **Bagels & Company** (11064 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2435) contains coupons for some terrific week-day deals. For dine-in deli mavens, \$3 off a minimum \$15 meal or \$5 off a \$25 check. And for all customers, six free bagels with the purchase of a dozen.

For nightlife aficionados who prefer dining and dancing at the same venue, restolounge **Trio on the Bay** (1601 79th St. Cswy., 305-866-1234) is ideal, especially with its new nightly dinner deal: a three-course meal, from a monthly changing prix fixe menu, for just \$39. The view alone is worth more than that.

Meanwhile, across the puddle, the recent \$20 million renovation of the 1940s **Shelborne South Beach Hotel** (1801 Collins Ave., 305-531-1271) offers an opportunity for morning-to-midnight dining without budging from the beach-front venue. For breakfast: the pool deck's Vesper American Brasserie. For lunch, Baja tacos at Lucy's Cantina Royale. For dinner: famous Philly chef Zama Tanaka's sushi bar. Residents who remember the 1990s Shelborne only for its decidedly unrenovated cellar karaoke club have to think: Geez... Talk about spring cleaning!

Since its relocation to sleek new digs, longtime locally favored Japanese culinary hotspot **Yakko-san** (93881 NE 163rd St., 305-947-0064) has developed a lounge personality, too. Check out their new Third Thursday parties on March 29, from 9:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. Martinis are \$5; sake shots are \$2; and you'll be treated to the house's surprise martini tasting.

Every Monday in March, Liza and Gigi of **Anise Taverna** (620 NE 78th St., 305-758-2929) will take you (or at least your taste buds) on a trip around the Mediterranean: Tunisia on March 5, Mallorca on March 12, Portugal on March 19, and Turkey on March 26. The \$55 per person price for dinner includes unlimited wine and beer, but tax and gratuity are excluded, as is the price of transportation to all those foreign countries. (What's a gallon of gas going for this month?)

Not quite enough cultural understanding for you? Travel farther at March's *free* Saturday wine tastings, 1:00-5:00 p.m., at **Laurenzo's Italian Center** (16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381). Voyage via Italian vino on March 3, and artisan Chilean wines on March 10. And on March 17, St. Patrick's Day, you'll find food bargains like sfince San Giuseppe for just \$2.50. (These cream puffs are actually a typical specialty of St. Joseph's Day,

March 19, but the feast day of the Virgin Mary's husband is much more popular in Italy. And the pastries beat corned beef and cabbage any day.)

At the **Aventura Arts & Cultural Center** (3385 NE 188th St., 305-466-8002), March's entertainment possibilities include tributes to comedy icons George Burns and Gracie Allen plus musical icons the Beatles; Oscar-nominated foreign film *Revanche*; a documentary film on Joan Rivers; and for the kids, *The Ugly Duckling* (performance including free face painting and snacks). Visit www.aventuracenter.org for info and tix.

Rejoice, lovers of outside-the-box contemporary classical music! On March 11, at 3:00 p.m., the concert series at **St. Martha's Church** (9301 Biscayne Blvd.) presents the Carpe Diem String Quartet, internationally acclaimed for both traditional chamber music interpreted for modern audiences and for the compositions of their own Korine Fujiwara. For further info on this uncommon opportunity: 305-458-0111 or 305-751-0005.

Whether you're a professional or a prospective writer, Miami-Dade College's "spring edition" of their **Miami Writers Institute**, May 2-5, can help you achieve your goals. The four days of intensive workshops (on fiction, nonfiction, poetry — all genres) include manuscript consultations, a publishing seminar, an interactive Pitch-O-Rama with industry pros, and more. You'll want to reserve a spot early, so go to www.theCenteratMDC.org.

Welcome to the **Miami Gay & Lesbian Film Festival**, a new advertiser. It's a bit early yet for a rundown of the flicks at this year's fest, April 27-May 6. But it's not too early to volunteer as a festival worker (benefits include vouchers for screenings, a doubtless cute T-shirt, and beyond-the-bar-scene/computer screen opportunities to meet and mingle). For more info: www.mglff.com.

While we're thinking ahead: Now that spring is here, ready for summer? New advertiser **The Cushman School** (592 NE 59th St.) is doing just that. Offerings at the independent and innovative school's June 11-August 10 summer camp, for kids ages 3-11, range from robotics to giant water slides and "Pizza Fridays." Contact camp director Tina Heffernan for details: 305-757-1966 or theffernan@cushmanschool.org.

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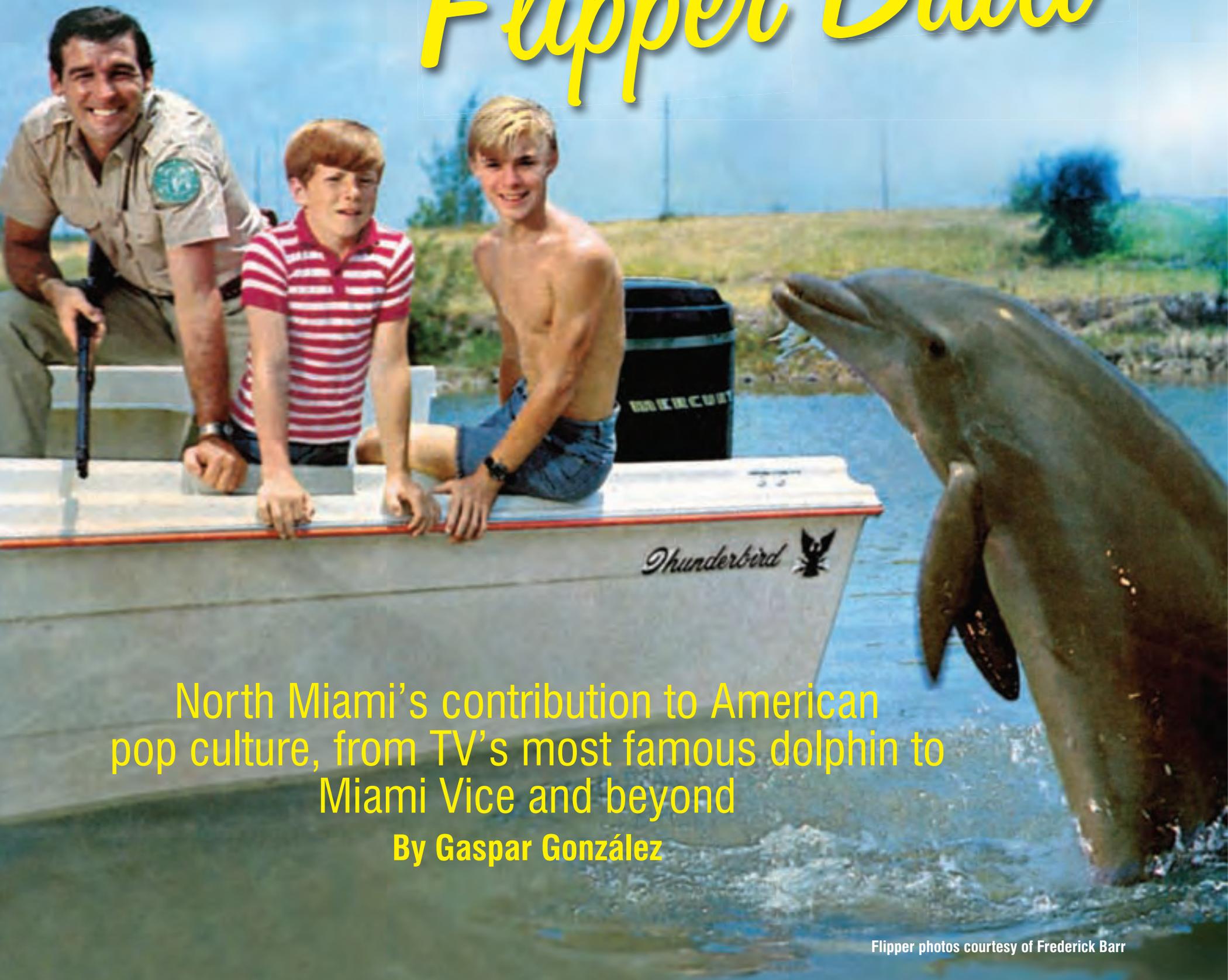
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The House That Flipper Built



North Miami's contribution to American pop culture, from TV's most famous dolphin to Miami Vice and beyond

By Gaspar González

From the outside, Greenwich Studios doesn't look like much: a cluster of warehouse-size buildings fronting NE 16th Avenue, between 121st and 122nd streets. The studio's name, spelled out in blue letters and punctuated by a leaping dolphin, is visible only from the north side of the property, and then only if you're really looking for it.

Turn your head for a moment — or approach the buildings from the south — and you could easily confuse Greenwich for a storage rental facility. There are quite a few such businesses in this industrial strip running just west of, and parallel to, Biscayne Boulevard in North Miami.

But Greenwich is special. It was once an epicenter of American television production, turning out hit shows that baby boomers still recall with glee, among them, *Flipper*, the series about a pet dolphin that helped make South Florida famous and launched a million school lunchboxes.

Back then, the complex wasn't called Greenwich, but Ivan Tors Studios. A Hungarian with a colorful past, Tors was, for a time, one of Hollywood's most successful producers, rivaling even Walt Disney when it came to reeling in the kiddies with fantastic and farfetched science-fiction and adventure stories. Now the studio he built mostly churns out Spanish-language reality shows. It also produces the occasional ghost tale.

"The place is haunted, you know," says Jeff Beal, a writer-for-hire and sometime producer who keeps an office at Greenwich. He is on the phone with a reporter curious about the studio.

"By whom?" the reporter asks.

"Ivan Tors."

Who else?

Tors, it seems, was always a bit of a mysterious character. "He was in the OSS [Office of Strategic Services] and he very possibly was a spy," says David Tors, speaking from his home in Kentucky about his father's World War II experiences, "although I can't get anybody to admit it." He laughs. "Anyway, he got hurt somehow and was reassigned to the squadron that featured Glenn Miller."

That would have been the Army Air Force Technical Training Command (AAFTTC) band, stationed in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1943. Miller, at the time arguably the nation's most popular big-band leader and a newly minted captain in the Army Air Corps, was given the task of keeping American morale high with his signature swing sound.



Shooting a scene from *Around the World Under the Sea* in 1965, with actors Marshall Thompson, David McCallum, and Keenan Wynn at upper right.

What Tors might have been doing with the outfit is unclear; regardless, the assignment would pay off after the war. "That's where he got some of his contacts in show business," explains David.

Those contacts led Tors to Hollywood, where he found work as a writer. His first effort — he got credit for the original story — was a gangster picture of sorts, involving a returning vet who takes over his dead brother's illegal gambling operation. It was a solid "B film," low on budget, stars, and running time, but it must have gotten the 30-year-old Tors noticed, because his next three credits would have made any writer of the era envious.

First came *Song of Love* in 1947. A lush, historical romance woven around the life of 19th-century German composer Robert Schumann, it starred Katharine Hepburn and Paul Henreid, the suave leading man who had played Ingrid Bergman's husband in *Casablanca*. That was followed by *That Forsyte Woman*, an historical melodrama starring screen swash-buckler Errol Flynn, and *In the Good Old Summertime*, a turn-of-the-20th-century "boy and girl love each other, but don't know it yet" musical, with a still innocent-seeming Judy Garland hitting all the right notes. The *New York Times* called it "a wonderfully rich entertainment."

In a very short time, Tors had proven he could pen a star vehicle and had

demonstrated an affinity for nostalgic storylines and family fare, which would serve him well in years to come. He wasn't yet a producer, but that would come, too, with a flurry of science-fiction adventure films in the early 1950s, titles like *The Magnetic Monster*, *Riders to the Stars*, and *Gog*, about a series of unexplained murders at a top-secret government laboratory. It was fantasy stuff aimed at the teenagers who were increasingly filling the country's movie theaters; Tors was mining the "youth market" before that term had become part of the lexicon.

Perhaps it was only natural he would gravitate toward television, that new electronic extension of the American family. His first foray into the TV age was *Science Fiction Theatre*. A forerunner to Rod Serling's more famous *Twilight Zone*, the conceit of *Science Fiction Theatre* was that its stories were at least partly based on scientific discoveries. "I'll tell you now that this story is fiction," host Truman Bradley would regularly intone at the top of an episode. "It did not happen. But the big question is, 'Could it have happened?'" *Science Fiction Theatre* ran for two seasons.

In 1957 Tors had an idea for a different kind of adventure show, one that would take place underwater. Its lead character would be an ex-Navy scuba diver named Mike Nelson, played by Lloyd Bridges (father of actors Beau and Jeff Bridges).

In each half-hour episode, Nelson would use his scuba skills to help clients retrieve valuable property from the ocean floor, rescue people in distress, outsmart the bad guys, and anything else that needed to be done that required a wet suit and a set of swim fins. At the end of each episode, Nelson would address the audience directly, asking viewers to help protect the world's oceans. Tors would call his show *Sea Hunt*.

The three major networks — ABC, CBS, and NBC — turned down the idea. *Who wants to see a show about a frogman?*

There's no dialogue when he's underwater.

But Tors was undeterred. He produced a pilot and sold the show into first-run syndication. *Sea Hunt* became a smash, running for 155 episodes between 1958 and 1961. The show also brought Tors to Florida, where he met Ricou Browning.

"I was working as the assistant director of public relations at Silver Springs in Ocala," recalls Browning, now 82 years old. Tors, according to Browning, was scouting locations for the second season of *Sea Hunt*, when "Ivan saw me swimming and said, 'Hey, how'd you like to swim for me?'"

If this sounds a little like the classic story of some lucky kid being plucked from obscurity by the big Hollywood producer, it isn't. Browning, a Florida native, was an accomplished swimmer and diver who'd been doing underwater tricks for the newsreels since the early 1940s, and whose cinematic fame had been assured a few years earlier: Wearing a green rubber suit, he had played the eponymous lead in the 1954 monster cult classic *Creature from the Black Lagoon*.

On *Sea Hunt*, Tors had Browning double for the bad guys in the underwater scenes. In time the two men became friends and business partners. They formed Underwater Studios, a production company based in Nassau, specializing in underwater cinematography. "We shot our own shows there, as well as underwater sequences for other shows and movies," explains Browning. Among these was the 1965 James Bond thriller *Thunderball*, which claimed an Academy Award for Best Visual Effects for its extensive deepwater action footage.

The inspiration for Browning's biggest contribution to the partnership was born one afternoon when he observed his

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Flipper

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children planted in front of the television. “They were watching *Lassie*,” says Browning, “and I thought, ‘Why not do something with a boy and a *dolphin*?’ I remembered all this Greek mythology about boys on dolphins, and I’d seen trained dolphins [at water shows].”

The underwater stuntman’s first thought had nothing to do with television. “My brother-in-law, Jack Cowden, and I spent a weekend writing a summary of a book,” he says. “I took the idea to publishers in New York, and never heard back from any of them.”

It was only then that Browning turned to Tors for help, but again, not because he was thinking of this as a TV or movie property. That was just a ruse. “I thought if I could get a movie producer to say he was interested in producing my story, the publishing houses would get off their rear ends,” Browning recounts, laughing because he knows how the story ends.

Tors told him he would go along with the idea, and to send him the book proposal, just for the hell of it. When he

got it, Tors recognized the story really was just *Lassie* on the water, but that’s what made it attractive: A young boy named Sandy Ricks, the son of a Florida Keys fisherman, befriends a bottlenose dolphin. His father doesn’t much like the idea, until the dolphin rescues Sandy from a shark attack. The story ends with the family agreeing to keep the dolphin, which Sandy has named Flipper. Forget the book, Tors told Browning. *Let’s make a movie.*

The idea would have appealed to Tors for several reasons, the most obvious being that it would be shot on and around the water, which was his specialty. Another reason was that it would be wholesome — critics might call it hokum — family entertainment, something Tors believed was in short supply.

He’d been outspoken on the point. In 1961 the producer testified in front of the U.S. Senate’s Juvenile Delinquency Committee, complaining of pressure from the networks to put more sex and violence into the shows he pitched them. Tors thought TV should aspire to more. “We have no excuse to make any kind of shows only because they are profitable,”



Actor Ricou Browning being fitted in his costume for *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, 1953.

he told the senators. “I think we have a tremendous responsibility, which I see more and more as my children grow up and I see how they are affected adversely

Photo courtesy of HistoryMiami

by TV viewing.” On occasion, he would also tell reporters that he was frustrated because “I have three sons, and if a Disney picture isn’t showing, we can’t go to the theater together.”

(Tors’s sons — Steven, Peter, and David — were born to the actress Constance Dowling, whom Tors wed in 1953. The couple was introduced, says David, by Hollywood legend Shelley Winters.)

If Tors admired the Disney formula — and who didn’t — might not *Flipper*, as the dolphin film would be called, be able to capture some of that same magic? Tors knew that casting would be critical. For the part of Porter Ricks, the fisherman dad, he sought out Chuck Connors, who was the star of the hit TV western *The Rifleman*. For the role of Sandy, he needed a kid who looked comfortable outdoors, and settled on a 14-year-old actor named Luke Halpin.

Halpin, now 64 years old and living on Florida’s west coast, remembers his first meeting with Tors: “I’d been doing a Broadway play with Jackie Gleason, and someone came up to me after the show and said, ‘Ivan Tors would like to speak with

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Flipper

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you.' I knew who Ivan Tors was because I used to stay up to watch *Sea Hunt*."

Good thing, because otherwise one of Tors's first questions to Halpin might have sounded rather odd. "Would you be afraid to swim with live dolphins or live sharks?" Tors asked the youngster.

Halpin jumped at the offer — "I loved the idea of playing Sandy" — and filming began, despite skepticism in some quarters. "A lot of people thought you couldn't do a movie like *Flipper*," says Halpin, "because you couldn't get a dolphin to do the tricks. But Ivan was a very rare person. He had great insight."

He also had the good fortune of finding just the right dolphin. "For *Flipper*", says Browning, "we tried to get an animal that was already trained, but all the ones we saw were only trained to do tricks [above water]." That's when he and Tors heard of Milton Santini, who ran a "porpoise school" in the Florida Keys. Santini, Browning recalls, kept a pet dolphin named Mitzi. When Browning waded into Mitzi's pond, the female dolphin swam

right up to him, and Tors knew he had his leading man, er, lady.

(Credit for training Mitzi to play Flipper has been shared by everybody from Santini to Browning to Dale Hyldahl, who worked with dolphins at Marineland, the oceanarium near St. Augustine. Flipper's most famous trainer, Ric O'Barry, now a vocal critic of dolphin captivity, didn't join the Flipper franchise until later.)

Flipper made a late-summer splash at the box office in 1963. Produced for a reported \$500,000, newspapers projected the film to gross between \$5 million and \$8 million by year's end. Flipper was suddenly the most famous marine mammal on the planet, and Tors wasted no time cashing in. He made a deal for a sequel, as well as a new half-hour prime-time television show.



Ricou Browning and trainer Ric O'Barry with one of the Flipper dolphins (undated photo).

"We started shooting the second feature film [*Flipper's New Adventure*] and the first episode of the TV series at the same time," says Browning.

The series required some tweaks. The father now would be played by Brian Kelly, and his new occupation would be game warden, while Sandy would get a little brother named Bud (Tommy Norden).

But that was minor compared to the logistical challenges of building a show around a dolphin. A series translated to approximately 30 episodes per season. Flipper would need a permanent home, and South Florida was deemed the ideal place. It was close to the Bahamas, where, owing to the underwater topography, ocean scenes could be filmed, and the Miami Seaquarium was home to the stars of the show — Flipper would be played by five female dolphins.

(The Seaquarium would also double as a set. The Ricks's Cracker-style cottage was built there, to go with an exact replica erected at the old Interama site, now Florida International University's Biscayne Bay campus. The identical sets, says Halpin, gave producers flexibility when it came to filming exteriors.)

The only thing Tors didn't have was a studio, but he found one. Or at least,

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Flipper

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the beginnings of one. Thunderbird Studio in North Miami, according to Browning, was operated by a soundman named Howard Warren. “It was only one stage,” says Browning. But there was room to grow.

Renamed Ivan Tors Studios, the facility officially opened in the spring of 1964. Over the next couple of years, Tors would build three more sound stages, the two largest of which possessed 40-foot ceilings and could be configured into a single 16,000-square-foot space.

In addition, there were offices, a carpentry shop for building sets, and a back lot, not to mention employees — 150 of them, with an estimated annual payroll of \$3 million. By 1966 it was believed to be the largest production facility in Florida, and one of the largest anywhere outside California and New York.

“We were the only studio down here,” says Browning, who eventually became studio president. “We were doing TV shows. We did two different Jackie Gleason films. And we had the [underwater filming business] locked up.”



BT photo by Silvia Ros

Developer Martin Margulies: “I had no idea what to do with the studio, so I lent it to a group of artists, rent-free.”

The South Florida location resulted in a more relaxed work environment, according to Halpin: “There was a freedom of not working in Los Angeles. The entire [Flipper] crew was as much of a family as anything. If the weather was going to turn bad, Ivan would tell everybody to go home. He was very protective.”

Why not? *Flipper* was the flagship, the dolphin that laid the golden egg. Running for three seasons on NBC, from 1964 to 1967, the show probably did more to popularize Ivan Tors Studios — and South Florida — than a boatload of press agents working overtime could ever have managed. “Imagine if you

lived in Pennsylvania in 1965,” says Scott Cardinal, director of the recent documentary *The Legend of Ivan Tors*. “It’s winter, and you turn on the TV and you see two kids swimming with a dolphin. You think you might come down to Florida? Ivan was responsible for bringing millions in tourist dollars to South Florida.”

Halpin still marvels at the novelty of it all. “Ivan was very clever,” says the former actor. “Two kids with their own boat, their own gear, a pet dolphin, and a father who’s a game warden and not around very much. It was a great set-up for a show.”

Tors followed up the success of *Flipper* with more animal-themed productions, including *Zebra in My Kitchen*, a 1965 film starring former *Dennis the Menace* child star Jay North as a proto-animal-rights activist who springs his furry friends from the local zoo, and two TV series: *Daktari*, about a veterinarian who studies animal behavior in Africa, and *Gentle Ben*, the adventures of a young boy (played by Ron Howard’s little brother, Clint) and his pet bear. Not all were Florida-based — *Daktari* was

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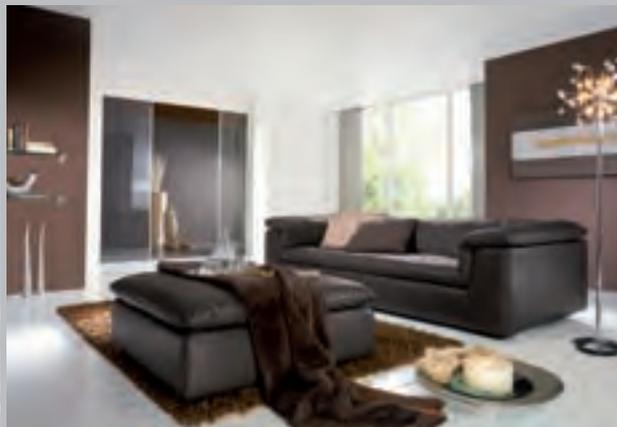
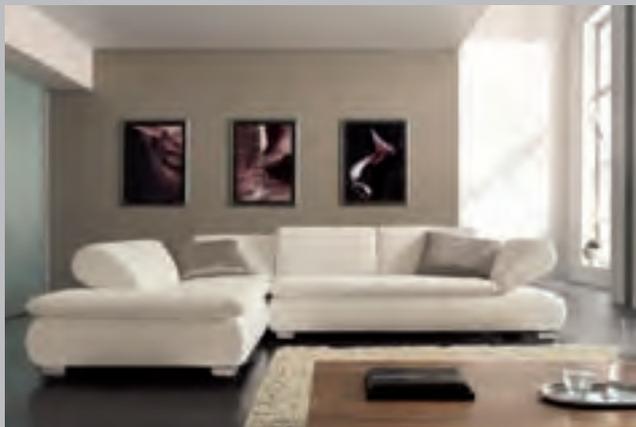


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Flipper

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shot in California — but *Gentle Ben*, set in the Everglades, was produced out of the North Miami studio and utilized Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden as a shooting location.

By the late 1960s, newspaper and magazine articles were asking if Tors was “the new Disney,” to which the Hungarian usually replied, “I don’t want to be the second Walt Disney. I want to be the first Ivan Tors.”

Not every new undertaking was a success. A daytime game show Tors unveiled in 1967, *Treasure Isle*, was a flop, and an expensive one. A venture with Florida billionaire John D. MacArthur, *Treasure Isle* was billed as the world’s first outdoor game show.

