

BISCAYNE

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Volume 10 Issue 4

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Times

TWO TANKS OF GAS

Forget the European vacation or the cross-country road trip. With a little driving, you can have big fun. Page 34.



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One Island Place, Aventura Unobstructed Ocean & Intracoastal views from every rm in this unbelievable 2-story 8,879 sf penthse. 5bd/7ba, approx. 5,200 sf of balconies & priv. roof top terrace, 5 underground prkg spaces incl. \$2.895M



Bal Harbour Oceanfront Home in the sky with endless ocean views and 5 star amenities. Walk to beach, shops, restaurants and houses of worship.

opendoor

by Bonnie & Ilene



Bal Harbour Village Great opportunity! Build your dream home in guard gated community. 20,500 sf lot on the wide waterway with waterfront pool and dock. \$4.5M



Bay Harbor Islands Wide Bay Award winning architect Barry Sugarman's home. Featured in HGTV, Florida Design, Casa & Estilo & more. 4/2.5, Open floor plan. Magnificent views. \$2.975M



Sans Souci Estates 2 story California style waterfront in 24hr gated community. Great floor plan, 3650sf/appraisal. 4/3.5, heated pool & spa, new wood deck & dock. \$899K



Hamptons South, Aventura 3000sf, designer finished, upgraded 2bd unit, media room, marble & wood floors, ocean, Intracoastal, lake & golf course views. \$849K



Bay Harbor Islands 4 story corner townhouse. 3bd/4ba, private elevator, huge rooftop terrace, top of the line kitchen and baths, 2 car garage. \$795K



Quayside Completely renovated townhouse, over 3700 SF on the trendy Biscayne corridor. Downtown & Bay views, gated & secure community. \$649K



Bay Harbor Islands 3bd/2ba, updated eat-in kit., open & spacious living rm, vaulted ceilings, private lushly landscaped backyard, pool, Jacuzzi perfect for entertaining. \$5,000/mo.



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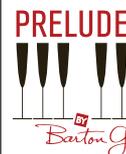
JUNE

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

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
 JUNE 12-16	  THE LION KING BROADWAY'S LANDMARK MUSICAL MAY 15 TO JUNE 10	5TH ANNIVERSARY JAZZ ROOTS 2012/2013  TOTALBANK SUBSCRIBE NOW!		1 Summer Shorts 2012 7:30 PM  Disney's The Lion King 8 PM  "[Director Julie] Taymor has introduced a whole new vocabulary of images to the Broadway blockbuster." <i>The New York Times</i>	2 Disney's The Lion King 2 & 8 PM  "A jaw-dropping magnificent spectacle." <i>Newsday</i> Summer Shorts 2012 7:30 PM 	
3 Disney's The Lion King 1 & 6:30 PM  Miami's most eagerly awaited stage production ever will leap onto the stage. Summer Shorts 2012 2 PM 		5 Disney's The Lion King 8 PM  "Awe-inspiring!" <i>Time Magazine</i>	6 Summer Shorts 2012 7:30 PM  Disney's The Lion King 8 PM  Take your place in the "Circle of Life."	7 Summer Shorts 2012 7:30 PM  Disney's The Lion King 8 PM  Experience the phenomenon.	8 Disney's The Lion King 2 & 8 PM  Visually stunning, technically astounding and with a musical score like none other you've ever heard. Summer Shorts 2012 7:30 PM 	9 The Brand New Kid 11 AM  Summer Shorts 2012 2 & 7:30 PM  Disney's The Lion King 2 & 8 PM  "There is simply nothing else like it." <i>The New York Times</i>
10 Disney's The Lion King 1 PM  Tony® Award-winning Broadway sensation that <i>Newsweek</i> calls "a landmark event in entertainment." Summer Shorts 2012 2 PM 		12 The Brand New Kid 10 AM & 12:30 PM  "Funny, upbeat musical numbers. Endearingly goofy!" <i>The Washington Times</i>	13 The Brand New Kid 10 AM & 12:30 PM  Summer Shorts 2012 7:30 PM  Returns for the sixth consecutive season at the Arsht Center!	14 The Brand New Kid 10 AM & 12:30 PM  Summer Shorts 2012 7:30 PM  The freshest, funniest, fastest short plays of your life!	15 The Brand New Kid 10 AM & 12:30 PM  A delightful kids' musical based on the children's book by TV journalist Katie Couric! Summer Shorts 2012 7:30 PM 	16 The Brand New Kid 11 AM  Summer Shorts 2012 2 & 7:30 PM  These mini one minute plays will have you laughing hysterically and the next shocked beyond belief.
17 Summer Shorts 2012 2 PM  Hang on for the ride of your life in this evening of theater that promises something for absolutely everyone!		23 Siudy Between Worlds 8 PM  "A masterpiece of dance." <i>The Examiner</i>	CITY THEATRE'S SUMMER SHORTS America's Short Play Festival JUNE 1-17 	 ARRIVES JULY 13 	 JUNE 23 & 24	
24 Siudy Between Worlds 2 & 6 PM  "Mesmerizing! Siudy is perfection!... Powerful and beautiful!" <i>Times Square Chronicles</i>						

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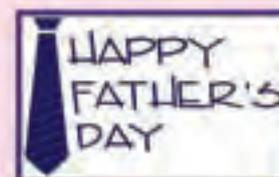
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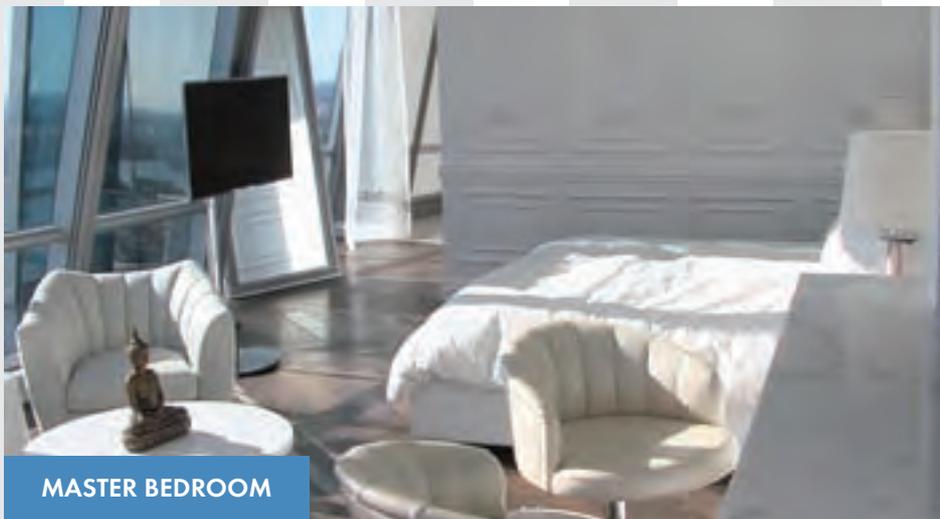


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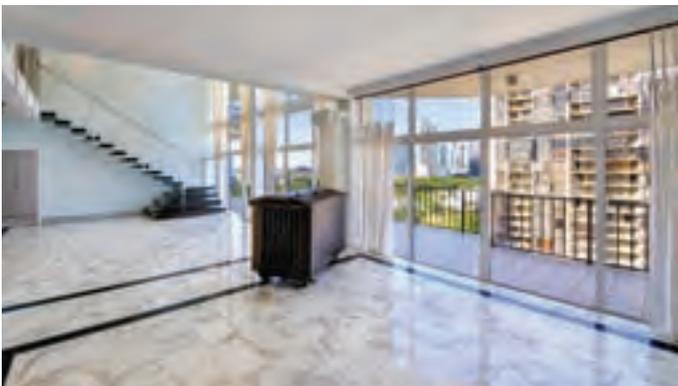
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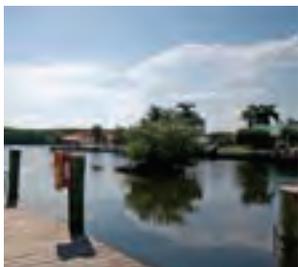
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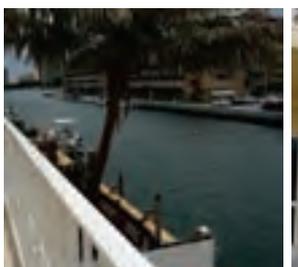


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Commentary: LETTERS

Jorge Perez, It's Time to Show 'Em

Thanks to Anne Tschida for a very well-researched, thoughtful, and well-written story about Miami Art Museum ("From MAM to PAMM," May 2012). Lots of diverse voices; not much happy-talk.

I hope her mission of inspiring debate, as voiced by Tami Katz-Freiman, does get a boost; and that the great majority of players — large and small — manage to maintain (or restore) commitments to the long-term life of the museum.

Anne says that everyone wants MAM to succeed. Unfortunately, I have to wonder in some of the cases she cites.

What an extraordinarily tough job it must be for MAM director Thom Collins to rally support among such strongly opinionated stakeholders, any of whom who can jump ship at will.

So when will Jorge Perez show the picture cards he's holding? That's sure to get some tongues wagging!

*George Fishman
 Miami Shores*

Jorge Perez, Don't Take Us from MAM to SPAM

Anne Tschida's well-researched article brought new light to Miami's often fractured art society. It seems Jorge Perez was the only one to put his money where his mouth is. Tate, Guggenheim, the Getty — naming rights have always brought in the big bucks.

Mr. Perez's big test will be what he brings to hang on the walls — whether his art donations will be a strong base to influence a worldwide collection, or as pointed out in the article, a handful of chunky Botero cartoons.

It won't be long before Miamians will know if they've gone from MAM to PAMM or MAM to SPAM.

*Marco Fernandez
 Normandy Isle*

Jorge Perez, Your Good Intentions = Bad Spectacle

Great article by Anne Tschida. In Boca Raton there are several buildings and institutions named after a couple who, though generous, managed to get totally embarrassed back in the 1990s over dubious royal titles.

I'm not suggesting Mr. Perez has done anything like this, but there is still room for conjecture regarding complications with a collection of art not worth the value perceived by the owner. This essentially would mean that the amount pledged isn't real.

Regardless, as a person who lives close by, the entire thing seems strangely vulgar and sad. Mr. Perez should withdraw his offer and his name.

Once again in Miami, someone manages to create a bad spectacle out of good intentions.

*Giovanni Gutierrez
 Fort Lauderdale*

Imagine Liking the BT So Much You Would Actually Lift a Finger to Get One

Last month's *Biscayne Times*. Where to begin?

First we have a rambling, nonsensical letter to the editor about Gaspar González from Carmen De Bernardi, a letter that somehow negotiates two or three unrelated issues without ever making a coherent point. To add insult to the injury Ms. De Bernardi dealt herself, she wound up complaining about her favorite knight in shining armor, whose "I hate fences, and I hate anything new" posture is legendary. (Although I will concede he is very fond of his own ideas, even if they are new.)

I suspect she has not the faintest idea she did that. *Biscayne Times* editor Jim Mullin must have been asleep the day this letter came through. He forgot to limit it to the word count he applies to letters from everyone except Steve Bernard and Bryan Cooper. Oh, wait a minute: Carmen De Bernardi is a Bernard sycophant. Never mind. Give her as many words as she wants.

Then there's that adorable scamp Gaspar González. I feel so protected by him. Had it not been for the droning sarcasm and obnoxious innuendo [in his column "Well, Shut My Mouth," May 2012], I would almost have thought he considered me honest. Well, he hasn't before, so why should he start now?

And he used his patented style of writing: He put together a whole column about something involving two people, without ever having a proper conversation about the topic at hand with either of the two people.

Gaspar spared himself from knowing that the sizable majority of people who signed the petition [to prohibit distribution of *Biscayne Times* in Biscayne Park] agreed they have no use for the *BT*, and would rather not receive it than bother to throw it away.

Or that the petition was signed by some people who want and like the *BT* but understood that it does create litter, and who would be pleased to go to a

Continued on page 24

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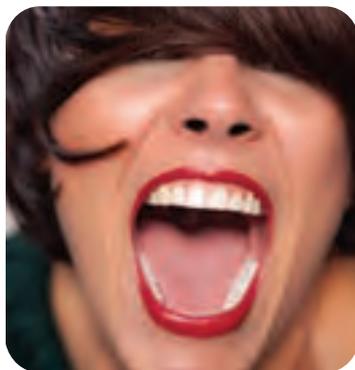
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Commentary: LETTERS

Letters

Continued from page 22

convenient place to pick up a copy.

Imagine liking the *BT* so much that you would actually lift a finger to go get one.

So no, the petition wasn't about censorship at all. It was, as Gaspar facetiously concedes, about litter. Chuck Ross and I even offered to take names of interested but lazy readers and bring them a copy.

I guess Jim Mullin's offer to retrieve copies after 48 hours begins some other month. Last month's copy is still on my neighbor's swale.

Fred Jonas
Biscayne Park

The *BT* As Litter? Bring It On!

After reading Gaspar González's column "Well, Shut My Mouth," about the Biscayne Park petition to ban *Biscayne Times* because it causes litter, I'd like to ask the *BT* to please continue "littering" the streets in our Bayside neighborhood.

I retrieve any unwanted copies to take to friends who are out of the *BT*'s distribution area. They prize each issue.

Keep up the good work, *Biscayne Times*.
Mildred Neill
Bayside

Highland Lakes: Vehemently Opposed to Cityhood

Erik Bojnansky's article about our area did not include the most important facts ("Highland Lakes to County: We Want Out!" May 2012). The majority of the people in our area are vehemently opposed to the formation of another municipality in our region of north Miami-Dade County.

Several years ago, many hundreds of residents attended meetings opposing this unnecessary exercise. We certainly do not need another layer of government as we are getting all the services needed.

Gerard G. Moss
Sparling Lake

Highland Lakes: Love the County's Lower Taxes and Better Services

I read with interest Erik Bojnansky's article about how a few people in the Sky-lake/Highland Lakes area are not happy with the services they receive from the county. They feel that being annexed by the City of Aventura will bring about better services and a lower property-tax millage rate.

While the latter is true, the former probably is not.

As a resident of North Miami Beach and also a property owner in unincorporated Miami-Dade, I can see no appreciable difference in the services I receive in either location. The greatest difference is in the ad valorem millage rate that the City of NMB charges me: \$7.87 per \$1000 assessed value versus what the county charges: \$2.01 per \$1000 assessed.

In fact, by owning properties in the unincorporated area, I have the use of the bulk-trash recycling drop-off facility that allows me to dispose of white goods, old furniture, tires, oil, and yard waste — something NMB does not offer.

Currently the City of North Miami Beach, like many cities, is feeling the stress of being incorporated. Huge pension costs, driven by having your own police department, sanitation department, and other departments, plus all the costs associated with duplicating the services the county offers, is extremely expensive and inefficient. The cost of providing these services on a much smaller scale, based on the assessed millage rate, is almost four times what the county charges for the same services.

The cities of Sunny Isles Beach and Aventura, owing to their large residential condo towers and successful commercial areas, are unique among cities in having such low millage rates. Elected officials in other cities can only dream of having the same tax base those two enjoy.

Beware those residents who push for incorporation. These are the same frustrated "condo commando" activists who feel they will become elected officials in their newly incorporated areas, something they apparently cannot achieve by running for office in unincorporated Miami-Dade.

The last thing most taxpayers need is more government involved in their lives.

Bruce Lamberto
North Miami Beach

Highland Lakes: Aventura, We'll Pay You a Bonus To Let Us In

I have lived in Highland Lakes for 36 years and have very few issues with our status in Miami-Dade County.

I would not be a fan of becoming our own city, which would create a new layer of politics and problems for a small community.

I do believe that joining Aventura would be a good thing for all.

In fact, I would not be adverse to paying our current higher property tax rate to Aventura to accommodate this move.

Stuart Frankel
Highland Lakes



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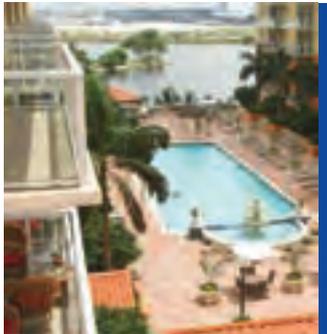
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Job Description: Miami Mayor

Can't be too light, can't be too dark, must be fluent — in Cuban Spanish

By Jack King
BT Contributor

The passing of the Memorial Day holiday always makes me feel good. That time between Memorial Day and Labor Day generally means the City of Miami shuts down and accomplishes very little. This is a good thing, because much of what the city does is not so good.

Occasionally something does slip through, as did the infamous August 1925 election, when Miami annexed the Village of Coconut Grove and several other neighborhoods. The neighborhoods were in favor of the annexation because they wanted better city services (I wonder if they still feel that way), but the Grove wanted no part of it. But the election grouped them all together and the rest, as they say, is history.

This is also a time when I like to ponder what lies ahead: Who will be our future leaders? Who will step forward and really make a difference? Right now it doesn't look good.

Mayor Tomás Regalado has had a very bumpy ride as mayor and may not want to continue on this roller coaster. I'm thinking he'll quietly retire at the end of his term next year and take his pension. Even if he does decide to run, nothing is certain.

Who else might run for mayor? The first thought would be Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, who ran a pretty good re-election campaign last year. However, Miami is a Cuban town, and Sarnoff has virtually no

support in that community. In fact it's been a long time since Miami had a gringo mayor — way back in 1973, with David Kennedy.

I know some of you with long memories will say it was Steve Clark, who beat Miriam Alonso in November 1993. But Clark was actually the most Cuban mayor we ever had. He was fully controlled by the Latin Builders Association, doing everything they wanted in exactly the way they wanted it done. And he was paid well for it. Everybody knew that, including the feds, but he had the audacity to die before he could be indicted.

City Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones did get herself indicted, but she beat the charges when the case began to fall apart. The Overtown/Liberty City community rallied around her and kept her out of jail, but that came at a very high price. Quite a few community leaders were tarnished in the mess, and my guess is they'll never help her again.

Recently the *Herald* ran a piece about Spence-Jones headlined, "A strong rebound on the dais," noting how much she has accomplished since her return to Dinner Key. To me it looked like a *Herald* apology for the way they handled her arrest and trial. She doesn't speak to the paper any longer, and this appeared to be an effort to get back in her good graces. Certainly it had nothing to do with what Spence-Jones has done on the dais, which is just about zero.

I'm not sure Spence-Jones would ever consider a mayoral campaign anyway. This

town is racially divided in a major way, despite a long-standing, uneasy truce that keeps black, white, and Hispanic leaders happy — namely, everybody gets a share of the pie. We've never had a black mayor and probably never will.

That leaves the three Hispanic commissioners: Frank Carollo, Francis Suarez, and Willy Gort. Not much chance that Gort will run for mayor. He tried in 2001 and was drubbed by Manny Diaz. Plus he'll be 75 when the next election comes around.

That leaves us with our two legacies. Francis's father Xavier was mayor from 1985 to 1993, and then again 1997-98. Frank's brother Joe was mayor in 1996-97 and then again in 1998-2001. The elder Suarez presided over a commission that was very civil and accomplished much. It helped that the mayor and two commissioners lived within blocks of each other in Coconut Grove. That was before we had voting districts.

Then everything changed. In 1996 the elder Carollo ran for mayor to replace the deceased Steve Clark. In 1997 the elder Suarez ran against him and won. Carollo sued, citing voter fraud. Carollo was reinstated by the courts and Suarez was out.

Amid all this were stories of late-night visits to constituents' homes, flying teapots, spousal abuse, and dead people



¿Sarnoff podría aprender un poco de español? Coño!

voting. The word "loco" was applied liberally to both mayors. It was the best of times (for the news media) and the worst of times (for Miami). In 2001 Manny Diaz beat all comers for mayor and finally we had a mayor whose surname was not Suarez or Carollo.

Which brings us to this question: Did any of the insanity do permanent damage to young Frank Carollo or Francis Suarez? I don't know. Only time will tell. Both men are bright and well educated, but as we know, politics can and does make people crazy.

Could it be time for Marc Sarnoff to take Spanish lessons?

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The Naked Truth

All right, so a guy was recently shot dead while trying to eat a other man's face — crime in Miami-Dade is still nowhere as bad as it once was

By **Christian Cipriani**
BT Contributor

One of the first things I do each morning is whip out my phone and skim sensational headlines in the *Daily Mail*. The British tabloid's lurid spin on everything puts even the *New York Post* to shame. Leave it to Miami, then, to produce a story so jaw-dropping that it doesn't need spin: "Naked Man Killed by Police Was 'Eating Face' Off Victim."

All of this happened 15 blocks from my condo during the dreaded Urban Beach Week. The perp reportedly lost it on a powerful new form of LSD — hardly the boozed up, gangland-style gun crime we've come to expect on Memorial Day weekend.

The incident came at the tail end of a month of thinking about crime in our area. As I'm wont to do, I like to use this column to explore issues that gnaw at my daily life here in Edgewater. One revolving-door conversation I have with my fiancée, Danielle, is about neighborhood safety. She's convinced that her quiet, leafy street in Coconut Grove (where I had all the wheels stolen off my car) is much safer than the "ghetto-in-transition" where I've lived since 2007, and where — knock on wood — I've yet to have a bad experience.

There's a lot of emotion and perception at play in this conversation. We argue like these two neighborhoods

represent our personalities, and that's made picking a place to call home when we're married all the hairier.

On the second Saturday of May, we took Danielle's brother and his wife to Wynwood for Art Walk. We were all bemused to realize what a family event it was; they could have taken their two-year-old, no problem. The next night at their parents' house in West Miami, though, their other brother said, "You were in Wynwood? Are you trying to get shot?"

I've been in Miami for seven years, and I'm well aware of its history. But for a lot of people — especially those who live in the western suburbs — there is so much *opinion* on crime and safety. So in the spirit of *Freakonomics*, I set out to find out how reality measures up to perception.

One thing I was surprised to find was that the early 1980s cocaine cowboy era wasn't Miami's most crime-ridden period. The murder rate was at an all-time high, but it wasn't until the early 1990s that we reached our highest rates of robbery, sexual battery, burglary, aggravated assault, auto theft, larceny, and reported crime in general.

During the recent condo boom, from 2006 to 2010, violent crime and robbery actually dropped countywide, and statewide crime is at its lowest rate since 1971, when they started keeping track. This all bodes well for the perception that Miami feels safer than it did in the past, but I looked at the data to see if I'm



BT photo by Christian Cipriani

Leafy, quiet, and safe Coconut Grove.

right, or whether being tall, male, and lucky has insulated me from real experiences with crime.

Last year the police were called to the Wynwood/Edgewater area about 20,000 times. They filed roughly 8500 incident reports and arrested 1600 people. Down in Coconut Grove, there were also about 20,000 calls to police and 1400 arrests, but the police filed 40 percent fewer incident reports.

Compare this to Overtown. Again, around 20,000 calls to police, but the area's incident report and arrest rates were nearly equal. This suggests that people in Overtown only called the cops when they really needed to. In fact they should probably call the police more, and people in the Grove should call them less.

Most of my research focused on crimes that diminish the quality of life in a neighborhood. This year alone, Edgewater has racked up 100 assaults, 93 burglaries, 37 robberies, and one homicide. Wynwood is averaging 30-50 percentage points higher in all categories, while Coconut Grove has experienced 70-some assaults, 40 burglaries,

20 robberies, and no murders.

Despite the occasional headline about a naked man eating someone's face, all of Miami-Dade is getting safer — which is boring for reporters. In April several news outlets picked up on a study that ranked Florida as the fourth-least peaceful state in the U.S. This stat came from the Institute of Economics and Peace, which produced another study that identified the number-one cause of violence: poverty.

But did we really need a study to reveal that? Walk around Miami for an hour to understand the relationship between economic opportunity, desperation, and violent crime. People act according to how much they have to lose, and in Miami that can change in the course of a single city block.

Things are looking up in Miami, but Wynwood/Edgewater is still about twice as dangerous as the Grove. And I still have a fiancée to accommodate, so by this time next year I may well be writing to you from a quiet, leafy street somewhere south of I-95.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

<p>900 NE 100 Street</p>  <p>\$649,500</p> <p>Updated 3/3 on 3 lots. Overlooks golf course. Gourmet eat-in kitchen. Family room. Wood floors. Fireplace. New roof. Garage. A rare find!</p>	<p>10901 N. Bayshore Dr.</p>  <p>\$699,000</p> <p>Million dollar views from this Key West style 2/2 home on wide bay. Great out-door entertainment area. Storm shutters. Den/Office. Must see!</p>	<p>5235 Pinetree Dr., Miami Beach</p>  <p>\$3.35M</p> <p>Classic 4/4 Mimo style with over 4,200 sq. feet. 1/3 acre lot with 75' on intercoastal. L-Shape dock. Pool/Jacuzzi. Gated property for total privacy. A rare find!</p>	<p>12702 SW 52 Ct., Miramar</p>  <p>\$320,000</p> <p>This huge 4/2.5 built in 2002 has over 2,800 sq. feet. Tray ceilings & arched entrance. 2 car garage. Huge master. Big family room. Gated community with pool.</p>	 <p>DUFFY REALTY www.duffyrealty.com</p> <hr/> <p>Patrick L. Duffy 305-904-4803</p>
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MADE IN GERMANY



BizBuzz: June 2012

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

By Pamela Robin Brandt
BT Contributor

June was the month we moved to Miami, many years ago, and like most Northeastern tourists, we'd visited here only in the winter. So we did expect summer to be a bit different.

And boy, was it ever. Heat that would cook a prime rib, without the oven. Insects that rivaled the size of my car. And as for hurricanes, it was hard to tell which was scarier — the storms or the residents who listened to hurricane warnings and heard, "Surf's up!"

But seriously, what was most unexpected was the sense of celebration that went with taking back our town. "Low season" sounds like Miami goes to sleep for six months. Instead the fun just becomes more locals-oriented.

For a new local, moving in during a season when Miami's defined by residents, not tourists, turned out to be a most enjoyable, and productive, way to get to know the place. That never changes. And BT advertisers have a plethora of parties, deals, and news to share this month, to help us make the most of our town.

Nightlife impresario Gerry Kelly has been known as a master of spectacle in South Florida since 1993, when he partnered with Sean Penn to open the South

Beach club Bash. Bash the club is long gone, but Kelly's "50th Royal Birthday X-Travaganza" at his current venue, the bayfront restolounge **Trio on the Bay** (1601 79th St. Cswy., 305-866-1234), on June 23 starting at 10:00 p.m., is one bash you won't want to miss. Kelly promises a complete décor transformation by celebrity set designers, a bevy of breathtaking shows, an open vodka bar from 10:00-11:00 p.m., and more. To attend and/or to reserve for the \$39pp three-course dinner beforehand, give a call.

Turnberry Isle Resort (19999 W. Country Club Dr., 305-933-6930) offers several opportunities for fun. A couple of them (the 25th anniversary Taste of the Nation fundraising feast, and a discount celebrating Miami Spa Month) happen later in the summer, so we'll save those details for next issue. But this month sees the kick-off of a special summer menu at the resort's Cascata Grille. From June 1-September 30, \$60 buys a three-course menu for two that includes a glass of wine per person — and we're talking good eats, too, like local swordfish with olive vinaigrette, fennel purée, and herb potato. Sounds like a great idea for Father's Day (June 17). For reservations call 786-279-6800.

Stretch dinner with dad into a soothing staycation at the charmingly retro



White House Inn on the Bay (2305 NE 123rd St., 305-893-8280), a new advertiser that's under new ownership. A night in one of the motel's remodeled rooms/suites, all with water views, won't crimp your wallet a bit, thanks to this month's weekday special. Mention the BT for discounts off the already very affordable rates. You (or visiting friends) will also appreciate the inn's bayside pool/sun deck and fishing from a nearby pier, plus something never, ever found ten minutes away in South Beach: free parking!

For those who want to give thanks to dads in a more spiritual way, **First United Methodist Church of Miami** (400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-371-4706) will be devoting a special time to pray for fathers during its 11:00 a.m. service on June 17. While you're there, suggests church rep Wilma Baggesen, welcome the church's summer intern Christina Sheperd, a University of Florida grad who will be helping out for the next few months before heading to Duke Divinity School in the fall. And speaking of

helping others: On June 23, at 10:00 a.m., First United will have a "Flippin' into Summer" flip flop sandal giveaway for the homeless.

Parents probably already know **Kidstown Pediatrics** (4112 NE 1st Ave., 305-576-5437) as a medical facility that isn't a factory. Dr. Margaret Okonkwo and her staff have a reputation for taking the time to truly care for kids. What people might not know is that the care extends far beyond Miami. Earlier this spring the doctor was a major sponsor of "A Night in Bollywood," donating all the gift bags at this annual Coral Gables fundraiser for Sunil's Home orphanage in India. The event drew more than 1100 patrons. If you didn't make it, the night of Indian food, décor, and performances will have to wait till next year. But the folks at Kidstown want you to know the chance to make a difference in the lives of Indian children (who need the medical therapy, education, and loving home that

Continued on page 32

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**\$ 1.1m- Keystone Pt. Waterfront
Quick Bay & Ocean Access**

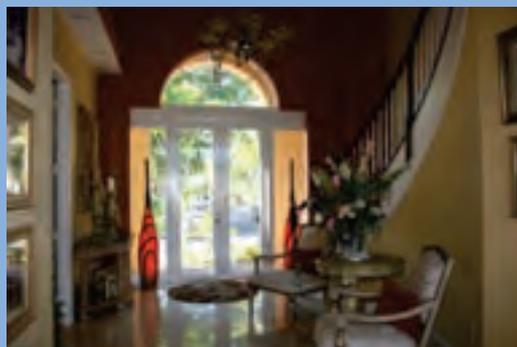
Executive Waterfront Home in 24 Hr. guard gated Islands of Keystone Point. From the dock of this remodeled home you are in Biscayne Bay in 5 minutes and cruising/fishing the Atlantic Ocean 10 minutes later. 75 ft on deep water canal, NO Bridges to Bay. Features: 5 bedrooms, 5 baths over 4,000 sq.ft living area. 25' soaring ceilings, open floor plan, huge granite kitchen w/ cooking island + walk-in pantry. Custom pool. 2 Car Garage.

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and Sellers
intersect every
day*



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

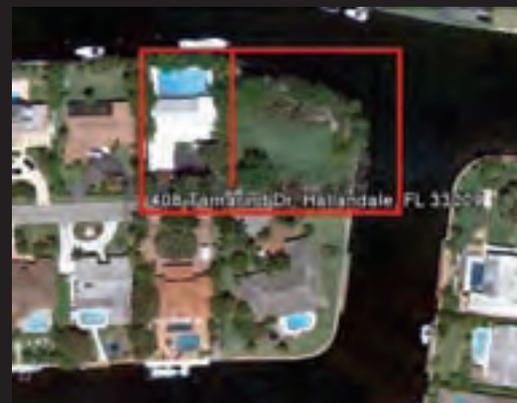
Gorgeous water views and "park" like setting in the front. Quiet, tropical, & serene - a must see! This waterfront home has it all. Won't last long. 5000+ sq.ft Newer Construction. 6 beds, 5 baths. 2 car garage. High end finishes everywhere: marble flrs, granite kitchen with center island, custom pool and waterfall Jacuzzi. Impact/hurricane windows and doors. Security cameras & Alarm Sys. Too much to list. 75 ft on deep water-room for the big boat & the little boat! Beautiful wide water views. No bridges to bay. Located in the 24 Hr. guard gated community of Keystone Point. \$1,990,000



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NEW CONSTRUCTION - Waterfront Paradise !

Brand New Construction – Custom Built 2 Story pool home! Modern Design with Super high-end finishes. 5br, 6ba, 3 car garage, 5,970 sf., 75 feet on direct bay canal. 45' foot dock, 2 boatlifts (24K & 12K). Yard completely gated and fenced. Full security alarm and camera system. Metal roof, separate outside kitchen, complete sound system, huge eat-in kitchen - natural gas. OWNER WILL FINANCE !!! Offered at \$1.79m.



Opportunities like this don't come often – over 400ft on the Waterfront

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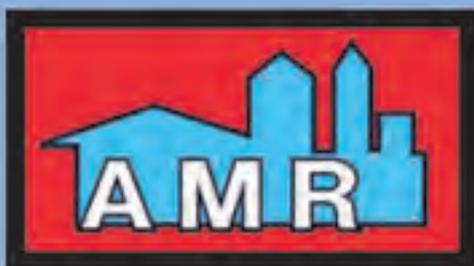


Keystone Pt. Island 5 – Waterfront

76 Feet on protected ocean access canal – Boat lift - No Bridges to Bay – Lowest price per sq.ft. for this 2 story-tri-level pool home. Huge living areas, updated eat-in kitchen with granite counters. Upstairs master suite, tub & separate shower + large walk-in closet is 12'x10'. FEATURES: Auto exterior lighting, sprinkler sys, alarm sys, waterfall & pond! Offered in the low \$800s- Make offer!

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Our Sponsors: JUNE 2012

BizBuzz

Continued from page 30

Sunil's provides) is something you can still do. Visit www.sunilshome.com to learn more and make a donation.

Now that school's out, your own kids are probably underfoot and misbehaving. When we were growing up, our grandmother kept us in line during summer vacations by threatening to send us to juvie. But in these more enlightened times, the solution isn't threatening nanas; it's **Wonder Nannies** (20801 Biscayne Blvd., 305-965-0378). All of this new advertiser's experienced nannies (as well as housekeepers, babysitters, and personal assistants) are not only thoroughly screened and background-checked, but trained in CPR and first aid. Give 'em a call and they'll guarantee to match you up perfectly. The agency's motto is: "Do It Right the First Time."

Miami's summer low season is typically the time of year that restaurants fold or, at best, coast rather than offering something new. But that's not true of *BT* restaurant advertisers.

Welcome to new advertiser **Hippo Bites** (1071 NE 79th St., www.hippo-bites.com for online orders) and **Buddha Sushi Bar**, two adjacent eateries with one owner — i.e., an instant mini-restaurant empire. The sushi bar is actually coming soon, but Hippo is already serving up just the kind of light fare one craves during the dog days — salads, sandwiches like grilled veggies or smoked shrimp, international wraps, fresh-squeezed OJ — plus the kind of food one craves all year — namely, pastries and breakfast served all day. There's also free private parking, outdoor picnic tables, and a playground area.

If it's the grown-ups who want to play, Thierry Bossa, the very French proprietor of new advertiser **La Cigale Wine Bistro** (7281 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-0014), announces that the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship, hosted by Poland and the Ukraine from June 8-July 1, will be retelevised in the restaurant. "Football," in this case, means soccer. Ah, those crazy Europeans. Less crazy folks can try to ignore the generally very vocal fans and just eat, something made easier by Provençal taste treats like an authentic Niçoise salad, an entrecôte steak with secret sauce, sweet pan-fried swai fish, duck confit, traditional North African cous-cous with imported merguez sausage,

and lavender cake.

At **Laurenzo's Italian Center** (16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381), the new cooked-to-order (no longer just steam-tabled, cafeteria-style) dishes that the café's pizzaiolo Don Vito has been testing for the past few months are now perfected on a new menu offering more than 20 items. Stop by Tuesday-Saturday from 3:00-6:00 p.m. or Sunday from noon to 5:00 p.m. for restaurant-quality, two-course dinners of Italian-American classics (like soup or salad plus gnocchi Bolognese, chicken Marsala, and many more choices), for under \$10. In a rush? While we personally wouldn't dream of forgoing the pleasure of cruising the shop's salumi counter, olive oils, and wines, owner David Laurenzo says it's okay to call in orders to go.

Meanwhile David Cohen at **Bagels & Company** (11064 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2435) is continuing his coupon specials through the summer. Bring in this issue's ad for three eat-in specials (\$2 off tabs of \$10 or more; \$5 off checks totaling \$20 or more; and a buy-one-get-one-free entrée twofer), or a take-out bargain: Buy a dozen of the shop's hand-rolled bagels and get a dozen free. The deals are good weekdays only.

One thing that definitely is no fun in the summertime is sweating over a hot stove. Fortunately the prices at new advertiser **Namaste Indian Restaurant** (7420 Biscayne Blvd., 786-536-9050) are so budget-friendly that it's possible to dine out every night at this friendly, no-frills neighborhood place, which offers all the usual North Indian favorites plus a few unusual Indo-Chinese dishes. Parking is free, too, in the motel lot across the Boulevard.

If you're in the mood for locally oriented American and ethnic comfort food with a creative twist, drop in to new advertiser **Blue Collar** (6730 Biscayne Blvd., 305-756-0366), a name describing not just chef/owner David Serfer's food but the place's décor — and working-class prices. We're particularly partial to the changing seasonal vegetable sides, more than a dozen-and-a-half daily, but the Miami-born Serfer shows his booster side in other dishes, too, like egg-topped pork and beans incorporating the luscious, locally made links of Proper Sausages, or Cuban-inspired inventions like vaca frita-crowned tostones.

The standard after-work happy hour may be enough to make some happy, but for Miami's many night people, 4:00-7:00

p.m. is practically breakfast. Fortunately there's an alternative: **Tuna's Garden Grille** (17850 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-932-0630). Though known primarily for its seafood, it's also a best-kept-secret hangout for night owls, with frequent live entertainment in the outside bar area and a happy hour, offering discounted prices on much of the menu, from 11:00 p.m. to closing. The kitchen stays open till 2:00 a.m., too.

As if the Midtown/Design District area weren't already Miami's hottest dining destination, here's more exciting news: **Metro 1 Properties** (120 NE 27th St. #200, 305-571-9991) has just completed the sale of the 10,500-square-foot, indoor-outdoor restaurant/lounge space formerly occupied by Grass, on NE 40th Street. Metro 1 president Tony Cho and commercial sales director Tony Arellano represented the seller. No word yet on whether the club/lounge planned for the space will have a restaurant component or, if so, what kind of food is coming. But we're working on it, and will let you know ASAP.

The family pets need feeding, too. And now that they've become accustomed to the gourmet natural and/or organic products of longtime advertiser **By Nature**, they're going to get mighty grouchy if you don't take advantage of this month's special: \$1 off a bag of By Nature dog biscuits, which come in tempting flavors, including spiced molasses, green tea and honey, and mixed berry. There's a "canine whites" biscuit, too, that cleans teeth and freshens breath. Consult the company's website (www.bynaturepetfoods.com) for local shops selling the full line of healthy, tasty treats.

If you're going to venture outside of air-conditioned zones this month, chances are it'll be in a bathing suit, or shorts/tank top. How're ya gonna look? Well, darn fine if it's up to **Beach Beauty** (6685 Collins Ave., 786-280-9204) which, this month, is offering a free personal training session on the Power Plate to the first 30 callers to schedule an appointment mentioning the *BT*. The machine, a whole new style of full-body training according to BB's body master Fernando Maestre, not only tones and defines but also rehabilitates injuries, burns fat, stimulates lymphatic drainage that aids in detoxifying and revitalizing your system, increases bone density and flexibility, and enhances relaxation. The latter of which we'd expect. Geez, just writing about all that self-improvement makes us want to flop and snore. By the way, the name Beach Beauty may suggest that the facility is

just a salon and/or for women — but it's actually a full-service health/fitness spa for everyone, offering services from haircuts to anti-aging treatments— even teeth whitening.

The coolest place to enjoy the outdoors during South Florida summers is right on the water, basking in the sea breezes from the deck of a boat. And tropically landscaped **Keystone Point Marina** (1950 NE 135th St., 305-940-6236) has just made it a lot easier to own your own with the leasing of an office space to Davey Marine Center, which has been selling both new and used boats from its Fort Lauderdale location since 1977. As for all your other boating needs (outdoor dry storage or wet slips, pressure cleaning and bottom painting, gas and oil, boating supplies, ice, fishing bait, a fish-cleaning station and weigh-in scale, as well as fishing charters, towing service, a free pump-out station, and even a "safe harbor hurricane plan"), Keystone, in operation for more than 50 years, is truly a full-service marina.

Like many Miamians, our idea of enjoying nature during the dead of summer is looking at it through the window while lying on a couch in air-conditioned comfort. Barbecues and similar summer parties are nice, too, as long as someone else is doing all the outdoor work. When you're spending months indoors, though, one can't help feeling the urge to redecorate. Check out new advertiser **Divano Design** (100 NW 36th St.), a European company with a new Design District location. Owner Jerome Abecassis will charm you, and so will the stock of contemporary furniture by French designers. Much modern furniture is too minimalist for our taste, but Divano's is different, with many pieces featuring festive curvilinear elements that look like the party has already begun.

With all that summer has to offer, it'd be a shame to miss out because some painful, persistent chronic medical condition makes it impossible to feel like having fun. But there's hope. **Dr. Lee Barbach** (www.iWishiFeltBretter.com) will be holding in-office seminars on different topics each Saturday over the summer: low back and neck pain, irritable-bowel syndrome, thyroid disorders, learning disabilities, fibromyalgia, weight loss, more. Call 305-373-5411 to find out the topic of the week and reserve your space.

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

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Airboating along the Kissimmee River at River Ranch.

TWO TANKS OF GAS

Eight pretty cool staycation spots you can drive to without spending a fortune

By Karen-Janine Cohen

You know you're going to do it. Sure, times might be tough, airlines have raised fares, and there's no knowing when gas prices will spike again. But the Constitution guarantees Floridians — like all Americans — the right to a summer vacation.

Okay, it's not exactly squeezed between Freedom of Speech and the right to stockpile an arsenal, though it might as well be. Come war, famine, or pestilence, the American family will, in June or July or August, take time to frolic and bond.

Yet in these days of austerity, that vacation could be shorter, cheaper, and closer to home than before. In that spirit, Biscayne Times has come up with a few getaway suggestions, all within Florida, from the Keys to the Georgia border. We even included one right in our own backyard.

Many of these destinations offer discounts to Florida residents, along with summertime specials. All can be reached with two tanks of gas or less. (Our highly scientific calculations were based on how far a 2012 Chevy Tahoe SUV can take you with two fill-ups.)

An intrepid *BT* correspondent ventured in person to several locations, while the information on others was gathered by phone, Internet, and e-mail. Most were referred by people who have been there and done that, or who have special knowledge of the Florida hospitality landscape.

One particularly valuable resource is Sal Dickinson's website FloridaVacationAuction.com, which is affiliated with VisitFlorida.com, the state's official tourism organization. Dickinson, a veteran of the hospitality industry, used eBay as a model to design his site, in which hotels

and attractions offer packages through a time-limited bidding process. Some of the deals are truly amazing.

So let's pack up the car, grab the kids, and hit the road!

Westgate River Ranch Cowboy Theme Park Resort
3200 River Ranch Blvd.
River Ranch 33867
863-692-1321
wgriverranch.com

If you feel South Florida isn't fulfilling your whoopin' and hollerin' needs, head up



Real cowboys riding real bulls at the ranch's Saturday rodeo.

the turnpike to River Ranch. It's roughly 175 miles northwest of Miami and 25 miles from anything else. This is about as close to the classic dude ranch as you'll find in these here parts. River Ranch motto: "Unleash your inner cowboy."

With pet-friendly accommodations that range from standard inn rooms to 1400-square-foot, one-bedroom cabins with wrap-around porches, the ranch offers horseback riding, skeet shooting, archery, airboat rides, dinner hay rides, a petting zoo, a big swimming pool, a full-service marina, and most impressive, a Saturday night rodeo that features acrobatic horseback tricks, barrel racing, and bull riding.

During a recent trip to the ranch, it's clear that Ray Duncan, rodeo master of ceremonies, takes his job seriously, urging the hundreds of eager people in the stands to cheer for the riders — be they girls racing nimble pintos around a series of barrels or young men trying to stay on the back of a bucking bull.

"This is not a funeral! This is not the opera!" Duncan shouts to the audience from atop his own mount. "You have the ability to make *electricity* in the arena. If there's any red in your neck, you can show it tonight!" And that just about sets the tone.

As the sun sets and the moon rises, the audience claps and yahoos when one of the bull riders stays on for more than a few seconds; groans when he is thrown off; and everyone laughs when the bulls, with names like Banana, Old School, and Gangster, decline to return to their pens, taking star turns around the grounds, snorting at the audience, charging and feinting at the attendant horsemen. Kids are especially entranced by it all.

The rodeo bleachers are filled with River Ranch guests — many from Tampa or Miami, others from as far away as South Africa — but also with quite a few area residents. One telling observation: No one, not a single person, was seen yakking on a cell phone or texting obliviously.

River Ranch is clean and well-kept, the grounds nicely landscaped under a canopy of majestic oak trees draped in Spanish moss, where you might glimpse a crested caracara, also known as a Mexican eagle. In fact wildlife abounds, thanks largely to a neighboring 7000-acre wildlife management area. A 13-mile stretch of the rustic Florida Trail is accessible as it winds through nearby wilderness. Oh yes, there's also an airfield on the property



TradeWinds Island Resorts has 20 acres of beachfront and a huge water park.

— for the pilots among us.

The ranch animals seem relaxed, even in the petting zoo, with its little goats, donkeys, and other creatures to delight eager young children.

Sunday morning calls for riding, and the horses are also low-key during two hours on the trail. In pastures you can see grazing horses and their foals, cows, calves, and bulls, some of which had starred in the Saturday show. A thrilling airboat ride down the Kissimmee tops off the trip.

Many of the accommodations are time-shares, so the décor varies, though they are always spotless and well-equipped. You can dine at one of three on-site eateries or prepare your own meals at your cabin, a nice option for those who like to cook.

River Ranch has been around since the 1960s. Westgate Resorts bought it out of bankruptcy, about a decade ago, says Mark Waltrip, COO of the company, which operates a number of other resorts. "We dumped a ton of money into it and rebuilt the whole thing."

Florida residents get ten percent off the best available rates. Add-ons are extra. The rodeo is \$15.50 for adults, \$8 for kids. Horseback rides are \$40. And archery? Five buck for all the arrows you can shoot.

TradeWinds Island Resorts
5500 Gulf Blvd.
St. Pete Beach 33706
727-360-5551
www.justletgo.com

For some reason, many of us who live along the Biscayne Corridor need to cross Alligator Alley in order to feel like we've really gone someplace different. Call it the Everglades effect. There's something transformative about passing through a wilderness ruled by alligator and egret, though Miami to Naples is only two hours.

One Gulf Coast vacation option worth considering is "Winter's Dolphin Tale Getaway," at TradeWinds Island Resorts on St. Pete Beach Island. The three-night package, beginning at \$591, includes resort lodging at either the TradeWinds Island Grand or the sister property, Sandpiper. Also included: a dolphin watch cruise for two — and a plush toy dolphin, plus two tickets to the Clearwater Marine Aquarium, home to Winter, the dolphin that inspired the 2011 movie *Dolphin Tale*. Winter, whose fluke was damaged by a crab trap, was rescued and ultimately received a prosthetic tail.

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At Hawks Cay: Five swimming pools, a private lagoon, even an adults-only section.

Two Tanks

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An especially enticing draw for families is the TradeWinds Grand's 15,750-square-foot water park and playground — for those kids who just have to spend all day in the water. The feature, unveiled last year, includes water slides, climbing equipment, the “Rockit” inflatable island, and many other slipping and sliding treats.

This year the resort, with 20 acres of beachfront, is luring guests with the JetLev, a water-propelled jetpack that lets you soar to heights of 30 feet at 30 miles an hour. You could be James Bond in *Thunderball!*

“Over the years, we’ve put in a lot of resources,” says Travis Johnson, vice president of marketing and a 12-year veteran of the resorts. The recent program additions — from partnering with the Clearwater aquarium to the new water park and electric surfboards, the JetLev, not to mention the Gyrosphere, a contraption that lets guests spin and twirl away their vacation days — are all part of creating an experience to remember, says Johnson: “We really want to make it, nationwide, noticed as a top family destination.”

Meanwhile the nearby Sandpiper will soon become the first Guy Harvey-branded U.S. resort. (Two others are located in the Bahamas.) Harvey, an entrepreneur who advocates sustainable sport fishing, sells shirts and other gear at many retail outlets. Harvey also

funds ocean conservation and research, and in 1999 established the Guy Harvey Research Institute in collaboration with Nova Southeastern University’s Oceanographic Center. “He’s an international brand, and we were looking at ways to create a difference with Sandpiper,” Johnson explains.

Florida residents can take advantage of a 15-percent discount promotion. Both properties also feature a scratch-off ticket with prizes ranging from free beverages and a beach towel to a \$500 gift card.

Hawks Cay
61 Hawks Cay Blvd.
Duck Key 33050
888-395-5539
www.hawkscay.com

For many of us, another gateway to that feeling of escape is the Overseas Highway. The Florida Keys take some of the ingredients in the Miami mix — sun, sand, boating, and fishing — and puts them at the top of the recipe.

For those who want a luxurious experience with an island flavor, Hawks Cay may be the place. It’s mid-Keys, at Mile Marker 61 on Duck Key, and boasts five swimming pools, a private lagoon, and an adults-only section — while also offering a variety of programs for kids. In 2007 Northview Hotel Group acquired the property, which dates from the 1960s. The company invested more than \$35 million in renovations. “The hotel building was taken down to the



Photo related.com

On Little Torch Key, Parmer’s Resort is for active vacationers, though the hammock beckons.

studs and renovated,” says Hawks Cay marketing director Jennifer Dinan, giving the building a “Tommy Bahama feel. I always tell people from South Florida: Our island is like you have left the country and gone to the Caribbean. It’s a completely different world.”

At the 60-acre property, which includes hotel rooms and villas, the emphasis is on water sports, including diving, snorkeling, and fishing — not to mention paddle-boarding, kiteboarding, and kayaking. It also offers the JetLev. Hawks Cay’s Calm Waters Spa was ranked in the top 25 in North America by *Travel + Leisure*’s “World’s Best Awards” in 2009 and 2010.

Guests can also interact with four raised-in-captivity dolphins that live in an ocean enclosure at the resort. Dinan says that Hawks Cay’s dining options also set it apart. The upscale Alma is Hawks Cay’s signature restaurant. “It’s especially impactful for South Florida guests because it has a Latin culture and flavor, using European cooking techniques,” she says.

Hawks Cay always gives a discount to Florida residents — 15 percent in summer — and for the fourth year will host its Heroes Welcome program, from August 20 to November 18. This offers military, fire and rescue, law enforcement, and medical personnel rates starting at \$99. Other visitors who donate \$2, which goes to nonprofits benefiting first responders and those who serve the country, get 20 percent off the cost of

their rooms. Says Dinan: “Every year it’s gotten bigger and bigger and more exciting for all of us.”

Parmer’s Resort
565 Barry Ave.
Little Torch Key 33042
305-872-2157
www.parmersresort.com

Staycationers willing to venture into the lower Keys will find a different experience altogether at Parmer’s, on Little Torch Key, between Marathon and Key West. The 46-unit resort is about 40 years old. “There really was a Parmer, a husband-and-wife,” says Parmer’s general manager Sandy Sledge.

Having been bought by Jay Marzella in 1998, Parmer’s remains a one-owner property, an increasingly rare status in the modern hospitality industry, and reminiscent of an earlier Florida. Rooms have been remodeled and updated, and the docks have been resurfaced and refurbished. Parmer’s proximity to a variety of parks and conservation areas attracts lovers of nature.