The concept called for competing couples to paddle around a lake in a canoe, looking for clues that would lead them to the “treasure isle,” where they would dig for prizes. Sherman Adler, who was involved with the show, years later characterized it as “part *Newlywed Game* and part *Survivor*.” Shot on location in



Jeff Beal is the studio’s knowledgeable go-to guy: “The place is haunted, you know.”

Palm Beach County, the show’s manmade set consisted of a lagoon and three “islands,” at a cost of half a million dollars. It lasted one season.

In retrospect, it was a sign of things to come. Tors’s amazing run, dating back to *Science Fiction Theatre* and *Sea Hunt*, was nearing its end. Some of it was

probably just show-biz physics: Everything that goes up sooner or later must come down.

In Tors’s case, his core audience of baby boomers was growing up, and now more concerned with Vietnam, the Civil Rights struggle, and the counterculture than what their favorite animals were up

BT photo by Silvia Ros

to in prime time.

Flipper went into reruns in 1967; *Daktari* and *Gentle Ben* were canceled outright in 1969. To make matters worse, that same year Tors’s wife, Constance, died of a heart attack. With Tors’s personal life upended and his homegrown lineup of shows history, says Browning, “we started leasing space to other [production companies].”

According to pioneering Miami independent filmmaker Bill Grefé, who succeeded Browning as studio president in 1970, Tors had also been relying on loans to keep his filmmaking ventures afloat. “He borrowed a lot of money from Bruce Norris, whose family owned the Detroit Red Wings hockey team,” recalls Grefé.

Newspaper clips from the era support Grefé’s recollections. The *Miami News* reported in late 1967 that Norris “had purchased a substantial stock interest in the Tors corporation,” and by early 1968 was claiming that Norris “[had] become a partner handling the financial end of the Tors property.” Norris, says Grefé, eventually came

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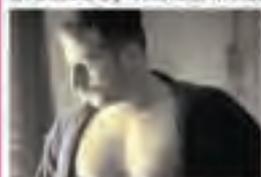
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We Need To Talk About Kevin

Directed by Lynne Ramsay



A suspenseful and gripping psychological thriller, Lynne Ramsay's *We Need To Talk About Kevin* explores the fractious relationship between a mother and her evil son, Tilda Swinton. In a bracing, tour-de-force performance, plays the mother, Eva, as she contends for 15 years with the increasing malevolence of her first-born child, Kevin. Based on the best-selling novel of the same name, this film explores nature vs. nurture on a whole new level as Eva's own culpability is measured against Kevin's innate evilness. Ramsay's masterful storytelling simultaneously combines a provocative moral ambiguity with a satisfying and compelling narrative, which builds to a chilling, unforgettable climax. Tilda Swinton's impeccable performance solidifies her as the Meryl Streep of her generation.

March 22nd thru 25th

Jiro Dreams of Sushi

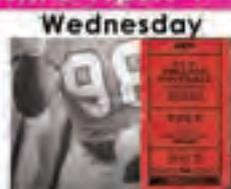
Directed by David Gelb



Jiro Dreams of Sushi is the story of 85 year-old Jiro Ono, considered by many to be the world's greatest sushi chef. He is the proprietor of a 10-seat, sushi-only restaurant inauspiciously located in a Tokyo subway station. Despite its humble appearances, it is the first restaurant of its kind to be awarded a prestigious 3 star Michelin review, and sushi lovers from around the globe make repeated pilgrimage, calling months in advance and shelling out top dollar for a coveted seat at Jiro's sushi bar. For most of his life, Jiro has been mastering the art of making sushi, but even at his age he sees himself still striving for perfection. At the heart of this story is Jiro's relationship with his eldest son Yoshikazu, the worthy heir to Jiro's legacy, who is unable to live up to his full potential in his father's shadow. *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* is a thoughtful and elegant meditation on work, family, and the art of perfection, chronicling Jiro's life as both an unparalleled success in the culinary world, and a loving yet complicated father.

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Directed by Charles Evans Jr.



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Flipper

Continued from page 42

to hold the mortgage on the property, after which the studio “became secondary” to Norris’s other business concerns.

Despite his setbacks, Tors would attempt to produce one last series in the studio he’d built. *Primus*, David Tors remembers, was a “mini-adventure underwater show.” It premiered in 1971 and sunk so quickly not even super-diver Mike Nelson could have found it.

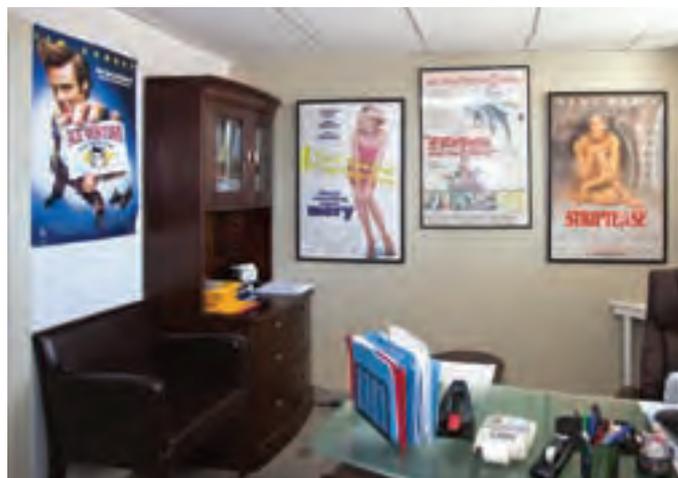
After that, Tors left North Miami, though not the entertainment business. “Ivan took my brothers and me to Germany and Africa with him,” says David. “He did some animal shows for German television and a film, *Escape from Angola*, that we were all in.”

Tors never found even a sliver of the success he had once enjoyed — David says his father spent the 1970s “pitching ideas to young punk executives,” with predictable results — although he did manage to pass on his love of wildlife to his children; son Steven is a safari guide in Africa.

Tors died in 1983 of an apparent heart attack. It happened in Brazil, while the producer, keeping in character, was on a scouting trip for a TV series he was trying to get off the ground. Tors was only 67. The timing was cruel. If he had lived just a little while longer, he might have gotten a real kick out of what was going on at his old studio.

“Do you remember what South Beach was like before *Miami Vice*?” asks Jeff Beal, leaning back in his office chair. “Boarded-up storefronts, abandoned buildings.” Beal pauses in midsentence, before making the sign of the cross. “Thank you, *Miami Vice*.”

Beal, the self-described “de facto go-to guy” whenever a new production sets up shop at the studio, is retailing the oft-told tale of how *Miami Vice* swooped into town in 1984 to save South Florida from cultural irrelevance. That’s always been a bit of an exaggeration, but the



BT photo by Silvia Ros

There has been a steady flow of Hollywood productions over the past two decades, including *Something About Mary*.

series undeniably helped save Ivan Tors Studios. “They built their sets here,” says Beal. “The police station, mostly.”

“I got lucky,” says developer and renowned art collector Martin Margulies, recounting how, for five seasons, *Miami Vice* became the best tenant any studio could have envisioned.

Margulies bought the property from Bruce Norris’s company in 1980. He

wasn’t looking to get into the movie business; he wanted to develop the surrounding land, but it was a package deal. “I bought all that land and developed Greenwich [Park] condominiums,” he says, speaking of the complex just to the west of the studio. “But I had no idea what to do with the studio, so I lent it to a group of sculptors and artists, rent-free, because I’m an art collector. Guys were sleeping there.” *Miami Vice* changed all that, of course.

Under Margulies, the property — studio and condos — came to be called Greenwich Studio City. (The name is reminiscent of Los Angeles’s Studio City, a neighborhood developed around silent-film producer Mack Sennett’s movie-making factory in the 1920s.)

Margulies was happy to take *Miami Vice*’s money as long as the series ran, but he wasn’t an entertainment mogul,

Continued on page 46

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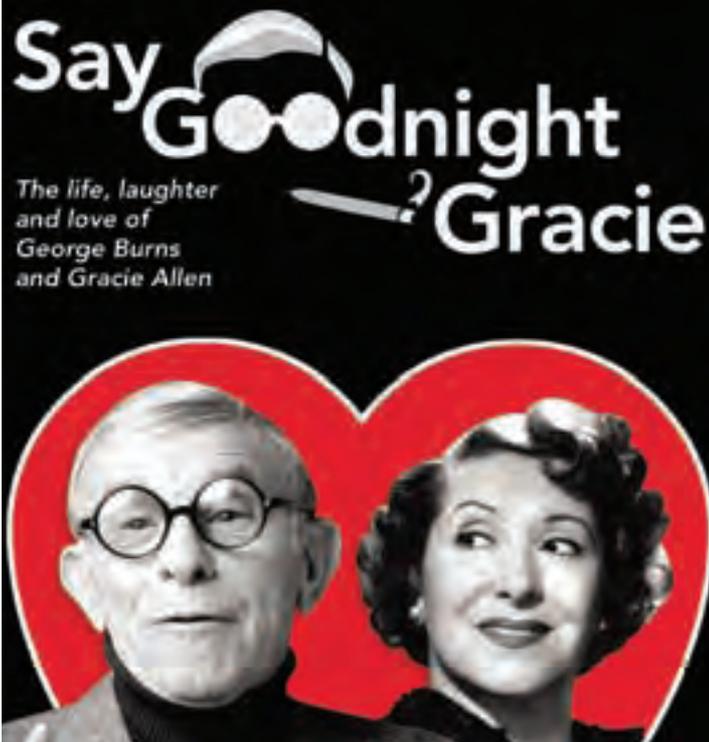
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Flipper

Continued from page 44

and he knew it. “[The studio] was a project that I just had no more heart for,” he says. “I wanted out — and Stanley Markofsky gave me that out.”

Reached by phone at his office in Fort Lauderdale, Markofsky, president of Skymark Real Estate Investments, laughs when asked if *Miami Vice* convinced him to buy Greenwich from Margulies in the late 1980s: “*Miami Vice*’s contract expired two months before I closed on the property.”

Like Margulies before him, Markofsky was primarily interested in the land. He built rental apartments to go with the condos, and “wanted to tear down the studio and build more rental apartments, but the city objected, so I said, ‘Okay, I’ll run it as a studio.’”

That’s a tidier version of events as reported in newspapers at the time. In March 1989, Markofsky told the *Miami Herald* he planned to turn one of the studio’s massive, hangar-shaped buildings into a storage facility, and perhaps introduce a retail element. At a time when the City of North Miami’s official motto was “Florida’s Film

and Recording Capital” — a nod to both Tors’s legacy and the presence in the city of Criteria Recording Studios, now the Hit Factory — those were fighting words. “The talk was that they wanted to do a shopping mall,” says David Tors. “That pissed off a lot of people.”

In the end, Markofsky and the city did reach a compromise. The city ceded control of the portion of NE 121st Street that runs in front of the studio in exchange for Markofsky’s pledge to keep Greenwich operational.

“As a residential developer, I never thought I’d get involved in something like a studio,” says Markofsky, echoing the sentiments of the previous owner. Markofsky, like Margulies before him, nevertheless gave it a try. He undertook an extensive renovation of the buildings, popularized the Greenwich name — “We had a big sign on U.S. 1 that said Greenwich Apartments and Studio” — and even managed to land a full-time tenant, the Spanish-language soap opera *El Magnate* (*The Magnate*).

But like Norris and Margulies, Markofsky eventually threw in the towel. “I was there for a few years, we built 400



Florida State Archives Photographic Collection

Though his fortunes eventually faded, Ivan Tors created a unique brand from his studios in North Miami.

apartments, and sold the whole package,” he says, summing up his short-lived career as a studio boss.

Enter current owner Sylvan Adams. Described by Canada’s *Financial Post* as “one of the shrewdest and richest

real estate developers” in that country, Adams purchased the Greenwich property in 1990 for \$7.2 million. Based in Montreal and largely an absentee landlord — “He used to show up about once every three years,” says Beal, though he notes visits have become more frequent — Adams has nevertheless preserved Greenwich as a working studio.

Posters and photographs in the waiting area of the administrative office attest to the steady flow of Hollywood productions over the past two decades: *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, *True Lies*, *Striptease*, *Something About Mary*, *Bad Boys II*, and *Stuck on You*. (“You know,” says Beal, “that’s the one where Matt Damon plays a twin joined at the hip with his brother.”) There are also glossies of Gloria Estefan, Enrique Iglesias, and other music acts that have either filmed videos at Greenwich or used the studio as rehearsal space to prepare for tour dates.

According to Beal, in recent years the studio’s best clients have been Hispanic productions: “The Spanish-language version of *Dancing with the*

Continued on page 48

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Flipper

Continued from page 46

Stars [Univision's *Mira Quién Baila*] and reality shows having to do with beauty contests. The past five years, this place has been booked every day, 365 days a year." To make his point, he tells the story of the time, four years ago, he had to turn down a request for studio space from Paul McCartney.

Perhaps. But on this day, the only visitors to the studio are a work crew doing some upkeep of the administrative building's courtyard, and a couple of cleaning ladies. It's a reminder that, when it comes to maintaining a facility like this, you can never have enough business.

"Sylvan Adams won't make a deal," says Beal, by way of explaining the lack of activity on this day. "He won't provide somebody with space for [consideration] on the back end." Beal pauses, searching for the quickest shorthand he knows: "He's not a movie guy."

Indeed, there hasn't been "a movie guy" since Tors, and the studio is unlikely to have a future to compete with its past. "People come to Florida for the location, not because there's a studio here," says Ricou Browning, speaking from experience. "So if all you have is a studio, it's hard to make a living."

It's also true that Greenwich is no longer the obvious choice for studio space in South Florida. Other venues attracting production companies include Ice Palace Film Studios near downtown Miami and the Coconut Grove Convention Center, where the cable series *Burn Notice* has been shooting since 2007.

(The latter is a sore spot for Greenwich. *Burn Notice* shot its pilot at Greenwich in 2006, before the City of Miami moved in and offered the show's producers a sweetheart deal if they would relocate to the Grove. "Did the city hurt [my] business?" Greenwich general manager Carlene Tiedemann told the *Herald* in 2008. "The answer is yes.")

And if developer Michael Swerdlow is to be believed, competition is only going to grow. In development plans for Biscayne Landing, Swerdlow has floated the possibility of erecting a 200,000-square-foot TV and film production studio.

If any of this fazes the staff at Greenwich, they're not letting on. "Everybody talks about building production facilities down here; that's all Sylvester Stallone talked about in the late 1990s," says Beal.

His point? That for all the hype about South Florida as a movie mecca — the dream of a new, subtropical Hollywood springing up here has been a recurring theme since at least the 1960s — it remains the case that Tors did it first and, arguably, got closer to the ideal than anybody who's likely to follow in his footsteps.

Tors didn't just provide a black-box backdrop for other people's productions. He created a unique brand, put his personal stamp on hundreds of hours of television shows and movies, and made South Florida, for longer than a hot minute, a leading site of film and TV production. And he did it all from a studio he built from the ground up in North Miami.

Which is why it's all the more remarkable that the only visible traces of Tors's reign as the king of 1960s kid-friendly TV (Uncle Walt notwithstanding) are a few blocks of NE 16th Avenue, renamed "Ivan Tors Boulevard" in 1983, and a small bronze plaque just outside the Greenwich gates on NE 121st Street.

The plaque, which contains a relief of Tors surrounded by his beloved animals and declares the studio "an important landmark in the City of North Miami," appears to receive very little attention from either the studio or the city. Discolored and dotted with dried pigeon droppings, it isn't much of a tribute.

Then again, maybe Tors isn't really gone. There are those ghost sightings Beal mentions. "I haven't seen anything myself," the studio's go-to guy confesses when pressed, "but people here late at night *have* seen things. They all describe Ivan Tors when he had a beard." (In his later years, Tors resembled a kind of Hungarian Hemingway.)

One time, the studio's artist-in-residence felt his blanket being pulled off him as he slept in the loft over the carpentry shop; the man is said to have awakened to the sight of Tors, wearing an overcoat, standing at the foot of the bed. Another time, an air-conditioning technician claimed he encountered the spectral presence in the makeup room at the north end of Studio B.

Beal assures potential clients the ghost is harmless: "He hasn't done anything mischievous. Mostly he stays in the shadows. Perhaps he's just pleased to see that production is still going on in the house he built."

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Culture Cash

The Knight Arts Challenge is back, looking for more ways to enrich Miami's creative scene

By **Melissa Wallen**
BT Contributor

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation has plenty to celebrate as the Knight Arts Challenge enters its fifth year of donating to Miami's burgeoning arts scene.

Created in February 2008, the Arts Challenge is an initiative designed to empower creative minds and contribute toward the cultural transformation of South Florida. At the outset of this endeavor, the Knight Foundation pledged to donate at least \$20 million over the course of five years, funding artists, thinkers, and entrepreneurs with a vision — and a compelling pitch.

Thousands of proposals have been received each year, and the foundation has thus far funded 109 innovative ideas representing a diverse array of interests and cultural experiences, such as the Sleepless Night festivals in Miami Beach, LegalArts Residency, Random Acts of Culture, the Borscht Film Festival, and [NAME] Publications.

"These projects don't happen in a vacuum," explains Dennis Scholl, vice president of the Knight Foundation's national arts program, which includes the Challenge. "These things don't happen in a community that isn't going through some sort of metamorphosis. As a community, we're in an amazing time for culture." Scholl should know. He



Dennis Scholl, a prominent Miami art collector, directs the Knight Arts Challenge.

and his wife are among of Miami's most prominent art collectors.

The Knight Arts Challenge has two components: donations to Miami institutions and a communitywide competition. The institutional component has provided grants totaling \$20 million to establish leadership endowments for the Miami Art Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the New World Symphony, institutions responsible for bringing legitimacy to Miami as a cultural destination. (Recently the Knight Foundation expanded the program to

include a second Knight Arts Challenge in Philadelphia.)

On the competition side, applicants submit their most innovative ideas for consideration. In 2011, 31 projects — culled from more than 1000 applications, many from small cultural groups — received \$2.9 million in funding.

Past winners have set themselves apart by concisely expressing ideas that are both relevant to their communities and reflect artistic excellence. One such success story

.....
Continued on page 54

In the Market for Markets

This is the season for fresh produce and one outfit's fresh new beginning

By **Margaret Griffis**
BT Contributor

Spring is a special time for south Florida foodies. It's a crossroads for winter vegetables and summer fruits, both of which grow heartily here, especially during mild winters like this one.

In fact produce is grown in such abundance here that it seems downright *fruitless* to chow down on the artificially ripened stuff flown in to local chain supermarkets from giant foreign plantations.

That's part of the reason why farmers markets are gaining in popularity.

They help small, specialized farmers get fresh, wholesome produce directly to consumers who never knew what a fresh tomato actually tastes like. But not only do these markets support small farmers, one volunteer group ensures they also help urban dwellers, especially those who lack cheap and easy access to nutritious food.

The nonprofit Urban Oasis Project currently distributes a mix of organic, conventional, or sustainably grown produce, spices, pasture-raised chicken eggs, and much more at their three farmers markets every week. Volunteers buy (and sometimes harvest the food



Urban Oasis co-founder Art Friedrich (right): "We really hope people will be able to stay and socialize more."

themselves) from as many as 30 local farms. Then they resell the produce in some of Miami-Dade's most barren "food deserts," where fresh fruits and

vegetables are rare and expensive. As an added bonus, EBT users (electronic food

.....
Continued on page 56

BT photos by Margaret Griffis

Are You Now or Have You Ever Been an Adult Entertainment Club?

Tokyo Valentino's proprietor says no — period

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Senior Writer

The poster of a fetching blonde woman in a red dress advertising “Videoplex” and “24/7” covers the windows of Tokyo Valentino. The name of the establishment, which has been open for barely a month, was conceived during a night of partying, reveals Atlanta-based entrepreneur Michael Morrison.

“A friend of ours, his nickname was Valentino,” Morrison recalls.

As the story goes, Valentino spent a lot of time overseas, including in Tokyo. After a few rounds of drinks, combining the two names seemed like a “cool” idea.

Apparently the moniker continued to sound cool even after the buzz wore off, because that was the name picked for the 5800-square-foot business located at 8830 Biscayne Blvd. in Miami's Upper Eastside.

Morrison, Tokyo Valentino's managing partner, describes it as a “gay lifestyle movie club,” where, for an admission price of ten dollars, a customer can walk through a turnstile and enjoy DVDs with friends or strangers in private booths or while lounging on beds in private rooms for up to eight hours at a time.

Available for sale at the front register are condoms, personal lubricants, and other sexual enhancements. A pool table, video arcade games, and a dance floor round out the entertainment opportunities. Once he obtains a recreational license from the City of Miami, Morrison says he'll have DJs (advertisements already claim to feature them on the weekends).

Morrison does confess that his emporium is not always open “24/7,” as the window art professes. Instead Tokyo Valentino is open nonstop just Thursday

through Saturday. During the rest of the week, the operating hours are scaled back by half.

Whether it's 24/7 or not is immaterial to some people living nearby by the Shorecrest neighborhood. They contend that Tokyo Valentino is more than a gay lifestyle club. It's an adult club that encourages sexual activities, they charge.

Following complaints from Shorecrest homeowners, city officials now say that Tokyo Valentino is operating illegally and is already under investigation by the Miami Police Department. “From my understanding, they are operating an adult entertainment club,” says Miami's zoning director, Barnaby Min. “Adult entertainment is not allowed.”

Two strip clubs featuring nude female dancers operate within a mile

of Tokyo Valentino: Take One Lounge at 333 NE 79th St. and Wonderland at the Boulevard Theater at 7770 Biscayne Blvd. Both were opened in the 1970s

and are therefore immune from revisions to Miami's zoning code, which forbids “adult entertainment establishments” from being within 1000 feet of residential properties, schools, or parks.

Shorecrest, a cozy community of single-family homes, is less than 330 feet from Tokyo Valentino. Adult entertainment venues are limited to areas zoned “D2 Industrial.” Tokyo Valentino is located within a T-6 “urban core” zone.

Morrison says he's already been cited by city code enforcement officers for running an adult-oriented business, having live entertainment, and other alleged infractions. He vows to fight the



BT photos by Silvia Ros

Tokyo Valentino's managing partner describes it as a “gay lifestyle movie club.”

charges in court if necessary, and is adamant that Tokyo Valentino is not an adult club, but merely a retail operation. “We are not a strip club,” he says. “We don't sell pornos. We don't have live entertainment. We don't serve alcohol.”

During a recent visit, the *BT* observed only mainstream movies on display at the front entrance. As for the condoms, Morrison says they are also sold in supermarkets and drug stores, yet *they* are not considered adult clubs by the authorities. “The reality is that in the

gay community, condoms are sold in a lot of bars,” he says. “They encourage safe sex, and safe sex saves lives.”

Patrons are free to bring their own movies and Morrison admits his staff does not discourage sex on the premises. But Morrison, who is straight, says gay sex cruising occurs in many public places. “If you go on the gay cruising websites, you'll find that the bathroom in Home Depot is a popular spot for gays having encounters,” he says.

Jack Spirk, a civic activist and former president of the Shorecrest Homeowners Association (and who is gay), says an establishment that allows sex between patrons does not belong near two churches, a school, and a residential neighborhood that is striving to clean up the Boulevard's past seedy

image.

“Usually you find businesses like that in areas where there is no residential neighborhood around it,” Spirk says. “I have nothing against that kind of business. I'm not a prude. But I don't believe this is the place to have them.” (The Shorecrest Homeowners Association officially has not taken a position on Tokyo Valentino, notes the group's vice president, Keith Meinhold.)

Morrison's lawyer insists Tokyo Valentino has a legal right to operate at its current location. “If this store is considered an adult entertainment establishment, then any drug store should be considered adult and any bar should be considered adult,” says Danny Aaronson, a Fort Lauderdale-based attorney who specializes in adult-entertainment law.

Although Morrison denies Tokyo Valentino is an adult venue, he does have a history of challenging codes banning X-rated businesses. He opened an adult toy store called 9 1/2 Weeks in Atlanta in 1994, near the site of a future children's museum. In less than a year, he was arrested for obscenity.

“The resulting torrent of community complaints and angry letters spurred then-Mayor Bill Campbell to make a public display of cracking down on the sex shop, accompanying police in a photo-op raid in which they confiscated blow dolls, dildos, and day-glow condoms,” according to a 2003 *Creative Loafing* article headlined “Porn Wars,”

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Michael Morrison remains optimistic that the area will eventually accept his new business.