“We have a lot of naturalist types,” says Sledge, hastening to add she doesn’t mean that in the nudist sense, but in the outdoors sense. “Kayaking is big,” she adds, “and we’re a very big fishing spot.” Many guests take advantage of the kayaking tours offered by author and well-known Keys naturalist Bill Keogh.

Continued on page 38

Your NEW Congressional District 24



Who is
Dr. Rudolph Moise, D.O., J.D.

EDUCATION

- U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine - Degree: Flight Surgeon
- University of Miami School of Law, JD
- Master of Business Administration, MBA
University of Miami
- Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine
Doctor of Osteopathy, D.O.

WORK EXPERIENCE

- President/Medical Director
Comprehensive Health Center, Inc.
- Chief of Hospital Services
Homestead Air Reserve Station
Rank: Colonel

COMMUNITY SERVICES

- National President (former)
University of Miami Alumni Association
- University of Miami Board of Trustees
- Florida Memorial College, Board of Visitors
- United Way Board of Directors
- Executive Committee Member, Greater Miami
Chamber of Commerce
- Trustee of United Way of Greater Miami
- Jackson Memorial Hospital, Board of Directors
- North Shore Hospital, Board of Directors

PHOTO BY RUDOLPH MOISE FOR CONGRESS

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Two Tanks

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Parmer's is close to the renowned Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary (spectacular coral-reef snorkeling), and the *Adolphus Busch Sr.* and the *USNS Vandenberg* (popular with wreck divers). Parmer's is also near Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge, Bahia Honda State Park, and the Great White Heron National Refuge.

Sledge says the magic of the area turns many guests into repeat customers, who love lounging around the pool or watching the sun set after an active day.

The rooms range from basic to one-, two-, and three-bedroom suites, most with kitchens. Visitors can book the luxurious presidential suite, which has a gourmet kitchen, an outdoor whirlpool, and "his" and "hers" titanium bicycles for the length of your visit. Then there is the waterfront, two-bedroom Lagoon Cottage, which is set apart from the rest of the resort. "It's a great couples retreat, or good for a family coming down," says Sledge.

Parmer's, Sledge adds, is "quiet Keys comfort. We are not a Hyatt, we don't put chocolate on your pillow at night. It's old Keys, but clean and comfortable."

Renaissance World Golf Village Resort
500 South Legacy Trail
St. Augustine 32092
904-940-8000
www.worldgolfrenaissance.com

Some people don't think they've really had a vacation unless it's all about teeing up. One option for such die-hard duffers would be Renaissance World Golf Village, near St. Augustine. It's just down the road from the historic city, which has tons of attractions. It might be just the thing for the golfer, nongolfer couple.

Renaissance World encompasses two courses. One is the King & Bear, named after Arnold Palmer (king) and Jack Nicklaus (bear). According to Scott Selvaggi, the resort's director of sales and marketing, King & Bear is "the only course ever co-designed by both legends of golf." The other course, the Slammer & Squire, was designed with input and inspiration from Slammin' Sammy Snead and Gene "The Squire" Sarazen.

Slammer & Squire "is just steps from the hotel," Selvaggi says. "A chip

Continued on page 40



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Two Tanks

Continued from page 38

shot away.” King & Bear is not quite as close, so transportation is provided. Players enjoy such amenities as chilled apples at the first and 10th holes, cool towels, complimentary range balls, and each cart is equipped with a GPS. This place sprawls such that GPS could come in handy.

Meanwhile, there is the PGA Tour Golf Academy, which offers lessons from pros, and the PGA Tour Stop — the world’s largest golf store. Top that off with the World Golf Hall of Fame & Museum. “It has a lot of fun, interactive exhibits,” Selvaggi says. One is the virtual golf simulator, where you can “play” on 22 of the world’s top courses.

The 301-room hotel offers a number of dining options, from the Villagio Italian Grille to Murray’s Bros. Cad-dyshack. Renaissance World also provides transport to downtown St. Augustine, 15 minutes away, and to the members-only Serenata Beach Club, to which Renaissance guests are given complimentary access.



Amelia Island boasts many Victorian mansions like Fairbanks House, a bed and breakfast in Fernandina Beach.

Renaissance World also offers a special for Florida residents starting at \$99. Selvaggi notes they have certainly seen an uptick in visits by Floridians over the past few years, and also people replacing the traditional two-week road trip with a series of smaller vacations. For golf fanatics, Selvaggi says, “There is no reason to go north — or anyplace else.”

**Amelia Island
Tourist Development Council
102 Centre St.
Amelia Island 32034
904-277-0717
www.ameliaisland.com**

If you’re considering north Florida but find St. Augustine too obvious, give a thought to Amelia Island. It’s 13 miles long, capped at one end by Fort Clinch

State Park and at the other by Big Talbot Island State Park. Amelia is separated from the mainland by Nassau Sound and a maze of rivers and creeks.

It has a brace of golf courses, a jazz festival, a chamber music festival, a film festival, and something called the “Amelia Island Concours d’Elegance,” in which owners of vintage and super-cool cars — presumably a mostly well-heeled, Great Gatsby crowd — show off their prizes for charity.

In short, this is a tony island. It’s also a place with a fascinating history and an abundance of hotels and inns that offer pretty nice summer packages. “This one island showcases everything that people love about Florida — beautiful beaches, breathtaking natural beauty, great restaurants, golf, resorts — but has a colorful history and distinct charm all her own,” says Gil Langley, president and CEO of the Amelia Island Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Amelia Island is the only place in the United States to have been under eight different flags, he explains, “giving her a rather tumultuous past of pirates, pillaging, and plunder.” Visitors can learn more

Continued on page 42

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Two Tanks

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at the Amelia Island Museum of History.

Known in pre-Colombian times by the Timucuan Indians, Amelia Island's modern history began in 1562, when Jean Ribault landed on its shores. It's been one thing after another ever since — a smuggler's haven in the early 19th Century, part of Civil War history, and by century's end a haven for wealthy northern visitors. It has a treasure trove of Victorian homes and many independently owned stores in downtown Fernandina Beach.

It is also the home of American Beach, established in the 1930s for African-American vacationers, when black Americans were denied hospitality in most other beachfront resorts up and down Florida's coast.

This summer a number of island hotels and inns are offering special deals. For example, the Amelia Hotel at the Beach is offering a "Sail Away" package that includes a two-night stay and private sailing lessons, starting at \$545.

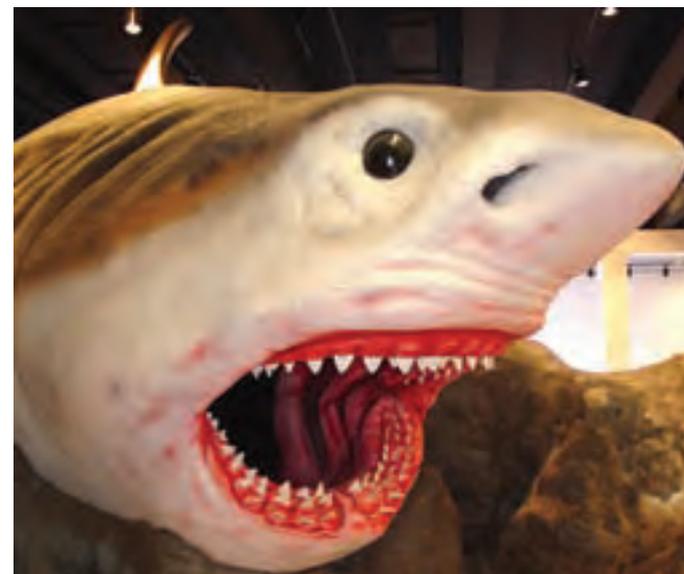
The Omni Amelia Island Plantation has a girls' getaway package, "The Sand,



Believe it or not, you don't need a passport to have fun at the Sheraton Fort Lauderdale Beach Hotel.

Sun & Soul," that includes yoga classes on the beach, a \$100 spa credit, and a basket of literary beach reads, starting at \$265 per night.

On the other hand, the kid-friendly "Pirates and Princesses" package for \$245 per night includes pirate patches and tiaras at check in, private in-room



At the Museum of Discovery and Science's shark exhibit, you can confront the giant megalodon.

movies, and a parents-only dinner while the children are entertained at their own event. What's more, 19 Amelia Island hotels and inns are offering a third or fourth free night for those who meet certain requirements.

Something seems to be working. "We already have more business on the books

for June of this year than we had for all of June last year," says Theresa Hamilton, innkeeper at Fairbanks House, a breathtaking Victorian in Fernandina Beach. "Advance bookings are up, longer stays are up, and last-minute stays are up."

Continued on page 44



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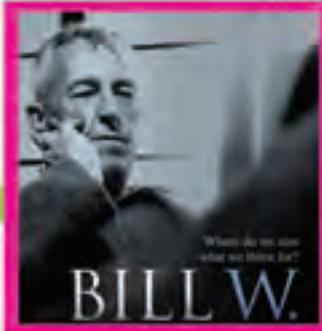
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Two Tanks

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www.sheratonftlauderdalebeach.com

Some of us think just crossing the county line from Miami-Dade to Broward is a journey to a foreign land, complete with unfamiliar customs, different food, and strange music.

For anyone who really wants to stay close to home, Fort Lauderdale this season has some great options. The Sheraton Fort Lauderdale Beach Hotel, for one, is promoting its "Everyone's Invited Escape," for those who think summer vacation should be Spring Break with hotter weather.

Starting at \$548 for two nights, it includes "Battle of the Sexes" beach volleyball, margarita-making lessons, a shopping trip to the Galleria Mall via water taxi, and tickets to the art museum (girls) and a round of golf and wave runner rentals (guys).

This is the first year of the promotion, says Anna Whiddon, from the Zimmerman Agency, which is running the campaign. "We know that staycations are really big in South Florida during the summer months," she says, "and we wanted to create a campaign that piggybacked on the increasing popularity of friends group getaways."

In addition, a program run by the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau, offers to people who book hotel reservations on its site (www.sunny.org) a \$25 American Express gift card. "It's to help offset the price at the pump," says Jessica Taylor, the group's media relations director.

The sunny.org website also has a list of two-for-one deals, from catamaran charters to scuba diving.

Some purists maintain that the only real staycation is the one you build yourself. Fort Lauderdale might have some of the best ingredients for that, especially for kids. Since the movie *Jaws*, nothing says summer like sharks. Parents can keep their shark-mad kids happy with

Continued on page 46



BT photo by Silvia Ros

Miami splurge: The Mandarin Oriental on Brickell Key has its own beach and a spa to die for.

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BT photo by Silvia Ros

The Mandarin's special offer: Limo to a Marlins game, great seats, jerseys and caps, and more.

Two Tanks

Continued from page 44

two exhibits. At the Fort Lauderdale Museum of Discovery and Science you can find the megalodon, a representation of the giant prehistoric shark that roamed the ancient seas. It's part of the museum's "Prehistoric Florida" exhibit, representing the Sunshine State some 65 million years ago. The museum also has several live sharks on exhibit.

Next, take the kids to the Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, where sharks are also to be found — in drawings, photos, sculptures, and video—in an exhibition, "SHARK," organized in collaboration with Nova Southeastern University's Oceanographic Center and curated by Richard Ellis, an artist, author, and environmentalist. It addresses as well the impact of *Jaws*, which did so much to influence how people around the world feel about sharks, and speaks to efforts to protect shark species, many of which are now facing extinction due to overfishing.

Mandarin Oriental, Miami
500 Brickell Key Dr.
Miami, FL 33131
305-913-8288

www.mandarinoriental.com/miami/

We all know how wearing travel can be. How often have you said you need a vacation to get over the vacation? If that's you, one option is to stay even closer to home, maybe at a place where you don't have to put out too much effort, someplace that treats you really well. In fact, someplace like the Mandarin Oriental Hotel on Brickell Key.

This year it is offering the "I Love Marlins" package. It's a two-night stay for two in a luxury suite; two therapeutic

spa treatments; and a chauffeured trip to and from the Miami Marlins ballpark, where you'll get great seats, plus two baseball jerseys and caps. At \$2450 it may be considered a splurge.

While no one's going to confuse the Mandarin Oriental with a value chain, that doesn't mean it doesn't offer specials. Through September 30, guests can take advantage of the "Insider Offer" from \$249 a night, which includes breakfast, complimentary valet parking, and special extras at the spa.

And by the way, the spa at the Mandarin Oriental has it all, from a 50-minute aromatherapy facial to full-day programs that encompass everything from Ayurvedic Holistic Body Treatments to Thai Herbal Compass Rituals and lots more in-between. If both of you want the experience, never fear — there is also a couples suite.

The mood is set early by the spa's location, overlooking Biscayne Bay. "We sometimes see dolphins from here," says spa therapist Shavon Etan, as the elevator rises from the ground floor — where spa patrons have already been relaxed with a cup of cool raspberry hibiscus tea and an herb-infused Oshibori towel — to a treatment room so private and lovely it will make you think of the spa cultures of old Europe, though in modern translation.

There is the self-warming treatment table, and up a step, a chaise lounge with a Jacuzzi-type tub. The far wall is all windows.

Etan is a master at her craft, transporting clients to a relaxation zone where cares just drop away.

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Food Truck Mix-Up

The big Wynwood roundup on Second Saturday (love it or hate it) is battling bureaucracy

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Senior Writer

Aron Byers, owner of the Nacho Bizness food truck, loves the monthly Second Saturday Art Walks. Apart from the high volume of sales for his burritos, tacos, and salads, Byers loves the vibe.

"It is the best event on earth," he says, while preparing a grilled skirt steak burrito with black beans and corn salsa during a recent food-truck event held at North Miami's Johnson & Wales campus. But Byers is not sure if he will return for the next Second Saturday on June 9 for fear he will be shut down. "The City of Miami is just run by sh**heads," he says.

Miami still doesn't have a clear policy for mobile kitchens. Although most food trucks are licensed as restaurants by the state, they can't remain stationary on public or private property within Miami city limits unless they have a special-event permit.

Yet food trucks are still as common a sight as hipsters in stingy-brim fedoras during Wynwood's Second Saturday, and for more than a year they thrived in a sanctuary: a 3.2-acre lot at NW 2nd Avenue and 22nd Street. Besides dozens of trucks, the lot hosted free live music, a bar, and vendors selling a variety of wares.

This past March city officials discovered that the so-called Wynwood Street Food & Music Fest was operating without proper permits and shut it down. The event at that lot was canceled again last month after Richard Hales, the festival's organizer, was unable to extend a temporary permit awarded to him a month earlier.

As of press deadline, it remains unclear if the proper permits will be pulled in time for June 9, although Hales vows to try. "We're going to be meeting with the city to find a resolution and get this thing done," he says.

Even if Hales obtains a permit to gather on the vacant lot, the event's days may be numbered. City officials have demanded improvements to the property, including the installation of a new iron fence and more hedges. Oren Cohen, the property's manager, says the enhancements are somewhat pricey. "It's more of a neighborhood kind of event than a business thing," says Cohen. "We're trying to see how it's going to play out. Hopefully we'll resolve it one way or another."

Cohen's boss, Moshe Mana, bought the land from developer David Lombardi for \$3.6 million in December 2011, a transaction that increased the Israeli-American entrepreneur's holdings in Wynwood to more than 20 acres. According to Cohen, the new owner intends to continue the food-truck events for the time being. Future uses for the property are now being analyzed, says Tony Cho, president of Metro 1 Properties: "Right now I'm working on a couple of options for that site, but nothing is concrete for the moment."

The food-truck community considers Wynwood Second Saturdays their biggest night. "There's no other event that is bigger," says Hales, owner of the food truck Dim Ssam a Gogo and Sakaya Kitchen restaurant. "A lot of the trucks depend on it."

The food trucks have helped increase attendance at the art walk as well, Hales says: "When I first came here in 2010, the art walks were not nearly as populated. And when the food trucks are not there, the attendance is lower."

Larger crowds mean more exposure for Wynwood, Hales reasons. "Along with gallery owners and developers, we're working to make it a better area.... I believe that the food trucks are showing potential investors in the neighborhood that you can make money here."

Nina Johnson-Milewski, owner of Gallery Diet at 174 NW 23rd St., thinks food trucks have turned the art walks



Photos by Robby Campbell / BeachesMiami.com

Richard Hales's food truck in Wynwood: "There's no other event that is bigger. A lot of the trucks depend on it."

into a circus. "It creates a street atmosphere where people walk around with disposable food items and leave them by the side," she says. The generators used to power the food trucks can be noisy, too. "The ambient noise from having 20 or 30 different food trucks is so loud I can hear it when I'm in the office," she adds. "It can be a little problematic."

Juliana Mieth, manager of Diana Lowenstein Fine Arts at 2040 N. Miami Ave., says she won't go to NW Second Avenue during the art walks because "it's too crazy." The food trucks, she believes, "distract a lot from the idea of an art scene. People go to the gallery walk and eat and then go to the galleries to use the bathrooms."

Hales says the chaos is actually caused by some local street vendors and gallery owners who offer complimentary alcohol. "We bring a lot of attention to ourselves, but then you have people selling beer and barbeque, unlicensed, without permits, all over the street," he says. "And they've been allowed to stay there."

David Lombardi says he started the food truck event on his vacant lot in an attempt to control them. "I didn't like the way the food trucks were lining the street in front of the façades of businesses, with smoke billowing inside the gallery spaces," Lombardi recalls. "I just thought it would be a good solution."

He teamed up with Hales, who agreed to help him organize the event. Before long, 35 trucks had signed on, paying a rate of \$75 for the right to operate there. After expenses for portable toilets, sanitation, and entertainment, Lombardi says he earned maybe \$500

or \$600 a month from the events. Not exactly a windfall.

Lombardi says he pulled permits for the event "a couple of times," but usually he didn't even bother. "Nobody complained," he says. "It was a logical thing. It was a benefit."

That changed this past March when code enforcement officers told Hales they'd been alerted to the situation. Hales says a complaint had been filed by Brad Knoefler, president of the Omni Parkwest Redevelopment Association, owner of downtown's Grand Central event space, and prolific e-mailer to city officials. Knoefler also owns Grand Central Park, a temporary open space where the old Miami Arena once stood that has hosted events such as concerts and a monthly food-truck event on Fridays.

"He sent a direct e-mail to the city," Hales says, "outlining that we did not have a permit, asking why the fire department wasn't involved. He was very specific."

Knoefler denies he complained about the Wynwood Street Food & Music Fest. Frustrated with the city bureaucracy regarding his own Food Truck Happy Hour event, Knoefler claims he was merely inquiring how Lombardi was able to get his permits. "I figured they were doing something different with the city," he says.

Knoefler insists he never considered Wynwood to be a threat to his Friday Food Truck Happy Hour. In fact he says he wants *more* events like the Wynwood gathering. That's why he's campaigning for a streamlined permit process. "The problem with the city is that it's a free-for-all," he

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New Life for an Old Favorite

At last the Vagabond Motel has found a benefactor

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Senior Writer

After sitting abandoned and boarded up for three years, the historic Vagabond Motel may soon have new owners. Developer Avra Jain and her partner Joseph Delvecchio have a contract to buy the iconic Vagabond for an as yet-to-be revealed price from a partnership headed by David Lin.

Their plan is to restore the 1950s-era motel, located at 7301 Biscayne Blvd., to its former glory, running it as a boutique inn with up to 50 rooms. The new Vagabond, which could be open as early as fall 2013, will include a renovated pool and courtyard, at least one restaurant with dining terraces and a full-service bar, a bakery, a salon, a spa, and a gym.

"We're pretty excited about it," says Jain, who has developed properties in New York, Sunny Isles Beach, and along the Biscayne Corridor. "So far everything seems to be going pretty smoothly."

But for the project to be realized, Jain says the Vagabond needs a zoning change. Right now, only the western portion facing Biscayne Boulevard is zoned for hotel use, she says.

The City of Miami's Historic Environmental and Preservation Board will hear the plans for the Vagabond in July, says project architect Dean Lewis. Once the HEP Board endorses the project's plans, the developers will formally apply for a zoning change. So far, meetings with Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, whose district includes the Upper Eastside, and city planning and zoning officials have been positive, he adds.

"The city has agreed to support the application and it makes sense to them," Lewis says. "We're not talking about adding additional height or more rooms or anything like that. It is more of an administrative resolution based on the renaissance we have planned for the Vagabond. We're basically reviving this

motel and it needs support."

The Vagabond's rezoning already has the support of the Belle Meade Homeowners Association. In a May 10 letter to the city, Jo Wilder, president of the Belle Meade HOA, declares that a renovated motel is far better, and safer, than a boarded-up building, which she describes as a "plague upon the Belle Meade community" that has attracted drug users, the homeless, illegal dumping, and prostitution. "We encourage you to not only approve the requested [zoning change], but to expedite the required processes necessary to assist the development team in getting shovels in the ground as soon as possible," she writes.

Teri D'Amico, a co-founder of the MiMo (Miami Modern) preservation movement, who championed the Vagabond's historic designation back in 2003, is also thrilled at the prospect of a complete restoration. "I hope it'll be an excellent model for the other Biscayne motel owners and encourage them to rehabilitate their properties," D'Amico says. "The motel use will bring people into the neighborhood and will help the other businesses along Biscayne Boulevard, too."

Sidney Goldberg built the 22,000-square-foot Vagabond Motel in 1953, at a time when Biscayne Boulevard was heavily used by vacationing families traveling to South Florida. It was designed by B. Robert Swartburg, architect of the Delano Hotel and the Bass Museum in Miami Beach.

MiMo design advocates such as D'Amico hail the Vagabond as a prime example of 1950s and 1960s MiMo architectural design. But like many motels along the Boulevard, the Vagabond's appearance deteriorated during the downturn of the 1970s and 1980s, when that part of Miami's Upper Eastside was overrun by prostitutes and drug dealers.

Eric Silverman, a former men's clothing executive, bought the Vagabond in 2005 for \$4 million, with a primary mortgage financed by the previous owners,



Developer Avra Jain, a perfect match for the Vagabond.

headed by Lin. Playing up the legends that Frank Sinatra and other Rat Pack stars frequented the Vagabond during its heyday, Silverman vowed to create a boutique motel that would spur the resurgence of other old motels along the Boulevard.

To encourage this trend, the Miami City Commission in 2006 created the MiMo Biscayne Boulevard Historic District between 50th and 77th streets. Silverman, however, only managed to open a clothing store and operate a farmers market at the motel. Still owing Lin and his partners a mortgage of \$2.7 million, and hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines and past-due property taxes, Silverman abandoned the property in 2009.

After Lin regained control, several potential buyers showed interest in the property. Lewis, an Upper Eastside resident who is the architect for two other new commercial projects on the Boulevard, says he also took an interest in the Vagabond, introducing two prospective purchasers to Lin.

One of those prospects was Jain, a former Wall Street trader who began her real estate career in Manhattan by buying, renovating, and selling condos and other buildings in SoHo and TriBeCa. By 1999 Jain was investing in property in Miami-Dade County, developing the condo resort Blue at Doral, buying the retail portion of the Marina Blue condo in downtown Miami, and spearheading efforts to build the 43-story Regalia in Sunny Isles Beach.

Her Miami-Dade real estate adventures did come with some pain. The Regalia project's lenders sued to foreclose on the site before it even broke ground in 2009. Last year it was sold to Golden

Beach Developers LLC, headed by Louis Montello. Jain says she "hung on" and is involved with Regalia once again.

Jain, who lives in downtown Miami, has long been intrigued by the Vagabond. "It speaks to me every time I drive by it," she says. "It's the gem on the block. I can see it lit up, walking in the courtyard. I can imagine what it was like back in the day. I think it should be that way again."

To help plan the Vagabond's resurrection, Jain hired Stoli Hotel & Resorts as the project's food and beverage consultant. Also on the team is Stephane Dupoux, CEO of Dupoux Design, which created the interiors for South Beach nightspots such as Opium, Pearl, Nikki Beach, Touch, and The Strand.

Jain is the perfect developer for the Vagabond, according to Jeff Morr of Majestic Properties. "She's good at raising money," he says. If redeveloped right, the Vagabond could become "the Standard of the Upper Eastside," Morr adds, referring to swank hotel and spa on Belle Isle in Miami Beach.

The owners of the New Yorker motel at 6500 Biscayne Blvd., which underwent an extensive renovation in 2009, already charge between \$65 and \$175 a night for their 50 rooms. Morr thinks a revamped Vagabond could demand from \$100 to \$175 a night. By contrast, most Boulevard motels charge around \$40 a night. The Vagabond project may change that business model.

"It may encourage more motel renovations," Morr says. "Instead of being hooker hotels, they'll be places where normal people will stay — and not by the hour but by the day."

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

The One-Party System

Political maneuvering leads to a State Attorney showdown in which only Democrats can vote, and which *BT* readers could decide

By **Erik Bojnansky**
BT Senior Writer

During the 19 years Katherine Fernandez Rundle has been Miami-Dade's State Attorney, she has had election challengers just three times. Voters from all political parties had a chance to decide if Rundle deserved to be re-elected, or if the job should go to someone else. She won every time.

Now she's facing a challenger for the fourth time, but with a difference. On August 14, Rundle will face off against attorney Roderick Vereen. In this election, however, only registered Democrats can vote. No Republicans, no independents, no Libertarians will be allowed to cast a ballot. It's known as a "closed" primary. How did that happen?

Thanks to arcane state election laws, it happened automatically when Miami attorneys Michele Samaroo and Omar Malone entered the race as write-in candidates. More about that below. The consequences, however, are clear: It that means *Biscayne Times* readers will likely decide the August election.

Why?

Because the Biscayne Corridor, from Brickell to Broward, is heavily Democratic.

"South and west Miami-Dade County are not going to be an issue in this race," says Sean Foreman, a Barry University political science professor who studies local elections. "The action, the fighting, will be north of downtown Miami."

The Biscayne Corridor's potential was apparent to Vereen. On May 9, just days after announcing his candidacy, he held a fundraiser at the New Yorker Motel at 6500 Biscayne Blvd. The candidate drew a respectable crowd, among them Miami City Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones, former Miami Mayor Joe Carollo, and several Biscayne

Corridor activists.

Rundle campaign consultant Robert Levy also recognizes the significance of the Biscayne Corridor's neighborhoods, though he's not quite as emphatic as Foreman. "Considering the demographics of the area and the likely voter registration," he says, "they are very important areas, but no more so than any other area of the county where there are Democratic voters."

Most voters in Miami-Dade County are registered as Democrats — 525,890 of them compared to 368,409 Republicans, according to April 2012 statistics from the Miami-Dade Elections Department. (Independents number 302,780, while 17,105 people are registered with other political parties.)

Within county Commissioner Sally Heyman's District 4 — which covers Aventura, Biscayne Gardens, Miami Shores, Bay Harbor Islands, North Bay Village, and most of the beaches — there are 44,425 Democrats and 19,892 Republicans, with another 26,566 voters belonging to neither party.

Inside county Commissioner Audrey Edmonson's District 3, which includes Edgewater, the Design District, Buena Vista, Little Haiti, the Upper Eastside, western Miami Shores, and El Portal, there are 58,042 Democrats, 9627 Republicans, and 17,361 independents or other party affiliates.

The downtown-Brickell area is dominated by Democrats as well. According to a voter-profile study conducted by the Miami Downtown Development Authority last year, 8188 voters are registered as Democrats compared to 4646 Republicans and 5905 registered as independents or other parties.

Dario Moreno, an election pollster and political science professor at Florida International University, says targeting probable Democratic voters across ethnic lines will be critical for



Incumbent Katherine Fernandez Rundle has never faced a "closed" primary.



Challenger Roderick Vereen is counting on the black vote and the Biscayne Corridor.

both Rundle and Vereen. "You have to look at who votes in a Democratic primary," Moreno explains. "The likely voters [countywide] are 48,000 African Americans, 42,000 non-Latin whites, and 25,000 Hispanic Democrats. That is the universe they're fighting for."

Barry University professor Foreman predicts low voter turnout for this race: "I think your everyday person, your regular citizen, doesn't pay much attention to what the State Attorney's office is doing."

Those who do vote will be influenced by the ethnicity of the candidates, Foreman adds. Rundle is Cuban American. Vereen is black. "The average voter is going to look at their faces, look at the names, and then they're going to decide," he says.

Rundle's most persistent opponent over the years has been former Broward prosecutor Alberto Milian, who ran against her in 2000 and 2004. Both times Milian ran as a Republican and had the backing of the Miami-Dade Police Benevolent Association, a police union long at odds with Rundle.

This time Milian and the PBA are backing Vereen, a former prosecutor turned criminal defense attorney whose clients have included the Liberty City Seven, who, after two mistrials, were convicted of plotting terrorist acts. He also represented Lionel Tate, a juvenile who killed his playmate while wrestling. In 2010 Vereen lost to Frederica

Wilson in a race for the U.S. House of Representatives.

It was during his run for Congress that Vereen says he was encouraged to run for State Attorney. He believes the State Attorney's Office under Rundle has shown favor to the wealthy, has been inconsistent in public corruption cases, and is weak on crime. "She is the *Titanic* and I am that iceberg," he says. "Twenty years in any office is too long. Do I believe in term limits? I do. I think two or three terms is enough. We need to bring in fresh ideas."

Levy argues that Rundle remains popular in every segment of the county. "She has served every area of Miami-Dade County as a tireless person of sincerity and integrity," he says. "She has been tireless in her pursuit of criminal activity in this community, regardless of where it is or who the person is."

Levy also believes it was Rundle's opponents who encouraged Samaroo and Malone to run as write-in candidates. "They were specifically put in the race," he says, "in order to close the primary to deny independents and Republicans the right to vote in the primary election."

Vereen, while admitting he has met Samaroo and Malone, denies having anything to do with their write-in candidacies. "I understand that my counterpart was upset that it's now a Democratic

Continued on page 54

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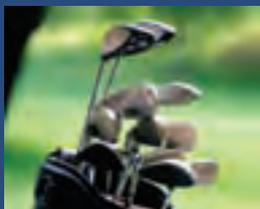
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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR



Not everyone likes the festival atmosphere: "It's too crazy. People go eat and then go to the galleries to use the bathrooms."

Food Truck

Continued from page 48

complains. "One person applies for an event this way, another that way. You can't bring high-quality events to the downtown area because of this mess."

Following the March code-enforcement action, Knoefler says he got an angry phone call from Hales. Then the food-truckers boycotted Grand Central Park. "Whatever," Knoefler shrugs. "I'm still willing to help them get a waiver and apply for a special-event permit for temporary use of the land."

Hales says he's handling permits himself. The property owner even filled up pot holes, removed large rocks, and yanked out old rebar on the site. A fire inspector and off-duty cops were hired as well during the April event. The enhancements and legalization came at a price, though: Food-truck operators had to pay \$125.

Thinking all was fine, Hales flew to Asia. Unfortunately the April permit could not be extended. As a result, only three food trucks operated on the NE 2nd Avenue lot last month.

Recently another food-truck event, organized by Seth "Burger Beast" González, popped up on another vacant lot at 250 NW 24th St., but it was also suspended after the fire department refused to permit it, according to miamifoodtrucks.com. (González did not return phone calls from the BT.)

Barnaby Min, the city's zoning director, says the April food-truck event in Wynwood was granted a "temporary-use permit." Although good for two weeks, a single location cannot obtain a

temporary permit more than twice a year.

Another option is a "vacant-land permit" that is good for six months and can be used "as many times as you want," Min says. The application process is much more detailed and "minor improvements" such as landscaping, restrooms, and trash receptacles are required.

Hales, though, contends that the landscaping and fencing request from the city is more than "minor" for an event that operates for only a few hours each month. "It's pretty expensive," he says.

Nonetheless Hales says he has good rapport with the city and hopes to negotiate: "We're trying to figure out how to substantially meet our obligations and keep the costs in line."

Knoefler suggests that Hales get a special-event waiver from the Miami City Commission that can be good for a year, as he did for Grand Central Park. "I'm willing to help," he says. "I want there to be water under the bridge."

Many food-truckers say they still plan to be in Wynwood on June 9, whether or not the vacant lot is available and in spite of sporadic hassles from police and code enforcement. "We'll try and find a spot somewhere," says David Chipman, owner of Purple People Eater.

One day it may be somewhat easier for food trucks to operate in Wynwood and other parts of Miami. At the request of Mayor Tomás Regalado, Barnaby Min is creating a new food-truck ordinance that will replace regulations from the 1960s meant to govern ice cream trucks. Says Min: "Hopefully it'll be ready in the next few months."

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR

State Attorney

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primary," he says. "I have no control over anyone who files in any position. Somebody could file as a Republican if they wanted to. Anyone has the right to file for anything they feel fit for."

Neither Samaroo, a former president of the Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr. Bar Association, nor Malone, a downtown personal injury attorney, returned phone calls from the *BT*.

Chris Cate, spokesman for the Florida Division of Elections, explains that Florida primaries are always restricted to voters of a particular party — unless that primary will decide an election. For example, if only Republicans run for a partisan state office, then the election is open to all voters. (State Attorney is a partisan state office.)

A single write-in candidate, Cate says, is enough to close any particular primary: "Independents and write-in candidates go directly to the general election ballot without being on the primary ballot. Therefore there will be opposition in the general election." Thus a primary is needed to determine a single Democratic candidate.

Whoever wins the Miami-Dade State Attorney primary in August will technically be running against write-in candidates Samaroo and Ferguson on November 6, even though their names won't appear on the ballot.

Instead of their names, the ballot will contain a blank line with the word "Write-in."

Barry University's Foreman notes that write-in candidates are commonly used by political operatives to close primaries. He suspects the same strategy was this time. "Somebody has got to be behind this," he says.

Some of Rundle's critics believe a closed Democratic primary will prevent the incumbent's own campaign operatives, particularly consultant Alberto Lorenzo, from targeting Cuban-American retirees, many of whom are Republican.

"Ms. Rundle has claimed for so long that she's proud of being a Democrat, but when she was faced with a Democratic primary, she was extremely upset because she wanted her Republican friends to vote," says former Miami Mayor Carollo, a Vereen supporter.

Moreno, however, points out that Rundle never really depended much on Republican voters, including Cuban

Americans. "In a general election, the Republican vote would be against her," he says. "She could get some of it due to the legacy of her father [Carlos Benito Fernandez, Miami's first Cuban-American judge], but not more than 25 or 30 percent."

In the past, Rundle could count on support from the black community. For example, in the 2000 race against Milian, she won 94 percent of the county's black votes. But that was before Rundle filed corruption charges against Miami Commissioner Spence-Jones, a popular figure in Overtown and Liberty City. The commissioner was acquitted last year of charges that she solicited a \$25,000 bribe from developer Armando Codina.

Spence-Jones, whose district also includes Wynwood, Buena Vista, and the Design District, is not only supporting Vereen, she also plans to sue Rundle for violating her civil rights.

With or without Spence-Jones's support, Vereen is bound to get a majority of the black votes in this primary, political pollster Moreno says, yet that won't be enough, especially since Jewish Democrats from Aventura and North Miami Beach tend to back Rundle. "He [Vereen] has got to get a significant number of Hispanic Democrats," Moreno says. "He has to build a coalition."

To assemble such a coalition, Vereen needs lots of money, but he is virtually unknown in the county and has yet to report raising any campaign funds. Says Moreno: "If Vereen can't raise \$200,000, which is hard to do in this economy, he won't be able to launch a serious county-wide campaign."

Rundle, on the other hand, has already raised at least \$489,000. "Her list of campaign contributors reads like a who's-who of downtown businesses and the legal community," Foreman says, adding that he's sure those same contributors, many of whom live in the Biscayne Corridor, will be giving her votes as well. "She does have a pretty good record on fighting public corruption," he allows. "There's also the perception around the business community that things are pretty safe."

So Foreman is confident that Rundle will be re-elected — barring something unexpected. "Unless Vereen does something to really rock the boat," he says, "it looks like the status quo will hold the day."

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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By Joann Hennessey
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Waiting for Joe

Even with a Whole Foods scheduled to open nearby, Miami Shores could still use a local gourmet market

By Jen Karetnick
BT Contributor

In Samuel Beckett's two-act absurdist play, *Waiting for Godot*, the two main characters wait, waxing philosophically, for an unrecognizable individual who, in the end, never appears.

So how many of us in Miami Shores feel like itchy Vladimir and sleepy Estragon? You know, tapping our toes in vain not for someone, but for *something*: an organic-market alternative to Publix.

Count my husband and me among the forever sanguine. Without going into too much detail, we both have chronic illnesses, thanks to centuries of

intermarrying Jews with faulty genes — an argument for marrying outside the faith if I ever heard one — and try to maintain gluten-free diets. (I cheat when I review restaurants and test recipes, which means, in the busy season, I'm a really bad girl. But that's another story.)

Living without wheat, oats, barley, and the other grains that produce gluten is both easier and harder than people think. If you are a good home cook and have the time to make everything from scratch, using quality local ingredients, you won't, after a while, even miss the stuff.

Rice, corn, potatoes, and quinoa are delightful starches that serve just as well for bread mixes as they do on the plate. If



you're not personally inventive, a slew of cookbooks offering gluten-free recipes — including breads, pizza dough, and cakes — has recently come on the market.

But — and it's a big “but” — who has the time to cook this way? Jon and I don't. He often works 14-hour days, not counting the nights he's on call. I have two full-time vocations. And we share the responsibilities of kids, cats, dogs,

and mangos. As for the house, well, that's falling apart; my stiletto heel recently went through our wood floor. (But again, that's another column.)

So half the time, our gluten-free family dinners revolve around a restaurant table. We search beyond Miami Shores — where Pizza Fiore makes it far too tempting to cheat — for South American places that rely on potatoes or Asian



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restaurants that serve rice-noodle dishes.

A big winner? Peruvian-Brazilian-Japanese fusion restaurant SushiSamba Dromo on Lincoln Road (and soon to open in Coral Gables), where chef Michael Bloise, formerly of American Noodle Bar in the Upper Eastside, has an extensive chart in the kitchen for all his cooks detailing what on the menu is free of gluten (and other allergens) or if it isn't, how to make it so. The restaurant now offers hand rolls made with quinoa and beers brewed from rice and sweet potatoes.

Other nights, we pop prepared convenience products into the microwave or onto the stovetop. But eating this way can be even more expensive than dining out, because gluten-free items are outrageously priced. And when you have to drive to a Fresh Market or a Whole Foods far out of your neighborhood, you add the cost of our all-too-expensive gas to what will be a pretty hefty bill.

Yes, the Miami Shores Publix does have a gluten-free section, composed mostly of sweets, snacks, and mixes, along with random prepared items mixed in with the frozen foods and "green" fare. As this type of diet becomes more

popular with folks who want to lose weight — along with tamping down PMS bloat, osteoarthritis attacks, and a whole range of other common complaints — our Publix is attempting to keep up.

But it's almost impossible to afford it. For instance, I recently paid more than \$7 for a bag of Glutino pretzels there. Sure, I could probably have done without them. But I am a snacker of pretzels; it's my preferred nosh. Not having them around would just lead me to cheat on regular pretzels and inflame my symptoms.

If *Waiting for Godot* had a third act, the two men might have seen at least a shadow of hope, just as we are about to: Whole Foods will soon open in the former Office Depot site on the corner of Biscayne Boulevard and 123rd Street.

Unlike the Miami Shores Publix, which only stocks a few products from one or two dedicated gluten-free brands, we will have plenty of options, ranging from Udi's bagels and pizza to Kiss My Face bar soap. (Yes, some people are so sensitive they can't even tolerate gluten on their skin.)

What's more, Whole Foods has its own "Gluten-Free Bakehouse," and the

products, from the apple pie to corn muffins, are pretty darn tasty. In fact Whole Foods offers a gluten-free shopping list to make the lives of people with celiac and other diseases easier; now you don't have to waste your time reading labels. (Check out the shopping lists for other food allergens as well.)

The drawback — and it *is* a drawback — is that Whole Foods is so expensive that it's earned the nickname "Whole Paycheck." In addition, though this site is significantly closer to Miami Shores than the one in Aventura, it will be located at on a stretch that already includes Home Depot, Walgreens, and Office Max. In high-traffic times, the area is impossible to navigate. Want to pick up something on the way home from work? Good luck.

The solution to both problems — expense and location — is to resume petitioning for a health-minded market in Miami Shores. It wouldn't be a Whole Foods, whose extensive cooked sections make that an impossibility given our lack of a sewage system. (Besides, they would never open two branches so close together.) What we need is a Trader Joe's.

Trader Joe's is a chain of grocery stores that began in Southern California in the late 1950s. It's dedicated not only to wholesome, fair trade, gourmet products — emphasis on gourmet — but to keeping prices consistent and low. I became addicted to shopping there as a grad student at the University of California, Irvine. While my peers were supping on cheap spaghetti, I was feasting on foie gras and French baguettes for basically the same price.

Trader Joe's began to expand across the country in the ensuing decades, and in May opened its first Florida store in Naples. A second store is debuting soon in Sarasota. It has no plans to come to this coast anytime soon, but that doesn't stop me from believing it would be an ideal fit for Miami Shores.

The products that are packaged in-store don't require elaborate preparation, and the philosophy of the management — give the people what they want and what they need — is something everybody in Miami Shores could use.

Until Joe decides to show, unfortunately, I see a lot of road trips in my future.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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A Prayer for Confusion Corner

The state's new traffic plan for W. Dixie Highway may do more harm than good, God help us all

By **Mark Sell**
BT Contributor

Driving through the automobile-choked intersection where 125th Street, NE 6th Avenue, and W. Dixie Highway all converge in North Miami awakens many things in the human spirit, none of them good. Now the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is closing in on a plan to relieve that congestion — a plan that might inspire homicidal thoughts, at least if and when construction proceeds.

Try the intersection at rush hour and you'll see why the corner is such a bugbear. Driving east on 125th Street — say, from I-95 — the backup starts at NE 4th Avenue

or even west of there. You sometimes must wait three, even four, light changes before getting through the transom.

Or try zipping through NE 6th Avenue as the light changes to yellow, then red, and — flash! — the photo-enforced camera goes off, welcoming you to the Star Chamber of North Miami red-light court justice and a \$158 fine. Challenge it before the black-robed, no-nonsense magistrate in tennis shoes and she will set you back about \$273, thank you very much. (Yes, I've been there.)

Drive west and the result is about the same, with the eternal wait, the camera, the fine, the works.

How about from the south? Well, they walled off West Dixie a few years



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

back, so now you turn on 123rd Street, head east to NE 6th Avenue, get way back in line in the left lane, wait a couple of light changes as the traffic pokes along, finally hang that left, and wind up smack dab behind... a bus. Or two buses. Or a bus where a passenger is going around to the front to retrieve his bike from the rack while the northbound light changes from green to yellow to red.

(Watch out for that camera!)

This is a good time to focus on your breath and try meditation, as long as you look alive when the light finally turns green again.

Or come from the north, via 6th Avenue or West Dixie. If the light's green and the arrow's out, you're golden. But once it turns to red, just wait. And wait. And wait. Breathe...



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All right, so you know this stuff already. It's not only frustrating; it gets dangerous. The intersection has been the site of 400 crashes in the past five years. Go a block east to NE 7th Avenue and 125th Street, and it's almost as bad. That corner is also a high crash-rate location. And if you want to make a left turn from either direction, you also block a thru lane, making it worse for everybody behind you.

Well, FDOT has a deal for you. It goes like this: Close off all but one lane of West Dixie at the intersection, leaving a single northbound lane snaking past the Chevron station there.

Reroute southbound West Dixie traffic to take a right onto NE 128th Street, three blocks north of Confusion Corner, and then turn left for your last chance to go southbound on NE 6th Avenue, bypassing West Dixie.

But wait, there's more: Narrow West Dixie south of 128th Street from four lanes to two lanes, one-way in each direction, with parallel parking on either side. Make NE 7th Avenue southbound-only north of 125th Street. (That means no northbound left turn from 125th onto

NE Seventh; the plan would also prohibit southbound left turns onto NE Seventh from 125th Street.)

It could have been worse. FDOT was considering blocking off *all* northbound traffic to West Dixie from 125th, before deciding to open it to one lane.

So how do folks like this? Not much, far as we can tell. FDOT held a public hearing at the Elks Club on May 10 and attracted maybe 50 to 60 people. Everyone who spoke was against the plan. In a rare collective display of assent, three council members showed up, all opposed: Michael Blynn, Scott Galvin, and Jean Marcellus.

Muhammad Sidiqqi, a black-bearded gent whose family runs the Chevron, said the family's hard work at the station, as well as his own, had just gotten him through law school. "If you shut this down," he said, "it will really hurt the family."

Marcellus, whose district includes most of the intersection, said, "It's going to hurt our businesses and economic conditions so bad I cannot vote for it."

Galvin said, "I think it will decimate the businesses [north of the intersection]. You have Mary's Lb., AAA

TV, Captain Jim's Seafood."

Mary Tanguay, an animal lover who has catered to pet owners at Mary's Lb. pet supply store for 24 years, worries she will be off the beaten path and lose customers. The store, at the southeast corner of West Dixie and 133rd Street, gets much of its loyal business from Miami Shores and Biscayne Park. Tanguay fears that changing the traffic pattern will drive people away.

"It's a real pain because people will have to go farther," she says. "I haven't heard one person say they like this plan."

Amid all this, FDOT project manager Alejandro Martinez struggles to devise the right answer. Time and again, FDOT has tried to come up with something. Time and again, the community has given it a thumbs down.

"When you have a safety project, something has to happen," Martinez said. "We have 100 crashes a year. We presented another alternative, which was closing West Dixie completely. Now we are presenting this. We take out the southbound lane, and the northbound will remain open. That will benefit businesses around the area. We are doing this because the other alternative was taking 17 businesses away."

If FDOT actually goes ahead with this plan, it would start design within months and the new route would go into effect in 2015.

The economic devastation of the roadwork on NE 2nd Avenue in Miami Shores in 2008 is fresh in the minds of many, including the family running the St. Jacques and St. Jean Baptiste Botanica on the corner of 128th Street, where the spirit of the Almighty battles the potential effects of similar roadwork.

"As soon as they begin work, we're out of here," says Veronique Bellot, visiting her brother, Ernest Tifat, the proprietor. "I don't know what will happen. God knows."

In the center of the shop's floor, there's a 12-inch statue of Saint Lazarus in front of a fountain filled with pennies, with a wooden cane towering over it in symbolic support of the lame and infirm.

Abandoning objectivity, I fumble through my pockets, find three quarters, and toss one in as a prayer for the sick — and for the businesses of West Dixie.

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Maid to Order

Who do you have to know to get good cleaning help in Aventura?

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

I grew up on Long Island, where it was common for families to have housekeepers in some form. Some lived in-house, some came daily, and others did their thing every other week.

They were consistent, reliable, and capable. (Those who dubbed themselves “cleaning people” actually had the skill sets to own the title.) So why is it so difficult to find — and keep — halfway decent cleaning people in Aventura?

Is it because there’s a different work ethic (or lack thereof)? Is it a language barrier? Do I expect too much (show up on time, every time, and clean dirty

things)? If the answer to these questions is no, then please, offer suggestions. I want to know.

I shouldn’t limit this issue to Aventura because, looking back, *Cleaning Lady Interrupted* has occurred at my other South Florida residences. But since I’ve lived here for almost nine years now, let’s talk about what’s happening — or not happening — in Aventura.

I feel compelled to explain why I need a cleaning lady. It’s not because I’m a snob. I don’t feel entitled nor am I a show-off. What I *am* guilty of is being busy and domestically challenged. I love the idea of cleaning my home, but when I’m through, it doesn’t look or smell the way it does when professionals dig in. So,



essentially, it’s a necessity.

While living in Aventura, I have moved a lot, which explains why I’ve gone through Mary, Linda, Amanda, Lola, the lady that my girlfriend Abbi recommended whose name I cannot remember for the life of me, and Kathleen — to name only a few. I’ve noticed that the bar seems to be set much lower than I remember from my childhood.

My memories include Florencie, who was a staple in my home. My husband still tells me about Gloria, who lived with his family for years. She left because his parents moved to Florida. They couldn’t bring her, so she went to work for their friends. Thinking back, we also had a guy named Jim who waxed our kitchen floor. Same day, same time, for ten years.

An advertisement for Classical South Florida radio station 89.7. The background is white with a large, dark brown harp in the center. Three orange and white clownfish are swimming around the harp. In the bottom right corner, there is a large yellow circle containing the text "89.7 CLASSICAL SOUTH FLORIDA" and "90.7 WEST PALM BEACH".

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So as my mother did before me — and still does — I believe in keeping a spotless home. And part of this entails hiring the right person. That should be simple, right? Think again. Not so easy.

I'll skip over my experiences in Broward and Palm Beach counties as you, *BT*'s loyal readers, don't live there. So let me get right to the point: Finding talent here is tough. We moved to Mystic Pointe and began asking around. Could it be possible that no one knew anyone? And if they did know or use good people, they were booked solid — for the rest their lives. Alrighty then.

Where to turn? I'm sticking with recommendations. Someone had to become freed up someday. And then it happened. Amanda came to me via the publisher of a magazine for which I wrote. When I called Amanda for the first time, I understood one out of every ten words she spoke. She had a heavy Colombian accent. But what I did *comprendo* was that she had a spot open, Monday morning, every other week: "You wan...yes o no?"

Oh, yes I do.

And for the next five years, we grew to understand and love each other. She

was sweet, hardworking, and good at her job. She'd go the extra mile, looking for things to do outside the norm. Everything was perfect. I never had to ask.

And then it happened — we had to move. A mere five blocks away, but in the interim, Amanda went to Colombia and, upon her return, was too sick to work. She was an older lady, and I knew it was bound to happen. I just didn't really believe it *would* happen.

I begged. I pleaded. I tried bribery. She couldn't do it. I was heartbroken. My Amanda. (Can I draw a sad face emoticon?) I asked around, picked up business cards, hopped online. Nothing.

I interviewed people; no one felt right. I needed more recommendations. My friends, Susie and Steve, said their lady, Lola, might be available. Similar expectations. Let's try. As often happens, a family she worked for had moved away, creating a hole in her schedule. Hey, I'll be a plug any day.

She was sweet, seemed honest, and spoke clear English. (While I welcome people of all languages, ethnicities, and backgrounds, unfortunately I'm fluent only in English — my bad, I know.) I

wanted to like her. But something was off. She simply couldn't clean. So after the fourth or fifth try, I threw in the towel. Back to square one.

I needed to regroup. It was time to begin asking around again. I was panicking when my girlfriend, Abbi, told me about the valet in her building, who, it so happened, also cleaned homes. If this was Skype, you'd see me vigorously shaking my head no, because a jack-of-all-trades, as they say, is usually master of none. But at \$75 per visit, what did I have to lose?

She came once. It was okay. Second time, it was quick, but clean enough. Finally, the third time, besides the fact that she brought her husband to help (odd, no?), she called us to come and pay her after only two hours. (No key is given, no money left until the three-month mark has come and gone and you're still with us.) Seriously, two hours? What gets clean in two hours?

When we arrived 20 minutes after she rang, we watched her walking away from our building. "Where are you going?" I asked.

"Uh, duh, uh...we were finished," she eloquently explained.

"How'd you lock the door? Do you want your fee?"

"Duh, uh...it's open. You can pay me next time."

"Seriously? You just left? Thanks," I said, handing her the money. "We won't need you anymore."

Game over. Bye-bye, Lady Whose Name I Cannot Remember.