MIAMI-DADE FARMERS' MARKETS

Thanks to localfoodsouthflorida.org for compiling the following list

Aventura Mall Farmers' Market Saturdays, 10am to 9:30pm & Sundays, noon to 8pm every other weekend; see website for exact dates (open seasonally from February to September). In the center courtyard. 19501 Biscayne Boulevard; Aventura, FL 33180. 305.531.0038 Local Harvest Reviews themarketcompany.org

Opa Locka Farmers' Market Wednesdays, 2pm to 4pm. Open seasonally from January to April. At the Nathan B. Young Elementary School. 14120 NW 24th Avenue; Opa-Locka, Florida 33054. Contact Jasmin Evangelista at 305.685.0973 or via email or Ms. Kelly at 305.685.7204.

North Miami: FIU Biscayne Bay Campus Farmers' Market Thursdays, 10am to 4pm. Open seasonally in the fall and spring semesters. Located in front of AC-1, near the FIU shuttle bus stop. 3000 NE 151st Street; North Miami, FL 33181. 305.531.0038 themarketcompany.org

North Miami Farmers' Market Thursdays, 11am to 6pm. Open seasonally from December to March (may run longer). In the plaza of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). 770 NE 125th Street; North Miami, FL 33161. Contact 305.895.9840 or contact Muriel Olivares via email. Local Harvest Reviews

Bal Harbor/Surfside/Bay Harbor Island: Sur-Bal-Bay Farmers' Market Sundays, 9am to 2pm. Open all year. Location alternates Sundays between the intersection of AIA and 95th Street at 9500 Harding Avenue; Surfside, FL 33154 and the intersection of 96th Street and Bay Harbor Terrace at 1122 96th Street; Bay Harbor Islands, FL 33154. Contact Bryan O'Neill at 954.426.8436 or via email.

Miami Shores: Barry University Green Market Tuesdays, 9am to 3pm. Open seasonally from October to May. 11300 NE 2nd Avenue; Miami Shores, FL 33161. 305.531.0038 themarketcompany.org

Normandy Isles Village Marketplace Saturdays, 9am to 5pm. Open all year. At the Normandy Isle Fountain. 900 71st Street; Miami Beach, FL 33141. 305.531.0038 Local Harvest Reviews themarketcompany.org

Upper Eastside: Biscayne Plaza Farmers' Market Saturdays, 9am to 2pm. Open all year. All local produce. EBT purchases doubled for the first \$10. In the parking lot of Biscayne Plaza at the intersection of Biscayne Boulevard and 79th Street (northeast corner). 561 NE 79th Street, Miami; FL 33138. Local Harvest Reviews Yelp Reviews urbanoasisproject.org (on Facebook)

Liberty City Farmers' Market at TACOLCY Park Thursdays, noon to 5pm & Saturdays, 11am to 4pm. Open seasonally from November to May. EBT purchases doubled for the first \$10. In the open field of TACOLCY Park (hidden from the street) at the intersection of 62nd Street and NW 8th Avenue (southeast corner). 6161 NW 9th Avenue; Miami, FL 33127. 954.235.2601 or via email.

Little Haiti Farmers' Market Saturdays, 10am to 2pm. Open January to March (may run longer). EBT purchases doubled for the first \$10. Located on 59th Street, 1 block west of NE 2nd Avenue in the courtyard of the Toussaint L'ouverture Elementary School. 120 Northeast 59th Street; Miami, FL 33137. Contact Phillip at (786) 529-2010 or via email. bochika.org

Brownsville Farmers' Market Fridays, 11am to 3pm. Open seasonally from November to April. All local produce. EBT purchases doubled for the first \$10. Located at the entry courtyard of the Jessie Trice Community Health Center, in the southeast corner at the intersection of 54th Street and 22nd Avenue. About 5 blocks northeast of the Brownsville Metrorail station. 5361 NW 22nd Avenue; Miami, FL 33142. Local Harvest Reviews urbanoasisproject.org (on Facebook)

Miami Beach: St. John's Market Thursdays, noon to 5pm. Open all year. At St. John's Methodist Church. 4760 Pinetree Drive; Miami Beach, FL 33140. 305.531.0038 themarketcompany.org

Miami Springs Farmers' Market Saturdays, 8am to 1pm. Open for 3 Saturdays: March 3, 10, 17, 2012. (grand opening 3 March 2012). Located in the 200 block median of Curtiss Parkway. Approximately 200 Curtiss Parkway; Miami Springs, FL 33166. 305.508.8080 miamisprings-fl.gov

Wynwood Green Last Sunday of each month, noon to 7pm. Farmers' market at monthly eco festival. Urban Oasis booth accepts EBT. On the green adjacent just west of Armory Studios. 572 NW 23rd Street; Miami, FL 33127. 305.815.2981 wynwood-green.org Yelp Reviews (on Facebook)

Miami: Jackson Memorial Hospital Green Market Thursdays, 9am to 4pm. Open seasonally from November to May (opens for the season spring 2011 after courtyard renovations). In Alamo Park on the JMH campus. About 1 block northeast of the Civic Center Metrorail station. 1611 NW 12th Avenue; Miami 33136. 305.531.0038 Local Harvest Reviews Yelp Reviews themarketcompany.org

Overtown: Roots in the City Farmers' Market Fridays, 9am-5pm. Open seasonally from January to April. Accepts EBT. At NW 3rd Avenue & 16th Street. Approximately 1551 NW 3rd Avenue; Miami, FL 33136. Note: For the past 2 seasons, Roots in the City ran a farmers' market at a second location in Overtown, going forward this is the only location. 786.573.0180 Contact Dave Trujillo via email. rootsinthecity.com (on Facebook)

South Beach: Lincoln Road Farmers' Market Sundays, 9am to 6:30pm. Open all year. Lincoln Road between Meridian & Washington Avenues. Organic market is located in front of the Lincoln Theatre. 730 Lincoln Road; Miami Beach, FL 33139. 305.531.0038 Local Harvest Reviews themarketcompany.org

Miami: Mary Brickell Village Sundays, 10am to 4pm. Open all year. Located 1 block east from the Brickell Metrorail/Metromover station. 901 South Miami Avenue; Miami, FL 33130. 305.531.0038 Yelp Reviews themarketcompany.org

Miami: Downtown Harvest Market Fridays, 11am to 5:30pm. Open seasonally from January to May. EBT purchases doubled for the first \$10. In the street level plaza in front of the Stephen P. Clark Governmental Center/Metrorail station. 111 NW 1st Street; Miami, FL 33128. Call Lydia at 786.233.2784 or via email. harvestmarkets.org

Sweetwater: FIU Maidique Campus Farmers' Market Wednesdays, noon to 3pm. Open seasonally in the fall and spring semesters. Located between Green Library and the central fountain. 11200 SW 8th Street; Miami, FL 33174. Yelp Reviews gogreen.fiu.edu (on Facebook)

Brickell Farmers' Market Saturdays, 9am to 4pm. Open all year. Located inside Central Park Miami, at the southeast corner of the intersection of SW 13th Street and South Miami Avenue. Located 4 blocks southeast from the Brickell Metrorail/Metromover station. 1300 South Miami Avenue; Miami, FL 33130. 305.531.0038 or via email. Yelp Reviews themarketcompany.org (on Facebook)

Coral Gables Farmers' Market Saturdays, 8am to 2pm. Open seasonally from January to March. In front of the Coral Gables City Hall. 405 Biltmore Way; Coral Gables, FL 33134. 305.460.5607 Local Harvest Reviews coralgables.com (on Facebook)

Coconut Grove: Roots in the City Farmers' Market Saturdays, 9am to 5pm. Open seasonally from

Continued on page 66



The market's volunteers gather produce and more from 30 local farmers.

Markets

Continued from page 50

stamps) get two dollars of groceries for every one dollar they spend there.

Art Friedrich, an Urban Oasis Project co-founder (www.urbanoasisproject.org), recently informed the *BT* that their popular Upper Eastside Farmers Market, currently at Biscayne Plaza (79th Street and Biscayne Boulevard), is moving.

He says the plan is to reopen at Legion Memorial Park (6447 NE 7th Ave.) on March 24. That is, if their permit application gets final approval, as expected, before then. Look for them next to the Neighborhood Enhancement Team office on the Boulevard at 66th

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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR



Scenes from the Coral Morphologic project
by Colin Foord and Jared McKay.

Arts Challenge

Continued from page 50

is Karen Peterson, a dance professional who has spent the past 20 years educating “mixed ability” and special-needs students through her nonprofit organization, Karen Peterson and Dancers.

After winning the Knight Arts Challenge last year (\$10,000), she expanded her established residency programs to include 22 Miami-Dade public schools, accommodating more than 350 students. Her residency program affords children opportunities to express themselves physically despite their disabilities. For many of these children, the idea of creating forms such as circles or straight lines through movement is transformed from something abstract to something they're able to accomplish themselves.

Despite such compelling causes, the Knight Arts Challenge isn't simply about doling out money. Once a proposal is chosen, the artist or collective is required to match the funds promised by the Knight Foundation — dollar for dollar. “It's important that the community be our partners, because we don't want to just hand out money,” says Scholl. “By requiring some kind of match, the artistic community learns how to go out and raise money on their own.”

There have been very few exceptions to this matching principle, notably in cases involving smaller, fledgling organizations. However, all recipients have made the effort to connect with their communities and raise funds on their own.

When [NAME] Publications was selected as a Challenge winner in 2008, for example, founder Gean Moreno expressed concern that finding matching funds would prove difficult. “Gean reached out to the community and got ten artists to do limited editions of ten objects, prints, and drawings,” recalls

Scholl. “He threw an event, sold the work, and raised all of his funds to match the grant. He's a beautiful example of an artist who gets it done, and I'm proud of that.” (Moreno's grant amount: \$30,000.)

Scholl continues: “We hope that by giving artists some start-up capital, we can get the idea started, and the project will get some momentum going. If your idea is a great one, people will sign on and continue to support you.”

Moreno's [NAME] Publications, now established and financially viable, won again last year (\$20,000) and dedicated its artist-book series exclusively for one year to four local women and their work. The books were showcased in international collections, libraries, and book fairs, bringing attention to Miami's diverse cultural community.

Another Knight Arts Challenge winner from 2011 is Coral Morphologic, a coral aquaculture laboratory run by marine biologists Colin Foord and Jared McKay. Through Coral Morphologic, Foord and McKay combine their love of science, coral, and art by cloning fluorescent corals and photographing them for use in multimedia projects.

Coral Morphologic sees these naturally fluorescent corals as pop-culture icons for the city, and thus intrinsic to its identity. The duo's contributions to protecting coral reefs, as well as their photographs and multimedia projects, highlight Miami's unique relationship to marine life that lies beyond the beach.

For the next two years, Coral Morphologic will receive \$150,000 in support from the Knight Foundation while Foord and McKay work on a project titled “Aqua/Cultural Transformation,” in collaboration with the Miami Science Museum, and a series of short films for the Miami International Airport.

“Since the beginning, between Miami and the Knight Arts Challenge in Philadelphia, we've received over 8000 applications, and I've read every single one of them,” says Scholl. So what stands out in this sea of applications? “A good title helps a lot, actually,” he notes. “It's one of those things that just jumps out at us.”

And remember: Winning the Challenge is not as important as the ideas behind the proposals. Scholl believes that the process of concisely committing an idea to paper

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Tokyo Valentino

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which chronicled the proliferation of adult-themed stores in Atlanta.

That pattern repeated itself several times, every time he opened a new store in the Atlanta area, but after every raid, Morrison reopened. Eventually he developed a “live-and-let live relationship with most local governments,” the *Creative Loafing* piece stated.

Morrison says he once owned as many as 21 video booth and adult toy stores in the Southeast, as well as various bars and clubs that were “conventional and adult.” He has dabbled in a variety of themes for his adult venues. “We have done everything — hetero-brand, gay-brand,” he says.

Then in February 2005, Morrison was convicted on two counts of filing false tax returns and one count of lying to the federal Securities and Exchange Commission. According to a press release from the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Morrison never reported \$2.3 million in “booth revenue,” thereby cheating the federal government of \$1.4 million in taxes.

He was released in February 2008 after serving 30 months of a 46-month prison sentence in a Miami federal lockup. Among his fellow inmates, according to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, was his former adversary, Mayor Bill Campbell, who was also serving time for tax evasion.

Morrison says he now has only four video booth shops, including Inseccion, an adult video store in Atlanta, and two gay-oriented videplexes called Stardust in Tennessee and North Carolina, which, like Tokyo Valentino, offer only mainstream movies for customers’ booth-viewing pleasure.

Morrison says he picked Miami’s Upper Eastside for his latest venture for two reasons. Reason one was that the “gay lifestyle in Miami is very prevalent.” Reason two was the Jamboree Lounge, a gay bar located at 7005 Biscayne Blvd., near the gated community of Belle Meade.

“Ever been to Jamboree’s patio?” Morrison asks the *BT*.

BT: Do sexual activities occur there?
Morrison: “They do.”

Indeed five reviews on yelp.com describe or allude to sexual activity occurring “behind the curtain.” As reviewer “Christopher D.” puts it: “Make no mistake, the Jamboree Lounge is a



Only mainstream movies are available for booth-viewing, but customers can bring their own.

gay man’s ‘sex’ bar.” (Jamboree Lounge could not be reached by phone and did not reply by deadline to an e-mail message requesting comment.)

Sexual activity, if it is in fact taking place at the Jamboree Lounge, should stop as well, says Shorecrest’s Jack Spirk. However, his unease about Tokyo Valentino is not just based on the booths, but also in the sneaky way he feels Morrison opened his business.

Spirk notes that the owners of the gay-oriented Eros Lounge, located at 8201 Biscayne Blvd., were upfront with city officials about their desire to serve drinks, set up several plasma televisions, and attract DJs and other live entertainment. As a result, it took the owners “forever to get a certificate of use,” Spirk says.

By contrast, Tokyo Valentino received its permits in a mere four months because it claimed to be a “commercial/retail establishment.”

For his part, Michael Morrison remains optimistic that the area will eventually accept his new business. He claims that the complaints filed against Tokyo Valentino have been made by a “vocal minority” of Upper Eastside residents.

Insists Morrison: “We are *not* doing anything wrong.”

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR

Markets

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Street. (The other two Oasis locations, Brownsville and North Miami Farmers Markets, will remain where they are.)

Although Urban Oasis is still grateful to Biscayne Plaza manager Terranova Corp. for financial and other support, contractual conflicts with certain tenants forced the market to find a new home. The outcome, happily, could be a great boon for both Urban Oasis and their new neighbors at Legion.

The park's natural beauty will almost demand patrons stop to enjoy some of their tasty finds under the shady trees or overlooking Biscayne Bay. Grazers can pick from baked goods, fresh dips, and the "best *guarapo* and fruit juices in town," according to Friedrich, as well as filling out the usual shopping list assortment of fruits and vegetables.

More often than not, there is also musical entertainment, and cooking demos take place on the first Saturday of every month. For those who overindulge, the park itself offers basketball and tennis courts, and a Vita course. Conveniently, there's free yoga at 10:00 a.m. every Saturday too.

Says an enthusiastic Friedrich of the new location: "We really hope that people will be able to stay and socialize more. It happens on the crazy, hectic corner we are on now, but we hope [the market at] Legion Park becomes a community crossroads."

The Urban Oasis Upper Eastside Farmers Market is open every Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. year-round. It will remain at Biscayne Plaza until March 17. For a comprehensive list of farmers markets visit the BT's website (www.biscaynetimes.com) or localfoodsouthflorida.com.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Miami-Dade Market List

Continued from page 52

January to April. In the southwest corner of the intersection of Douglas Road (37th Avenue) and Grand Avenue. Approximately 3701 Grand Avenue; Miami, FL 33133. 786.573.0180 Contact Dave Trujillo via email. rootsinthecity.com (on Facebook)

Coconut Grove: Glaser Organic Farmers' Market Saturdays, 10am to 7pm. Open all year. South Florida's oldest organic produce market; a place where people can learn and explore a true vegan market. 3300 Grand Avenue; Coconut Grove, FL 33133. 305.238.7747 Local Harvest Reviews Yelp Reviews glaserorganicfarms.com (on Facebook)

Coral Gables: University of Miami Farmers' Market Wednesdays, 9am to 2pm. Open seasonally from October to April. At the Foote Green between Starbucks & the Richter Library. 1300 Memorial Drive; Coral Gables, FL 33124. 305.531.0038 Yelp Reviews themarketcompany.org

South Miami Harvest Market Saturdays, 9am to 2pm. Open seasonally from November to June. EBT purchases doubled for the first \$10. At the South Miami City Hall. About 4 blocks southwest of the South Miami Metrorail station. 6130 Sunset Drive; South Miami, FL 33143. Contact Lydia at 786.233.2784 or via email. Local Harvest Reviews Yelp Reviews harvestmarkets.org (on Facebook)

West Miami: Norman Brothers Monday to Saturday, 8am to 7pm, Sundays 9am to 6pm. 7621 SW 87th Avenue; Miami, FL 33173. 305.274.9363 Yelp Reviews normanbrothers.com (on Facebook)

Key Biscayne Farmers' Market Saturdays, 7am to 4pm. Open seasonally from January to March. At the Key Biscayne Community Church. 355 Glenridge Road; Key Biscayne, FL 33149. 305.531.0038 themarketcompany.org

Pinecrest Gardens Farmers' Market Sundays, 9am-2pm. Open all year. Miami-Dade's largest farmers' market, located in the Pinecrest Gardens Park (site of the old Parrot Jungle). Note: Bee Heaven Farm booth takes EBT (not doubled). 11000 Red Road, Pinecrest; FL 33156. 305.531.0038 Local Harvest Reviews Yelp Reviews pinecrest-fl.gov (on Facebook)

Cutler Bay Farmers' Market Sundays, 8am to 3pm. Open all year. At Old Cutler Road and SW 87th Avenue. 20002 Old Cutler Road; Cutler Bay, FL 33190. Call 786.486.0202 or contact via email. cutlerbay.net (on Facebook)

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Arts Challenge

Continued from page 54

makes the applicant far more likely to follow through: "The Challenge itself is a catalyst for people who've had ideas, but never wrote them down. We polled people who were a part of the Challenge, but didn't win, and asked, 'Have you moved your idea forward simply because the Challenge required you to write it down and send it to us?' Believe it or not, over 40 percent of the people we spoke to said Yes."

The Knight Foundation is accepting applications for this year's Arts

Challenge through Monday, March 19, at www.KnightArts.org. Anyone interested in participating is encouraged to apply.

Applicants can learn more by speaking with Dennis Scholl at a town hall meeting scheduled for March 14 at the Little Haiti Cultural Center (212 NE 59th Terr.).

The English Q&A begins at 6:00 p.m., followed by a session in Spanish and Kreyol at 7:00 p.m. You can also participate in a live web chat regarding the Challenge by visiting www.KnightArts.org on March 7 from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

A Sampling of Knight Arts Challenge Winners

Miami World Cinema Center

Year: 2008

Amount: \$750,000

To assist the prosperity of the Miami's independent film community by establishing an extensive institute for connecting, funding and advising local film makers.

Miami Light Project: Here & Now Festival

Year: 2008

Amount: \$200,000

To increase the development of original, locally produced performance art through expanding the accomplished Here & Now Festival.

Gold Coast Jazz Society: First Friday

Jazz Jams

Year: 2008

Amount: \$18,000

To launch free, monthly jazz "jam" sessions where students of all levels can play alongside professionals.

Sweat Records, Inc.

Year: 2009

Award: \$150,000

This grant will help Sweat Records, a store and community resource that offers live performances, film screenings and an art gallery, strengthen and expand its cultural offerings.

Michael Bell: Scholastic Writing Awards Program

Year: 2010

Award: \$20,000

Through an affiliation with the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, the Scholastic Writing Awards Program will help identify and motivate young writers.

Bas Fisher Invitational: Weird Miami

Bus Tours

Year: 2011

Award: \$100,000

Bas Fisher Invitational will offer a behind the scenes look at the city and its artistic offerings by expanding the popular, artist-led Weird Miami bus tours, which introduce locals, as well as tourists, to lesser-known places and cultural projects.

Bridge Red Studios Project Space: Long-Standing Local Artists Get New Spotlight on Their Work

Year: 2011

Award: \$15,000

Bridge Red Studios Project Space will give new exposure to long-standing artists by providing a space to exhibit their works and ideas.

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Chronic Failure on Miami's Mean Streets

Two decades of wrongheaded policy have done nothing to help Miami's homeless

By Frank Rollason
BT Contributor

Back on January 18, Barbara “Bobbie” Ibarra, executive director of the Miami Coalition for the Homeless, wrote an “Other Views” piece for the *Miami Herald*. She led off with this: “Our community is in the throes of a homelessness epidemic. All of the shelters in Miami-Dade County are full. Desperate people with no place to spend the night are regularly told to call back later by overburdened outreach workers who have no housing to offer — sometimes for days on end.”

The gist of her opinion piece was that affordable housing for destitute

families is sorely lacking owing to a shortage of funding. The problem, as Ms. Ibarra sees it, is that the current economic downturn has hit lower-income families the hardest and many are on the verge of becoming homeless. She further stated, “As a community, we can no longer ignore their plight.”

The annual count of Miami-Dade's homeless took place a few days later, beginning at 10:00 p.m. Tuesday (January 24) and ending around 3:00 a.m. the next morning. I have participated in these all-night counts, and I can tell you it is quite an endeavor to locate those who have no desire to be located.

This year's count was reportedly 840 homeless on the streets of the county,



including those currently in temporary shelters — an increase of 51 people over last year's count of 789. Ron Book, chairman of the county's Homeless Trust, opined, “It shouldn't be a surprise related to the continued unemployment, foreclosure, and economic status — it's a spike upward, but it's not dramatic.” (And the beat goes on...)

The *Herald* had its own contribution via an editorial on February 1, in which

it warned that housing the homeless in sports facilities was a logistical nightmare that would not address root problems. This in response to state legislators who have uncovered a law on the books requiring professional sports facilities that were built with government funds to house the homeless when there are no events taking place.

The *Herald* called this an “obscure 23-year-old law that few, if any,

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municipalities have enforced.” In closing, the paper pointed out that the law “does little to offer stability, hope, and a way forward for people fighting their way out of homelessness,” and asked the legislature to “look at ways to help people out of homelessness — not stunts for headlines.” Did the *Herald* offer any constructive alternatives? Nope, not a one.

Then on the front page of the paper’s local section on February 7 was an article on how the City of Hollywood’s leaders “have turned their focus to cleaning up Federal Highway, a corridor beset by crime and homelessness.” Notice how “crime” and “homelessness” are linked in such a way to suggest that, if you’re homeless, you’re most likely associated with crime.

This effort, regardless of how misguided it may appear to be, is the result of the failure to address the real issue. You see, it’s not the people in dire straits because of the economic downturn who make up the lion’s share of the recent count of 840. It’s the chronically homeless — those who are mentally ill, alcoholics, drug addicts, or in many cases, all three rolled into one.

Back in November of 2007, I penned a column in this publication titled “How to Solve the Homeless Problem: First Admit Failure, Then Vow to Get It Right This Time.” I received a lot of backlash for my insensitivity toward the subject, but the points I made back then are still true today.

When you look at the Website for the Homeless Trust you will find a very succinct mission statement for the organization: To Eliminate Homelessness in Miami-Dade County. Period. End of mission statement. End homelessness — not mitigate it down to an acceptable level of 1000 or so, more or less, give or take.

Yet I submit to you that, for an organization that has been in existence since 1993, it is no closer to solving the problem of chronic homelessness today than it was 20 years ago.

The reason, as I see it, is that you cannot solve the issue of the chronically homeless by implementing a plan, such as the “Continuum of Care” program, which provides individuals with short-term, mid-term, and long-term care. It is continually touted as the saving grace for our homeless “epidemic,” when it

does not address the problems of the chronically homeless. In fact, most of the chronically homeless do not qualify to enter the “Continuum of Care” program because they are unable to comply with the basic requirements.

Back in 1943, a behavioral psychologist by the name of Abraham Maslow published an academic paper that suggested a hierarchy of needs, positing that lower-level needs must be satisfied before reaching for the next level of needs. At the very bottom of the hierarchy are the basic needs — air, water, food, sleep, and excretion — needed to sustain life.

These needs are exactly what the chronically homeless devote their days to — their mission statement, if you will. It is what all of us call survival and what most of us take for granted, but for the chronically homeless, it is these fundamentals that drive them day in and day out.

The next level of Maslow’s hierarchy includes shelter and clothing. Beyond these needs are income, conformity, interpersonal dynamics, quality circles, goals, and objectives. I think you get my point. As the old saying goes: “When

you are up to your ass in alligators, it’s difficult to remember that your mission is to drain the swamp!”

This community’s population of chronically homeless desperately needs our help, but the help they are offered falls far short of addressing their needs. We are treating the problem with the wrong cure, folks!

It’s been 20 years and we still have 1000 chronically homeless people on our streets. It’s way past time to recognize that this problem is not going away under our current approach. It’s time to form a task force made up of appropriate professionals to address the problem *and fund* an effective treatment for this segment of the homeless population.

And that brings us full circle to the Homeless Trust and its mission statement to “Eliminate Homelessness in Miami-Dade County.” The question is whether the trust is up to the task, or will we continue to hear the same old recitations of how wonderful the “Continuum of Care” program is, and how much worse off we would be if it did not exist?

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The Thrift of Gab

Our correspondent talks through her second-hand addiction

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

It's Super Bowl Sunday. Most people are sitting in front of a television mindlessly stuffing their collective faces with chips, dip, beer, burgers, and sports trivia.

I'm mindlessly scouring the neighborhood thrift for anything noteworthy. I do not *need* anything. In fact, I dare say I'm teetering on the edge of hoarderdom. The only thing standing between me and a spot on bad reality television is the fact that I use props in my artwork and photography, so I kind of have an excuse for my excessive load of crap. Kind of.

I'm not talking about what normal people think of as clutter — a closet filled with some extra winter clothes, or a junk drawer. I'm referring to an entire third and fourth room chock-full of, well, everything: boxes of dolls and doll parts, a dollhouse, stuffed animals, clothing, shoes, costumes, trinkets, and found objects I mean to make into "sculptures." What should be my photography studio is Fred Sanford's dream room.

What's worse is that this stuff has been traveling with my husband and me for years. If there were a GPS for crap collecting, you could map it. Point A: Start at my apartment near downtown Miami (Spring Garden), in 2001, pre-marriage. In 2003, make a left at our



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

condo in North Miami, bear right and merge into a house in Biscayne Park in 2005. Exit the highway and turn left to another house just west and south of Biscayne Park. Make a U-turn and proceed north to Binghamton, New York (otherwise known as the MUFT, or Merciless Un-Frozen Tundra), go 3000 miles back to another house in North Miami. You have reached your destination.

In the MUFT, I had an excuse. Thrifting was one of my means of escape from the misery of endless freezing, gray days. Good thrift stores ranked among one of the MUFT's more appealing offerings. I think the MUFT owes this to its age. Old places offer better thrift fodder. That especially applies if you're going to resell your wares, but I'll get to that in a minute.

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Each geographic locale offers its specialties, and the thrift located dangerously too close to my house is no exception. Anyone who loves Caribbean art, for example, might be able to outfit all their walls following a few visits. It's also a practical stop for people who want to send cheap clothing and house items back to relatives in Haiti.

Me? I never tire of the oddities in housewares (creepy clown tea party set, anyone?) and the designer clothes and bags, sometimes brand-new, on the cheap. Mostly. While the prices are reasonable on most items, sometimes the thrift workers get it completely wrong. Example: I'm not paying \$4.50 for a ratty T-shirt when I can snag an equivalent for less — new at a retailer.

The real appeal of the thrift is psychological. And that is precisely why it is addictive. See, the true thrifter is not just there to grab a few crystal candlestick holders. It's not like those people don't exist; it's just that they are shoppers, not *addicts*. And you usually don't spot them more than once.

The Thrifting Addict personality possesses a few key elements. Just

like there is a quiz to determine if you have attention-deficit disorder, there is a Thrifting Addict test. Questions include: How often do you visit the thrift? (I'm there six days, maybe seven days a week.) Do you buy things that you not only don't need but that also are completely ridiculous? (Creepy clown tea party set, anyone?) Can you just walk away? (No.) Are there any rituals you practice pre-thrifting? (I must park on the right side of the store.) Do you ever feel ashamed of your thrifting? (Often.) Have friends or family noticed a change in your personality? (Hard to tell. I have many!) Are your friends fellow thrifters? (Some.)

The thrill of the hunt, which is the key to the addiction, never ends because every TA (Thrifting Addict) worth their bins of crap recognizes the magical sound of "the cart" rolling out. The cart means new stuff is arriving.

Employees load the stuff onto the carts throughout the day. Unlike garage sales, you can score at the thrift at any time of day. Some rude TAs dive-bomb the cart as the employee is trying to roll it down the center of the store aisle. At

some thrifts, this behavior will get you thrown out — as it should!

Every community has its rules of conduct. Thrifting is no exception, and poor thrifting etiquette is frowned upon. This includes overly pushy or grabby hands.

There is one Thrifting Enthusiast (TE) I've seen several times, but he isn't there often enough to qualify as a TA. This kid is all wrong! I first "met" him around Halloween, when he snatched a shirt right out from under my debating gaze. He then proceeded to sashay around me and push his shopping cart off. But I got my revenge. I saw him one month later and he grabbed a doll. *Out of my cart.* "That's mine!" I growled. He gave me a once-over and pranced away.

Thrifting Addicts are divided into a few groups. There are the Oglers, who go for the entertainment value; the Collectors, who scout particular items; the Converters, such as myself, who like to buy crap and make it into art; and the Resellers. While I fall into every group but the Resellers (and that is only because I fear the post office), I have thrift friends who fall into others.

There is 72-year-old Josephine, who likes to kill time and shop for her grandkids. She's 80 percent Ogler and 20 percent Collector. Rob is 95 percent Reseller. He looks for pottery he can resell at the Lincoln Road antique market and snags an occasional T-shirt for himself.

While I've made friends with many of the TAs and the employees, there are a few Resellers who run in and out. It's all about business for them. The Huncher is one.

The Huncher is an older man who, despite his troll-like posture, moves quickly and stealthily among the housewares. He and Rob are competitors, while Rob and I work together. (I give him leads.) The Huncher is a sour dude, but Josephine and I chat. When I took two days off, she noticed.

I know the employees' schedules, and I'm wise to who dishes the good discounts. Membership has its privileges.

Oops! Speaking of the thrift, I'm running late. It's nearly noon and I don't know what I'm missing. And I *really* need another dinosaur-shaped tissue cozy.

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Worried about crime? Village police are on the case

By **Gaspar González**
BT Contributor

Some readers may recall that, roughly a year-and-a-half ago, I wrote about someone attempting to break in to my tool shed. I didn't actually see this unfold, but the latch that holds the lock in place had obviously been worked on. Knowing that there had been a recent burglary of a nearby house — and that crooks often use tools taken from sheds and garages to then break in to the main house — I called the Biscayne Park Police Department.

The response was immediate. Then Capt. Tony Sanchez — who has since moved on to the Opa-locka Police Department — came out and surveyed the

scene, did a walk-around my property, and alerted me to some changes I may want to make, like installing security lights with motion detectors, trimming my trees to improve visibility of my property from the street, and locking my gates. The police department also put my house on a watch list, which meant that, for the next few weeks, it got a little more attention from officers on patrol.

At that point, my wife and I had only lived in Biscayne Park for about nine months and hadn't had much direct contact with the police department. (One notable exception: Lt. Betsy Albert helped me install the baby seat in my car when I had to go to the hospital to pick up my wife and newborn son.) The episode



confirmed for me what a lot of longtime residents already know: Our police department is one of our biggest assets.

In fact, I have since come to the conclusion that, if local government ran as smoothly as our police department, I'd have very little to gripe about. (What would become of this column?) Which is not to say that crime has disappeared from Biscayne Park and the surrounding area. On the contrary, it seems to be the hot topic of conversation, including in the pages of this publication; Miami Shores correspondent Jen Karetnick

wrote about our sister village's struggles with lawlessness in last month's *BT*.

The difference in Biscayne Park is that, apparently, we do a very good job of collaring our criminals. So good that we may want to come up with a new slogan to put on our "Don't Even Think About Speeding" signs: "Don't Even Think About Committing a Crime Here."

The following dispatches were taken (and slightly edited) from police reports and e-mails sent to Biscayne Park residents and members of the village Crime

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Watch by Chief Mitch Glansberg the first six weeks of this year, when the arrests seemed to come quicker than usual.

They make for entertaining reading, and not only because of the chief's *Dragnet*-style prose. They're proof that our criminals — luckily — are pretty dumb. (You're going to ride a bike near the place you stole it from the week before? Really?) They're also a reminder that our police department is doing great work.

Cue the music... *Dum-da-dum-dum*.

Thursday, January 12

In the month of December we had a very active criminal who had entered four cars at night in the village that may have been left open. The subject removed change and other valuables.

I am extremely pleased to report that, as a result of Commander [Ray] Atesiano's hard work and perseverance while investigating these vehicle burglaries, he was able to identify an offender and, last night at about 9:00 p.m., Commander Atesiano did arrest an adult male and charged him with four counts of auto burglary. A stolen GPS and iPod were recovered from the offender.

Tuesday, January 17

Public Works Director [Bernard] Pratt and Assistant Director [Cesar] Hernandez distinguished themselves in the line of duty today. Director Pratt, while making his rounds, observed vandalism in progress to a street sign. He saw a young male tagging one of our signs with permanent magic marker at 121st Street and NE 6th Avenue.

Director Pratt and Assistant Director Hernandez got police to respond while watching the subject. We arrived on scene and took the 19-year-old into custody and charged him with one count of criminal vandalism.

Both directors are a true credit to the village and continued proof that our innovative program, Village of Biscayne Park on Patrol [VBPOP] — in which village employees help the police department identify suspicious activity — continues to work for the betterment of the community.

Wednesday, January 18

On Sunday night, at approximately 7:00 p.m., a burglary occurred in a home in the 11900 block of NE 11th Place. The offenders were captured on video via the home's security monitoring system. Commander Atesiano and

Officer [Charlie] Dayoub worked leads on the case and were able to identify two juveniles that committed the crime.

These same two were arrested previously for the same crime in the village. The two reside in the area of the 1300 block of NE 119th Street and simply walked over the tracks to enter our community to commit the crime. Commander Atesiano and Officer Dayoub arrested these two juveniles and two others last night at 7:00 p.m.

Two subjects were charged with the residential burglary. Two were charged with trespass on the railroad tracks based on our recently passed initiative with Florida East Coast Railway [enforcing a no trespassing statute on the FEC corridor].

We continue to get calls concerning trespassing on the railroad tracks. We encourage all residents to call the police when they see anyone walking or crossing the FEC tracks. It's both dangerous and illegal.

Monday, January 23

Last week a residential burglary occurred in the 1200 block of 119th Street. A bike was stolen from the front porch of a home, next to the front door.

On Sunday, the resident victim observed a young male riding the bike that

had been stolen and called police.

Officer [Nicholas] Wollschlager and Officer Dayoub searched for the subject and, after a brief time, located the subject nearby and detained him. The victim responded and identified her property. The 18-year-old suspect was arrested for burglary and grand theft. He resides in North Miami, in the 1200 block of 113th Street, just over the FEC tracks.

Friday, February 3

In December, a residential burglary occurred in the 800 block of NE 119th Street. Commander Atesiano worked a strong lead that resulted in the arrest of four subjects. The subjects were (1) a juvenile with a lengthy arrest record, (2) an adult career criminal, (3) a convicted sexual offender, and (4) a village resident who is a convicted felon. All are now in jail.

Note: For all emergencies, residents should call 911. To report suspicious activity, call 305-476-5423 (305-4-police). For more information about Biscayne Park's Crime Watch program, e-mail coordinator Chuck Ross at biscaynepark_crimewatch@yahoo.com.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Rating the Round Dough

Who has Aventura's best bagels?

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

The ritual began when I lived in Manhattan. Purchasing a dozen bagels at Ess-a-Bagel or Pick a Bagel, leaving the store and, as I'd start the seven-block trek home (on foot, of course), I'd open the bag jammed with steaming hot bagels, and tear into the one closest to the top.

Oh, the pleasure it brought. I can still taste the salt, the pumpernickel, and the garlic, feel the texture of the sesame seeds as they cracked between my teeth in each bite of my everything bagel, which was always in the mix. It went like this: three everything, three sesame,

two plain, two salt, a pumpernickel, and a whole wheat.

To this day, a warm, fresh bagel is still one of my favorite things in the world to eat. Only now, I've traded the streets of Manhattan for the strip malls of South Florida. And only 50 percent of the time am I walking and "ripping," the other 50 percent of "tear time" is spent in my or my husband's car.

And that's not always as pleasant as I want it to be. Why? Because crumbs breed contempt. And with a new car in the picture, neither crumbs nor seeds fit in. Every time I go to pull off a piece of bagel — no matter how careful I am — he reminds me: "My car. Don't make crumbs." Although I understand why, it



still takes the pleasure out of it. Insert big heavy sigh. But I digress.

Let me get back to the point. Be it boiled or baked, made with water or air, bagels are a serious staple of my diet, and many other people's as well.

There are so many types — not flavors, exactly, but styles and techniques used to create them.

Think about the options. Bagels can be big, small, heavy, light, cakey, bread-like, doughy, thin, thick, yeasty, crusty,



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soggy, dry... I could go on, but I think it's safe to assume that you know and love all these options, as I do.

Bagels are an art. And for every style of bagel, there are devotees and there are disbelievers, fans and foes. Which ever way you lean, it matters. Bagels are important enough to evoke some form of emotion, discussion, and opinion.

Since I eat one almost every day, I am acutely aware of what works, what doesn't, and who sells what.

Within Aventura's 2.7 square miles of land (and just in case anyone's interested, Aventura has a total of 3.5 square miles; 0.8 square miles is water), there is an abundance of bagel shops.

In the five years I've resided here, I've seen them come and go. I live within walking distance of three of the top four. I'm not counting local bakeries, nor would I ever consider Publix or Costco.

With so many, how do you choose? If it comes down to it, it's simply what you like best. It's not about service, cookies, or cream cheese (although I'm always on the lookout for an above-average nova spread), nor baked salmon, whitefish salad, or anything else that sits

atop the baked foundation of a delicious and satisfying meal. So let's take a tour and rate each place purely on its bagels. Where do those in the know go in Aventura for the best bagels?

Over the past seven days, I have purchased — and eaten — sesame and everything bagels from almost a half-dozen places. And it has reconfirmed my opinions. So whether you like your bagels hollowed out or straight up, here's the scoop on Aventura's finest.

Mo's Bagels & Deli: 2780 NE 187th St., 305-936-8555. With deep roots in this community, Mo's is my favorite, hands down. If you like big, heavy bagels, this is your place. Since we aren't talking about anything beyond bagels, the toppings are plentiful, the shape is always imperfect (which I love), so flat areas abound, and there is a hint of crispiness to the crust that gives way to a sinfully doughy inside. On the Yum Scale, it gets a 5 out of 5.

Bagel Cove: 19003 Biscayne Blvd., 305-935-4029. As part of the neighborhood for a long time, Bagel Cove is usually a good runner-up to Mo's. I must have hit it on a day when the cook

was feeling lazy. There weren't enough toppings on the everything bagel, and the sesame was a bit dark (almost overcooked). Usually the bagels are a good size, heavy, and satisfying. Toppings are generously applied and evenly distributed. On the Yum Scale, it gets a 3.5.

Bagelworks: 18729 Biscayne Blvd., 305-937-7727. New to the neighborhood, this is a place I feel I should like more than I do, but there is something off. It feels generic. The bagels, which are a bit smaller than Mo's, seem mass-produced. They don't taste bad, but the toppings tend to be inconsistently applied. And while usually properly cooked, on the day of my purchase, they were on the well-done side.

The other thing I've noticed is that, no matter how many times I try to get there when the bagels are warm, they never are. I want to bite into a fresh, warm bagel, and this place cannot deliver. On the Yum Scale, it rates a 2.5.

Mish Mash Bagel: 3565 NE 207th St., 305-935-1809. I found this one much later in the game, like the very day I was writing this column, and despite some less-than-positive online

reviews, I took the dog and the husband, hopped in the infamously crumb-free car, and drove over.

As I walked into the shop, baskets of bagels were sitting out in the open, just waiting for me to come and select my very own. Anyone who knows me knows that I'm a control freak, so imagine my joy as I took tongs in hand and began inspecting before selecting each bagel.

It's amazing how the little things matter.

The bins made me really happy. It felt like it was going to be a good experience. But what about the bagels? After all, isn't that what I came for? These were different from all the other bagels. These were light in weight, and tasted yeasty. I didn't dislike them, but they weren't my favorite. The sesame was a bit overcooked, and the everything was lacking in toppings. (Not as much an "everything" as it could have been.) On the Yum Scale, I give them a 2.0.

Let me know about your own bagel experiences. I'm sure we could go round and round all day.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Positively 125th Street

North Miami's downtown drag may finally be turning the corner

By **Mark Sell**
BT Contributor

The word that best describes North Miami's 125th Street is *eclectic*. Trophy and tuxedo stores jostle for attention with hair salons, tattoo parlors, immigration services, and a fresh gaggle of slick-packaged, mid-20th century décor stores and galleries, the latest key to a fledgling downtown renaissance.

How's the renaissance coming along? One possible answer: It's organic and bumpy, but generally heading the right way. Fourteen of the above-mentioned décor galleries have cropped up, most of them in the past 18 months, turning the north side of the street, between

NE 7th and 9th avenues, into "20th Century Row."

The MOCA Café is on track to open soon near its namesake, the Museum of Contemporary Art. At the northwest corner of NE 9th Avenue, Cane á Sucre (Sugar Cane), the new gourmet soup-and-sandwich shop, opened late last year, and is packing them in at a site that had been a restaurant graveyard.

"People who saw this street when we opened in 1996 remarked how desolate it seemed," says Bonnie Clearwater, executive director and chief curator of the city-owned MOCA.

MOCA dominates 125th Street like a mother ship, and is currently preparing a \$14 million expansion with a projected



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

2014 completion date, as money allows. "What's happening here is amazing," Clearwater continues. "There has been a lot of progress. It's great to see spaces fully rented." Those rents remain cheap, sometimes running \$12 a square foot, or even less.

Still, progress is fitful and the verdict is mixed. Unlike say, Wynwood, dominated by developer-landlords Tony Goldman and David Lombardi, no single coordinated group governs 125th Street's transformation.

The mid-20th century décor places flocked together on their own, migrating from Wynwood, the antique shops in Miami's Upper Eastside, the Design District, and South Beach. It's a narrow range of retail establishments, but it's a big component in the emerging North Miami art scene.

South Beach long ago yielded to sky-high rents, as the franchises booted out the mom-and-pops. Midtown and the Design District are brimming with franchises and restaurants. Wynwood rents

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have shot up, leading some galleries to hunt for cheaper, larger spaces.

North Miami has yet to follow those trajectories, but the artists have certainly landed. Renowned sculptor Mark Handforth, at MOCA's behest, has graced nearby Griffing Park with *Electric Tree*, installing more than 60 green and yellow neon lights in the park's huge banyan tree. Widely respected artist Robert Thiele now operates Bridge Red Studios and exhibition space just off 125th Street.

Rather by accident, North Miami has created its own brand of funk, with assortments of businesses found few other places. The merchants' association numbers no more than 25, dominated by galleries.

They compete with rich assortment of businesses. You have ID Tattoo and Body Piercing right next to Jewish Community Services, Tuxedos and Bridal Gowns by Sassy amid 20th Century Row, along with Mr. Trophy and assorted nail salons, beauty parlors, barbers, immigration and tax-preparation services, notary publics, cobblers, cell phone shops, and health clinics.

Pedestrians reflect North Miami's Kreyol-inflected polyglot character,

with dignified Haitian men in dark suits, young urbanites with black NPR T-shirts walking poodles, and Brazilo-Eurozone couples wearing Versace sunglasses, crawling among the modernism stores, checking out those \$8500 chairs and other *objets d' desire*.

The new organic farmers market — which sets up in front of MOCA on Thursdays — is a hit, with Indonesian food and wood-burning pizza joining the produce and honey.

At the venerable Luna Star Café across the street, you can listen to live folk, bluegrass, or blues. The \$6 beers carry names like Zywiec Lager and Lagunita's Hop Stoopid.

The street and museum have attracted international notice, with MOCA figuring in articles in the *New York Times* and Luna Star making a prominent appearance in a February 5 *Washington Post* essay titled "A Poem to Miami."

Global designers visit such decorative and fine arts showrooms as Vermillion, Stripes, Marc Corbin, and Gustavo Olivieri. "We're attracting top decorators from all over the world," says Marc Corbin. "It's pretty great. We're getting more

known and turning into a destination."

Perhaps the best news comes from Sinuhe Vega, who, with his brother Michael, recently opened Cane á Sucre, developing a following from nearby doctors' offices, MOCA, and everything in between. They have imported much of their mainstay salad, sandwich, and soup menu from their popular Uva 69 restaurant at Biscayne and 69th Street. "The opening of Cane á Sucre is a real turning point in the neighborhood," Clearwater says.

But if there's optimism, there's also some dissension within the ranks. Susan Cutler, owner of the well-regarded Vermillion gallery, is situated right across from the farmers market and is not happy about it.

She'd rather see tables with umbrellas and flower settings, and high-end food trucks offering al fresco menus. She'd also like to see a few more restaurants (as would everyone) and a flashing traffic light in front of MOCA, providing more direct access to her side of the street. "I was the first [modernism gallery] on the street, and we're not seeing as much traffic as we'd like," Cutler says. "Cane á Sucre was a great addition, but there need

to be more spices added to this street."

Some of the galleries lament that high-end direct buyers are bypassing the decorators and insisting on wholesale prices. The result, say some, is "more business, less money." They also remark that the many small landlords, who just want to fill their buildings, could be choosier about their tenants.

"We left the 87th Street antiques plaza because there was critical mass here," says Joel Perez, a partner in Gustavo Olivieri, a gallery that takes up a 2000-square-foot space abandoned by Starbucks in 2008. "We believe competition is good and healthy, and there is a synergy with MOCA."

Bonnie Clearwater's wish list is for a more coordinated marketing effort along 125th Street, where merchants in all their jumbled variety are otherwise too busy trying to keep afloat to devote the time necessary for activism and collective marketing.

Indeed it may be that 125th Street's very flux underscores a dictum attributed, rightly or wrongly, to Joan Didion: "If you don't like Miami, just wait a minute."

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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A Way to Wine Down

So many springtime food and drink festivals can make an otherwise trying time of year seem much less so

By **Jen Karetnick**
BT Contributor

This time of year makes me want to run away from home. The mangos in Miami Shores are in full bloom, drizzling pollen on our car windshields and promising sinus infections to the allergy-prone, followed by a labor-intensive summer.

The students I teach at Miami Arts Charter (and the ones I live with who attend Miami Country Day School) are restless for spring break, which is no break for me, given that every year I escort a student to Tallahassee for the Poetry Out Loud state recitation

competition. This is also when spring travel soccer heats up.

Both the girls and boys Miami Shores Futbol Club teams, run by director David Ocampo, have done extraordinarily well this year, with the under-11 boys winning divisionals after an undefeated season and the under-12 girls taking the Weston Cup.

But the better these kids do, the more we parents are required to drive them to early-morning, weekend-long tournaments held anywhere from Cutler Ridge to Orlando and cheer them on.

Moreover, the constant merry-go-round of February and March festivals — the Coconut Grove Arts Festival, the



Miami International Boat Show, the upcoming Ultra Music Festival — draw such an enormous amount of out-of-towners that the roads are as closely packed as bodies on a beach.

More people, however temporary, means longer lines at Publix, an increase in visitors to our healthcare facilities, and stressful commutes to and from work. (The new crosswalks installed on Biscayne Boulevard in the Upper Eastside don't help; they're only allowing the prostitutes extra minutes to show off their wares.)

It may be the best time to visit South Florida, but weather aside, for those of us in little suburban villages like the Shores, it can be the worst time to live here.

I find the Food Network South Beach Wine and Food Festival (SBWFF) to be especially demanding on my time and energy. Naturally, as the dining critic for the local sponsoring magazine (*Miami Magazine*, from Modern Luxury), I'm delighted to rep my publication. But all those people having a blast remind me only that I'm supposed to be working



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(if not taking notes or pictures, then at home, writing it up). And I can see that not just the working press, but Miamians feel pressure, too — to score as many tickets as they can, then soak up every minute at every possible event. It's a hard way to have any fun.

In addition, starting in the fall of 2013, I'll be pushing my own cookbook at events like this. That, quite frankly, scares me. The increasingly madding crowds at the SBWFF (and other events like it, such as the Food Network New York City Food and Wine Festival) can make even the most hardcore transplant, no matter how well she's thrived, feel like the palest bloom in the garden.

Perhaps it makes sense, then, that I feel a bit more comfortable at under-the-radar (but closer-to-the-equator) wine-and-food events like the Food and Wine Experience coming up this April in St. Croix, which, like the SBWFF, is 11 years old this year (www.stcroixfoodandwine.com), or the newly introduced Caribbean Food and Wine Festival in the Turks and Caicos (www.caribbeanfoodandwinefestivalci.com).