And so I was back where I started. I found a bunch of business cards in my lobby. One strike, two strikes... and then I found MaidinAventura.com.

Kathleen began nearly six months ago and won me over. At first she needed coaching, but the good outweighed the not-so-good. This past Thursday, after completing her four-hour session, she dropped the bomb. "I'm moving to Arizona," she chirped.

"Oh no! Not again..."

The names of the people in this article have been changed to protect the guilty, the lazy, and the unqualified.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Hello, Goodbye

Just when it seems everyone has a ticket to ride this summer, one old friend drops into town to share stories of his days with the Beatles

By **Gaspar González**
BT Contributor

It's a phenomenon familiar to those of us who've lived in Miami for any length of time: the seasonal exodus. Despite the Chamber of Commerce declarations that we are now a year-round hub of activity, we know better. It isn't that Miami shuts down completely in summer, but it does seem to take, shall we say, an extended lunch break.

How else to explain the afternoon a couple of weeks ago, when, seizing an all-too-rare respite from my work schedule, I decided to hop in my car and head to the beach? My usual destination, when I can get there, is a little north of

the tourist action, with a small parking lot that services it. Good luck finding a spot there between December and April.

But on this picture-perfect day, the kind that launched a million postcards — cloudless, about 79 degrees, with gentle waves — more than half the parking spaces were empty. (Woo-hoo!)

The first of my neighbors left a few days ago, not to return till after Halloween. Other neighbors won't be gone nearly as long, but they'll be gone for a good stretch, seeking relief from the heat and those fickle, tropical wet kisses that keep threatening to visit our corner of the world this time of year.

It can get a little lonely in the village, not seeing people you're used to



Photo by Harry Benson

Harry Benson tricked the Fab Four into meeting with Cassius Clay.

seeing. But it can also be an opportunity to perform neighborly acts. Some of my neighbors, knowing I'll be around, ask me to look after their homes, pick up mail, or just keep an eye out for anything suspicious. It makes them feel better to know they at least have someone they can call to make sure everything is okay,

so I happily agree.

It's easy enough to do, and it's not like these small acts of kindness are keeping me from much of anything. That's because summer in Miami, culturally speaking, is pretty lame. That's always been the case, albeit for different reasons.



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Before, it was a case of there not being a whole lot of culture anywhere on the calendar, period. Now it's because galleries, museums, and other cultural purveyors wait to schedule their big events closer to the first weekend in December, to coincide with Art Basel Miami Beach.

This year, I'm happy to report, there's at least one notable exception. My friend Harry Benson is having a book signing at the Taschen store on Lincoln Road on May 30. (I know, I know, you won't be reading this till June, but I'm writing in May. Besides, this isn't the Events Calendar.)

For those who don't know, Harry is one of the world's great photographers, having chronicled everything from the Civil Rights movement to the assassination of Robert Kennedy to the first Gulf War. He's photographed every American president since Dwight Eisenhower, and celebrities from Frank Sinatra to Jack Nicholson to stars so young they may not know those other names. Harry has been named a Commander of the Order of the British Empire and his work has been exhibited in major museums, including a one-man show at the Smithsonian

National Portrait Gallery in 2007.

And if none of that rings a bell, how's this: Harry was the fifth Beatle. True. As a young photographer for the *Daily Express* in London in early 1964, Harry was all set to ship off for Africa, to cover the liberation struggles on that continent, when he got a phone call from his editor, telling him he was headed to Paris instead. Seems there was this British pop group that had made quite a splash there and it looked like their next stop was America.

Somewhat disappointed — Harry was not a rock-and-roll guy — he traveled to Paris to meet the lads, and was there when they received word that "I Want to Hold Your Hand" had gone to number one in the States. That's when the five of them flew over. In old footage of the Beatles landing in New York, Harry, camera in hand, is visible just behind the group as they get off the plane. It's Harry's days with the Fab Four that are the subject of his new book for Taschen, *The Beatles: On the Road, 1964-1966*. Taschen's 1000th title release, it's a big deal.

Harry's Beatles connection is also partly responsible for our friendship. In

2006 I was making the documentary *Muhammad Ali: Made in Miami* for PBS. I had previously interviewed Harry for a magazine story and I knew him to be the architect of the famous meeting between Cassius Clay (as Ali was then known) and the Beatles. I called him up and asked him if he would tell that story for the film. "Sure," said Harry.

It's a nice moment in the documentary, and a surprising one, because the meeting didn't happen the way most people might assume. It was February 1964. Harry was with the Beatles in Miami Beach for their second *Ed Sullivan Show* appearance at the same time that Clay was preparing to fight then-heavyweight champ Sonny Liston, who was supposed to destroy his young challenger sometime between the moment they got in the ring and the end of round one. Naturally, Harry thought it might make for great photos to take the band over to the Fifth Street Gym, where Clay, who never met a camera he didn't love, was training.

At least that was the plan. When John Lennon heard it, though, he balked. "Clay's going to get beaten," Harry remembered Lennon saying. "We want to

be photographed with the champ." Harry couldn't get him to budge, so he went over to Liston's camp to inquire about the photo-op. "Don't bring those fellas here," Liston told him, without ever looking up from his training regimen. ("Fellas" wasn't the actual word.)

So Harry, a pragmatic Scot, did the only sensible thing: He lied to the Beatles about where he was taking them, drove them to the Fifth Street Gym, and locked them in a side room until he could get Clay's attention. By the time the Beatles discovered the ruse, it was too late. Clay had them clowning around with him in the ring. And Harry, of course, snapped away.

Harry has told me a lot of stories like that when we've gotten together over the years, which we do occasionally in Palm Beach County — where he and his lovely wife, Gigi, keep a home — or at his exhibitions. It's been a while, though, so I'm looking forward to seeing him at the Taschen event. Otherwise, I'll have to wait till November. That's when Harry usually returns from New York.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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California Dreamin'

A trip to the West Coast turns surreal

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

The gas station bathroom door flung open and I came face to face with The Face. The Face displayed narrowed eyes fixed into a cold, haughty glare, a freshly applied, red lipsticked-mouth, all framed by gleaming, Pantene-worthy brown hair.

The Face looked me up and down, sniffed, and walked past me into the crapper. Confused, I stood there wondering what just happened. The Face seemed familiar. And then it hit me: The Face did not belong to anyone I knew, but to *everyone* I knew — in Miami. I had just experienced a dose of home,

three-quarters of the way into my week-long Let's-Do-Something-To-Celebrate-Our-Ten-Year-Wedding-Anniversary-Since-We-Never-Had-a-Honeymoon trip.

The irony of meeting The Face at that moment, in the dirtiest of dirty Northern California hippie towns, was not lost on me. What was French Manicured, Little Miss Versace Princess doing here? Had she been kidnapped? Was she a West Coast spy miming a nasty East Coaster's snotty 'tude skills? Maybe in preparation for her upcoming assignment: Operation Snarl?

Should I pretend I was interested in the new mint-flavored Three Musketeers bar, wait until she exited the crapper and follow her? Maybe she was a *terrorista*.



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

Should I alert the FBI? Should I bust back into the crapper and scream "Ah ha!" regardless of what I saw?

Even if she were not doing anything illegal, her business in there could still be a threat to the store's olfactory preservation. So many "Should I's" for one bathroom stop: Should I get Jolly Rancher? And if I did, should it be the traditional hard throughout or the new chewy-on-the-inside kind? And what

about that mint-flavored Three Musketeers bar? Should I try it?

As I pondered these thoughts, I still came back 'round to the basic question: Why had this walking reminder of Miami's most glaring flaw — its generally nasty and rude inhabitants — presented itself just as I had settled into the comforting cocoon of Northern California? Northern California, with all of its progressive causes: caring about the



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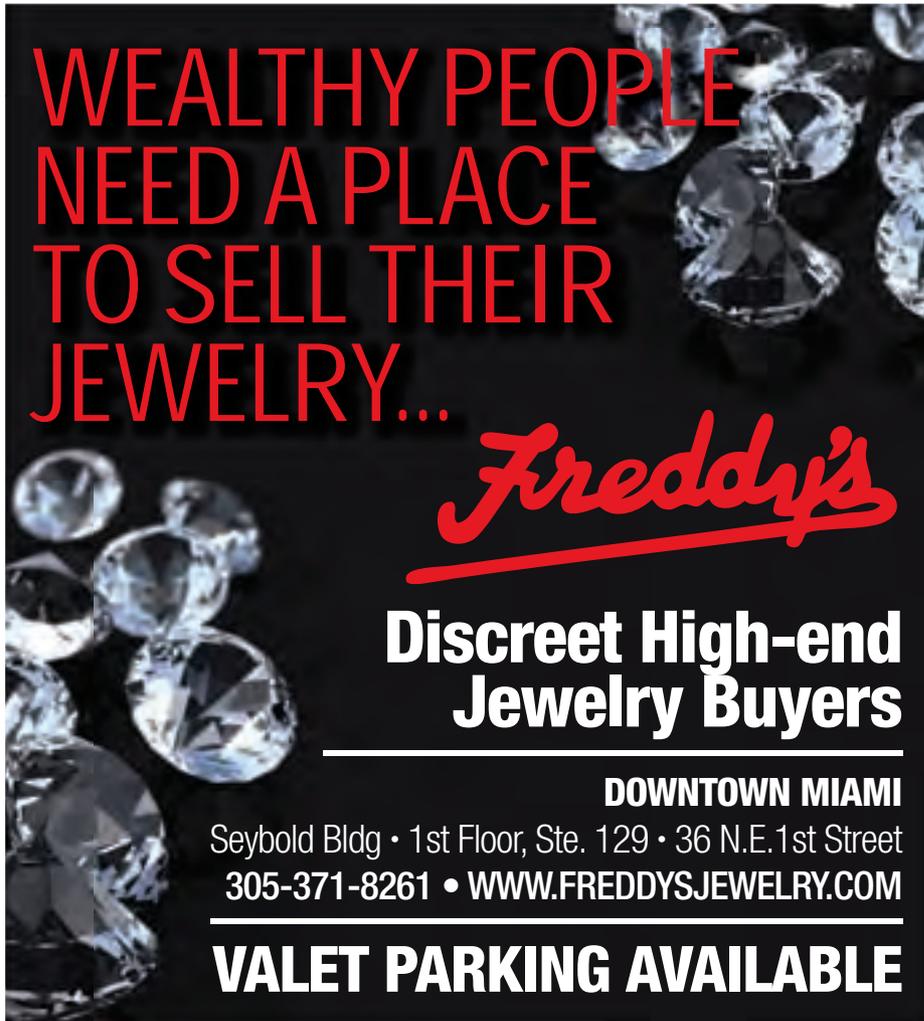
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environment, caring about people, caring about the humane treatment of animals, caring about lettuce. So much caring!

Maybe it was a sign. After three long years in the MUFT (Merciless Un-Frozen Tundra) of Upstate New York, my five canines-to-one husband ratio family had recently found its way back to Miami. Was it already time to move on?

It took me about three seconds to answer that: No. First off, although I loved Northern California (after only a few days), there remained the deal-breaker: the weather. While infinitely sunnier on a bad day than the MUFT on a good day, it still sucked enough to land Northern Cali as MUFT No. 2 on my list. Maybe that's harsh. But, um, do I detect fog?

After spending a sunny day in the Bay Area and on the pier with the wonderfully gregarious sea lions (essentially a West Coast manatee, as far as I'm concerned), it got cold. And then there is the wind. Wind and I are a no-go. Fire and water, as one of the region's earth-enthused, neo-hippies might say. I get earaches in Miami while bicycling in 70 degrees. Apparently, Northern California never got the "It's Spring" memo.

Still, Northern California had me at compost. And compost stations (next to glass and plastic recycling areas) are the first things you see when you arrive at baggage claim at the San Francisco airport. Bleary-eyed but relieved to be back on the ground after a somewhat turbulent six-hour flight (flying is not my favorite activity), I was surprised and impressed to see a compost box.

Now, I was not altogether clear as to what one would compost after exiting an aircraft. My barf? The barf bag, which contained the barf? And if that were the case, did the barf go in the compost area and the bag in the recycling area? Clearly, hailing from the mostly eco-unfriendly Southeast left me with much to learn before I could even begin to earn my Northern California Girl Scout badge.

Recycling and composting aside, Miami and Northern California do share commonalities. I figured I'd be saying that about Los Angeles, an area that specializes in plastic (ranging from credit cards to personalities), rather than Northern California, an area known for forward thinking and Birkenstocks. However, there is a sort of magic in

Northern California. It's palpable. In the same way Miami offers the lure of the beaches and exotic plants and animals, Northern California offers its version of delightful un-reality. And no, I wasn't stoned on this trip. Not even once.

At the risk of sounding like I'm stoned now, I will continue. When I say "magic," I am not talking about Harry Potter. I'm referring to a sense of something larger than you that takes hold of a particular environment. If you are perceptive and open to it, it grabs you.

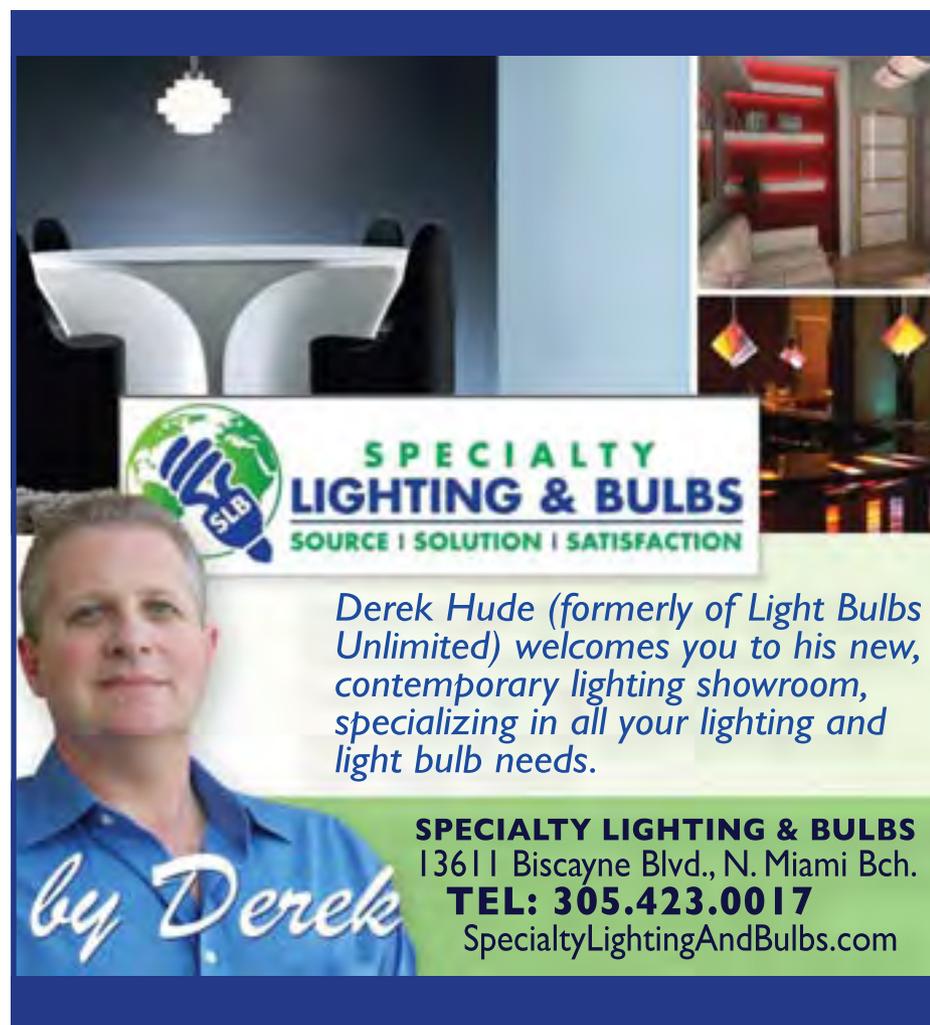
Certainly, Miami has this magic: the beaches, the bay, the lush tropical plants. Spend any time amongst these awesome creations and you will sense the magic. If you pay attention. In my experience, magic is a bit like ghosts. You have to be open to it in order to feel or see it.

I had two magical experiences in Northern California. One was on the coast at a federally designated archeological site. Glass Beach is a dump at the foot of the Pacific where large debris has been removed, but small debris was left behind. Over time, the small debris, with help from the ocean tides, morphed into something else. The old became new.

Glass bottles are now smooth sea glass and pieces of cars have been transformed into rusted-metal sculptures. You can go elbow-deep in glass and remain unscathed. That's magical enough. But the walk and climb down to the beach is *Alice in Wonderland*-esque. Large squirrels that are unafraid of humans. One almost hopped onto my shoulder. Wildflowers and vines grow bold and colorful.

At another wondrous area, Point Reyes, you can watch the uncommon and prehistoric-looking elephant seals and their cubs frolic in the surf. But perhaps the most magical place of all is the beach there. At low tide, it is stunning, with the juxtaposition of the frigid blue water, the stoic brown mountains, the green seaweed, and the flat, almost black beach littered with driftwood, patterned rocks, seagulls, and crows. And when the wind blows, it causes the dark sand, so fine it seems like silt, to blow around in swirls that do a midair dance. The sand seems alive. It's desolate and otherworldly, which makes it wonderful.

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A look at recent winners and losers around Miami-Dade County

By Frank Rollason
BT Contributor

Here's a cliché we all use from time to time: You win some, you lose some.

I remember back in the mid-1970s, when the City of Miami experienced its worst fire death toll in a single incident, the Avondale Hotel fire in the heart of downtown. Eleven people perished in that fire, set by a disgruntled guest who had been evicted. He returned later that night and doused the wooden stairs with gasoline and set the building ablaze. The city's fire marshal was quoted in the following morning's newspaper as saying, "You win some, you lose some." By that

afternoon, he was no longer fire marshal.

It's a rainy Sunday morning as I sit at my computer contemplating some of the latest "wins" and "losses" for our community. In the win column I have to place the compromise, reached between the county and environmentalists, which will allow the dredging of PortMiami to continue. (It's now called PortMiami instead of Port of Miami, just as it's now ZooMiami instead of MetroZoo, and it's no longer "downtown," it's "DWNTWN," whatever the hell *that* means.)

Anyway, this project was able to get back on track because the two differing positions came together in a compromise that diminishes the environmental impact while allowing the dredging to



move forward, keeping it on schedule to coincide with the completion of the Panama Canal widening project and the supposed arrival of the Panamax mega-size cargo ships.

Whether those ships will actually come to PortMiami remains to be seen, but our county leaders have a handy cliché for that as well: "If you build it, they will come." So we're building it, not

to be outdone by any of the other ports along the East Coast whose administrators also believe that if they build it, the ships will come — to them, not to us.

We shall see, I guess, where they eventually dock, but the point here is that, through the compromise process, we can chalk this up as a win for our community. The environmentalists win because the marine environment will be safer and

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cleaner. The working public wins because, if the predictions come true, there will be more jobs available for people in our community. And the county wins because its politicians will be able to claim that “we have the deepest channel for cargo ships on the East Coast of the United States.” (Or dare I say, “ECUS.”)

On a smaller scale, there was a win for all us pick-up truck owners, as the Coral Gables Planning and Zoning Board voted to ease the ban on residents parking pick-up trucks in the driveways of their homes between 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

The measure still requires the approval of the city commission, but that will most certainly happen, since myriad new rules accompanied the change: You must back in the truck on the driveway, so only the front is visible. (Heaven forbid anyone drive by and see the back end of a pick-up truck — must be something Freudian there, but I can’t put my finger on it at the moment.) And the cargo portion of the truck must have a cover made of “standard equipment” — not a hunk of plywood.

And of course, the old tried and true measure of no commercial markings

or advertising or “added appendages.” (Another Freudian slip? They seem to be fixated on rear ends and appendages over there.)

Nonetheless this is a “win” for the City Beautiful, with its inane requirements. At least the board did not restrict truck colors, demanding muted earth tones that won’t clash with the house colors, or mandating that two adjacent pick-ups be the same color.

Perhaps these issues will come to light once the number of pick-ups exceeds the BMWs, Mercedes, Bentleys, and other appropriate luxury vehicles deserving of a coveted place of display in the Gables.

It’s also a great victory for the residents, many of whom still work for a living and utilize a pick-up truck for various duties associated with work and regular home maintenance performed by the do-it-yourselfer. I cannot imagine owning a home and not having a pick-up. But that’s just me, I guess.

All in all, this is a product of compromise, helping bring the Gables into the 21st Century and demonstrating that the City Beautiful accepts the fact that

many commoners contribute to its tax base — thereby continuing to make the city the rose among the rest of us thorns that make up Miami-Dade County. And if you don’t believe that’s what it is, just ask anyone there; they’ll tell you.

The next win is the latest development in the Belle Meade 6th Court fence caper. The Miami City Commission took action on April 26, instructing city staff to proceed with the construction of the fence, including the infamous gates that will have no latches or locks. (These gates, presumably, will be held closed by the will of God.)

This is a win for the city in that they will treat the Upper Eastside no different from the rest of the city when dealing with fences and walls. It’s also a win for Belle Meade residents in that more than 92 percent of those who voted approved the construction of the fence.

This project has been a long time coming. To put it in perspective, we have spent more time discussing this fence project than it took to build the new Marlins Park. Will the fence actually be built? Who knows, but we are hoping that, “If we build it, they (the

bad guys) *won’t* come.”

Now, since the theme of this column is “win some, lose some,” we must have a loser. My vote goes to the recent decision by the City of Miami that the changing of the soffit finish from metal to stucco on the new commercial building at 61st Street and the Boulevard does not constitute a substantial architectural change in the finishes.

The building is a beautiful addition to our MiMo Historic District, but it could have been just a little more beautiful had it been built according to the plans presented by the developer and approved by the city, and not short-circuited administratively because of greater concern for the developer’s pocketbook than the aesthetics of the final product.

In this case, there was no chance for a compromise because we, the people, had no opportunity to participate in any meaningful dialogue to come up with an agreeable solution.

Like I said, you win some, you lose some.

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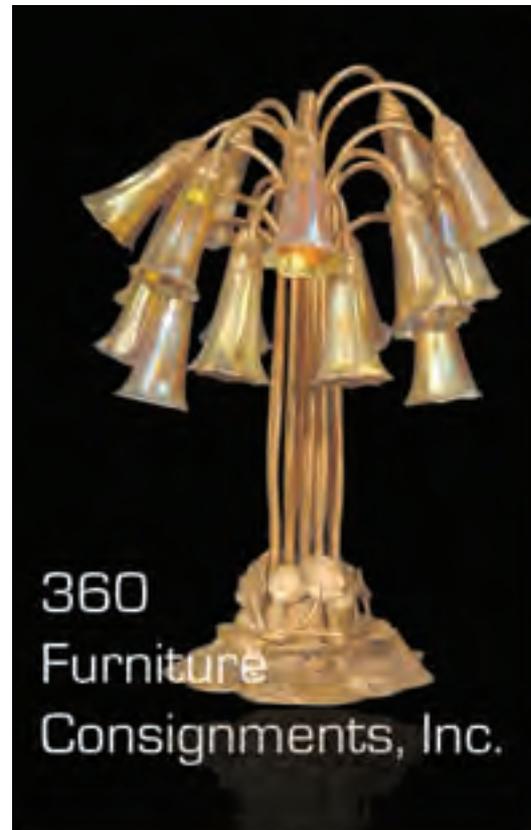
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Building Bridges

Two artist-run exhibition spaces in North Miami span the little known corners of the local art scene

By Anne Tschida
BT Arts Editor

Some of the first structures humans ever made were bridges. We knew we wanted to cross over to new territory, and then be able to come back again.

So the two artist-run alternative exhibition spaces in North Miami are aptly named: Bridge Red Studios Project Space and Under the Bridge. They're both located in a complex of studios off NE 123rd Street, and both have a mission to exhibit art that may not otherwise appear in galleries, although they achieve this in slightly different ways.

The first to open up was Bridge Red Studios, named after the brightly painted red door that serves as the space's entry. It's run by veteran artist Robert Thiele, his artist daughter Kristen, and photographer son-in-law Francesco Casale, all of whom believed that too many artists who had put in years perfecting their craft were flying well under the radar in Miami, with its youth-obsessed burgeoning art scene.

So in early 2011, Bridge Red opened with a retrospective of painter Salvatore La Rosa, whose prolific output from well more than 40 years, for the most part, had been hidden away in his studio, away from the bright lights of



Laura Tan's *Eggs in Spoon on Blue*, currently on display at Bridge Red.

Art Basel Miami Beach. "He is the classic misunderstood artist," says Robert Thiele about La Rosa, a recluse who makes art for art's sake and for almost no other reason. The reaction to the inaugural exhibit was overwhelming, remembers Thiele, so they continued with more shows, and "not all of them involved senior citizens," he says with a laugh.

These shows included "3," featuring Robert Chambers, William Cordova, and Barbara Neijna, and "70s," which highlighted work from artists who taught



The "3" show at Bridge Red last year, featuring Robert Chambers, William Cordova, and Barbara Neijna.



Downstairs at Under the Bridge, the "Smoke Signals: portals y paisajes" show, curated by William Cordova.

at the North Campus of Miami-Dade Community College (as it was then called) during the 1970s, including the late, great Duane Hanson. "These are,

and were, mature artists with a formidable body of work, who, for whatever reason, are not showing in the galleries here," explains Thiele.



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Bridge Red will produce five exhibits per year. It kicked off 2012 with a solo show by Sherri Tan, who makes sculpture and collage from found objects and baroque imagery, and whose work has not been exhibited since the early 2000s.

All that heavy lifting paid off with a Knight Arts Challenge Grant this year; Bridge Red raised the matching funds of \$15,000 with a one-night auction, proving the popularity of the artwork the space is showing.

“Each show pulls in a new crowd that we haven’t seen before,” says Kristen Thiele, who recently gave up her curating and board duties at the Art Center/South Florida to concentrate on Bridge Red. With the grant, the Thieles and Casale will concentrate on making catalogues and documenting the exhibits on their Website, “to extend their lives,” she says.

Currently on view as the summer show is painting and sculpture from Zaydee Martinez, Joe Nicastri, and Laura Tan, all artists who’ve had long careers. Next up will be a solo show by Robert Flynn, a rising star who left Miami to teach in Vermont and then unexpectedly died of a heart attack at age 39 in 2007.

The North Miami complex that includes Bridge Red has long been a home to a number of artists, including Lou Anne Colodny, who was the founder of the Center of Contemporary Art (COCA), the precursor to the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). Opened in 1981, the complex “showed alternative work, from performance and sound installation to experimental visual arts,” recalls Colodny. “We showed video before video was ‘in.’”

When the space morphed into a full-fledged museum, Colodny passed the reins over to director Bonnie Clearwater



Yanira Collado's y hoy se is part of the “Smoke Signals” show downstairs.

and focused on making her own art. But after Bridge Red opened upstairs from her, she decided it was time to get back in exhibiting mode. “There are so many artists who have been biding their time, doing their own thing, working behind the scenes,” she says, pointedly adding that, contrary to popular belief, an art scene existed here before Art Basel.

To kick off what she named Under the Bridge, Colodny asked her old

friend Adalberto Delgado if he would like to show his work. Delgado, an influential member of Miami’s cultural community, is an experimental visual artist and rumba master who recently opened an alternative art space in Little Havana, the 6th Street Container. He put together the clever “Again, After All These Years” exhibit, which lampooned the pretentious and all-too-serious nature of the current art scene. “He is a forgotten hero,” says Colodny,

Lou Anne Colodny's Under the Bridge space isn't going to concentrate only on work created by artists in the later stages of their careers.

“I wanted him at my space.”

But unlike Bridge Red, Colodny isn’t going to concentrate only on work created by artists in the later stages of their careers: “I want it to be a mixed bag — just art that excites me, whenever it was made.” She wants artists to collaborate, with no predetermined outcomes.

One result is the current exhibit, “Smoke Signals: portals y paisajes.” Curated by William Cor-

dova, the 14 artists included in the show range from well known to obscure. The “portal” is the key element in the various small-scale works on the ground floor of Under the Bridge, a former warehouse.

Each work suggests a peephole, a bird’s-eye view into another realm. Miami-raised and now New York-based Luis Gispert has a drawing that resembles a vinyl record, but it’s only halfway colored in. Should we be drawn into the vortex completely, or



Works by the late Duane Hanson from the “70s” show last year at Bridge Red.

remain halfway out? A spinning record is a portal into music, of course, and into all the emotions that are evoked by it. Back in 2002, Gispert became one of the first of the new generation of artists from Miami to be accepted into the Whitney Biennial.

A less familiar name would be Yanira Collado, who has crafted what looks like blacked-out text on paper, not unlike a classified document. In fact, the strips of text are actually woven fabric, a coded quilt. When looking into this portal, the meaning — or the revelation — truly is layered.

Other artists include Robert Thiele, Jorge Pantoja, Glexis Novoa, and Fatima Haider. “I want the exhibits to be whimsical and serious,” says Colodny, not just “crappy handicrafting.”

“Martinez/Nicastri/Tan” runs through July 8 at Bridge Red Studios Project Space, 12425 NE 13th Ave., Suite 5; 786-390-8915. “Smoke Signals: portals y paisajes” is downstairs at Under the Bridge, 305-987-4437.

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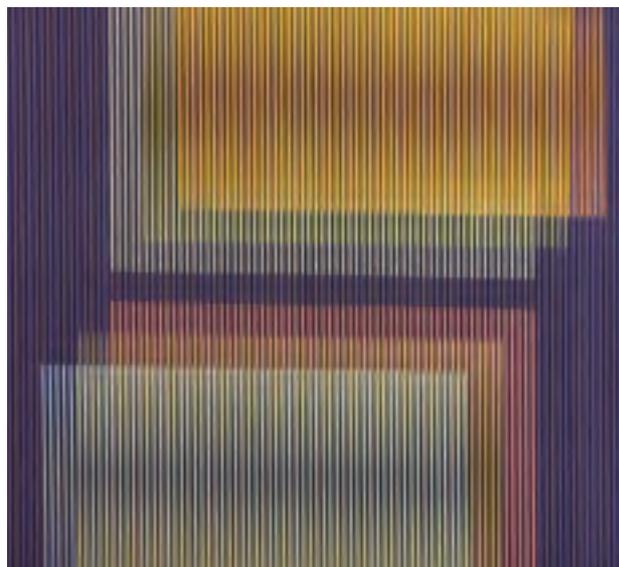
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June 9 through July 28:
"White Thoughts" by Gye Hoon Park
"Abismo Nupical" by Daniel Verbis

DIASPORA VIBE GALLERY

3938 N. Miami Ave., Miami
786-536-7801
www.diasporavibe.net
Call gallery for exhibition information

DIMENSIONS VARIABLE

3850 NE Miami Ct., Miami
305-607-5527
www.dimensionsvariable.net
Through June 16:
"AABBCDDV" by Erik Smith

DINA MITRANI GALLERY

2620 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
786-486-7248
www.dinamitrani-gallery.com
June 9 through August 31:
"Women's Perspectives" with various artists

DORSCH GALLERY

151 NW 24th St., Miami
305-576-1278
www.dorschgallery.com
Through June 9:
"Walk With Me" by Elisabeth Condon
"Façade" by Felecia Chizuko Carlisle
"The Pretend Dimension" by Michelle Weinberg

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 June 9:
"Spring Exhibition" with Alba Vasconcelos, Vilma Quevedo, and Luis Kaiulani

ETRA FINE ART

50 NE 40th St., Miami
305-438-4383
www.etrafineart.com
Through June 8:

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Department of Off-Street Parking (DOSP)

"Spring Group Show" with Christian Awe, Andrea Dasha Reich, David Kessler, and Antoni Amat

FREDRIC SNITZER GALLERY

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

www.snitzer.com

Through June 9:

"Post Modern" with Merlin Carpenter, Ian Cheng, Jason Galbut, Ed Lehan, Georgie Nettell, Georgia Sagri, and Thank You Brenda

Through June 30:

"Une Saison en Enfer (A Season in Hell)" by José Bedia

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 MIAMI CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY

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 July 14:

"ART BLOG ART BLOG Presents: Leave It to Beavers" with Christy Gast, Anya Kielar, Fabienne Laserre, Ella Kruglyanskaya, Katherine Bernhardt, Letha Wilson, Denise Kupfersmidt, Holly Coulis, and Lia Lowenthal, curated by Gina Beavers

GARY NADER FINE ART

62 NE 27th St., Miami
305-576-0256

www.garynader.com

June 1 through 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

Through July 7:

"This Sharp World..." by Kate Kretz

"Dreams" by Carlos Cardenes

"Finding Home" by Lorie Kim

"Something Almost Being Said" by Natasha Duwin

"Untitled (Homage to Gego)" by Consuelo Castañeda

Reception June 9, 7 to 10 p.m.

HAROLD GOLEN GALLERY

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

www.haroldgolengallery.com

Call gallery for exhibition information

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

Through July 21:

"SigfredoChacónDrawings?" by Sigfredo Chacón

KAVACHNINA CONTEMPORARY

46 NW 36th St., Miami
305-448-2060

www.kavachnina.com

Call gallery for exhibition information

KELLEY ROY GALLERY

50 NE 29th St., Miami
305-447-3888

www.kelleyroygallery.com

June 2 through August 30:

"Summer Solstice" with Mimi Bates, Mira Lehr, Antonio Ugarte, and Soile Yly-Mayry

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

June 9 through July 28:

"In & Out of Bed" by Leah Poller

Reception June 9, 5 to 10 p.m.

LOCUST PROJECTS

3852 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-8570

www.locustprojects.org

Through June 23:

"So I Will Let It Alone And Talk About The House" by

Meredyth Sparks

"Lines" by Anya Kielar

MAOR GALLERY

3030 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
http://maormiami.org

Call gallery for exhibition information

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, CENTRE GALLERY

300 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
Bldg. 1, Room 1365

305-237-3696

www.mdc.edu

Call gallery for exhibition information

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, FREEDOM TOWER

600 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
305-237-7700

www.mdc.edu

Through August 11:

"Emergence & Structure: Nature in Process" with

various artists

"Embedded: A Photojournalist Captures Conflict and

Resistance" with various artists

Through October 5:

"Shutter: Selected Photography and Film from the CINTAS

Foundation Fellows Collection" with various artists

June 28 through August 11:

"Milagros Project" by Felici Ateizna

Reception June 28, 6 to 9 p.m.

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, GALLERY NORTH

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

www.mdc.edu

Through June 15:

"2012 Emerging Artists" with various artists

MIAM-DADE COLLEGE, HOMESTEAD ART SPACE

500 College Terr., Homestead
305-237-5000

www.mdc.edu/homestead

Through June 15:

"2012 Emerging Artists" with various artists

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, KENDALL GALLERY

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

www.mdc.edu/kendall

Call gallery for exhibition information

MICHAEL JON GALLERY

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

www.michaeljongallery.com

Through June 12:

Min Song

MICHAEL PEREZ POP ART GALLERY

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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

Call gallery for exhibition information

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. Bayshore Dr., Miami

305-395-3599

www.ninatortresfineart.com

June 8 through 30:

"June Contemporary" with various artists

Reception June 8, 7 to 9 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

June 9 through 31:

"I Was In Pain" by Catalina Ramirez

Reception June 9, 7 to 11 p.m.

OM GALLERY

8650 Biscayne Blvd., Suite 21, Miami

305-458-5085

Through July 31:

"Mid Century Design" by Danielle Quarante

ONCE ARTS GALLERY

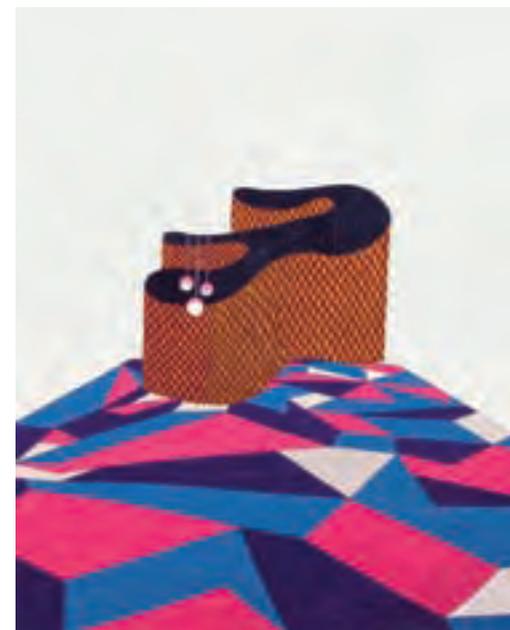
170-C NW 24th St., Miami

786-333-8404

www.oncearts.com

Ongoing: Pablo Gentile, Jaime Montana, Jaime Apraez,

and Patricia Chaparro



Michelle Weinberg, *Folded Kiosk*, gouache on paper, 2011, at Dorsch Gallery.

PANAMERICAN ART PROJECTS

2450 NW 2nd Ave., Miami

305-573-2400

www.panamericanart.com

June 16 through July 28:

"Outside the Box" with various artists

PAREDES FINE ARTS STUDIO

2311 NW 2nd Ave., Miami

305-534-2184

www.miguelparedes.com

Ongoing:

"Elements of an Artist" by Miguel Paredes

PRIMARY PROJECTS

4141 NE 2nd Ave., Suite 104, Miami

www.primaryprojectspace.com

info@primaryflight.com

June 9 through July 31:

"Salon d' Notre Societe" with various artists

Reception June 9, 7 to 11 p.m.

SAMMER GALLERY

82 NE 29th St., Miami

305-441-2005

www.artnet.com/sammergallery.html

Call gallery for exhibition information

STASH GALLERY

162 NE 50th Terr., Miami

305-992-7652

www.stashgallery.com

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Leonard Daley, *Untitled*, oil on wood, 1990,
at Pan American Art Projects.

<http://swampspace.blogspot.com/>
swampstyle@gmail.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

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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
Through July 7:
"Fictional Eyes: The Dreams of Reason" with Sandra Torralba, Stefano Bonazzi, Christopher Lee Donovan, Michel Rajkovic, Serrah Russell, Kaveh Hosseini, Polly Chandler, and Alba Tenas

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI CAS GALLERY

2200-A NW 2nd Ave., Miami
June 5 through 22:
"Full Circle" by Jacqueline Gopie
Reception June 15, 5 to 9 p.m.

UNIX FINE ART GALLERY

2219 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-496-0621
www.unixfineart.com
Ongoing:
Alexis Torres
June 9 through August 31:
Eugenio Merino

WINE BY THE BAY

888 Biscayne Blvd., Suite 112, Miami
305-455-9791
www.winebtb.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

WYNWOOD WALLS

NW 2nd Avenue between 25th and 26th streets
305-573-0658
www.thewynwoodwalls.com
Ongoing:
"Wynwood Walls" with Retna, How & Nosh, Roa, b., The Date Farmers, Saner, Sego, Liqen, 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.yeelenart.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

MUSEUM & COLLECTION EXHIBITS

ARTCENTER/SOUTH FLORIDA

800 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach
305-674-8278
www.artcentersf.org
Through June 17:
"Quantum Shift" with London Tsai and Judith Berk King

BASS MUSEUM OF ART

2100 Collins Ave., Miami Beach
305-673-7530
www.bassmuseum.org
Through August 12:

"Erasey Page" by Jillian Mayer and Eric Schoenborn
"Charles Ledray: Bass Museum of Art" by Charles Ledray

CIFO (Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation)

1018 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-455-3380
www.cifo.org
Call gallery for exhibition information

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

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FROST ART MUSEUM

10975 SW 17th St., Miami
305-348-2890
thefrost.fiu.edu
Through August 5: "Sculpture" by Ursula von Rydingsvard
Through August 26: "Miami's Vices" with various artists, curated by Annie Wharton

"Museum Studies Spring 2012 Exhibition: Jamaican Art" with various artists
Through September 2:
"Scapes" by Lynne Golob Gelfman

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 June 3: "Recent Paintings" by Darby Bannard
Through September 23:
"Sainly Blessings: A Gift of Mexican Retablos from Joseph and Janet Shein" with various artists
June 23 through October 21:
"Introspection and Awakening: Japanese Art of the Edo and Meiji Period, 1615-1912" with various artists
Reception June 22, 6 to 9 p.m.

MIAMI ART MUSEUM

101 W. Flagler St., Miami
305-375-3000
www.miamiartmuseum.org
Ongoing:
"Between Here and There: Modern and Contemporary Art from the Permanent Collection"
Through June 10:
"The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl" with various artists
Through September 2:
"Transcultural Pilgrim: Three Decades of Work by José Bedia" by José Bedia
June 29 through August 26:
"Kimsooja: A Needle Woman" by Kimsooja
Reception June 28, 6 to 9 p.m.

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

770 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-893-6211
www.mocanomi.org
Through June 20:
Donna Karan and Philippe Dodard
Through September 2:
"Song" by Ragnar Kjartansson
"On the Road" by Ed Ruscha

THE MARGULIES COLLECTION

591 NW 27th St., Miami
305-576-1051
www.margulieswarehouse.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

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 Schöll Collection
170 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-438-9908
www.worldclassboxing.org
Call gallery for exhibition information

Compiled by Melissa Wallen
Send listings, jpeg images, and events information to
art@biscaynetimes.com



by José Bedia.” Running through Sunday, September 2, this exhibit features 35 works, including figurative (and mythology-heavy) paintings, drawings, and installations exploring the spiritual and historical journeys of indigenous peoples. Admission to the museum is \$8; free for children under 12. Go to www.miamiartmuseum.org.

A Life's Work

José Bedia is one of Miami's most prominent artists. Although a native of Cuba and a member of the island's pioneering "1980s Generation," since arriving in Miami in 1993, his work has become entwined with South Florida. Highlighting the scope and power of his art, the Miami Art Museum (101 W. Flagler St.) has just opened a major retrospective, "Trans-cultural Pilgrim: Three Decades of Work

The Sounds of Youth

The Music School Project is a private school in North Miami Beach run by the director of the classical Russian troupe Arts Ballet Theater, Vladimir Issaev. The teachers include a professional cellist, trumpeter, harpist, vocalist, violinist, and pianist. The fruit of this eclectic group — their students — will show off all they have learned on **Thursday, June 7**, at the **Young Musicians Concert** at the Aventura Arts and Cultural Center (3385 NE 188th St.). Starting at 7:00 p.m., the young talent will interpret both classical and popular music. Tickets are \$20. Go to www.aventuracenter.org.

Free Like It Oughta Be

Guitarist and singer Eric Hutchinson's star took off after some late-night performances on Jay Leno and Jimmy Kimmel in 2008, where he kicked it with "Rock and Roll," his first big single. Since then his tunes have been heard on the soundtracks of both movies and television shows. Hutchinson will inaugurate this year's **DWNTWN Concert Series**, which will include three more shows over the summer. On **Friday, June 8**, Hutchinson will headline, with opening act Jacob Jeffries Band, at the Olympia Theatre at the Gusman Center (174 E. Flagler St.). Doors open at 7:00 p.m., music starts at 8:00 p.m. The event is

free, but seating is limited, so get there early. Go to www.dwntwnconcerts.com.

A Cuban Caligula

The exciting and groundbreaking LGBT festival Out in the Tropics closes on **Thursday, June 14**, with a truly intriguing offering, *Caligula*, by **Teatro El Publico**. The Havana-based theater company will interpret Albert Camus's *Caligula*, which first premiered in postwar Paris, in ways that cross language and cultural boundaries. Considered a seminal piece of existential theater, *Caligula* is relevant to the realities today on both sides of the Florida Straits. According to El Publico, "Like Caligula, we believe in the strange tyranny of desire." At 8:00 p.m. at the Colony Theatre (1040 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach). Tickets cost \$30; \$25 for students. Go to www.fundarte.us.

Fruit and Spice and Everything Nice

On the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Andrew, a nice nod to resilience would be a trip to the Redland's Fruit and Spice Park (24801 SW 187th Ave., Homestead), and what better occasion than the annual two-day **Summer Fruit Festival** on **Saturday, June 16**, and **Sunday, June 17**. Back in 1992, the park lost 750 canopy trees and two historic buildings, to name just some of the damage from Andrew. From 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., marvel at the resurrection of the plants

and trees, and visit booths featuring local agriculture, wines, and foods. Admission is \$8; free for children under 11. Go to www.fruitandspicepark.org.

Kampong Retreat

A *kampong* is a Malay word for village, although Coconut Grove's version is a mansion. But like its Southeast Asian namesake, the grounds of the Kampong are draped in tropical fruits and flowers, including many planted by David Fairchild (of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden fame). Now's your chance to study them, with an eco-tour from HistoryMiami (101 W. Flagler St.), **The Wonders of the Kampong**, led by historian Frank Schena. The walk starts at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 11:00 a.m. on **Saturday, June 16**. Cost is \$15 for HistoryMiami members; \$25 for nonmembers. Reservations are required. Call 305-375-1621 or e-mail citytours@historymiami.org.

Overtown Celebrates

Miami's Overtown wasn't always a down-and-out neighborhood. In the 1940s and 1950s, before the freeways tore it up and urban blight sunk in, it was one of the most vibrant areas of Miami. Along with home-grown talent, Overtown hosted shows by some of the greatest performers of the era, from Duke Ellington to Billie Holiday to Sam Cooke. On **Saturday, June 23**, that



Keep It Short

Eight short plays. One fast, furious evening. That sums up **Summer Shorts**, which this year includes plays performed by veterans of Broadway and Chicago's renowned Second City troupe. They know how to keep a pace. Started 17 years ago by City Theatre as a cultural outlet in our traditional off-season (and focused on "short" because of our heat-addled attention spans), the festival moved around before finally landing at the Carnival Studio at the **Arsht Center for the Performing Arts**. Running almost daily until the 2:00 p.m. matinee on **Sunday, June 17**, the series remains true to its roots — light and breezy. Tickets cost \$35. For exact dates and times, go to www.arshtcenter.org.

energy will be revived for the second **Overtown Rhythm and Arts Festival**, featuring local church choirs, marching bands, and vendors selling Southern-style barbecue and Caribbean treats. It's free, and takes place on historic NW 3rd Avenue, between 9th and 11th streets. Visit www.overtownfestival.com.

Bring Your Kite and Appetite

It's starting to get hot and steamy, which makes evenings on the beach the only acceptable option for being outdoors. So try this month's installment of **Kite-Flying Food Truck Nights on the Bay**, on **Friday, June 29**, at Haulover Park (10800 Collins Ave.). Along with a blanket and a kite, make sure to bring a little cash to sample the plethora of foods being sold from the trucks, from gourmet-style dishes to county-fair-style, deep-fried Oreos. Glass containers and pets are not permitted. The fun goes from 5:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.. Go to www.miamidade.gov/parks.

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



Thrill of the Grill

You really don't know about cooking ribs until you've heard or read Steven Raichlin. The Coconut Grove resident, author, TV host, and grill master will share his latest book, *Best Ribs Ever: A BBQ Bible Cookbook, 100 Killer Recipes*, at Books and Books (285 Aragon Ave., Coral Gables) on **Sunday, June 24**, at 7:00 p.m. Raichlin first chronicled his obsession with grilled meat back in 1998 (*The Barbecue Bible*), and since then has traveled the globe, digging up recipes from Cambodia to Alabama, and writing and talking about it. Everything about this evening sounds delicious. And it's free. Go to www.booksandbooks.com.

Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Man's Savings Go For a Walk

1300 Block of NE Miami Court

Out of the goodness of his heart, victim had allowed two people to stay at his home for several weeks. As with any relationship (especially in the home), trust has to be built. It was. The victim inexplicably left \$13,000 in a brown paper bag stuffed into the corner of his closet, next to his shoes. On this day, he returned and found the bag missing. Also missing were his two erstwhile roommates. Repeated phone calls to the two suspects went unreturned, so the victim filed a report with police. Okay, if you won't open a bank account — because you can't trust “the man” — or buy a safe, at least use a shoebox, to

make it harder to figure out where the money is.

Meat and Greet, Miami-Style

1000 Block of NE 78th Street Road

A woman came by a home in an effort to sell some steaks. The homeowner was not impressed and turned down the three pieces of raw meat. Shortly afterward the same woman came by again, but this time her brown paper bag concealed a silver revolver. The victim locked herself in a closet while the crazed woman managed to break a window with a rock and subsequently entered the home. She stole \$60 and made her getaway. No arrests have been made. To add insult to injury, the suspect didn't leave even a complimentary steak behind.

Just Do It — But Don't Get Caught

3401 N. Miami Ave.

“Just do it” is one of the most iconic slogans in sports advertising. This person took it too far. Suspect went into the Sports Authority in Midtown and stuffed seven pairs of Nike shoes into a large duffle bag. When he was approached by store employees, instead of dropping the bag and making a run for it, he repeatedly tried to bite one of the sales associates. He then pulled out a box-cutter and tried to cut the employee. He managed to escape on a bicycle with the Nike shoes. It sounds like we have the makings of a new triathlon — stealing, biting, and bicycling. Maybe Nike will sponsor the event. Get Phil Knight on the phone!



Well, It Is Called a Scooter

7800 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

A man's scooter wouldn't start when he attempted to leave the Valero gas station, so he paid an employee five dollars to watch the scooter for 15 minutes, while he

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went to get some assistance. The employee decided to move the scooter to the front entrance of the store, presumably because it was easier to keep an eye on it there. When the man returned 30 minutes later (everything takes longer than you think it will), the scooter was gone. The employee told him she had no idea where it could be. The man called police, but the scooter has not been located. Maybe he should have given her \$10 to watch the scooter? Nah, you can't find good help in Miami, no matter how much you pay.

Define "Safe"

Biscayne Boulevard and 68th Street
While the Biscayne Corridor is infinitely safer and more welcoming than it was ten years ago, we still have our incidents. A woman was on her way home when she was stopped by a Boulevard hoodlum. He screamed, "You wanna die? Give me your necklace!" He then pushed the woman to the ground and ripped the necklace from her neck. Fortunately, the victim sustained no injuries, save for the trauma associated with being robbed. Please be aware that the Boulevard is still dangerous, despite those happy

yellow, blinking crossing lights.

A Case of Kick and Run

401 Biscayne Blvd.

Psychologists tell us to express our anger in nonthreatening ways — by punching a pillow, for instance. Not in Miami. This dolt got into an argument with someone and, instead of channeling his rage in a more positive direction, picked out a random car parked at the Bayside Marketplace and began kicking in the windshield. The owner of the car, happening upon this scene, was understandably upset and chased the suspect through the complex. Police eventually stopped the suspect, who, according to their report, had bloodshot eyes and smelled of alcohol. Police arrested him before the victim got to express his own anger.

We Hate To Say Anybody Was Asking For It, But...

100 Block of NE 80th Terrace

People are either clueless or love our Crime Beat feature so much they are willing to do almost anything to get into it. This woman filed a report claiming numerous items had been stolen from her home in the last month. Okay, that's

a good reason to file a report. However, she also admits that she often goes to the corner store and *always* leaves her door open. While Crime Beat rarely publishes exact addresses, all homes on this block should really lock their doors from now on — because we're pretty sure even criminals read Crime Beat.

Little People Score Big Boots

NE 7th Avenue and 137th Street

Victim was buying ice cream when he was approached by three juveniles. They demanded his Timberland boots and his money. As victim was removing his shoes, one of the juveniles, who stood about four-foot-nine, punched him in the left temple. The other suspects, who were all about the same height, fled northbound after they got the shoes and money. Lil-liputians? Angry jockeys? Either way, be on the lookout for mean little people wearing oversize boots in North Miami.