At the latter, where the Grace Bay Club and Veranda resorts provide every

guest with a personal butler and a welcoming basket filled with three different bottles of rum paired with chocolates, the fête is intimate, with events geared to hundreds, rather than thousands, of invited guests. The pleasures, like the hand-rolled cigars to be savored while you work your feet into the sand, are more subtle, but the dramas are also less infuriating. (They may not always have the correct glassware, but Moët Hennessy won't run out of Champagne by 8:30 p.m., either.)

That's not to say there aren't celebrities, or that the invited winemakers aren't superior. At the 2012 St. Croix Experience, for instance, James Beard "Rising Star Chef" Sue Zemanick, our own *Top Chef* alum Howie Kleinberg, proprietor of Bulldog Barbecue and Bulldog Burger in North Miami, and Govind Armstrong, among others, will be in attendance; in the Turks and Caicos this past September, some of the most generously poured vintages stemmed from the prestigious Nickels and Nickels and Semper vineyards.

Still, these overlooked Caribbean destinations, which aren't much farther away than the Bahamas, offer the feel of a vacation, even if you're there for work.

I guess a private butler and winemaker with a ratio of one bottle for every five guests will do that for you.

If springing for an island retreat in our so-called recovering economy is out of the question, or your work or kids' schedules won't allow it, consider another, ever-more-personal wine experience that can be tailored to your Miami Shores home life: a Wines for Humanity tasting event.

My friend Tabitha hosted this at the height of the SBWFF, and it was a relief to attend a house party where I was ensured a glass of wine without having to elbow a stranger in the back for it (or being elbowed in return). And it was all in the name of good works.

In short, Wines for Humanity (www.winesforhumanity.com), for as little as \$70, will send a wine advisor to your house with six vintages that you choose beforehand from their cellars. They also provide glassware, tasting sheets, pens, and a whole lot of expertise. They then guide you and your guests through a two-hour tasting. All you need to do is come up with some willing sippers and a plate of cheese and crackers.

At the end of the tasting, the wines are available for order. They average around \$20 a bottle, which isn't that much more than what you'd find in the average wine shop. Unlike the nearest liquor store, however, Wines for Humanity is dedicated to "preventing homelessness in families with children." Thus much of the company's proceeds are donated. In Miami, for instance, funds raised from wine tastings and subsequent sales go to Camillus House.

We should also keep in mind that the proceeds from SBWFF benefit Florida International University's Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, and that the festival (without counting 2012) has raised \$14 million to date.

So however you decide to celebrate — or escape — the festivities next year, you can at least be sure your money is going to a good place. Then, if you still require the services of a private butler, well, there are always those hospitality students, willing to do almost anything to get the right kind of training.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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The Fabricator

When artists need help realizing their visions, they turn to Oliver Sanchez

By Anne Tschida
BT Contributor

Oliver Sanchez is likely the most talented and prolific Miami artist you've never heard of. But you've seen his handiwork, that's for sure.

He built those towering "Kids" sculptures in the courtyard of the Design and Architecture Senior High (DASH) in the Design District, for instance, although they are the concept and design of artists Roberto Behar and Rosario Marquardt. Same with the sets for the last Merce Cunningham dance performance here, which were conceived by Daniel Arsham; or various sculptures from Bert Rodriguez.

No, these prominent artists aren't stealing Sanchez's work, or appropriating it. Sanchez is what they call in the art world a fabricator, someone who is hired to make ambitious artistic dreams happen — through skilled knowledge of materials, structure, physical dynamics, and other intricacies that most people don't know or can't handle. And Sanchez is one of the best around.

He is also an artist himself. In fact he likely wouldn't have the ability to collaborate with others if he didn't possess that particular spirit. He's worked with top-tier artists not just in Miami but around the globe.

On this bright weekday afternoon in February, Sanchez is taking a cafecito break, both from work and from the process of moving. He's been hauling his art, equipment, and materials from his old Design District studio and exhibition space to his new one, also in the Design District, in a building again owned by developer and art aficionado Craig Robins.

During this pause in activities, it becomes clear that Sanchez has lived a fascinating life during his tenure in the art world, which spans a wide variety of locations, eras, and personalities.

His soon-to-be-former gallery on NE 1st Court, which he named Swampspace, had become a hangout for established and novice artists, a place where he could present off-beat exhibits in the tiny storefront space.

But the block that Swampspace inhabited, along with other notable galleries such as Spinello, Locust Projects, Dimensions Variable, as well as several artists' studios, is slated for demolition to make room for more viable commercial space (see "Art Movements," November 2011), as early as this month. Sanchez is philosophical about this change, and about all changes.

Nothing can or should be static, says the Cuban-born artist who grew up in Miami and has become a mentor to many of the emerging and emerged artists of the region over the years, although he



Stage set for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company designed by artist Daniel Arsham and built by Oliver Sanchez.



Sanchez manufactured this intricate star, designed by Roberto Behar and Rosario Marquardt for *The Peace Project*.

admits he recently has slowed down personally and professionally. Back in 1977, things were much more hectic and crazy.

That's when Sanchez moved to New York City, a time when Miami was a cultural backwater and the Big Apple was

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a hotbed of experimental art. “They called it the Coolest Day in Hell,” Sanchez says of the era when blackouts and crime dominated headlines, but when a still-gritty Manhattan was the center of the artistic universe in music, theater, television, and the visual arts.

While Sanchez was working as a commercial artist, he met many of the key players in this seething cauldron. One person he began collaborating with — and fabricating for — was the pop-culture, graffiti-inspired artist Kenny Scharf.

Eventually, as the heady days morphed into something darker, such as the rise of a gluttonous Wall Street culture and the ravages of AIDS, Sanchez was persuaded by Scharf to move to a new, unvarnished locale, South Beach.

Although Sanchez was reluctant at first — he came from here, after all, and it wasn’t exactly happening — this turned out to be another fortuitous move.

The year was 1992, and artists such as Antoni Miralda, Carlos Betancourt, and others were carving out a niche for the visual arts. By 1996 Sanchez was working for the newly minted MOCA in North Miami, and living with his wife and small daughter up on 129th Street, in a warehouse area that was for a fleeting moment touted as the new art hub, until a hurricane damaged many of the buildings, Wynwood took off, and deals were being extended to artists to locate further south.

Robins, a force behind the revitalization of South Beach, knew that the arts could jump-start a decrepit



Bert Rodriguez’s *A Common Courtesy*, fabricated by Sanchez.

neighborhood, and began offering steeply discounted rents to lure creative talents to his new hood, the Design District. Eventually Sanchez and Swampspace would be among them.

By this time, Sanchez’s expertise in materials such as Styrofoam and plaster — ingredients essential for large-scale sculpture — was invaluable. He helped the team of Roberto and Rosario construct not only the “Kids” sculptures but also their fabulous “House of Cards” solo exhibit at the Miami Art Museum, and most recently an installation involving a brilliant star at the Contemporary Museum of Art Denver. He has crafted pieces for some of the first generation of Miami-groomed artists, people like Martin Oppel, Bahkti Baxter, Cristina



Sanchez’s own painting *Nunsmoke* [“Truly the light is sweet...”].

Lei Rodriguez, and Bert Rodriguez. And he still works with Kenny Scharf.

Now Sanchez is setting up his shop, which will include an alternative exhibition space, in a former Christian community center and day school on 41st Street in the Design District. And once again his landlord is Craig Robins. Sanchez has no problem with the developer’s business decision to rebuild his old neighborhood. Robins isn’t here to subsidize artists forever, Sanchez says, but he still clearly has an interest in keeping artists in the area.

So in this quirky and spacious new spot, Sanchez has transplanted his own paintings and memories. As a farewell to the first Swampspace, he held a two-week exhibition in February featuring many of the artists he has collaborated with, and whose work was exhibited in the storefront over the years. Aside from the previously mentioned artists, they included Naomi Fisher, COOPER, Friends With You, Nicolas Lobo, and Jim Drain, among others — a roster that

encompasses Miami’s current art scene.

Sanchez believes that Miami has come a long way in its artistic maturation, but that it still has a distance to travel. For the first time ever, he says, artists can live and work and show here, but the process needs to move forward and not rely on the same collectors and galleries to keep it afloat. Change, and new blood, is always necessary, he says.

After a difficult 2011, when some of the most important people in his life passed away, and after his own surgery, the affable Sanchez is taking it a little easy with his new home. He’s extremely proud that his daughter is now in her first year at Cooper Union; and these days he can pretty much pick and choose his projects, while also concentrating on his own art.

Still, he hopes students continue to utilize his studio as a learning center, as they have in the past, and that a game of dominoes with whomever stops by for a coffee remains a priority.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Fran Bobadilla, *Moment of Natural Reflection*, oil and enamel on wood and canvas, 2009, at Kelley Roy Gallery.

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DORSCH GALLERY

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

DOT FIFTYONE ART SPACE

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

ELITE ART EDITIONS

46 NW 36th St., Miami
754-422-5942
www.elitearteditions.com
Through March 5:
"Gift Boxes" by Fabiana Peña
March 10 through 31:
"Latin American Art" with Ana Sanz, Fabiana Peña, Hernan Miranda, Santiago Medina, Fabia Nitti, and Magaly Bartola-Otaloa
Reception March 10, 6 to 10 p.m.

ETRA FINE ART

50 NE 40th St., Miami
305-438-4383
www.etrartfineart.com
Through March 11:
"Ecstatic Visions" by Andrea Dasha Reich

FREDRIC SNITZER GALLERY

2247 NW 1st Pl., Miami
305-448-8976
www.snitzer.com
Through March 17:
"Rites of Passage" by Michael Vasquez

GALERIE HELENE LAMARQUE

125 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-582-6067
www.galeriehelenelamarque.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

GALERIE SCHUSTER MIAMI

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

GALLERY 212

2407 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
786-431-1957
www.gallery212miami.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

GALLERY DIET

174 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-571-2288
www.gallerydiet.com
Through March 31:
"The Woodmans" with Betty Woodman, Charlie Woodman, Francesca Woodman, and George Woodman

GARY NADER FINE ART

62 NE 27th St., Miami
305-576-0256
www.garynader.com
Through March 31:
"Dance This Way" by Mikhail Baryshnikov
Through April 30:
"The Grand Latin American Art Show" with various artists

HARDCORE ARTS CONTEMPORARY SPACE

3326 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-1645
www.hardcoreartmiami.com
March 10 through April 7:
"Games in the Dark" by Gladys Triana
"Untitled" by Consuelo Castañeda
Gabriela Morawetz and Manuela Covini
Reception March 10, 7 to 10 p.m.

HAROLD GOLEN GALLERY

2294 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-989-3359
www.haroldgolengallery.com
Through March 3:
"Mambo for Cats" by Jim Flora

IDEOBOX ARTSPACE

2417 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-9878
www.ideobox.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

KABE CONTEMPORARY

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

KAVACHNINA CONTEMPORARY

46 NW 36th St., Miami
305-448-2060
www.kavachnina.com
Through March 8:
"Swaying in the Jongno-gu" with Eun Sook Shin and Jong-Taek Woo

KELLEY ROY GALLERY

50 NE 29th St., Miami
305-447-3888
www.kelleyroygallery.com
March 10 through April 7:
Fran Bobadilla and Peggy Hinaekian
Reception March 10, 2 to 9 p.m.

KIWI GALLERY

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

LELIA MORDOCH GALLERY

2300 N. Miami Ave., Miami
786-431-1506
www.galerieleliamordoch.com
March 10 through April 7:
"Double Entendre" with Patrick Hughes, Miss-Tic, Daniel Fiorda, Keren, Keith Long, Francisco Sobrino, Joe Neil, Gerard Delafosse, and Robert Blanc
Reception March 10, 4 to 10 p.m.

LOCUST PROJECTS

3852 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-8570
www.locustprojects.org
March 10 through April 27:
"Shortness of Breath" by Natalya Laskin



Robin Rhode, Requiem for a Pavilion of Silence, digital animation, 2010, at Miami Art Museum.

"High, Low and in Between" by Emmett Moore
Reception March 10, 7 to 10 p.m.

MAOR GALLERY

3030 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
http://maormiami.org
Through March 23:
"Gifts" by Jason Hedges, curated by Eric Charest-Weinberg

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, CENTRE GALLERY

300 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
Bldg. 1, Room 1365
305-237-3696
www.mdc.edu
March 6 through 29:
"Gender Bender: Evolving Identities 1914-1945" with various artists

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, FREEDOM TOWER

600 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
305-237-7700
Through May 4:
"Minimum/Maximum" with various artists

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, GALLERY NORTH

11380 NW 27th Ave., Miami
305-237-1532
www.mdc.edu
Call gallery for exhibition information

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, HOMESTEAD ART SPACE

500 College Terr., Homestead
305-237-5000
www.mdc.edu/homestead
Through March 30:
"Brian Trainor Photography" by Brian Trainor

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, KENDALL GALLERY

1110 SW 104th St., Miami
305-237-2322
www.mdc.edu/kendall
Through March 16:
"Annual League for Innovation Student Art Competition" with various artists
Through April 6:
"Not For Sale" with Alena Fresquet, Victor J. Gomez, and Ralph Provisero

MICHAEL JON GALLERY

20 NE 41st St., Suite 2, Miami
305-760-9030

www.michaeljongallery.com
Through April 14:
"Brand New Heartache" by Theodora Allen

MICHAEL PEREZ POP ART GALLERY

Shops at Midtown Miami
Store #120 Buena Vista Blvd., Miami
516-532-3040
www.michaelperez-artist.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

MYRA GALLERIES

177 NW 23rd St., Miami
631-704-3476
www.myragalleries.com
Through May 31:
"Myra Galleries Anniversary" with Milani, Lee Leenam, Kim Kyeong Ja, Paolo Cassara, and Jean Duffy

NEW WORLD GALLERY

New World School of the Arts
25 NE 2nd St., Miami
305-237-3597
Call gallery for exhibition information

NINA TORRES FINE ART

1800 N. Bayside Dr., Miami
305-395-3599
www.ninatortresfineart.com
Through March 30:
"Monumental: Here and Now" with Rodolfo Sanchez Lalinde, Henry Bermudez, Eduardo Agelvis, and José Antonio Zarate
Reception March 10, 3 to 8 p.m.

NORMAN LIEBMAN STUDIO

2561 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-573-3572
www.norman-liebman-studio.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

O. ASCANIO GALLERY

2600 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-571-9036
www.oascaniogallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

OM GALLERY

8650 Biscayne Blvd., Suite 21, Miami
305-458-5085
Through March 31:
"Around the World" with various artists

ONCE ARTS GALLERY

170-C NW 24th St., Miami
786-333-8404
www.oncearts.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

PANAMERICAN ART PROJECTS

2450 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-2400
www.panamericanart.com
Through March 31:
"The Naked Truth: Nudes and Erotica in Art" with Joaquin Blez, Claudia Brito Souza, Servando Cabrera Moreno, William Cannings, Raul Corrales, Andrea Cote, Max Delgado, Roberto Diago, Carlos Enriquez, Roberto Fabelo, Leon Ferrari, Julio Girona, Wifredo Lam, Luis Martinez Pedro, Pedro Pablo Oliva, Rene Portocarrero, Mariano Rodriguez, Tracey Snelling, and Paul Stoppi

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2311 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
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www.miguelparedes.com
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HOLY WEEK

Palm Sunday - April 1st
Worship - 11:00am
With special music

Maudy Thursday - April 5th
Worship - 7:00pm

Good Friday - April 6th
Worship - 12:00pm

Easter Sunday - April 8th
Sunrise Service - 6:30am
Bayside Marketplace Bandshell
Worship - 11:00am

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PRIMARY PROJECTS

4141 NE 2nd Ave., Suite 104, Miami
www.primaryprojectspace.com
info@primaryflight.com
Through March 31:
"Bad As I Wanna Be" by Jessy Nite
Reception March 10, 7 to 10 p.m.

SAMMER GALLERY

82 NE 29th St., Miami
305-441-2005
www.artnet.com/samnergallery.html
Through April 6:
"Equivocal Space" with Farcedote Faron, and Costidelo Bidal

SPINELLO PROJECTS

150 NE 42nd St., Miami
786-271-4223
www.spinelloprojects.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

STASH GALLERY

162 NE 50th Terr., Miami
305-992-7652
www.stashgallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

SWAMPSPACE GALLERY

3821 NE 1st Ct., Miami
<http://swampspace.blogspot.com/>
swampstyle@gmail.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

TONY WYNN MODERN ART GALLERY

3223 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
786-536-9799
www.tonywynn.com
Ongoing:
"Patriotica" by Tony Wynn

THE LUNCH BOX GALLERY

310 NW 24th St., Miami
305-407-8131
www.thelunchboxgallery.com
March 10 through April 7:
"iPhoneography" with various artists

WOLFGANG ROTH & PARTNERS FINE ART

201 NE 39th St., Miami
305-576-6960
www.wrpfineart.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

WYNWOOD WALLS

NW 2nd Avenue between 25th and 26th Street
305-573-0658
www.thewynwoodwalls.com
Ongoing:
"Wynwood Walls" with Retna, How & Nosm, Roa, b., The Date Farmers, Saner, Segó, Ligen, Neuzz, Faile, Vhils, Interesni Kazki, Kenny Scharf, Nunca, Shepard Fairey, Aiko, Ryan McGinness, Stelios Faitakis, and avaf

YELEN ART GALLERY

250 NW 23rd St., Unit 306, Miami
954-235-4758
www.yelenart.com
Through May 31:
"Possession" by Jerome Soimaud

MUSEUM & COLLECTION EXHIBITS

ARTCENTER/SOUTH FLORIDA

800 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach
305-674-8278
www.artcentersf.org
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

BASS MUSEUM OF ART

2100 Collins Ave., Miami Beach
305-673-7530
www.bassmuseum.org
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
Reception March 10, 7 to 10 p.m.

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FROST ART MUSEUM

10975 SW 17th St., Miami
305-348-2890
thefrost.fiu.edu
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 Theresia Negreiros
Through April 15:
"Metropole/Colony: Africa and Italy" with various artists
March 7 through July 1: "The War We Have Not Seen" by Juan Manuel Echavarria
March 28 through April 18: "Discrepant Modernism" with Peter Hammar, Pepe Mar, and Alex Trimino
March 28 through April 20:
"Aesthetics and Values 2012" with Roberto Behar and Rosario Marquadt, Robert Chambers, Luis Garcia-Nerey, Jiae Hwang, Kuhl and Leyton, Ed Levine, Jillian Mayer, Gean Moreno, Gavin Perry, and David Rohn

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 April 29:
"Focus Gallery: Marcel Duchamp" by Marcel Duchamp, curated by Rene Morales
Through May 6:
"Restless: Recent Acquisitions from the MAM Collection" with various artists
March 18 through June 10:
"The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl" with various artists
Reception March 17, 6 to 9 p.m.

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

770 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-893-6211
www.mocanomi.org
March 15 through May 6:
Rita Ackermann
Reception March 15, 7 to 9 p.m.

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

WORLD CLASS BOXING

Debra and Dennis Scholl Collection
170 NW 23rd St., Miami
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www.worldclassboxing.org
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Compiled by Melissa Wallen
Send listings, jpeg images, and events information to
art@biscaynetimes.com






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Curtain Call at the Olympia

Amid the ultra-shiny high-rises that now populate downtown Miami sits the Olympia Theater, a reminder of an earlier (perhaps even more) glamorous era. Now known as the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts, the theater was built in 1926, and its sumptuous lobby, organ, Moorish trimmings, and simulated starry-night sky have awed movie lovers and concertgoers over the years. She's had her ups and downs, but she endures. Now, HistoryMiami (101 W. Flagler St.) wants everyone to get to know her better, with a backstage guided tour, **Hungry for History: Inside the Olympia Theater**, hosted by Pepe Menendez. The lunchtime-friendly event runs from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on **Monday, March 12**. Tickets are \$10 for members, \$15 for nonmembers. Call 305-375-1621 or e-mail citytours@historymiami.org.

Grab a Paddle and Go

A March canoe ride off Key Biscayne? It doesn't get better than that. The **Crandon Park Bayside Canoe Adventure** leaves from 6767 Crandon Blvd. on **Saturday, March 10** at 1:30 p.m., and goes until 4:00 p.m. What happens in between is nature's treat — maybe an encounter with great blue herons, upside down jellyfish, or eagle rays. Closed-toe shoes and bottled water are recommended; reservations are required. Cost is \$44 per person. Go to www.miamidade.gov/eoadventures.

Fresh Italian Beats

We have an embarrassment of riches in Miami when it comes to cool Latin music, thanks in part to the Rhythm Foundation. This time around, though, the arts org is going Italian, bringing in rapper **Jovanotti**. He's huge in Europe, but his quirky lyricism, a mix of hip-hop and quasi-beat poetry, hasn't been heard by many on this side of the Atlantic. And while his stylings are unique, his hooks are crazy catchy. Jovanotti comes to Grand Central (697 N. Miami Ave.) on **Saturday, March 10** at 8:00 p.m. Tickets cost \$30. Call 305-672-5202 or go to www.rhythmfoundation.org.

One Guy, 100 Years of Show Biz

Entertainer and comic George Burns was famous for many things: living to be 100 years old, his cigar-chomping antics, and the love he had for his partner and wife, Gracie Allen. The two performed in every entertainment medium of the 20th Century, starting in vaudeville before moving to radio, movies, and television. *Say Goodnight, Gracie*, a one-man show at the Aventura Arts and Cultural Center (3385 NE 188th St.), celebrates his career and long life. The show runs from **Wednesday, March 14, through Sunday, March 25** at 8:00 p.m.,

with weekend matinees. Tickets cost \$37.50. Go to www.aventuracenter.org.

New World Symphony Goes Clubbing

The New World Center (at 17th Street and Washington Avenue in Miami Beach) is a groundbreaker on many levels. The Frank Gehry-designed beauty of a building has wowed international critics and has also functioned as a town center, drawing audiences of all ages with free outdoor film screenings and varied programming. Now it wants to mix it up again with **Pulse: Late Night at the New World Symphony** on **Friday, March 23**, starting at 9:30 p.m. Blurring the lines between nightclub and concert hall, the event will feature Mercury Soul (a trio made up of conductor Benjamin Schwartz, DJ Mason Bates, and designer Anne Patterson) and the New World Symphony. Tickets cost \$20. Go to www.nws.edu.

Miami's Got Talent

As students coming out of the New World School of the Arts — both high school and college — garner greater attention for their talent, checking out the annual **Rising Stars Showcase** becomes more of a must-do every year. On **Friday, March 23** at 7:30 p.m., stellar students of theater, dance, and

performance will take the stage at the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts (174 E. Flagler St.). Tickets range from \$20 to \$50. Go to gusmancenter.org or www.nwsa.mdc.edu.

A Decade of Drugs and Thugs

Filmmakers Alfred Spellman and Billy Corben have been telling unique, controversial stories of life in Florida through their production company, Rakontur, for a decade. In honor of this anniversary, O Cinema (90 NW 29th St.) will be screening four of their films, from **Monday, March 26, through Friday, March 30**. Each evening will begin with a reception, food, and drinks, followed by a panel discussion after the screening. **Rakontur 10-Year Retrospective** kicks off with *Raw Deal*, followed by *Cocaine Cowboys*, *The U*, and *Square Grouper*. Friday will feature a conversation with Spellman and Corben. Call 305-571-9970 or go to www.o-cinema.org.

Beyond the Birdcage

Gays and lesbians played an integral role in the revitalization of South Beach back in the 1980s. Its rise as a center of art and culture, its Deco preservation and renaissance, its club life, its reputation for being the beautiful people's capital — none of it would have happened without the contributions of the area's vibrant



Wynton's Jazzy Ways

Some guys get to do it all — because they can. One of these is Wynton Marsalis. The trumpeter, composer, nine-time Grammy winner, and recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for music is also the bandleader of **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra**, which comes to the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts (1444 Biscayne Blvd.) on **Friday, March 9** at 8:00 p.m., as part of the center's Jazz Roots series. The orchestra, made up of 15 internationally acclaimed soloists, could just be the best jazz band you will ever hear. Tickets range from \$25 to \$150. Go to www.arshtcenter.org.

gay and lesbian community. Now you can find out more about the past — and present — with a 90-minute **Gay and Lesbian Walking Tour of South Beach**, which starts at the Art Deco Welcome Center (1001 Ocean Dr., Miami Beach), on **Saturday, March 31** at 5:00 p.m. Tickets cost \$20. Call 305-673-4440 or go to www.mdpl.org/tours.