Worm Steals iPad From Bird Lover

12500 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

One can't flash valuables anywhere in North Miami. A man was snapping photos of birds with his iPad when he

was approached from behind. Suspect snatched the iPad from our bird-watching victim, then hopped into a car driven by an accomplice. Please be aware of your surroundings and don't make yourself a target. Bird-watching on the Boulevard may not be the smartest hobby to have in 2012.

Just Do it, Part II

1500 Block of NE 125th Street

He may be retired, but Michael Jordan's signature sneaks still cause otherwise normal people to become Crime Beat wannabes. Three juveniles broke into a home and stole 39 — yes, 39 — pairs of Air Jordans, plus a laptop for good measure. The victim told police she knew who the thieves were, as they all attend Alonzo and Tracy Mourning High School. (Maybe this is some sort of basketball-enthusiast crime ring?) Kids, for the last time, it wasn't the shoes that made MJ "His Airness." Besides, if you want to steal shoes associated with a basketball superstar, may we recommend LeBron's? We understand even the ones he plays in are only worn three-quarters of the way through. (Note: You have to be a basketball fan to get that joke.)

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A Park Sampler

Certain things about the Harry Cohen Complex are as tempting as a box of chocolates — just watch out for the nuts

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

The Forrest Gump wisdom about a box of chocolates hardly applies in Miami, because when you meet people in public, you always know what you're going to get: crazy. You could also get inspired, but that requires patience beyond the crazed-inducing heat that has melted your precious chocolates into primordial goo.

What I didn't know on a recent visit to a park in North Miami Beach is that the second group of people I met would redeem it from the first group's insanity. I don't use that term figuratively.

"We're all bipolar" is what she told me. She was a blonde hippie of a certain age, sitting on the grass and smoking a joint in the shadow of a war memorial and pointing to two male companions, whom she called homeless, before inviting them to sleep in her backyard. Her stream-of-consciousness ramblings tumbled out in circles, from the injustices of dry cleaning to the famous relatives of her doctors, who, she assured me, were

trying to poison her. "Tell them that," she said. Okay, now I've told them.

It was funny until it got sad. One of the men claimed to be a veteran and reminded me how neglected our vets are and how many end up homeless. While his case is unverified, it's true that many returning vets struggle to adapt to civilian life. This unidentified man, wearing a patriotic T-shirt, was standing in front of a black granite monument that read: "Beirut. Lebanon. 23 October 1983."

This rogue gang of three was gathered in All Wars Memorial Park, a fenced-in grassy area with three separate monuments. Besides the homeless, few people seem to visit them. The memorial's centerpiece is wordless — a curling, black-and-gray granite wall, gradually rising from about one to four feet, with a flagpole in the middle. Walking into it, it feels like a rising wave, and in the center its twin walls meet to form a simple circle. The lack of ornamentation gives gravitas to the space.

Two bronze plaques on the ground nearby identify it as the All Wars Veterans Memorial of 1990. An aluminum sign located above warns visitors to "please



Hidden within the big park is a smaller one — the All Wars Memorial Park.

respect this monument." Some pieces are missing. Beautiful coral rock forms the floor and a semi-circle of low amphitheater seating facing the wall. (Here, the annual crowd gathered for a Memorial Day ceremony this past May 28.)

To the south and north of this central monument stand two identical rectangular slabs. The Beirut monument lists the 27 "Men of Florida" who perished in that infamous barracks bombing. It was dedicated on January 15, 1989. Across the park, on the north side, a September 11 monument has an inaugural date of November 12, 2001, just two months after the attack. One side reads: "Attack on America. September 11, 2001. Many Faiths — One Hope. Many Cultures — One Resolve. Many Races — One People. United We Stand."

With no seating other than for the central monument, the park gets used heavily as a walkway. It seems to be at a North Miami Beach crossroads. Students are walking to and from school or to the city's library and athletic fields next door, Walmart is in view, a walking and biking path runs alongside the bordering canal, with a bridge carrying foot traffic across to a business district. People in this part of Miami-Dade are actually walking to get somewhere.

Parks also attract the not so mobile, and in this case that includes homeless interlopers and consumers of paper-bag-wrapped cans and bottles.



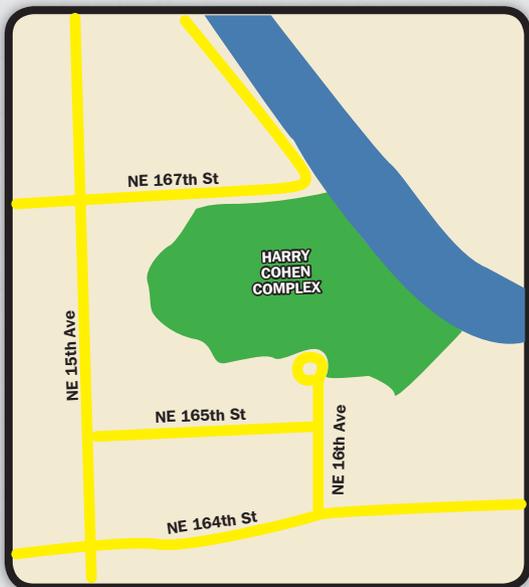
The memorial's centerpiece is a solemn circle of black granite, whose lack of ornamentation lends gravitas.

But there is another group with limited mobility that meets here regularly.

Enter Laura Maya of Doral and Terrah Moss of Miami Lakes, two women in wheelchairs, and on a stage. The stage belongs to the Gwen Margolis Amphitheater, a covered outdoor performance space with seating on a grassy hill, but the two ladies are not here to sing. They are here to exercise at the only free gym for the disabled in Miami-Dade County.

A free, high-tech gym, on a stage, under a giant white tent — who knew? People come from all over South Florida, says Maya, because it's unique. Both of the women say they love it.

HARRY COHEN COMPLEX



Park Rating



16501 NE 16th Ave.
North Miami Beach
305-948-2957
Hours: Sunrise to sunset
Picnic tables: No
Barbecues: No
Picnic pavilions: Yes
Tennis courts: No
Athletic fields: Yes
Night lighting: Yes
Swimming pool: No
Playground: No



Laura Maya and Terrah Moss love the park's unique, high-tech gym for the disabled, and it's free.

Park visitors would never know it exists because the gym is hidden behind closed doors in a room that sits on top of the stage area. The gym is open Mondays and Fridays from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and on Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The city's Disability Sports Program includes tennis and cycling, and with support from Councilwoman Marlen Martell, it appears to serve a growing crowd. Sweet.



The bridge carries lots of foot traffic — people here are actually walking to get somewhere.

Now back to the less tasty chocolate morsels. This 12-acre park complex may be hiding all kinds of secrets, because nothing is clearly marked. Walking past the amphitheater, you would never know that there was a gym inside, and even walking past the main park space, you could be in the dark about its war memorials.

Even the name of the park is unclear, although a sign on the northern edge calls it the "Harry Cohen Park Complex."

Who was Harry Cohen? Why is the bridge also named after him? I know that Gwen Margolis is a longtime state legislator from Miami, but even her sign seems stuck in a corner and out of place.

There are no signs naming the All Wars Memorial Park — or is it Harry Cohen Park? Harry Complex? (Does Harry *have* a complex? Is that the root of the park's identity crisis?) No clue was provided by sources at the library and



There are no signs naming the All Wars Memorial Park — or is it Harry Cohen Park? Harry Complex?

the city. In fact, the city's Website calls it "Challenger Park." That's appropriate.

Despite this park area's identity issues and other drawbacks, including too much litter, it gets credit for a strategic location that draws a truly diverse crowd seeking primarily to get from point A to point B, with the adjacent bridge offering a scenic route.

In this park, you can create your own box of chocolates, in the Miami mode. It may not always look pretty, but sometimes it tastes pretty sweet.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Creating a Helpful Canine

With the proper training, your pet's behavioral problems can be put to some very good uses

By Lisa Hartman
BT Contributor

For some dog trainers like myself, what dog owners see as problems are the stuff that dreams are made of. Where they see frustration, I see opportunity.

When my clients are contemplating giving their dog away for "acting up," I see the next pet star in the making. Finding a way to turn things around is the key to a happy life with pets. With that in mind, let's look at some typical dog behaviors and how they can become a great thing.

One of the most common behaviors for dogs is to play with, shred, or just pick up objects from the floor and play the keep-away game with them. Of course, most dog owners are inclined to chase after their pet or yell at him, which usually makes the dog only want to hold onto the object even more. The good news is, if you have a dog with this propensity, you have a service dog in the making!

You can quite easily teach your dog to pick up items from the floor and bring them to you. Instead of chasing your dog, try the exact opposite. Whenever your dog has something in his mouth, shout,



"Good boy! Come here!"

Naturally, your dog probably will be hesitant to follow your lead, but you can start coaxing him little by little in baby steps. Start by praising him and rewarding him even if he stays away from you. If you don't happen to have a reward he

likes (treat or toy), run to the kitchen and get him something yummy.

It might seem like you're rewarding nothing in the beginning, but as the dog learns that having something in his mouth and coming toward you is a good thing, he will come closer and closer.

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You can even set your dog up for practice: Throw one of his toys and say, "Get it!" As he picks it up, hold your arms out in a welcoming position and say, "Good boy. Bring!"

Even one step toward you in the beginning should be rewarded, whether or not he drops the object. With my own dog, I usually wasn't ready with a food reward (his personal favorite) when he would pick up something, so I'd immediately tell him to come running into the kitchen to get a piece of cheese.

He started by only walking a foot or two with the object before dropping it, but I rewarded him anyway. Soon he would come much closer, prompting more of a reward from me, say two or three treats. Eventually he was dropping the object at my feet. This was great, but my ultimate goal was to have him place the object in my hand. With a little encouragement over a short time, I was able to get him to pick up the object and give it right to me. Jackpot!

I had a party for him and lavished him with praise. I started dropping things and then saying "Oops! Get it!" His behavior became more and more

reliable. Now when I say, "Oops," he immediately starts wagging his tail, picks up the object I dropped, and brings it to me. I hardly ever have to pick up anything; I have a happy and willing assistant.

Have a dog that jumps up? Again, there's a way to turn this problem around. We can focus the jumping in specific circumstances and reduce it in others. How about having a dog who will turn the lights on and off for you? Have some treats with you and bring him toward a light switch on the wall. Tap near the light switch and coax him to touch it. Again you may have to start with baby steps as he has probably been reprimanded for jumping in the past. Reward him for even slight hops in the beginning, if that is all you get.

If your dog knows how to touch your hand with his paw, start with your hand held low, at his level, and increase the

height incrementally, rewarding each step along the way. Next, start pointing to different objects to touch, or if you're feeling confident, encourage your dog to touch the light switch. Again you will praise and reward good efforts. When he actually turns on the light, praise and reward heavily with lots of treats or a game of tug, if that's what your dog likes. (Note: You may have to keep the room somewhat dark so your dog notices

the difference when he turns on the light.)

Once your dog gets the hang of it, your next step is to create distance

between you and the switch. You will approach this the same way as the previous training, moving farther away as long as your dog is successful in his attempts. Don't worry if your dog starts missing the switch without you standing nearby to prompt him.

When you add a more difficult element, you have to expect other areas to

weaken a bit. Stay at a distance when he is doing pretty well and then tighten up the behavior from there. In no time, you'll be sitting in your comfy chair and pressing the dog into service: "Rocco, turn on the light! Good boy!" (Treat.)

Finding an effective and fun solution to a domestic problem with your dog is the crux of good dog training and the key to a happy canine household. There are many ways to teach behavior. The dog that once played keep-away with your objects now brings them to you happily, and maybe even puts your dirty clothes in the laundry basket. The dog that used to jump up and down for no good reason now helps you turn lights on and off. Envisioning a better tomorrow is the key to enjoying and even being proud of your dog — and getting help to boot.

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.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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After the War, an Explosion of Consumer Demand

A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami

By Paul S. George
Special to the *BT*

The wave of prosperity that swept post-World War II America was highlighted by a sharp rise in consumer spending. Downtown Miami, the region's vibrant center of shopping for residents and visitors alike, expanded quickly to meet the growing demand

for consumer goods.

In this photograph from the late 1940s, Burdine's famous "bridge," connecting the original store on the east side of S. Miami Avenue to the recently completed "annex" on the west side of the street, is nearing completion.

In 1950 and for the next ten Christmas seasons, the bridge hosted a giant neon Santa Claus, while the roof of the



Photo courtesy of Miami News Collection, HistoryMiami. #1989-011-10442

annex offered a rich array of rides for excited children who came to Miami's premier department store at the busy intersection of Miami Avenue and Flagler Street.

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

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Better Butterflies Through Gardening

Lantana will bring monarchs to your yard — just don't eat the berries

By Jeff Shimonski
BT Contributor

I was surveying a large piece of property in the Redland a few weeks ago and happened upon an attractive and interesting little shrub.

The plant with colorful flowers shown in the photo that accompanies this article was one of our invasive species, *Lantana camara*, called lantana by most plant people. It is native to Mexico, Central America, the Greater Antilles, Venezuela, and Colombia, but it has become naturalized in tropical and warm regions worldwide.

What was really interesting were the different varieties of lantana I found on this property. Normally the newest flowers on the common lantana, which are yellow, come out of the center. As the yellow flowers age, in a day or so, they are pushed out of the center by newer flowers and turn orange to red.

The newest flowers have nectar that certain of our native butterflies drink, but in the older flowers the nectar has dried up. This is an interesting phenomenon. Why does the plant hold on to the older flowers when they can no longer produce nectar for pollinators?

Give up? Watch a butterfly float onto the little clump of flowers; it is a landing zone, the brightly colored flowers making it easier for pollinators to recognize the plant from afar.

In the lantana's native habitat in the neotropics, there are two other species of plants in different families that share the

same floral and color characteristics. One is *Epidendrum ibaguense*, the reed stem orchid, and the other is *Asclepias curassavica*, or scarlet milkweed. These two plants, along with lantana, are pollinated by the same species of butterfly — monarch butterflies. These are great butterfly plants for our landscapes (although I can hear the native-plant folks screaming about the invasive-plant issue.)

One thing I find very interesting is that both lantana and scarlet milkweed provide nectar to the butterflies, while the reed stem orchid does not. The correct term for this characteristic is Mullerian mimicry, where the floral resemblance of lantana and scarlet milkweed allows both species to attract more pollinator visits through the combined impact of their floral displays and nectar offering.

The reed stem orchid benefits by mimicking the floral displays of the two other plants that do give nectar, and consequently has butterflies visiting its flowers and pollinating it (without having to offer a reward of nectar in exchange). This is called Batesian mimicry. Of course, it's only a theory, but still very interesting to those of us who wish to place everything into neat little categories.

Another interesting characteristic of *Lantana camara* is the floral color variation found in this one species of plant. I saw three different-colored *Lantana camara* on that one piece of property in the Redland. I also spotted two other species of lantana with which I'm



BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

A brightly colored and potentially toxic *Lantana camara* in bloom.

familiar — a yellow, low-growing one and a purple one. For many years I grew the purple species. It had a wonderful fragrance at night, to go with the carpet of striking flowers that were to be seen during the day.

Since I'm always asked about a plant's toxicity to animals and people, I should mention that *Lantana camara* is known by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council as a Category One "Invasive Toxic Species." It has been well documented that the foliage is very toxic to livestock such as horses, goats, and cattle — if they ingest one percent or more of their body weight. This, naturally, depends on the amount of toxin in the particular plant, and apparently not all species of lantana are toxic. (Nevertheless, you might want to keep your cat away from it; I had a couple of cats that liked to eat certain leaves off particular species of plants.)

I've heard over the years that the berries were toxic. However, studies I have read — including one recently done in California with children reported to have eaten lantana fruit — indicate the

ingestion of the unripe berries has not been associated with any significant human toxicity. Even so, best not to eat the berries. That way you'll be okay and not have to find out firsthand.

Another unpleasant characteristic of lantana species is they are allelopathic to other species of plants. Lantana produces biochemicals that keep other plant species from growing nearby, and enable them to utilize important resources like water and nutrients more efficiently.

This is certainly one of the reasons lantana is so invasive. Like the Brazilian pepper I wrote about a few garden columns ago, they have fruit dispersed by birds and they use chemical warfare against other plant species. At least the Brazilian pepper produces a tasty fruit useful in cooking.

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

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Rethinking Green

Is New Urbanism the new environmentalism?

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

Environmentalists are dumb. That's the message from Andres Duany, one of the world's most prominent urban planners. He uses the more eloquent term of "lobotomized."

"They are intellectually deformed. Half of their brains are gone," says Duany, based in Miami. He doesn't say "stupid" or "dumb," but they are implied. His contention is that environmental leaders fail to put humans first and only care about nature, preferably sans humans.

Is this guy trying to pick a fight? Actually, yes. I know this because he asked me to gather my environmental gang into a room so that our side and his side could "have it out." I foresee another Miami-based reality show in the making: *Zoning Wars*.

Duany is a founder of New Urbanism, a 30-year-old movement based on walkable communities, and he runs a firm called DPZ alongside his wife, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, the dean of the University of Miami's School of Architecture. While their books and opinions ring loudly in the world of architecture and urban planning, Duany says he never gets invited to speak to American environmentalists. (Our gang could change that.)

Instead he speaks in Vienna and Frankfurt about how cities can save the planet. Last month in West Palm Beach,

he addressed the 20th Congress of New Urbanism, which he founded. "The real way to save nature is to make cities that people really love," he stated at that event. "Everybody's trying to prevent us from doing it. New urbanists are heroes."

Duany's vision of perfection is a European plaza, a paved place where everyone gathers, but cars are not allowed. The New Urbanism movement looks to the past for inspiration, and it makes a distinction between towns developed before 1945 and after, when the highway became popularized and suburbs became possible.

Well-dressed and articulate, Duany vents his anger at Americans and, especially, American environmental regulators. They make his job impossible, he says, because they only think about nature and ignore human culture, which results in failure for both.

His solution to save the planet, including humanity, is to create cities where people love to walk and love to live, like Manhattan. In Florida, South Beach is his best example, but the rest of the county is unloved. "Miami-Dade has such horrible places, and people are always trying to escape to the suburbs," he says.

Today's environmental regulations would prevent the creation of another Manhattan or South Beach because such places were originally wetlands. According to Duany, by protecting native habitats, the environmental movement has sabotaged itself, saving roads and cars instead. "What



gets built are suburban places, saving the wetlands, but low in density and everybody driving," he laments.

"Until environmentalists become urbanists, Americans won't be able to tell the difference between Miami Beach and greenwash suburban sprawl," he says. The term "greenwash" refers to the growing tendency to call things "green" for the sake of popularity, although they may cause more harm than good to the environment.

Duany argues that cities allow people to live healthy, low-impact lifestyles. "Manhattan is the greenest city in the U.S. because most people are using transit and walking," he says. But he notes that underneath its streets are 1700 pipes that have diverted natural streams, with no special allowances for former rivers or wetlands. Such destruction of natural habitats would be illegal today. Hence, no new Manhattans.

At the other end of Duany's green-city spectrum are young suburban towns such as Weston in Broward County, where laws favor wide, grassy swales while preventing compact neighborhoods. He says that Portland, Oregon, is full of suburban sprawl, owing to planning and zoning legislation instituted in recent decades.

"Portlandians" or "Evergladians" are Duany's dumb environmentalists — the

ones who fight for and create zoning laws to protect nature while ignoring human needs. Duany says they did not support him as a lead consultant for Miami 21, the City of Miami's master planning guide approved in 2010. As a result, the level of density approved is "not as high as it should be," he says.

The Urban Development Boundary in Miami-Dade County is a sham, Duany maintains, because it has been moved repeatedly and has allowed for suburban sprawl. "The basic situation," he says, "is that the environmental movement only has half the tools. They only fight for the urban boundary. The permanent and long-range solution is making cities that people love and willingly live in."

As for American environmentalists, he predicts their reaction to this article: "I have no hope that they will know what I'm talking about. They'll think I'm a fascist maniac. It's futile. They only see themselves through the green lens. Their green is visual."

Is Duany's color of green — a tight urban grid — the better choice? Call me dumb, but I say yes.

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

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Saying Goodbye to Skippy

Helping your kids cope with the death of a pet is important

By Crystal Brewe
BT Contributor

One of my oldest friends died last week. He helped me cope with a move across the globe, saw me faithfully through two pregnancies, and was there for me through both the tough times and the great times. He was a swimmer, he was protective of his friends, and he was handsome. He was very old. In fact he was 112 — in dog years.

Skippy was a regal and gentle golden retriever. He chose us. He just showed up one day in our yard, skinny and smelling of swamp water from the Ala Wai Canal near our home in Hawaii.

He was the best dog my husband and I have ever had and loved our children more than table food. He was spry and puppy-like even into old age. He was a part of everything our family did. When he could no longer stand and his breathing was tortured, we knew it was time, but we didn't involve the kids in the euthanasia discussion.

Matilda, our seven-year-old, was inconsolable for days. She planned a memorial, invited neighbors, and drew pictures of Skippy in various happy places. Everly, our three-year-old, however, had countless questions: "Where is Skippy? When is he coming back? Why does he want to go to Heaven? Will I go to Heaven? When will I go to Heaven?"

The death of a family pet tends to be children's first encounter with this immutable law of nature. I quickly realized that our approach with this event would have a far-reaching impact on our children's understanding of death and dying.

My hope is that, instead of remembering the loss and sadness, Matilda remembers the seven wonderful years she had with her Skippy Dogstein: Swimming in the Hawaiian waters outside our family home, chasing crabs, and prancing around our neighborhood in Miami chasing tennis balls.

Everly? Well, she taught us a lot about our own beliefs. My husband, an atheist, had a hard time couching the death in a palatable way for a young child. My Christian upbringing-turned-agnostic attitude worked as a good alternative. Some sort of afterlife seemed like the most comforting way to explain this to a three-year-old. I'm not certain, but all dogs do go to Heaven, right?

When I was 12, our family pet, Shanny, a devoted collie, developed hip dysplasia. We had ten amazing years with that sweet dog, and my mother didn't want our memory to be of his illness or his final hours. One day she shipped my brother and me off to a neighbor and, when we returned, she explained that Shanny was very sick and died that morning. She didn't hide her tears, which was one thing I'll remember forever.



My mother was shaken, but explained the death to us clearly. She wasn't open to a frank conversation, though. She didn't like for us to see her cry, and I think she was more worried about *appearing* strong than embracing the emotion to illustrate that grieving together was acceptable.

Following Shanny's death, I had months of disturbing and guilt-ridden dreams. Grieving can be *weird* for a kid. In one dream, I forgot to feed Shanny and he withered away. In another, I accidentally smashed his nose in the arcadia door, and his head fell off. I was not to blame in any way for his actual death, but I was clearly affected — even in my sleep — by the loss.

The death of a beloved family pet is a big deal. Children naturally develop strong attachments, relating to pets as siblings, playmates, confidants, and even protectors. While children experience grief differently than adults, they do grieve. They need support and guidance to understand their loss, to mourn that loss, and to find ways to remember and memorialize their loved one.

A friend of mine, Claire, recently shared that her parents used the "Fluffy went to live on a farm" cliché when her family pet died. (Let me guess: Fluffy is running in the fields around this farm with the stork that brought Claire's sister, right?) She confronted her mother about it much later in life and the mother stuck with her story.

Kids are resilient and need this life experience. When in doubt, I always remind myself: "You aren't raising kids, you're raising adults. Don't lie to them."

We do have another dog, Foxy Mamma, who is also grieving the loss of Skippy. We have answered "no" to the predictable "Can we get a new dog?" question. "We don't need a new dog right now. We should just be an even *better* friend to Foxy," my husband said.

We've been spending a lot of time talking about our own childhood pets with our children. We laugh together about these memories and compare them to our Skippy Dogstein. He chose us, and I think he made the right choice. We'll never forget him.

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Not the Usual California Suspects

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

By Bill Citara
BT Contributor

Say “California wine country” and most people will likely think of Napa and Sonoma and... well, and nothing.

But the California wine country is an awfully big place, some 526,000 acres of vineyards, according to the Wine Institute, of which the big dogs of Napa and Sonoma comprise only about 100,000 acres or so, meaning there’s a lot of grapes in the ground we haven’t even considered.

So consider we will, two counties to the north and east of Napa and Sonoma: Mendocino and Lake. Mendocino County is huge, almost 4000 square miles, with about 17,000 acres of vineyard.

It’s hugely diverse in climate, soils, and grapes, too, from the cool-weather Anderson Valley AVA (American Viticultural Area) on the coast, home to such varieties as Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Riesling, and Gewurztraminer (most, sadly, beyond our budget), to the eastern and much warmer Mendocino AVA, where Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, and Zinfandel are the main grapes. It’s also considered the birthplace of organic-wine growing.

Lake County is considerably smaller, about one-third the size of Mendocino, with about half as much vineyard land, though that is expected to increase dramatically in the coming years. Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc are the

two most prominent grapes, though red varieties like Petite Syrah, Syrah, Tempranillo, and Zinfandel are carving out their own niches in the local wine universe.

A pair of Lake County Sauvignon Blancs split the difference between the austere, grapefruity New Zealand style and fleshier, fuller-bodied SBs that often come from Napa and Sonoma. The **2010 Pellegrini** displays aromas of lemons, grapefruit, and oranges with a bit of floral richness. In the mouth it’s fuller still, with a lemony acidity to the backbone, and soft citrus and vaguely tropical fruit flavors. Combined with an almost creamy texture, it can stand up to meaty fish like tuna and salmon, and even roasted chicken.