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



Magic in the Moonlight

In the middle of a South Florida winter, some of our most spectacular parks and gardens should never be far from sight. A particularly good time for a visit is when the full moon rises. On **Wednesday, March 7**, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens (3251 S. Miami Ave.) will stay open for the **Moonlight Tour of Vizcaya Gardens** beginning at 6:30 p.m. The evening includes music and refreshments. Then, on **Thursday, March 8**, the **Moonlight Tour at Fairchild** kicks off at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (10901 Old Cutler Rd., Coral Gables). Tram tours will be available every half-hour beginning at 7:00 p.m., and the Southern Cross Astronomical Society will offer up spectacular views of the sky through their powerful telescopes from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. For more details, go to www.vizcayamuseum.org or www.fairchildgarden.org, respectively.

Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Watch Those Strippers!

7700 Biscayne Blvd.

Man was at a newly opened “gentlemen’s club,” doing what gentlemen do, when he was approached by a working girl. We gather he was so happy to be noticed that he let his guard down. The working girl asked to see his Rolex and he happily gave it to her. Another woman then distracted him as the one with the watch disappeared. He eventually found the woman to whom he’d given his watch, but she claimed to have returned it to him. He contacted management and they told him there may be video of the incident. Thus far, there is no evidence, nor has the watch been recovered. It’s

really true what they say — time flies at those places.

A Case of Computer Dating?

2600 S. Bayshore Dr.

People are very attached to their computers. This person was “talking” on his computer until midnight, when he fell asleep. He awoke in the morning and found his hotel door open and the main social outlet in his sheltered life missing. Police and victim reviewed video and found no evidence of an intruder, nor did the electronic locking mechanism on the door reveal that it had ever been opened. We can only pray that the victim’s electronic pride and joy finds love with some other geek.

Chivalry Rhymes with Burglary

NE 2nd Avenue and 75th Street

Victim was approached by a distressed young woman who asked to use his cell phone. Seeing her discomfort, he obliged and then took a seat on a bus bench, waiting for her to finish her call. For some reason, he took his wallet out of his pocket and placed it at the other end of the bench, about three feet away. (Thieves... bring it on.) Seconds later, victim looked over and the wallet was missing. (Though the young lady did return his cell phone.) The *BT* advises male romantics to be wary of damsels in distress — honorable intentions get you nowhere in this city.

High Gas Prices Fuel Pump Rage

1 NE 62nd St.

Gas prices are driving all of us crazy. This suspect had had enough. Stopping his red Ford SUV alongside a pump at this gas station, he used a crowbar to



break into the pump, resulting in \$2000 worth of damage. This “pump rage” caused the station owner to run out of his store, scaring off the suspect, who jumped back in his car and drove away on N. Miami Avenue. In the future, we hope higher gas prices lead to serious consideration of alternative-energy solutions — not crowbars.

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We're Not Lovin' It

600 Block of NE 125th Street

Woman left the bathroom at McDonald's when she was approached by three males, one of whom was armed with a pink Taser. The men threatened to use it, but she talked them out of it by giving them \$60. They told her not to call the police. When she walked out to the bus stop in front of the restaurant, she discovered the suspects were also waiting for the bus. (So much for a getaway car.) She eventually called police, but the incident in question could not be corroborated by McDonald's staff. No arrests have been made. North Miami residents are advised to avoid public restrooms. If nature calls, you need to hold it in. Yes, it has come to that.

Wait... Our Homeless Have Briefcases?

N. Miami Avenue and 38th Street

It's horrible to be homeless. It's worse when your support network is composed of thugs. This homeless victim was approached by a man whose face was obscured behind his jacket. He demanded the victim's briefcase, then reached into

the victim's pocket to grab his wallet. The robber said he had a gun. However, just then, a giant wind gust blew the jacket away from the man's face. (Thank God for tropical weather.) The victim recognized him, and realized he did not have a gun. The victim flagged down police officers on routine patrol and the suspect was arrested.

One-Track Mind Leads to the Slammer

600 Block of NE 61 Street

Man went to feed the ducks behind his home when he was allegedly approached by gun-wielding thugs. The victim, a former convict, handed over his wallet. The thugs then took his probation tracking system. Or so he said. His probation officer was contacted and she told police the victim has had numerous incidents since being released from prison, including being the target of a shooting. Turns out, the victim had been harassing a woman by the name of Puffy and had concocted the whole robbery story as a way to rid himself of his tracking device so he could hunt her down. The scam did not work and the so-called victim

has been arrested. He should look on the bright side: If Puffy is really interested, she knows exactly where to find him now.

A Practical Response to Crime

14300 Biscayne Blvd.

Crime Beat is frustrated. We have implored Miami and North Miami residents not to leave their purses in their cars. At this post office, in broad daylight and likely in full view of others, a woman exited her car and left her purse behind. Within minutes, someone broke the passenger-side window and snatched the purse. Ladies, if you're not going to heed our advice about taking your purses with you, how about at least leaving your car windows open so criminal slime no longer have to break them? At least that way you'd save some money on glass repair.

Stealing Can Be Stressful

1100 NE 133rd St.

A group of North Miami thugs broke into a residence and stole several high-ticket items, including computer equipment, a television, and a wallet. They fled the

scene, but were chased by the owner, who was just arriving home. One of the suspects was eventually caught by police, who discovered the victim's wallet inside his book bag. This apparently got to the suspect, who developed a serious case of high blood pressure and had to be transported to Jackson Memorial. He was arrested upon his release from the hospital. You think your legitimate job is stressful? It's nothing compared to the pressure our criminals are feeling — good for us!

Neighbors Calling On Neighbors

600 Block of NE 85th Street

Woman was enjoying an afternoon nap when all of a sudden a rock was thrown through her window. She looked outside and saw a male she recognized. It was her former "neighbor," who had been an illegal squatter in the next-door apartment and had sold drugs from there. Guess he came by to say hello. Hopefully this woman will move to an area that is crime-free. Unfortunately, that magical place is not Miami.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Not Quite Beauty Greens Yet

We have some work to do before we crack the list of America's prettiest park cities

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who's the fairest city of all? When it comes to park space, we have the answer, thanks to an annual survey of the nation's 100 largest cities. In the 2011 competition, Florida had six cities vying for the national title of Miss Parks and Recreation.

In this beauty pageant of parks, the two entries from Miami-Dade County stumbled and fell. Even Miss Jersey City mumbled, "What are *they* doing here?" They seemed completely out of place alongside such glam green contestants as Miss Minneapolis, Miss Albuquerque, and Miss Anchorage.

Not to spoil the suspense, but the City of Miami didn't come in last. Hialeah did.

In the 2011 report "City Park Facts" from the Trust for Public Land, Hialeah ranks as the only large city in the U.S. with less than 200 total park acres (and most of that comes from Miami-Dade County's Amelia Earhart Park). Worse yet, Hialeah offers less than one acre of

green space per every 1000 residents. That's one crowded acre.

The City of Miami does somewhat better, at 2.8 acres for each 1000 residents, but she still places near the bottom of the list, in between Miss Anaheim, California, and Miss Newark, New Jersey.

These results are pathetic, almost hopeless. How could our civic leaders have let our green beauty queens fall apart — and is there enough plastic surgery in the world to fix them? Let's find out.

Mirror, mirror on the wall, where are the newest parks of all?

Still in gestation, Miami's youngest park doesn't even have a name. (Commissioner Mark Sarnoff held a naming contest last month, and he plans to reveal the winner at the commission's meeting on March 8.) The park is located at 1814 Brickell Ave.

Less than an acre, this plot next to a Lutheran church was intended for a high-rise, but the real-estate market crash left it undeveloped. Reports indicate that the City of Miami has spent more than \$3.5 million for acquisition and park construction, which began in June 2011. The site does not appear ready for a



BT photos by Jim W. Harper

Downtown Miami's brand-new (but temporary) Grand Central Park was built on the site of the demolished Miami Arena.

scheduled opening in March, so a complete rating is not yet possible.

That aside, the park would appear to have limited potential because it is small (smaller than the church's parking lot), isolated (adrift in a sea of condos), and on the wrong side of the street (away from the bay).

While clearly a neighborhood park — as opposed to a destination for outsiders — the land holds historical secrets. Buried remains of Native Americans had to be removed for construction, and the site was an encampment during the Spanish-American War, according to archeologist Robert Carr. Hopefully these discoveries will be featured on interpretive signs.

Where is another new park, you ask? Over the river and through downtown, to Grand Central Park we go. This public-private green space is a novelty for South Florida, because it is intentionally temporary.

Instead of purchasing the five acres tttttwhere the Miami Arena once sat, the nonprofit Omni Park West Redevelopment Association (OPRA) agreed to lease the parcel for \$200,000 per year for three years, or until it is sold for development. OPRA received a \$200,000 grant last year from the City of Miami's Southeast Overtown/Park West Community Redevelopment Agency, and it inaugurated the park in February.

The park is the brainchild and pet project of urban activist Brad Knoefler, president of OPRA, who lives across the street in the Grand Central lofts (which he also owns). Knoefler could not stand the rubble in his backyard,



Five chairs atop the park's hill offer nice views of the Freedom Tower and the American Airlines Arena.

so he bulldozed it into a hill.

Taking a cue from other cities across the U.S. that have been creating temporary parks out of abandoned lots, he hired local residents and gathered volunteers, including landscape architects, to create a wide-open public space on a shoestring budget.

During major events such as Miami Heat games, the park functions as a parking lot, a function for which it is not entirely unsuited. The park certainly looks like a giant, white parking lot, though it isn't covered with asphalt, but with PolyPave-ment, billed as a natural soil pavement.

Around the park's edge, surrounded by black steel fencing, runs a narrow path of pines and other native plants. Two round pits in opposite corners of the park are to catch rainwater, says Knoefler. His personal touch can be seen in the five blue plastic chairs sitting on top of the hill, which offers great views of the Freedom Tower.

GRAND CENTRAL PARK

Park Rating
UNRATED

700 N. Miami Ave., Miami
Hours: 8:00 a.m. to dusk

UNNAMED PARK

Park Rating
UNRATED

1814 Brickell Ave., Miami
Hours: TBD



Brad Knoefler, the mastermind behind Grand Central Park, took his cue from other U.S. cities.



The as-yet unnamed park at 1814 Brickell Ave. is still taking shape — at a cost of at least \$3.5 million.



The Brickell park has limited potential: too small, too isolated, and on the wrong side of the street.

Now that we've visited two very different young hopefuls in the City of Miami's pageant of parks, what about the rest of Miami-Dade County? What type of investment would it take to turn this awkward teenager into a first-rate beauty queen?

Mirror, mirror on the wall, what will it cost to have it all?

Answer: \$5 billion, according to a 2010 study by Redfields to Greenfields. This program, based at Georgia Tech, analyzed available distressed

commercial real estate across Miami-Dade County and recommended purchasing nearly 2000 acres for new parks.

For example, they recommended spending \$26 million for 174 acres along Maule Lake to expand the Greynolds Park complex, and another \$875 million for 750 acres for neighborhood parks scattered across the county. Elaborate plans and maps show how these green spaces could blossom.

But a total makeover for \$5 billion? Somebody needs to start doing some

serious fundraising before next year's Miss Parks and Recreation Pageant.

Hialeah needs guidance from the City of Miami's parks system, which in turn lags behind the state's other four cities, as rated by the Trust for Public Land.

Per 1000 residents, Tampa offers 9.8 acres of park space; St. Petersburg, 11.1 acres; and Orlando, 12.5 acres. But even these cities still fall below the median for their respective density categories. Only gangly Jacksonville, which gives 54.2

acres per 1000 residents, ranks above the median for its low-density group.

Cheer up, Miss Miami and Miss Hialeah, maybe you can make up ground during the interview portion of the pageant. If you could ask one — and only one — question of The Mirror, what question would you ask?

Answer: "Instead of a boring park, can we have another mall?"

Okay, so we still have a ways to go.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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The Puppy Math Problem

Animal overpopulation often comes down to owners with too many dogs and not enough sense

By Lisa Hartman
BT Contributor

It's 2012, and somehow we are still not getting anywhere in Miami with the pet overpopulation problem. The same could be said for animal neglect and abuse here; it's everywhere. Animals in the wrong hands. Animals bred or used for money. And it's not just dogs and cats that suffer, but goats, pigs, and horses.

(Even I didn't know until recently that there is a huge underground horse slaughter business here. These animals are treated like inanimate objects instead of living things, chopped to pieces and sold for meat.)

And when the owners of illegal farms and others can no longer take care

of their animals — if they were doing so at all — they are often left behind to fend for themselves. Why not call the authorities or have the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA for short, which cares for and puts horses and other animals up for adoption) come and collect them?

Answer: These owners either don't care, or their illegal activities make it impossible to call upon these agencies.

How did we get to the point that many tens of thousands of unwanted animals are euthanized each year in Miami? Of course, the economy is still in the toilet and many people can't afford to care for and feed their pets anymore, but this makes up a very small percentage of neglect cases.



A bigger problem: A lot of what owners want to do with their pets may seem perfectly fine and innocent to them, but it contributes greatly to overpopulation.

Here's what I'm talking about. Three of my former neighbors have acquired purebred dogs recently. Neighbor A

adopted two Yorkies from a questionable (in my opinion) breeder. The dogs aren't very sociable, and I suspect they weren't handled much as puppies. One is very tiny and doesn't look like his structure is very good.

"I'm thinking of breeding them in a few months," Neighbor A informs me.

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“Why?” I ask, puzzled and sad. “There are plenty of Yorkies in rescue. Not to mention that you don’t know their background or health issues. We don’t need more pets in the world right now.”

“Oh, but Lisa, these pets were from a top breeder. He gets \$15,000 for his dogs.”

“I highly doubt that,” I tell neighbor A. “I don’t know many top breeders who charge more than \$1800. And besides, you don’t know how to raise a litter properly. You have to get health clearances at least for eyes and hips, and you’ve already told me you think one has luxating patellas.”

Likewise, Neighbor B, who just acquired a bulldog from a breeder, tells me: “I’m looking for a female when he gets older.”

I ask the same question — “Why?” — even though I already know the answer. “Because these dogs are expensive,” Neighbor B tells me. “Everybody will want one and they’ll all get good homes.”

Keep dreaming, I think to myself. Also, the breeder can’t be that good if Neighbor B doesn’t have a spay-and-neuter contract with her — binding Neighbor B to have one of those procedures performed on the animal.

Neighbor C has a similar tale. Luckily, being the trainer of three of her dogs over the years, I think I have successfully talked her out of breeding, although her husband may still not be convinced.

In each of these cases, the owner was breeding for the wrong reason: money. There’s a line of thinking that says if you pay a lot of money for a dog, you’re somehow entitled — even obligated — to breed it. I know many such stories, and they often don’t end up the way people plan.

In most cases, people can’t sell all the puppies. Potential owners cancel out of the deal for personal reasons or find a puppy from somewhere else. The new “breeders” also don’t realize how expensive and time-consuming it is to raise a litter. There are vet visits and shots, not to mention possible C-section delivery (a definite with the bulldog), among other unforeseen costs.

Some of these part-time, amateur breeders will have to give up their entire litter to a shelter. Prospective owners won’t know if the dogs that mated were a good match, have temperament issues, or were raised properly. The odds usually favor worst-case scenarios. And, again,

the main problem is the dogs are not spayed or neutered and the owners don’t feel they’re doing any harm by having “just one litter.”

A former client looked for a mate for her dog, because she loved him so much he just *had* to have puppies. The first litter was a whopping 14 pups. She said they found homes, but they went without a spay-and-neuter contract.

Long story short, her dog put out four litters totaling more than 40 puppies, 12 of them mixed breeds owing to an accidental pairing. All of the dogs went to new homes without being spayed or neutered, and many of them had their own puppies, both mixed and purebred, that were then given to shelters. The first litter *alone* ultimately resulted in more than 100 dogs being born in a three-year period.

So why aren’t dogs, even when adopted from shelters, being spayed and neutered? In many cases the new owners have the heart to rescue, but not the money to spay and neuter — or the knowledge about how to handle their animal when it’s in season.

The Pets Trust is one organization trying to address this issue. Many Miami

homeowners are not even aware they are paying a tax of \$13 dollars each year to the Children’s Trust, which advocates on behalf of children’s well-being. The Pets Trust is fighting for a similar, small yearly tax that would go toward controlling the unwanted pet population.

The trust’s main objectives are to provide free or low-cost spaying and neutering services to those who want and need them, build a facility to accommodate large numbers of owners and shelter groups taking advantage of those procedures, trap and neuter feral cats, and educate owners on responsible pet-rearing.

But the first objective is to get the initiative on the ballot, and the Pets Trust needs your support to do so. You can find out more at www.petstrustmiami.com.

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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A Parent's Guide to Family Fun

Looking to get the most out of Miami with your little ones? Check out these options

By Crystal Brewé
BT Contributor

I've been told it doesn't take living in Miami very long before you become a true Miamian. Others argue that the process takes decades and an oracle-like knowledge of the nooks and crannies this fair city offers.

Having moved here only five years ago from Honolulu, I don't know that I qualify as a Miamian yet, but I'm confident that raising two small children with an adventurous spirit has brought me premature "wizard" status. My metamorphosis to true local status has meant unlocking some of Miami's best-kept (and affordable) secrets. Here's your cheat sheet.

Hidden Gem No. 1: Miami-Dade's library system. Most parents know that the Miami Beach Regional Library rocks on a rainy day, a sweltering day, or for a pre- or post-beach visit to load up on reading materials for the whole family.

But did you know how many libraries there are around Miami-Dade? Did you know that with your library card, you can find resources for parents that go well beyond books?

The Library Museum Pass program allows you to check out passes — as you would a book — to Miami's many attractions, including Miami Children's Museum, ZooMiami, Fairchild Tropical Botanic

Garden, Miami Art Museum, Miami Science Museum, and Vizcaya Museum and Gardens. The pass is good for a family of four, and provides free admission.

Bonus tip: The passes get checked out quickly and can't be reserved. Your best bet is to visit the less frequented library branches for the passes. For more information, go to www.mdpls.org.

Hidden Gem No. 2: Bayfront Park. This 32-acre public commons is located in the center of downtown Miami. Situated between Biscayne Boulevard and the bay, it features playgrounds, fountains, and a ton of green rolling hills.

The park recently underwent a renovation of its paved baywalk, which runs along the edge of Biscayne Bay, throughout the park, and continues to Bayside Marketplace, an open-air, festival-style mall that, while annoyingly touristy, offers a great carousel, a funky petting zoo on the weekends, and some terrific free concerts.

Bayfront Park is accessible by public transit (Metrorail, Metromover, and Metrobus), which makes for an easy commute over to the Adrienne Arsht Center for a kid-friendly show, or an outing in Brickell for lunch or dinner. Go to www.bayfrontparkmiami.com.

Hidden Gem No. 3: The Slide Mantra at Bayfront Park. The Slide Mantra stood out in our peripheral vision for nearly three years as we drove up and

down the Boulevard on our day-to-day doings. It's hard to miss from the road, given that it's a ten-foot-high, white Carrara marble slide sculpture weighing 29 tons. We finally stopped and tried it one day — and we were hooked.

Upon first inspection, you wouldn't think to let your kids touch it for fear of damaging a beautiful piece of art by Isamu Noguchi, who redesigned the park in the early 1980s. This sculpture, however, demonstrates the artist's belief that play leads to an appreciation of sculpture. Bonus tip: Have your kids wear knit pants; the velocity factor is incredible on this thing. Don't be afraid to try it yourself!

Hidden Gem No. 4: Best Friends Wood Oven Pizza. Everyone knows dining out with the wee ones can be rough. A Chuck E. Cheese hangover (ringing ears and faux-cheese reflux) lasts way longer than the pleasure the pizza rat brings to the kiddies.

The folks at Best Friends know your pain, and they know their way around a pie. Situated in the 4700 block of Biscayne Boulevard, Best Friends manages to delight adults and kids with great pizza, pastas, and burgers, amazing cocktails and wines, and an inflatable playground in their covered outdoor dining area.

It's like someone swept into my dreams one night and created a restaurant. The kids work up an appetite on the slides and bounce house, and you can enjoy a piña colada and an antipasto in their dining area and pretend you're on



vacation. Go to www.bf1880.com.

Hidden Gem No. 5: Community center programs. So it's a teacher-planning day on Monday, and you don't know what to do with your kids during that big budget meeting you just can't miss? There are programs at your local youth and recreation centers that can solve problems like these with planned activities, day camps, field trips, and "parents' night out" options.

Programs in Miami Shores and Morningside Park have been especially great for our little ones, but we can't ignore the Scott Rakow Youth Center in Miami Beach for its contributions to entertaining and engaging local youth.

Rakow houses an ice-skating rink, outdoor swimming pool, six bowling lanes, a gymnasium, an arts and crafts center, game room, indoor beach volleyball, and a play area. Go to miamibeachfl.gov/parksandrecreation.

Miami can be charming, even for families. The important thing is to leave your comfort zone and go exploring. Get out there, find more hidden gems, and use the letters link below to share them with all BT readers.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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SHOP SEE PLAY

Drinking in the Blue

A new event for people who want to protect the world's oceans, one cocktail at a time

By Jim W. Harper
BT Contributor

So my friend Annie and I are launching Blue Drinks South Florida this month (see Facebook) because we're bored... I mean, because we care about the ocean and want to assemble like-minded people in one place to get some "blue buzz" going.

Blue Drinks follows the same concept as established gathering Green Drinks, which is a socially acceptable way for people to drink and delude themselves into thinking they're somehow helping the environment. (Consume more, waste less?) At least for some.

The concept, though, is a good one: Offer an open, casual setting for the exchange of ideas. Great movements start with great ideas, and great ideas often emerge when people are relaxed and in the vicinity of napkins (the better to scribble solutions).

Why blue instead of green? The green movement is all over the place, while an overarching blue movement, focused on aquatic environments, has yet to pervade popular consciousness.

People may assume that the green movement includes all things aquatic, but the very name "green" derives from terrestrial plants and a bird's-eye view of land, not water. Of course it makes sense to use "green" as shorthand for the human environment, because we live on land and because life itself depends on photosynthesis.

A blue movement, however, is needed as shorthand for the most important

element on earth. We cannot survive without water. Even though we do not live on it, water covers most of our planet's surface. Indeed, the view from outer space reveals that earth is mostly blue.

The world's largest environment, the ocean, faces challenges that demand specialized attention. The unfortunate "out of sight, out of mind" mentality puts the ocean at an extreme disadvantage, especially for the YouTube generation that thrives on low-budget, "dry" video. With a seemingly endless supply of stupid humans and adorable cats, who cares about life rolling in the deep?

But there is one place that can convert anyone into "a blueie." The beach. There, humans can taste, touch, smell, hear, and see the ocean. We also catch sight of our insignificance. The shoreline is the horizontal counterpart to the great mountain ranges of earth, as both overpower us.

The immensity of the ocean makes it seem invulnerable, but the opposite is becoming more and more apparent. Ocean scientists have been revealing the limits of the ocean and opening our eyes to the destruction caused by seven billion humans on earth. The very essence of the ocean is changing, as measurements show that seawater is becoming more acidic. How is it possible that humans have changed the pH of the ocean?

The ocean has been abused for centuries as the world's toilet and garbage can. On earth, water accumulates impurities, and guess where all water eventually ends up? Yup, everything — *everything*



— eventually flows into the ocean.

You've heard of acid rain. Now welcome to "acid ocean." The ocean is the world's biggest sink for carbon dioxide, and this sink is clogging.

The ocean is the final frontier for wild animals as food, and guess what? There aren't always more fish in the sea. Large animals like whales may be the first to go, but even smaller species such as cod struggle to survive. We need to become just as conscious about eating tuna as we are about shooting bald eagles.

South Florida is home to many blue-minded individuals and organizations, but they remain disconnected. Our universities could become the catalyst for a movement to "occupy" the ocean. Most ocean scientists are too busy conducting science, however, to get the word out to the public, so they need the rest of us to buy them a drink and listen to their story.

Some of the bluest organizations locally include the Surfrider Foundation and ECOMB (Environmental Coalition of Miami and the Beaches); nationally, Oceana is a leader (and a participant in the Nautica South Beach Triathlon). Governmental entities include the

Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Blue artists include Guy Harvey and Xavier Cortada, and then there are the fishers, the aquaculture industry, the yachting crowd, the diving community.

(On a personal note, I wish to invite every swimmer, active or not, to make a commitment to the ocean. We may train in pools, but our heart connects with the big blue. Since my days as a seven-year-old mudskipper at the International Swimming Hall of Fame in Fort Lauderdale to my current efforts as a coach, the water has been my second home. It keeps us afloat, in every sense of the word, and it deserves more respect.)

How are we going to raise a blue consciousness, a blue ethic, and a blue movement to protect the ocean? Hopefully someone attending Blue Drinks will have the answer. Don't forget to scribble it on a napkin.

Going Green is Going Blue. Are you? Be sure to check out our Facebook page.

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Florida Fruit Frolic

This spring have some tasty fun with caimito and sapodilla

By **Jeff Shimonski**
BT Contributor

This has been a rather warm winter so far, with a great many species of trees and shrubs flowering early and entertaining us with the striking colors found in the tropics. When trees flower, they may also produce fruit, and we seem to have a bounty of delicious fruit to enjoy lately. I recently picked a couple of delicacies off trees that we had growing at Jungle Island.

At Jungle Island, we don't grow the typical fruit trees, but some of our ornamental trees certainly have delicious fruit. As you may have read in my previous columns, I grow plants that thrive in our local soil and climatic conditions without needing to be fertilized or maintained chemically to be kept in good condition.

Two of my favorite landscape trees that grow very well in South Florida are the caimito and the sapodilla. The caimito, or as it is known scientifically, *Chrysophyllum cainito*, is a very close relative of our native satin leaf *Chrysophyllum oliviforme*. Sometimes known as star apple, the caimito is native to Central America and the Caribbean.

The foliage of the satin leaf is almost identical to that of the caimito, a bit smaller, but just as colorful, with the undersides of the leaves an attractive golden color. I first grew the caimito many years ago from seed thinking I had a better, larger leafed variety of satin leaf.

About four or five years from seed, the trees can begin to get fruit and, thereafter, fruit can be found on the tree several times a year. The baseball-size fruit is normally purple and quite delicious. The photo that accompanies this article is of a caimito fruit cut open and ready to eat. The skin is too thick to eat, and the white part around the few seeds inedible, but the remaining purple part is delicious. It has a sweet, subtle flavor with the consistency of custard. I recommend chilling the fruit before eating it right off the skin.

Another species of tree that grows well in our area, in the same family as the caimito, is the sapodilla. *Manilkara zapota* is a long-lived tree that keeps its dark green leaves on all year, unlike the caimito, which drops its leaves in the winter. The sapodilla is also native to Central America and the Caribbean. It will grow taller and have a much wider canopy than the caimito, making it an excellent shade tree. The fruit is a gray or brownish oval berry that can be anywhere from two to three to six inches in diameter.

When unripe, the fruit is very hard and has a high latex content (sticky, white sap). The sap is found in the unripe fruit of the caimito as well. The color change to a ripe fruit is very subtle and takes a little practice to recognize, but the fruit will be softer to the touch, with the skin looking almost like the fuzzy brown of a kiwi fruit.

The inside of the fruit is a yellowish brown color and there may be several



BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

These purple caimito fruit were delicious.

black seeds within you don't want to swallow. Sapodilla — or nispero, as some Hispanics call it — can be found on mature trees a couple of times a year. When we eat the fruit at home, we cut it in half and use a spoon to scoop out the sweet, malty insides.

This current bounty of fruit I'm enjoying — as I'm sure others of you are — extends to some tasty banana cultivars. I have been eating some red bananas from a small plant I know as "Dwarf Jamaican." (I also have a tall variety, but it has not produced fruit so far.) The fruit has a red skin and tastes like a cross between banana and apple.

Another treat is the fruit from *Monstera deliciosa*. I've been seeing a lot of fruit that is ready to pick and eat. One should remember, though, that this very sweet fruit ripens gradually from the tip down and is not good to eat before it fully ripens.

To add to all of these tasty morsels, I've been successfully growing different

varieties of oyster mushrooms in coffee grounds, courtesy of a local coffee house. At home we recently ate some giant, blue oyster mushrooms that seemed to have a touch of anise-like flavor, possibly from the grounds. These mushrooms popped out almost overnight from the five-gallon buckets I'm growing them in following that week of heavy rain in early February (including 13 inches on Jungle Island).

But you don't need Jungle Island to grow your own plants. No matter how small or large your property is, you can cultivate a garden of edible plants almost anywhere — even on your apartment balcony.

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

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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The Meat of the Matter

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

By Bill Citara
BT Contributor

South Florida has a dirty little secret. Meat.

Okay, so it's not really dirty. And around here it's not much of a secret. But ask your average member of the Great (Frozen) Unwashed what floats our dietary go-fast boat and they'd probably say something like stone crab, rum, cigars, and cocaine.

They obviously haven't got a hint of an inkling of a wild-assed guess of a clue. They obviously don't know that from Key West to West Palm Beach, there isn't a flyspeck of a neighborhood so bereft that it doesn't have at least one emporium devoted exclusively to the preparation and sale of meat.

They obviously haven't made a tour of our fair region, where if stacked atop one another, good ol' American steakhouses, Brazilian churrascarias, Argentine parrillas, and designer burger joints could reach all the way to the stockyards of Chicago. And that's not to mention the steak-heavy menus of just about every other type of restaurant, the multitude of delicious things Cuban cooks do with pork and beef, the elevation of bacon to a sacrament and the pig to fatty, succulent saint.

Indeed, even a red-blooded, red-stated, beefaholic Texas carnivore is a lily-livered wuss compared to the typical meat-eating South Floridian, who can down blood sausage at breakfast, bacon cheeseburger at lunch, and a hunk of mojo-marinated lechon asado the size of a soccer ball for dinner. And that liver? Fry up some onions and it

would be pretty tasty too.

Of course, when you've got big, fat slabs of irresistibly savory meat, you need big, fat, irresistible red wines that can go toe-to-toe (or nose to tail) with them at the dinner table. (Or at the breakfast table, if you must. Really. Knock yourself out.)

And since we're talking big and fat we really must talk about Carmenère, which is to big, bold, full-figured varietals what Kirstie Alley is to an all-you-can-eat buffet. The **2007 Santa Rita Reserva** is a perfect example, delivering powerfully dense, jammy aromas layered with scents of oak, black olives, leather, mushrooms, and black 'n' blueberry fruit. It tastes like that, too; and its texture is thick, almost viscous, so much so you might be able to cut it up and eat it with a fork, just like that haunch of blood-rare cow on the plate in front of you.

Covering much of the same jammy, layered ground is the **2009 Tres Ojos Old Vines Garnacha**. Right out of the bottle it shows off a deep, inky purple color that could have dyed some ancient king's royal robes, yet stick your nose in the glass and the bracing red and black cherry fruit is given welcome nuance by sniffs of clove, olives, toast, and mint. Despite its "old vines" designation and 14.5-percent alcohol, it's no stupid, flabby fruit bomb but rather a well-balanced, well-structured wine that's as much a complement to meat as teeth.

You can pretty much chew on the **2009 Delas Cotes-du-Ventoux**, too. Unusually fruit-forward for a French wine, flavors of cassis, plums, dried fruit, leather, and spice don't just tickle your

taste buds, they slap 'em around, then come back and slap 'em some more. The wine's soft acids and tannins make it ready to drink now, especially with manly man meats like roast beef, prime rib, wild boar sausage, and the like.

Continuing down the ladder from huge to merely large, we come to the **DeLoach Vineyards 2009 California Cabernet Sauvignon**. This is another "fill up your nose with all kinds of good smells" kind of wine, though its aromas of cloves, cedar, tobacco, and black olives are rather more intense there than on the palate, where red and black cherry fruit predominate.

All the stuff of the DeLoach, plus the black pepper characteristic of California Zinfandels, comes pouring of a bottle of **Cline Cellars 2008 Zin**. It's got that king's robes color about it too, plus 14-percent alcohol. But despite its black fruit intensity, it's remarkably light and fresh in your mouth, with a balancing acidity and long, peppery finish. If you're looking for a spaghetti-and-meatballs red, you just found it.

Big fruit in the nose, smaller fruit in the mouth is also the deal with the fetchingly named **Thierry & Guy Fat Bastard Shiraz**. Born in 2010, it's still a mere pup, with its scents of blackberries, figs,



Grab a Fat Bastard at the Biscayne Commons Publix (14641 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-2171) for \$9.99, or the DeLoach Cabernet and Cline Zinfandel for \$9.99 each at ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525). Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270) carries the Montresor Valpolicella for \$11.99 and Tres Ojos Garnacha for \$9.99. And for the Santa Rita Carmenère and Delas Cotes-du-Ventoux, head for Crown Wine and Spirits (12555 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-9463), where they're \$9.99 and \$10.99, respectively.

and cassis dissolving a bit on the palate. Which is not such a bad thing, as it gives the wine a welcome balance, though the tartness of its fruit will mellow with age.

Lighter meats like pork and veal, even chicken, would play well with the **2010 Montresor Valpolicella**. It opens with perfume aromas of red cherries and raspberries, earth and spice, then segues into flavors of cherries and berries, easy on the palate, easy to like, easy to pour with our dirty little secret. But don't tell the Frozen Unwashed.

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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

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

NEW THIS MONTH

MIAMI

BRICKELL / DOWNTOWN

Tuyo

415 NE 2nd St., 305-237-3200
Atop the revolutionary Miami Culinary Institute, this upscale eatery, unlike the café downstairs, isn't student-run. Rather it's designed to showcase school ideals – including sustainability as well as definitive Miami cuisine. The changing menu, from a culinary Dream Team headed by "New World Cuisine" inventor/MCI instructor Norman Van Aken (plus former protégés Jeffrey Brana and Travis Starwalt), mixes citrus-inflected creamy conch chowder and other pioneering signatures with new inventions like mind-reelingly multidimensional oyster pan stew, or tartare of tuna and burstingly ripe tomato topped with a delicate sous vide egg. \$\$\$\$

MIDTOWN / WYNWOOD / DESIGN DISTRICT

Café 46

190 NE 46th St., 305-400-8828
It doesn't look like South Beach's late lamented Joe Allen. The urban beach bar décor and bohemian vibe actually are more reminiscent of this space's first restaurant, 190. But the menu is virtually identical – no surprise since co-owner/host Mario Rubeo, plus most kitchen staffers, are Joe Allen veterans. Revisit faves like matzo meal-crust chicken, the famous burger, still-unique dinner salads spotlighting uncommon ingredients like smoked trout, and fun signature desserts like Rice Krispy treats. \$\$\$

The Federal Food, Drink & Provisions

5132 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-9559
At the Fed, expect what locals know to expect from sommelier/chef team Aniece Meinhold and Cesar Zapata, whose previous restaurant concepts have

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. \$\$\$

included Blue Piano (gourmet stoner snacks) and Vietnamese pop-up Phuc Yea. That is, expect the unexpected. The Fed is an updated tavern featuring creative, from-scratch takes on traditional American regional dishes: flaky Southern biscuits with sausage gravy (and crisp-coated sweetbreads, if desired); Northeastern-inspired "pig wings" (pork drumettes with homemade Buffalo sauce, blue cheese mousse, and pickled veggies). Desserts, from third partner Alejandro Ortiz, include sinful sticky buns. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

UPPER EASTSIDE

Blue Collar

6730 Biscayne Blvd., 305-756-0366
Like its predecessor in this space (Michael Bloise's American Noodle Bar), this working-class-themed eatery is helmed by a former fine-dining chef, Daniel Serfer, a Chef Allen's vet who now crafts casual, creative fare at prices all can afford. Dishes are eclectic. The roughly dozen veggie dishes alone range from curried cauliflower purée to maduros to bleu cheese roasted asparagus. Shrimp and grits compete with any in Charleston; pork and beans, topped with a perfectly runny fried egg, beats Boston's best. \$\$\$

NORTH MIAMI

Cane à Sucre

899 NE 125th St. 305-891-0123
From the Vega brothers (who pioneered the Design and MiMo districts with, respectively, the original Cane A Sucre and UVA 69), this charming artisanal sandwich bar is the perfect breakfast/lunch stop before or after ingesting visual arts at nearby MOMA. Actually, creations like El Fig (fig confit, gorgonzola cheese, walnuts, and honey on an authentically French crisp-crust fresh-baked baguette) are art in their own right. Inventive, substantial salads, sides, daily soups, and homemade sweets (including mouthwateringly buttery croissants) complete the menu. \$\$\$

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! \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Bon Fromage

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

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

Slices Pizza & Pasta

13750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-5684
While pizza by the slice is common street food in every city in the USA, this informal Italian eatery offers a variation particularly appropriate to Latin American-influenced Miami: slices served rodizio-style. Brazil's traditional rodizio restaurants feature many different grilled meats, served tableside by a continuing parade of waiters till diners cry uncle. Here the concept is the same, with dozens of varieties of pizza (plus several pastas) replacing the beef. \$\$

AVENTURA / HALLANDALE

Blu Sushi

600 Silks Run Rod., 954-744-4398
Even hard-core sushi-bar addicts must admit that many such establishments suffer from a certain sameness. Not Blu. At this restolounge in the Village at Gulfstream Park, part of a mini-chain originating in southwest Florida, the specialty makis are outdone in outrageousness only by extravagant cocktails. Yes, there are California rolls. But why be bored when you have an alternative like Kin-SO: tempura king crab salad, tuna, and avocado with scallions, smelt roe, and tempura flakes, plus mayo and sweet eel sauce. \$\$\$

Luca Bella

19088 NE 29th Ave., 305-792-2222
In the space that once housed Chef Allen's, this trattoria offers a crowd-pleasing combination: décor with white-tablecloth elegance, yet the family-friendly feel of a classic checkered-tablecloth eatery – and Italian-American comfort food to match. Highlights: Mickey's Meatballs (named for owner Mickey Maltese), a meal-size marinara-sauced starter featuring whipped ricotta and creamy mascarpone; veal Bella Luca, mixing modern and traditional influences via a hefty breadcrumb-coated pan-fried chop with a topping of bracing balsamic reduction-dressed mesclun. \$\$\$

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. \$\$\$



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 crispy beer-battered moist cod, served with hand-cut fries and "mushy [mashed] peas," plus house-made tartar sauce and ketchup. All desserts are also made in-house, including a deliciously 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

Originally opened by Michelin-starred "New Aegean" chef Michael Psilakis, Eos changed upon the chef's departure into a more familiar Mediterranean resort eatery, minus Greek-inspired innovations. Now inspiration comes mainly from Spain and Italy, with nods to Morocco and Latin America. Best bets include a tasting platter of Spanish cheeses and cured meats; a pistachio-garnished salad featuring Serrano ham, figs, and arugula; crispy parmesan risotto balls with prosciutto and smoked tomato dip; and olive/smoked paprika-rubbed roast chicken. At lunch burgers and upscale sandwiches are added. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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, 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. \$\$

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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 Caffe

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 cheeseburger, the pancetta/mozzarella/plum-filled Americana, and several vegetarian options. At just over two bucks apiece, they're a money-saving moveable feast. \$

Hawa Jade

1331 Brickell Bay Dr., 305-905-5523

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

Il Gabbiano

335 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-373-0063

Its location at the mouth of the Miami River makes this 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? Pricey, 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) tableside knife theatrics, true, but the one-plate meals of seasoned steak slices, chicken, shrimp, or salmon plus dipping sauces, fried rice, and an onion/zucchini mix come at bargain prices. There are also hefty 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 offspring intended for private dining: Table 40. The charming, glassed-in wine "cellar" (actually in the kitchen) enables 12-14 diners to watch the action in heat-shielded, soundproofed comfort while eating creations by veteran chef Alexander Feher, combining Continental technique with local seasonal ingredients. Highlights: tender house-smoked, stout-braised short ribs; lavish lobster salad with grilled mango; and a seductive fresh corn gazpacho. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Iron Sushi

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

(See Miami Shores listing)

Jackson Soul Food

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

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

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10 SW South River Dr., 305-324-1111

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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 Nicoise with grilled fresh tuna, seared salmon with mango salsa, and other yuppie favorites. \$\$

La Provence 1064 Brickell Ave. 786-425-9003

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

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-macaron sandwich cookies with daily-changing fillings. \$\$-\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill 1 W. Flagler St., Suite 7, 305-789-9929

(See Midtown / Wynwood / Design District listing.)

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 flageolets (known as the caviar of beans), duck leg confit on a bed of mouthwatering green lentils from Le Puy, a classic moules/frites, a shared charcuterie platter with a bottle from the savvy wine list, and, of course, salade niçoise. \$\$-\$\$\$

Martini 28 146 SE 1st Ave., 305-577-4414

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

Miami Art Café 364 SE 1st St., 305-374-5117

For businessfolk on the go, this breakfast/lunch-only French café serves up evocative baguette sandwiches (like camembert) loaded, if you like, with greens, olives, and more. For those with time to sit, we'd recommend the savory crêpes, garnished with perfectly dressed salad, or sweet crêpe like the Bonne Maman (whose sugar/salted butter stuffing brings Brittany to downtown). And quiches are nicely custardy. But there are surprises here, too, including just a few full entrées, with correctly made traditional sauces one wouldn't expect at a luncheonette – except, perhaps, in Paris. \$\$-\$\$

Miami's Finest Caribbean Restaurant 236 NE 1st Ave., 305-381-9254

Originally from Jamaica, proprietor Miss Pat has been serving her traditional homemade island specialties to downtown office workers and college students since the early 1990s. Most popular item here might be the weekday lunch special of jerk chicken with festival (sweet-fried cornmeal bread patties), but even vegetarians are well served with dishes like a tofu, carrot, and chayote curry. All entrées come with rice and peas, fried plantains, and salad, so no one leaves hungry. \$

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

Part of London's famous Woodlands Group, this stylish spot, like its Coral Gables parent, serves the sort of upscale Indian food rarely found outside Great Britain or India. More interestingly, the menu includes not just the familiar northern Indian "Mughlai" fare served in most of America's Indian restaurants, but



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refined versions of south India's scrumptious street food. We've happily assembled whole meals of the vegetarian chaat (snacks) alone. And dosai (lacy rice/lentil crepes rolled around fillings ranging from traditional onion/potato to lamb masala or spicy chicken) are so addictive they oughta be illegal. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Miss Yip Chinese Café 900 Biscayne Blvd., 305-358-0088

Fans of the South Beach original will find the décor different. Most notably, there's an outdoor lounge, and more generally a nightclub atmosphere. But the menu of Hong Kong-style Chinese food, prepared by imported Chinese cooks, is familiar. Simple yet sophisticated Cantonese seafood dishes rock (try the lightly battered salt-and-pepper shrimp), as does orange peel chicken, spicy/tangy rather than overly sweet. And a single two-course Peking duck (skin in crepes, stir-fried meat and veggies with lettuce cups) makes mouthwatering finger food, shared among friends. \$-\$\$\$

neMesis Urban Bistro 1035 N. Miami Ave., 305-415-9911

Truly original restaurants are hard to find here, and harder to describe in standard sound bites. But they often are the attention-grabbing people-magnets that spark revivals of iffy neighborhoods. That's our prediction for this quirkily decorated bistro, where the kitchen is helmed by *Top Chef* contestant Micah Edelstein. The intensely personal menu of creative dishes inspired by her global travels (plus her fascination with unfamiliar ingredients) changes constantly, but scrumptious signatures include South African smoked veal bobotie, and Peruvian pinoli pancakes with housemade chicken/apple sausage, hibiscus syrup, and maple granules. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Novocento 1414 Brickell Ave., 305-403-0900

For those who think "Argentine cuisine" is a synonym for "beef and more beef," this popular eatery's wide range of more cosmopolitan contemporary Argentine fare will be a revelation. Classic parrilla-grilled steaks are here for traditionalists, but the menu is dominated by creative Nuevo Latino items like a new-style ceviche de chernia (lightly lime-marinated grouper with

jalapeños, basil, and the refreshing sweet counterpoint of watermelon), or crab ravioli with creamy saffron sauce. Especially notable are the 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 fiocchi purses filled with fresh pear and gorgonzola. And Sunday's \$15.95 brunch buffet (\$9.95 for kids) – featuring an omelet station, waffles, smoked salmon and bagels, salads, and more – remains one of our town's most civilized all-you-can-eat deals. \$\$

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. \$\$

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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. \$\$\$

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, huancaína cheese sauce? \$\$

Thai Angel

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

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

Tobacco Road

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

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

Tre Italian Bistro

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

"Bistro" actually sounds too Old World for this cool hangout, from the owners of downtown old-timer La Loggia, but "restolounge" sounds too glitzy. Think of it as a neighborhood "bistrolounge." The food is mostly

modernized Italian, with Latin and Asian accents: a prosciutto-and-fig pizza with Brazilian catupiry cheese; gnocchi served either as finger food (fried, with calamata olive/truffle aioli), or plated with orange-ginger sauce. But there are tomato-sauced meatballs with r'igawt for Grandpa Vinnie, too. \$-\$\$\$

Truluck's Seafood, Steak, and Crabhouse

777 Brickell Ave., 305-579-0035

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

Waxy O'Connor's

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

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

Wok Town

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

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

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Zuma

270 Biscayne Blvd. Way, 305-577-0277

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

Midtown / Wynwood / Design District

3 Chefs Chinese Restaurant

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

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

Adelita's Café

2699 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-1262

From the street (which is actually NE 26th, not Biscayne) this Honduran restaurant seems unpromising, but inside it's bigger, better, and busier than it looks. Unlike many Latin American eateries, this one sticks close to the source and proves a crowd-pleaser. On weekends especially, the dining rooms are packed with families enjoying authentic fare like baleadas (thick corn tacos), tajadas (Honduras's take on tostones), rich meal-in-a-bowl soups packed with seafood or meat and veggies, and more. \$

Andalus

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

Early publicity pegging this place (in Pacific Time's former space) as a tapas bar seemed to set it up as direct competition for nearby Sra. Martinez. It's actually quite different, with emphasis divided between small-plate lounging and full fine-dining meals. And regardless of size, dishes aren't contemporary riffs on tradition but authentic regional specialties. Subtly nutty jamon pata negra (the Rolls-Royce of cured hams) or salmorejo (Cordoba's Serrano ham/egg-enriched gazpacho) truly take your taste buds on a trip to Andalucía. 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 frites, salmon atop ratatouille, or many changing blackboard specials. Portions are plentiful. So is free parking. \$\$

Buena Vista Deli

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

At this casual café/bakery, co-owned by Buena Vista Bistro's Claude Postel, the day starts in authentic French fashion, with fresh breakfast breads, chocolate almond croissants, and other delights. At lunch cornichon-garnished baguette sandwiches (containing housemade pâtés, sinfully rich pork rillettes, superb salami, and other charcuterie classics) are irresistible, and a buttery-crust, custardy quiche plus perfectly dressed salad costs little more than a fast-food combo meal. As for Postel's 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. \$\$

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

City Hall the Restaurant

2004 Biscayne Blvd., 305-764-3130

After 30+ years spent guiding other owners' restaurants to success, Miami Spice program creator Steve Haas has opened his own expansive, two-floor place, on a stretch of Biscayne Boulevard that's suddenly looking fashionable. The vibe is a mix of power-dining destination and comfy neighborhood hangout, and chef Tom Azar (ex-Emeril's) has designed a varied menu to match. Highlights: an astonishingly thin/crunchy-crust pizza topped with duck confit, wild mushrooms, port wine syrup, and subtly truffled béchamel; crispy calamari (rings and legs) with light, lemony tomato emulsion; and tuna tartar that is refreshingly free of sesame oil. Big portions and a full bar to boot. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

The Cheese Course

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

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

Clive's Café

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

Some still come for the inexpensive, hearty American breakfasts and lunches that this homey hole-in-the-wall has served for more than 30 years. Since about 1990, though, when owner Pearlina Murray ("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. \$

Egg & Dart

4029 N. Miami Ave., 786-431-1022

While co-owners Costa Grillas (from Maria's, a Coral Gables staple) and Niko Theodorou (whose family members have several Greek islands restaurants) describe their cuisine as "rustic Greek," there is surprising sophistication in some dishes: an especially delicate taramasalata (cod roe dip); precisely crisp-fried smelts (like a 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 favas, 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 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 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 zep-poles, 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? \$\$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Jimmy's Kitchen

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

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

Joey's Italian Café

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

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

La Provence

2200 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-8002

(See Brickell / Downtown listing.)

Latin Café 2000

2501 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-3838

The menu is similar to that at many of our town's Latin cafés, largely classic Cuban entrées and sandwiches, with a smattering of touches from elsewhere in Latin America, such as a Peruvian jalea mixta (marinated mixed seafood), or paella Valenciana from Spain, which many Miami eateries consider a Latin country. What justifies the new millennium moniker is the more modern, yuppified/yucafied ambiance, encouraged by an expansive, rustic wooden deck. \$\$

Lemoni Café

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

The menu here reads like your standard sandwiches/salads/starters primer. What it doesn't convey is the freshness of the ingredients and the care that goes into their use. Entrée-size salads range from an elegant spinach (goat cheese, pears, walnuts, raisins) to chunky homemade chicken salad on a bed of mixed greens. Sandwiches (cold baguette subs, hot pressed paninis, or wraps, all accompanied by side salads) include a respectable Cuban and a veggie wrap with a deceptively rich-tasting light salad cream. \$\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Avenue, 305-576-5463

Like its South Beach predecessor, this Lime was an instant hit, as much for being a hip new Midtown hangout as for its carefully crafted Tex-Mex food. The concept is "fast casual" rather than fast food — meaning nice enough for a night out. It also means ingredients are always fresh. Seafood tacos are about as exotic as the menu gets, but the mahi mahi for fish tacos comes from a local supplier, and salsas are housemade daily. Niceties include low-carb tortillas and many Mexican beers. \$

Limón y Sabor

3045 Biscayne Blvd., 786-431-5739

In this dramatically renovated space, the room is now light and open, and the food is authentic Peruvian, with seafood a specialty. Portions are huge, prices low, quality high. Especially good are their versions of pescado a lo macho (fish fillet topped with mixed seafood in a creamy, zesty sauce); jalea (breaded and deep-fried fish, mixed seafood, and yuca, topped with onion/pepper/lime salsa), and yuca in hot yet 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 mezés: a Greek sampler of creamy tzatziki yogurt dip, smoky eggplant purée, and airy tarama caviar spread; and a Turkish sampler of hummus, fava purée, and rich tomato-walnut dip. The meze of mussels in lemony wine broth is, with Mandolin's fresh-baked flatbread, almost a full meal in itself. \$\$\$

Mario the Baker

250 NE 25th St., 305-438-0228

(See North Miami listing)

Mercadito Midtown

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

Some people frequent this fashionable restolounge, festooned with graffiti-style murals designed to evoke a bustling Mexican street market, just for the dangerously smooth margaritas. But the main must-haves here are tacos, encased in a rarity: genuinely made-from-scratch corn tortillas, small but fatly-stuffed. Of 11 varieties, our favorite is the carnitas (juicy braised pork, spicy chili de arbol slaw, toasted peanuts). A close second: the hongos, intensely flavorful huitlacoche and wild mushrooms, with manchego and salsa verde — a reminder that vegetarian food need not be bland. \$\$\$

Michael's Genuine Food and Drink

130 NE 40th St., 305-573-5550

An instant smash hit, this truly neighborhood-oriented restaurant from chef Michael Schwartz offers down-to-earth fun food in a comfortable, casually stylish indoor/outdoor setting. Fresh, organic ingredients are emphasized, but dishes range from cutting-edge (crispy beef cheeks with whipped celeriac, celery salad, and chocolate reduction) to simple comfort food: deviled eggs, homemade potato chips with pan-fried onion dip, or a whole wood-roasted chicken. There's also a broad range of prices and portion sizes to encourage frequent visits. Michael's Genuine also features an eclectic, affordable wine list and a full bar. \$\$\$

Ming Yuan

3006 NW 2nd Ave., 305-576-6466

What this tiny (three booths plus counter seats) Wynwood place serves isn't authentic Chinese cuisine. It's Chinese immigrant cooking: America's original Cantonese-based chop sueys and egg foo youngs plus later, spicier but also Americanized Szechuan/Hunan-inspired 1970s inventions like Mongolian beef and General Tso's this-or-that. But all the above (ordered extra-spicy if you like heat), plus crab rangoons and treat-packed special fried rice, are truly tasty. And since almost everything on the menu comes in several sizes, with even "small" being substantial, prices are unbeatable. \$\$\$

Mike's at Venetia

555 NE 15th St., 9th floor, 305-374-5731

This family-owned Irish pub, on the pool deck of the Venetia condo, for more than 15 years has been a popular lunch and dinner hang-out for local journalists and others who appreciate honest cheap eats and drinks. Regulars know daily specials are the way to go. Depending on the day, fish, churrasco, or roast turkey with all the trimmings are all prepared fresh. Big burgers and steak dinners are always good. A limited late-night menu provides pizza, wings, ribs, and salad till 3:00 a.m. \$\$\$

Morgans Restaurant

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

Housed in a beautifully refurbished 1930s private home, Morgans serves eclectic, sometimes internationally influenced contemporary American cuisine compelling enough to attract hordes. Dishes are basically comfort food, but *ultimate* comfort food: the most custardy, fluffy French toast imaginable; shoe-string frites that rival Belgium's best; mouthwatering maple-basted bacon; miraculously terrific tofu (crispy panko-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 restolounge 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. \$\$\$

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On facebook at Playwright Irish Pub & Restaurant

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Orange Café + Art 2 NE 40th St., 305-571-4070

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

Pasha's 3801 N. Miami Ave., 305-573-0201 (See Brickell/Downtown listing)

Pieducks 3500 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-5550 (See Brickell / Downtown listing)

Primo's 1717 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-371-9055

The imposing, cavernous lobby of the Grand doesn't have that "do drop in" locals' hangout vibe. But this lively Italian spot is actually a great addition to the neighborhood. The pizzas alone – brick-oven specimens with toppings ranging from classic pepperoni to prosciutto/arugula – would be draw enough. But pastas also please: diners' choice of starch, with mix-and-match sauces and extras. And the price is right, with few entrées topping \$20. The capper: It's open past midnight every day but Sunday. \$\$\$

Primo Pizza Miami 3451 NE 1st Ave., 305-535-2555

Just a few years ago, chain pizza joints were dominant most everywhere. Today many places now offer authentic Italian or delicate designer pizzas. But a sat-isfying 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 lunch-boxes – 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 restoloounge. Among the seafood offerings, you won't find exotica or local catches, but all the usual sushi/sashimi favorites, though in more interesting form, thanks to sauces that go beyond standard soy – spicy sriracha, garlic/ponzu oil, and many more. Especially recommended: the yuzu hamachi roll, the lobster tempura maki, and panko-coated spicy shrimp with hot-and-sour Mayo and a salad. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Salsa Fiesta 2929 Biscayne Blvd., 305-400-8245

The first stateside offshoot of a popular Venezuelan mini chain, this "urban Mexican grill" serves health-conscious, made-fresh-daily fare similar in concept to some fast-casual competitors. But there are indeed differences here, notably pan-Latin options: black beans as well as red; thin, delightfully crunchy

tostones (available as a side or as the base for a uniquely tasty take on normal nachos). Other pluses include weekday happy hours with two-for-one beers – and free parking. \$\$\$

S & S Diner 1757 NE 2nd Ave., 305-373-4291

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

Sra. Martinez 4000 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-5474

No Biscayne Corridor resident needs to be told that this lively tapas bar is the second restaurant that Upper Eastside homegirl Michelle Bernstein has opened in the area. But it's no absentee celebrity-chef gig. Bernstein is hands-on at both places. Her exuberant yet firmly controlled personal touch is obvious in nearly four dozen hot and cold tapas on the menu. Items are frequently reinvented. Keepers include wild mushroom/manchego croquetas with fig jam; white bean stew; crisp-coated artichokes with lemon/coriander dip; and buttery bone marrow piqued with Middle Eastern spices and balanced by tiny pickled salads. \$\$\$

Sugarcane Raw Bar Grill 3250 NE 1st Ave., 786-369-0353

This chic indoor/outdoor space is an offspring of Lincoln Road's SushiSamba Dromo and a sibling of Sugarcane 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 restoloounge, 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 ambience, 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/

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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. \$\$

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 pasteis to hefty Brazilian entrées, is also appealing — and budget-priced. \$\$

Le Café

7295 Biscayne Blvd.
 305-754-6551

For anyone who can't get over thinking of French food as intimidating or pretentious, this cute café with a warm welcome, and family-friendly French home cooking, is the antidote. No fancy food (or fancy prices) here, just classic comfort food like onion soup, escargot, daily fresh oysters, boeuf bourguignon (think Ultimate Pot Roast), Nicoise salad, quiche, and homemade crème brûlée. A respectable beer and wine list is a welcome addition, as is the housemade sangria. Top price for entrées is about \$14. \$-\$\$

Chef Creole

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

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

DeVita's

7251 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-8282

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

Dogma Grill

7030 Biscayne Blvd. 305-759-3433

Since Frankie and Priscilla Crupi took over this hot dog stand, the menu has changed significantly, with some items eliminated (any vegetarian hot dogs, salads, chichi toppings like avocado). But choices have expanded to include new dog choices (brats, Italian sausage, more) plus burgers and other classic eastern U.S. regional urban street foods: New England lobster rolls, New Orleans po'boys, Jersey shore cheese 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 cappiccio, 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

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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 of choice. You can indulge in a mouthwateringly succulent vacio (flank steak), and walk out without feeling like you're the cow. \$-\$\$\$

Magnum Lounge

709 NE 79th St., 305-757-3368
It's a restaurant. It's a lounge. But it's decidedly not a typical Miami restolounge, or like anything else in Miami. Forbidding from the outside, on the inside it's like a time-trip to a cabaret in pre-WWII Berlin: bordello-red décor, romantically dim lighting, show-tune live piano bar entertainment, and to match the ambiance, elegantly updated retro food served with style and a smile. For those feeling flush, home-style fried chicken is just like mom used to make – in her wildest dreams. \$\$\$

Metro Organic Bistro

7010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-751-8756
Big changes have come to Karma the car wash, the first being a separate new name for the revamped restaurant: Metro Organic Bistro, an all-organic fine-dining restaurant where simple preparations reveal and enhance natural flavors. An entirely new menu places emphasis on grilled organic meat and fish dishes. Try the steak frites – organic, grass-fed skirt steak with organic chimichurri and fresh-cut fries. Vegetarians will love the organic portabella focaccia. Dine either inside the architect-designed restaurant or outdoors on the patio. Beer and wine. \$-\$\$\$

Michy's

6927 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-2001
Don't even ask why Michele Bernstein, with a top-chef résumé, not to mention regular Food Network appearances, opened a homey restaurant in an emerging but far from fully gentrified neighborhood. Just be glad she did, as you dine on white almond gazpacho or impossibly creamy ham and blue cheese croquetas. Though most full entrées also come in half-size portions (at almost halved prices), the tab can add up fast. The star herself is usually in the kitchen. Parking in the rear off 69th Street. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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

Revalas Italian Ristorante

8601 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-1010
Owned by two couples (including former Village Café chef Marlon Reyes), this eclectic eatery occupies the former space of Frankie's Big City Grill, and fulfills much the same purpose in the neighborhood as an all-day, family-friendly place with affordable prices. The menu includes wraps and elaborate salads of all nations. But simple yet sophisticated Italian specialties like spaghetti 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 garlic-wurst) 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. \$\$-\$\$\$




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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 restoulounge, 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 foccicola pockets with gorgonzola sauce, oysters Rockefeller) to heartier 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), masago (smelt) roes, and special sauces. Thai dishes come with a choice of more than a dozen sauces, ranging from traditional red or green curries to the inventive, such as an unconventional honey sauce. \$\$\$

Uva's

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 hang-out. 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 homemade Indian naan bread. Additionally Bernardo carries unique treats produced by a few friends: candies, cupcakes, and exotically flavored flans. \$

NORTH BAY VILLAGE

Bocados Ricos

1880 79th St. Causeway, 305-864-4889

Tucked into a mall best known for its Happy Stork Lounge, this little luncheonette services big appetites. Along with the usual grilled churrascos, there's bandeja paisa, Colombia's sampler platter of grilled steak, sausage, chicharron, fried egg, avocado, plantains, rice, and beans. Don't miss marginally daintier dishes like sopa de costilla, if this rich shortrib bowl is among the daily homemade soups. Arepas include our favorite corn cake: the hefty Aura, stuffed with chorizo, chicharron, carne desmechada (shredded flank steak), plantains, rice, beans, and cheese. \$\$\$

The Crab House

1551 79th St. Causeway, 305-868-7085

Established in 1975, this Miami fish house was acquired by Landry's in 1996 and is now part of a chain. But the classic décor (knotty pine walls, tile floors, booths, outdoor waterfront deck) still evokes the good old days. Though the all-you-can-eat seafood/salad buffet (\$20 lunch, \$30 dinner) is a signature, freshness fanatics will be happiest sticking to à la carte favorites like the All-American fisherman's platters, or global specials like Szechuan shrimp, that change seasonally. \$\$\$

Japanese Market and Sushi Deli

1412 79th St. Causeway, 305-861-0143

Inside a small market that is widely considered Miami's premier source of Japanese foodstuffs, the "Sushi Deli" restaurant component is nothing more than a lunch counter. But chef Michio Kushi serves up some sushi found nowhere else in town. Example: traditional Osaka-style sushi – layers of rice, seasoned seaweed, and marinated fresh mackerel, pressed into a square box, then cut into lovely one-bite sandwich squares. While raw fish is always impeccable here, some unusual vegetarian sushi creations also tempt, as do daily entrées. \$

Mario the Baker

1700 79th St. Causeway, 305-867-7882

(See North Miami listing)

Oggi Caffè

1666 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1238

This cozy, romantic spot started back in 1989 as a pasta factory (supplying numerous high-profile restaurants) as well as a neighborhood eatery. And the wide range of budget-friendly, homemade pastas, made daily, remains the main draw for its large and loyal clientele. Choices range from homey, meaty lasagna to luxuriant crab ravioli with creamy lobster sauce, with occasional forays into creative exotic such as seaweed spaghetti, with sea scallops, shiitakes, and fresh tomatoes. \$\$\$

Shuckers Bar & Grill

1819 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1570

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

Sushi Siam

1524 NE 79th St. Causeway, 305-864-7638

(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

Trio on the Bay

1601 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1234

Several ventures have failed in this expansive indoor/outdoor waterfront space, but that's hard to imagine once you've experienced this stunning incarnation as an exciting yet affordable restaurant/nightclub where food definitely doesn't play second fiddle to entertainment. Former Crystal Café chef Klime Kovaceski 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 picatta. \$\$\$

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 homemade 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



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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 ajiaco. Both are thick chicken soups, full meals in a bowl. For Colombian-cuisine novices, a bandeja paisa (sampler including rice, beans, carne asada, chicharon, 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: crunchily outside, challengingly chewy inside. \$

Bulldog Barbecue/Bulldog Burger 15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-940-9655

These adjacent restaurants are really one place with two dining areas, since they connect and diners can order from either menu. They also share a BBQ/burger master: Top Chef contender Howie Kleinberg, whose indoor electric smoker produces mild-tasting 'cue ranging from the expected pulled pork, ribs, brisket, and chicken to more unusual items like hot-smoked salmon. As for burgers, many feature unique ingredients such as mayo flavored like red-eye gravy, with strong coffee, or the bun of the infamous Luther: a sweet-glazed mock (holeless) Krispy Kreme donut. Costs are comparatively high, but such is the price of fame. \$\$\$

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



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the most upscale rodizio joints – and beat the sword-wielding grandstanders for custom cooking (because staff asks your preference) – we'd bet on giraffe domination. Overstuffed grilled sandwiches, salads, even tasty veggie options are all here, too. The cheese bread is a must. \$\$

Happy Sushi & Thai

2224 NE 123rd St.
305-895-0165

Grab a booth at this cozy eatery, which serves all the expected Thai and sushi bar standards, including weekday lunch specials. But there are also delightful surprises, like grilled kawahagi (triggerfish) with seasoned Japanese mayonnaise. This intensely savory/sweet "Japanese home cooking" treat satisfies the same yen as beef jerky, except without pulling out your teeth. Accompanied by a bowl of rice, it's a superb lunch. For raw-fish fans, spicy, creamy salmon tartare (accompanied by hiyashi wakame seaweed) is a winner. \$\$-\$\$\$

Here Comes the Sun

2188 NE 123rd St., 305-893-5711

At this friendly natural foods establishment, one of Miami's first, there's a full stock of vitamins and nutritional supplements. But the place's hearty soups, large variety of entrées (including fresh fish and chicken as well as vegetarian selections), lighter bites like miso burgers with secret "sun sauce" (which would probably make old sneakers taste good), and daily specials are a tastier way to get healthy. An under-ten-buck early-bird dinner is popular with the former long-hair, now blue-hair, crowd. Frozen yogurt, fresh juices, and smoothies complete the menu. \$\$-\$\$

Le Griot de Madame John

975 NE 125th St., 305-892-9333

When Madame moved her base of operations from her Little Haiti home to a real restaurant (though a very informal one, and still mostly take-out), she began offering numerous traditional Haitian dishes, including jerked beef or goat 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 pizza; the top topping here is the savory housemade sausage. And no one leaves without garlic rolls, awash in warm parsley oil and smashed garlic. New branches are now open in Miami's Midtown neighborhood and in North Bay Village. \$

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, 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. \$

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 fillas 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,

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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 molled causas, whipped potato rings stuffed with avocado-garnished crab salad – altogether lighter and lovelier than the tasty but oily mashed spud constructions more oft 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 Gouveia, originally from British Guyana, the wrapper is a far more substantial and tasty roti, a Caribbean mega-crepe made from chickpea flour. Most popular filling for the flatbread is probably jerk chicken, bone-in pieces in a spiced stew of potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, and more chickpeas. But there are about a dozen other curries from which to choose. Take-out packages of plain roti are also available; they transform myriad leftovers into tasty, portable lunches. \$

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 house-made 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. \$\$\$

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The Melting Pot

15700 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-2228

For 1950s and 1960s college students, fondue pots were standard dorm accessories. These days, however, branches of this chain are generally the only places to go for this eating experience. Start with a wine-enriched four-cheese fondue; proceed to an entrée with meat or seafood, plus choice of cooking potion (herbed wine, bouillon, or oil); finish with fruits and cakes dipped in melted chocolate. Fondue etiquette dictates that diners who drop a skewer in the pot must kiss all other table companions, so go with those you love. \$\$\$

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 albóndigas – spicy, ultra-savory meatballs. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Racks Italian Kitchen

3933 NE 163rd St. (Intracoastal Mall),

305-917-7225

The complexity of the Racks concept makes a soundbite description impossible. It's part Italian market, with salumi, cheeses, and other artisan products plus take-out prepared foods; part enoteca (wine bar, featuring snacks like addictive Portobello fritti with truffle aioli, especially enjoyable on the waterfront deck); part ristorante (pastas and other Big Food); part pizzeria. What's important: All components feel and taste authentically Italian. Just don't miss the coal-oven pizza. Superior toppings (including unusually zesty tomato sauce) plus an astonishingly light yet chewy crust make Racks' pies a revelation. \$\$

Roasters & Toasters

18515 NE 18th Ave., 305-830-3354

Attention ex-New Yorkers: Is your idea of food porn one of the Carnegie Deli's mile-high pastrami sandwiches? Well, Roasters will dwarf them. Consider the "Carnegie-style" monster containing, according

to the menu, a full pound of succulent meat (really 1.4 pounds; we weighed it), for a mere 15 bucks. All the other Jewish deli classics are here too, including perfectly sour pickles, silky hand-sliced nova or lox, truly red-rare roast beef, and the cutest two-bite mini-potato pancakes ever – eight per order, served with sour cream and applesauce. \$\$

The Rumcake Factory

2075 NE 163rd St., 786-525-7071

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 homogenous 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, mussels Chardonnay, and Grouper Brittany. Traditional house favorites remain, and the emphasis is still on fresh fish from local waters. Open daily till 2:00 a.m., the place can get rather festive after midnight, but since the kitchen is open till closing, Tuna's draws a serious late-night dining crowd, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Vegetarian Restaurant by Hakin

73 NE 167th St. 305-405-6346

Too often purist vegetarian food is unskillfully crafted bland stuff, spiced with little but sanctimonious intent. Not at this modest-looking vegan (dairy-free vegetarian) restaurant and smoothie bar. Dishes from breakfast's blueberry-packed pancakes to Caribbean vegetable stews sparkle with vivid flavors. Especially impressive: mock meat (and fake fish) wheat-gluten items that beat many carnivorous competitors. Skeptical? Rightly. But we taste-tested a "Philly cheese steak" sandwich on the toughest of critics – an inflexibly burger-crazy six year-old. She cleaned her plate. \$\$

Yakko-San

3881 NE 163rd St. (Intracoastal Mall),

305-947-0064

After sushi chefs close up their own restaurants for the night, many come here for a rare taste of Japanese home cooking, served in grazing portions. Try glistening-fresh strips of raw tuna can be had in maguro neta – mixed with scallions and dressed with habit-forming honey-miso mustard sauce. Other favorites include goma ae (wilted spinach, chilled and dressed in sesame sauce), garlic stem and beef

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(mild young shoots flash-fried with tender steak bits), or perhaps just-caught grouper with hot/sweet/tangy chili sauce. Open till around 3:00 a.m. \$\$

Yes, Pasta! Trattoria Italiana 14872 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-1006

At Roman-native Flaminia Morin's casual, family-friendly eatery, the specialty is pasta yo ur way. Choose one of seven fresh or dried pastas (including gluten-free options), then one of 15 sauces ranging from traditional carbonara to inventions like Mozzarella Filante (creamy tomato sauce with melted cheese); à la carte meat, seafood, or veg add-ons are also available. Build a full Italian feast with antipasti, salads, six secondi (entrées), and desserts. Budget diner alert: Check out Monday-Friday lunch specials, two courses plus drink for \$8.

BAY HARBOR ISLANDS

Asia Bay Bistro

1007 Kane Concourse; 305-861-2222

As in Japan's most refined restaurants, artful presentation is stunning at this Japanese/Thai gem. And though the voluminous menu sports all the familiar favorites from both nations, the Japanese-inspired small plates will please diners seeking something different. Try jalapeño-sauced hamachi sashimi; toro with enoki mushrooms, bracing ooba (shiso), tobiko caviar, and a sauce almost like beurre blanc; rock shrimp/shitake tempura with a delicate salad; elegant salmon tartare with a mix-in quail egg. And spicy, mayo-dressed tuna rock makis are universal crowd-pleasers. \$\$\$

Caffe Da Vinci

1009 Kane Concourse; 305-861-8166

After renovations in 2010, this old favorite (since 1989) reopened with a hip new lounge – but no fixes to what ain't broke, notably handmade artisanal pastas sauced with high quality ingredients. Choose luxe stuffed models (like crab-filled ravioli with rich lobster sauce) or relatively pristine preparations like linguini with garlic, wine, and fresh little necks. 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 lunchroom/market's PBLT (a BLT sandwich with melt-in-your-mouth pork belly substituting for regular bacon) would be a strong contender. Co-owners Sandra Stefani (ex-Casa Toscana chef/owner) and Ines Chattas (ex-Icebox Café GM) have combined their backgrounds to create a global gourmet oasis with a menu ranging from light quiches and imaginative salads to hefty balsamic/tomato-glazed shortribs or daily pasta specials (like wild boar-stuffed ravioli). Also featured: artisan grocery products, and Stefani's famous interactive cooking class/wine dinners. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

The Palm

9650 E. Bay Harbor Dr., 305-868-7256

It was 1930s journalists, legend has it, who transformed NYC's original Palm from Italian restaurant to bastion of beef. Owners would run out to the butcher for huge steaks to satisfy the 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 Café and, with minor variations, at all the rest of Tom Billante's eateries (Rosalia, Villaggio, Carpaccio), right down to the typeface. But no argument from here. In a mall – a setting more accustomed to food court – dishes like carpaccio al salmone (crudo, with portobellos, capers, parmesan slices, and lemon/tomato dressing) and linguine carbonara (in creamy sauce with pancetta and shallots) are a breath of fresh, albeit familiar, air. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Bourbon Steak

19999 W. Country Club Dr., 786-279-0658
(Fairmont Hotel, Turnberry Resort)

At Bourbon Steak, a venture in the exploding restaurant empire of chef Michael Mina, a multiple James Beard award winner, steakhouse fare is just where the fare starts. There are also Mina's ingenious signature dishes, like an elegant deconstructed lobster/baby vegetable pot pie, a raw bar, and enough delectable vegetable/seafood starters and sides for noncarnivores to assemble a happy meal. But don't neglect the steak – flavorful dry-aged Angus, 100-percent Wagyu American "Kobe," swoonworthy grade A5 Japanese Kobe, and butter-poached prime rib, all cooked to perfection. \$\$\$\$

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-spinked 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 pineapple 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. \$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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
Ensnared 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



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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 sea-coast province of Guangdong (Canton). But you'll find no gloppily sauced, Americanized-Cantonese chop sueys here. Cooking is properly light-handed, and seafood specialties shine (try the spicy/crispy salt and pepper shrimp). For adventurers, there's a cold jellyfish starter. Even timid taste buds can't resist tender fried shrimp balls described this way: "With crispy adorable fringy outfit." \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Pilar

20475 Biscayne Blvd. 305-937-2777
Chef/owner Scott Fredel previously worked for Norman Van Aken and Mark 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)

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 homemade 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 Herrison, 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

17620 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 almon-dine, Swiss-style poached trout with champagne-shalot sauce, an elaborate steak tartar, and for dessert, peach Melba or strawberries Romanoff. \$\$\$



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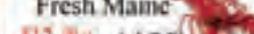
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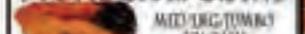


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