Bonterra Vineyards was one of the first California wineries to get serious about organic- and biodynamic-wine growing. (Certified biodynamic vineyards exceed the “organic” classification by requiring a very high level of agricultural sustainability.)

Like all of Bonterra’s wines, the **2010 Sauvignon Blanc** is produced from 100-percent organic grapes, 58 percent from Lake County and 42 percent from Mendocino. It starts off with a fresh, citrusy nose with grassy, herbaceous nuances, then moves on to enhance its lemon-lime-grapefruit flavors with richer notes of orange and, like it says on the label, kiwi. Crisp, clean, simple, and quite refreshing, it’s an excellent wine with seafood.

Two Lake County reds show off the deep, fruity, full-bodied character of the

area’s red wine varieties. The **2009 Shannon Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon** is a rich, royal purple, delivering an aromatic shot of black and red cherries, blueberries, anise, and oak. It takes a while to mellow in the glass, but when it does, you get a powerful taste of ripe black and blueberry fruit that’s a heavenly match for chocolate.

Just as potent, but with more complexity, is the **2010 Dalliance**, which blends Zinfandel, Barbera, Syrah, Tempranillo, and Grenache to create a really unique flavor profile. It’s a big sucker, too — 14.5 percent alcohol — and along with gobs of blackberry and blueberry fruit, it foos around with cloves, allspice, and sweet-smoky oak. If you’re looking for a wine to go with that New York strip fresh off the grill, you just found it.

Bonterra blends Mendocino and Lake County grapes again in its **2009 Cabernet Sauvignon**, a still young-tasting wine that benefits from its (relatively) low 13.5 percent alcohol level. Nothing wimpy about this organic Cab. It fills the nose with aromas of black and blue fruit, figs, anise, and allspice, though on the palate its fruit is more tangy than intense, which highlights its abundant spicy undercurrents.

We’re cheating just a tiny bit on the last wine, because such fine coastal



The Dalliance and Shannon Ridge wines both cost \$11.99 and are available at the North Miami Beach ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525). The Pellegrini can be found for \$9.95 at the North Miami Crown Wine and Spirits (12555 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-9463). The North Miami Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270) has the Angeline (\$11.99), Bonterra Cabernet (\$11.99), and the Bonterra Sauvignon Blanc (\$10.49).

Mendocino Pinot Noirs like Standish, Littorai, and Navarro are beyond our financial grasp. The **2010 Angeline Pinot Noir** uses grapes from Santa Barbara, Sonoma, and Mendocino, and delivers a remarkably Burgundian experience for an equally remarkable \$11.99 price tag.

Pop the cork and it smells of fresh raspberries and strawberries and red cherries with a trace of that characteristic Burgundy funk. It’s even more of a treat for the palate, with those cherry-berry flavors given complexity by hints of olives, tobacco, and toast, proof that the little guys can run with the big dogs just fine, thank you.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Drink Till You're Smart

Food news we know you can use

By **Pamela Robin Brandt**
BT Contributor

Typically, summer is a death sentence for a number of Miami restaurants, and we've already lost some good ones. But overall it looks like a hot season in more ways than one. Before we get to that, remember this: We need your help. Signs of a restaurant opening or closing in your neighborhood? Send your tips to restaurants@biscaynetimes.com. I'll check them out.

OPENINGS

Naoe (661 Brickell Key Dr., 305-947-6263) Chef Kevin Cory's superb seasonal omakase (chef's choice) Japanese restaurant, which closed last year owing to demolition of its former location, just reopened on Brickell Key. See the Dining Guide for a description of the food, which is worth every cent. What isn't: the rip-off rates at the island's one parking garage, \$3 per 20 minutes. With Naoe's multi-course dinners running more than three hours, opt instead to valet, for \$2 per hour, at Courvoisier Courts condo next door (701 Brickell Key Dr.).

Poncho Tacos (2531 NW 2nd Ave., 305-748-2828). A new addition to Wood Tavern's outdoor bar/beer garden, this graffiti-covered stand, incorporating a 1964 station wagon, serves Mexican street food: \$2 tacos (homemade tortillas stuffed with steak or chicken plus onions, cilantro, and hot sauce) or cheese quesadillas.

RiverShack (620 NE 78th St., 305-758-2929). It's in Anise Tavern's former

space on the Little River. Gigi and Liza Meoli still run the front of the house, while co-owner and chef David Long is in the kitchen. But the food is totally different, no longer Greek/Mediterranean but New American Gastrofiscamp comfort food.

Dominique Bistro-Club (1451 S. Miami Ave., 305-371-8859) This chic but completely nonattitudinous bistro/lounge opened without media notice, but only its publicity is poor. Paris-trained chef/owner Gerardo Barrera De Negri serves skilled versions of all France's classics, including a perfectly grilled rib-eye entrecôte (with béarnaise or, even better, complexly spiced Café de Paris compound butter) and a crème brûlée ethereal enough to win over cynics who got over this dessert cliché 15 years ago.

CLOSINGS

Fratelli Lyon, a Design District pioneer since 2008. Owner Ken Lyon (a South Beach food pioneer with Lyon Freres in the early 1990s), who cited differences in vision with his partners as cause for the closing, is offering a summer menu of Fratelli specialties through his catering company Lyon & Lyon. Meanwhile, Fratelli's space at 4141 NE 2nd Ave. is being redesigned for MC Kitchen, a "modern Italian" eatery from Dena Marino, a Michael Chiarello protégé and *Iron Chef* contestant. Opening is scheduled for August.

Sustain, in Midtown Miami. Universal critical acclaim (both local and national) for its creative comfort food and cocktails; a commitment to local, seasonal, sustainable ingredients; interesting music... Sustain had it all except,



according to owner Brian Goldberg, the finances to sustain itself. Partner Jonathan Lazar is already back in Brooklyn, at new Gran Electrica restaurant. No word yet on the plans of chef Alejandro Pinero, a Miami native and Fratelli veteran.

Mare Nostrum, in Brickell, an excellent but expensive seafood restaurant that opened last December but never established an enticing identity. "Mediterranean" just doesn't do it these days.

SIDE DISH

Remember all the lavish, and informative, zillion-course wine dinners of yesteryear? At **Trapiche Room**, the intimate, top-end restaurant at Brickell's JW Marriott (1109 Brickell Ave.) diners can revisit those decadent days of drinking one's way to educational excellence at its new monthly winemaker's dinner series.

Revelation from May's inaugural dinner with France's famed Perrin family: a Beaucastel Chateaufeuf du Pape containing only two grams of sulfite per gallon vs. the 100 grams allowed — no migraines!

June's dinner date isn't set yet. Evidently prestige producers don't confirm till the last minute, according to PR rep José

Lima. So call 305-329-3585 for details.

Along with pop-up eateries in vacant restaurant spaces, a newer trend has come to BT territory, in the form of one-night "chef pops" in a working restaurant — Michael Schwartz's **Harry's Pizzeria** (3918 N. Miami Ave., 786-275-4963). The one-night "pizzerias" feature visiting star chefs and fare that actually ranges from pies to fine-dining dishes. Tickets are now on sale for June 17's Animal Pizzeria, a collaboration with Jon Shook and Vinny Dotolo, two former Florida dudes whose outrageous L.A. restaurant Animal is famed for serving, literally, the whole hog.

June means jazz (and blues) at **Wynwood Kitchen & Bar** (2550 NW 2nd Ave., 305-722-8959), where the outdoor stage will host free live concerts, curated by Grammy-winning flutist Nestor Torres, every Thursday-Saturday at 8:00 p.m. For the schedule of artists: www.wynwoodkitchenandbar.com.

Finally, see this issue's "BizBuzz" (page 30) for more restaurant news and deals from BT advertisers Bagels & Company, Hippo Bites, La Cigale, Lorenzo's, Namaste, Trio on the Bay, Tuna's, and Turnberry Isle.

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Dining Guide

Restaurant Listings

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 308.

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 glib-trotting 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 sleeper setting than its perennially popular Lincoln Road progenitor, but the same simple yet sophisticated global menu. The indoor space can get mighty loud, but lounging on the dog-friendly outdoor terrace, over a rich croque monsieur (which comes with an alluringly sweet/sour citrus-dressed side salad), a lobster club on onion toast, some surprisingly solid Asian fusion items, and a cocktail is one of Miami's more relaxing experiences. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Bali Café
109 NE 2nd Ave., 305-358-5751
While Indonesian food isn't easy to find in Miami, downtown has secret stashes – small joints catering to cruise-ship and construction workers. This cute, exotically decorated café has survived and thrived for good reason. The homey cooking is delicious, and the friendly family feel encourages even the timid of palate to try something new. Novices will want Indonesia's signature rijstafel, a mix-and-match collection of small dishes and condiments to be heaped on rice. Note: bring cash. No plastic accepted here. \$\$\$

Banana & Leaf
234 NE 3rd St., 786-431-5548
Ever get tempted by the convenience of supermarket sushi boxes, but feel uneasy about freshness and disgruntled about sparseness of fillings? In the grab-and-go containers here, raw fish 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., 05-503-6500
On the Conrad's 25th floor, The Bar's picture-windowed space is not just a watering hole with panoramic views. At lunch it's an elegant sandwich bar; at night it's a raw bar (with pristine coldwater oysters) and (best) a tapas bar serving pintxos. That's just the Basque word for tapas, but here there's nothing mere about the generously portioned small plates. They range from traditional items like cod fish equixada and saffron-sautéed Spanish artichokes to inventive inspirations like foie gras and goat cheese-stuffed empanadas. \$\$\$

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

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-serve. 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 haloumi, doesn't melt but tantalizingly softens when heated. \$\$

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

Café Bastille
248 SE 1st St., 786-425-3575
Breakfasting on a ham-egg-cheese crepe at this very French-feeling – and tasting – café is a most civilized way to start the day. Formerly breakfast and lunch only, the café is now open for dinner, too. And while the crepes (both savory and sweet) are tempting and varied enough to eat all day, dinner choices like homemade foie gras (with onion jam and Guerdande salt), salmon with lentils and fennel salsa, or a very affordable skirt steak au poivre make it possible to resist. \$\$\$

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

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

NEW THIS MONTH

MIAMI

BRICKELL / DOWNTOWN

Naoo
661 Brickell Key Dr., 305-947-6263
Chances are you've never had anything like the \$85 prix-fixe Japanese dinners at chef Kevin Cory's tiny but nationally acclaimed oasis, transplanted from its original Sunny Isles space with its supreme serenity intact. By reservation only, in two dinner seatings of just eight people each, and omakase (chef's choice) only, meals include a seasonal soup, a four-course bento box, eight pieces of sushi, and three desserts. Cory personally does everything for you, even applying the perfect amount of housemade artisan soy sauce mix and fresh-grated wasabi to each mind-reelingly fresh nigiri. Few eating experiences on earth are more luxuriant. \$\$\$

Pier 94
94 SE 1st St., 305-379-5652
Tucked into "The Village," a collection of courtyard eateries far from any waterfront, this ceviche bar specializes in fresh seafood dishes from chef/owner Alex Del Corral's native Peru, but also features famous Peruvian meat and poultry dishes (including a refined aji de gallina, chicken in aji pepper-spiced cream sauce). Emphasis is particularly strong on Peru's penchant for fusion food, including traditional Chifa (Chinese-Peruvian) rice or noodle stir-fries. But the chef also fuses classic and creative influences. Try contemporary causas, combining Peru's favorite starch, potatoes, with unique new sauces. \$\$

Trapiche Room
1109 Brickell Ave., 305-329-3656
With multiple Marriott hotels in Brickell and downtown, one of them housing high-profile db Bistro, it's not surprising that this small, second-floor restaurant is something of a "best kept secret." But it deserves discovery. Chef Maria Tobar hasn't Daniel Boulud's fame, but she does have classic European-type technical skills, combined with contemporary creativity that turns even ultimately old-fashioned items, like a pork/cabbage strudel, into 21st century fine-dining fare. Both décor and service, similarly, are swlegant, not stuffy, and the room's intimacy makes it a romantic spot for special occasions. \$\$\$

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 cock-tails 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. \$\$\$

MIDTOWN / WYNWOOD / DESIGN DISTRICT

Barrel Wine Cantine
3622 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-7775
This boutique wine market/wine bar, featuring French small plates, sounds just like this address's former occupant, W Wine Bar, when it first opened. The difference: Instead of W's rotating chefs (including, sometimes, servers), Barrel's head honcho is Victor Passalacqua, a Miami fine-dining vet originally schooled by French stars like Paul Bocuse. Charcuterie selections feature imported cheeses and cured meats hard to find outside France (like rosette de Lyon salami) plus house-made prepared salads and an incomparably sinful foie gras terrine. Changing entrées include moules frites, if you're lucky. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

UPPER EASTSIDE

Namaste
7420 Biscayne Blvd., 786-536-9050
With food served from steam-table-type stations, plus plastic utensils and plates, this neighborhood Indian place is definitely no frills. But it's also excellent value for the money, especially if you go for the all-day \$8.99 special, which includes two entrée items plus sides for which most Indian restaurants charge extra: rice, choice of bread (garlic naan recommended), and refreshing raita. Invest some of your savings in BhelPapri chat, a savory snack featuring crisp chips topped with cilantro-spiked chickpeas, onions, potatoes, yogurt, and piquant tamarind sauce. \$\$\$

AVENTURA / HALLANDALE

BagelWorks
18729 Biscayne Blvd., 305-937-7727
Hard as it is for old-time NYC expats to believe, there's evidently a younger generation that doesn't equate the Jewish deli experience with loudmouthed servers and the smell of 75 years of fermenting pickle juice in the flooring. This cleanly contemporary place attracts this younger generation with the full range of classics, including many varieties of hand-sliced smoked fish, but also healthy options, most notably a wide array of substantial salads with grilled protein add-ons. Bagels, while machine-made rather than hand-rolled, are freshly baked all day. \$\$

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 restoulounge 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). \$\$

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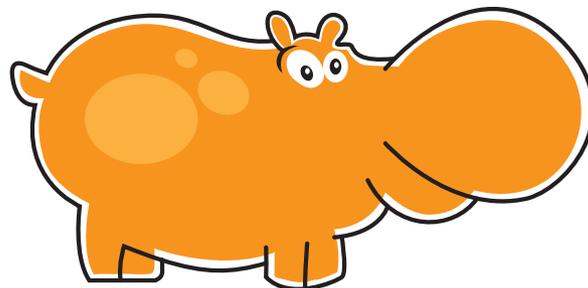
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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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. \$\$\$

Edge, Steak & Bar

1435 Brickell Ave., 305-358-3535
Replacing the Four Seasons’ formal fine dining spot Acqua, Edge offers a more kick-back casual welcoming vibe. And in its fare there’s a particularly warm welcome for non-carnivores. Chef-driven seafood items (several inventive and unusually subtle ceviches and tartares; a layered construction of corvina encrusted in a jewel-bright green pesto crust, atop red piquillo sauce stripes and salad; lobster corn soup packed with sweet lobster meat; more) and a farm-to-table produce emphasis make this one steakhouse where those who don’t eat beef have no beef. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Elwoods Gastro Pub

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

Eternity Coffee Roasters

117 SE 2nd Ave., 305-609-4981
Normally we list only full restaurants, but even a (not so) simple cuppa joe from Chris Johnson and Cristina Garces’ 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. \$\$

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. \$\$

Florin

3620 NE 2nd Ave., 786-953-5001
A labor of love from the married team of chocolatier/pastry chef Grazia Maggi and artist Rinaldo Malvernmi, this dessert café/tea house/market is a lovely little spot to enjoy a 100-percent organic afternoon tea (or herbal infusion) plus a daily-changing selection of housemade European-inspired pastries and chocolates, many incorporating edible flowers. Sweets, ranging from apricot-filled dark chocolate Sachertorte and Italian almond cakes to creamy truffles or meringue-dotted chocolate “salami,” have unusual sophistication. And artistic, hand-designed packaging makes the goodies great gifts, too – if you can resist eating them yourself. \$\$\$

Fratelli Milano

213 SE 1st St., 305-373-2300
Downtown isn’t yet a 24/7 urban center, but it’s experiencing a mini explosion of eateries open at night. That includes this family-owned ristorante, where even newcomers feel at home. At lunch it’s almost impossible to resist panini, served on focaccia or crunchy ciabatta; even the vegetarian version bursts with complex and complementary flavors. During weekday dinners, try generous plates of risotto with shrimp and grilled asparagus; homemade pastas like seafood-packed fettuccine al scoglio; or delicate Vitello alla Milanese on arugula. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Fresco California Bistro

1744 SW 3rd Ave., 305-858-0608
This festively decorated indoor/outdoor bistro packs a lot of party spirit into a small space, a large variety of food onto its menu. To the familiar Latin American/Italian equation, the owners add a touch of 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, non-traditional surprise: unusual sauces like sweet/tart passion fruit or mint, tomato-based BBQ, and mango chutney, along with the ubiquitous chimichurri. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Half Moon Empanadas

192 SE 1st Ave., 305-379-2525
As with South Beach’s original Half Moon, you can get wraps or salads. But it’s this 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

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

Hibachi Grill 45 NE 3rd Ave., 305-374-2223

Imagine a mini-express Benihana. This place specializes in teppanyaki cuisine – minus the thrilling (or terrifying) 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. \$

Jamón, Jamón, Jamón, 10 SW South River Dr., 305-324-1111

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

Jean Paul's House 2426 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-7373

Jean Paul Desmaison, original chef/co-owner of La Cofradia in Coral Gables, has chosen a decidedly less tony, more transitional neighborhood for this venture. But inside his renovated bungalow, ambiance is stylishly cozy, and the creative contemporary North/South American fusion cuisine is as elegant as ever. Best bets are dishes influenced by Desmaison's native Peru, including crispy pork belly braised in pisco with silky sweet potato purée, and a beautifully balanced nikkei (Japanese/Peruvian) salmon sashimi that does the impossible: tame leche de tigre, Peru's infamous "tiger's milk" marinade. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Kork Wine & Cheese Bar 2 S. Miami Ave., 305-377-8899

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

Largo Bar & Grill 401 Biscayne Blvd., 305-374-9706

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

La Loggia Ristorante and Lounge 68 W. Flagler St., 305-373-4800

This luxuriantly neo-classical yet warm Italian restaurant was unquestionably a pioneer in revitalizing downtown. With alternatives like amaretto-tinged pumpkin agnolotti in sage butter sauce and cilantro-spiced white bean/vegetable salad dressed with truffle oil, proprietors Jennifer Porciello and Horatio Oliveira continue to draw a lunch crowd that returns for dinner, or perhaps just stays on through the afternoon, fueled by the Lawyer's Liquid Lunch, a vodka martini spiked with sweetened espresso. \$\$\$

La Moon 144 SW 8th St., 305-860-6209

At four in the morning, nothing quells the munchies like a Crazy Burger, a Colombian take on a trucker's burger: beef patty, bacon, ham, mozzarella, lettuce, tomato, and a fried egg, with an arepa corn pancake "bun." While this tiny place's late hours (till 6:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday) are surprising, the daytime menu is more so. In addition to Colombian classics, there's a salad Niçoise with grilled fresh tuna, seared salmon with mango salsa, and other yuppie favorites. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

La Provence 1064 Brickell Ave. 786-425-9003

Great baguettes in the bread basket, many believe, indicate a great meal to come. But when Miamians encounter such bread – crackling crust outside; moist, aromatic, aerated interior – it's likely not from a restaurant's own kitchen, but from La Provence. Buttery croissants and party-perfect pastries are legend too. Not so familiar is the bakery's café component, where 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 (sauccisou 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., 305-372-233

At this French bakery/café, mornings start seriously, with choices ranging from quality cheese, charcuterie/pâté, or smoked salmon platters to chic Continental and

complete American breakfasts. At lunch, generously salad-garnished, open-faced tartines are irresistible. But sophisticated salads and homemade soups make the choice tough. And do not skip dessert. Superb sweets include rich almond/fresh raspberry or properly tangy lemon tarts, traditional Madeleines, airy layered mousses, and addictive mini-macaron sandwich cookies with daily-changing fillings. \$\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill 1 W. Flagler St., Suite 7, 305-789-9929

(See Midtown / Wynwood / Design District listing.)

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

Mare Nostrum 1111 SW 1st Ave., 786-691-2770

While Mare Nostrum's own blurbs describe it as a Mediterranean restaurant, it would be more accurate to precede that with "not just another." Both the name ("our sea") and a raw bar packed with pristine Spanish and local seafood make clear what is the specialty of chef Pedro Gallardo, an Arzak/El Bulli veteran. And indeed, simply steamed or grilled cigala (Mediterranean langoustines) are impeccable. But one could also be happy making a meal of sea-free small plates like luscious deep-fried artichokes with peppery, rich romesco sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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



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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 week-day lunch special of jerk chicken with festival (sweet-fried cornmeal bread patties), but even vegetarians are well served with dishes like a tofu, carrot, and chayote curry. All entrées come with rice and peas, fried plantains, and salad, so no one leaves hungry. \$

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

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

Miss Yip Chinese Café 900 Biscayne Blvd., 305-358-0088

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

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

neMesis Urban Bistro 1035 N. Miami Ave., 305-415-9911

Truly original restaurants are hard to find here, and harder to describe in standard sound bites. But they often are the attention-grabbing people-magnets that spark revivals of iffy neighborhoods. That's our prediction for this quirkily decorated bistro, where the kitchen is helmed by *Top Chef* contestant Micah Edelstein. The intensely personal menu of creative dishes inspired by her global travels (plus her fascination with unfamiliar ingredients) changes constantly, but scrumptious signatures include South African smoked veal bobotie, and Peruvian pinoli pancakes with housemade chicken/apple sausage, hibiscus syrup, and maple granules. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Novecento 1414 Brickell Ave., 305-403-0900

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

Oceanaire Seafood Room 900 S. Miami Ave., 305-372-8862

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

Ozzi Sushi 200 SE 1st St., 786-704-8003

Since its 1958 invention, conveyor-belt sushi has been the most fun form of Japanese fast food, but problematic. Who knew how long plates had been circulating on the sushi-go-round? Happily, this sushi-boat spot avoids sanitation issues with clear plastic covers, and as for freshness, low prices ensure a steady stream of

diners grabbing makis, nigiri, and more as they float by. Highlights include glistening ikura (salmon roe) in a thin-sliced cucumber cup, a sweet-sauced mango/guava/crab roll, and a festively frosted strawberry Nutella dessert maki. \$\$\$

Pega Grill 15 E. Flagler St., 305-808-6666

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

Pasha's 1414 Brickell Ave., 305-416-5116

The original branch on Lincoln Road was instantly popular, and the same healthy Middle Eastern fast food is served at several newer outlets. The prices are low enough that you might suspect Pasha's was a tax write-off rather than a Harvard Business School project, which it was by founders Antonio Ellek and Nicolas Cortes. Dishes range from falafel and gyros to more unusual items like muhammara (tangy walnut spread) and silky labneh yogurt cheese. Everything from pitas to lemonade is made fresh, from scratch, daily. \$\$\$

Peoples Bar-B-Que 360 NW 8th St., 305-373-8080

Oak-smoked, falling-off-the-bone tender barbecued ribs (enhanced with a secret sauce whose recipe goes back several generations) are the main draw at this Overtown institution. But the chicken is also a winner, plus there's a full menu of soul food entrées, including what many aficionados consider our town's tastiest souse. And it would be unthinkable to call it quits without homemade sweet potato pie or banana pudding, plus a bracing flop – half iced tea, half lemonade. \$\$\$

Perricone's 15 SE 10th St., 305-374-9449

Housed in a Revolutionary-era barn (moved from Vermont), this market/café was one of the Brickell area's first gentrified amenities. At lunch chicken salad is a favorite; dinner's strong suit is the pasta list, ranging from Grandma Jennie's old-fashioned lasagna to chichi 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 Arsht Center** 1300 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-6722

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

Puntino Downtown 353 SE 2nd Ave., 305-371-9661

The first U.S. venture of a hotelier from Naples, this stylish little place is open Monday through Saturday for dinner as well as lunch. Ambiance is fashionably cool Milanese rather than effusively warm Neapolitan. The food too is mostly contemporary rather than traditional. But in true Italian style, the best stuff stays simple: an antipasto platter of imported cold cuts with crostini and housemade marinated veggies; crisp-fried calamari and shrimp; airy gnocchi with sprightly tomato sauce, pools of melted bufala mozzarella, and fresh basil. \$\$\$

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

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

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

This casually cool jewel is a full-service seafood spot, as evidenced by tempting menu selections like soft-shell crabs with grilled vegetables, corn relish, and remoulade. There are

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 soffritto butter, chorizo, and manchego. There's also a thoughtful wine list and numerous artisan beers on tap. \$\$\$

Rosa Mexicano

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

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

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 hang-out, 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-finger pizza with Brazilian catupiry cheese; gnocchi served either as finger food (fried, with calamata olive/truffle aioli), or plated with orange-ginger sauce. But there are tomato-sauced meatballs with ri'gawt for Grandpa Vinnie, too. \$-\$\$\$

Truluck's Seafood, Steak, and Crabhouse

777 Brickell Ave., 305-579-0035

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

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 burblingly ripe tomato topped with a delicate sous vide egg. \$\$\$\$

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. \$\$

Wine Vault Miami

Shops at Midtown Miami
 Fountain Circle #105, 786-691-2000

From a Wine Vault press release: "Over 1,300 square feet of pure decadence." In fact, the soaring, two-story space, complete with glass elevator, has a look that lives up to the hype. But the most decadent thing inside is a nibble from its tapas list: chocolate-covered bacon. Go ahead and make a meal of it. We grown-ups can eat what we want. More substantial plates to accompany the roughly four dozen wines, artisan beers, or cocktails include chorizo with new potatoes, and sweetly piquant piquillo peppers stuffed with shredded tuna. Happy-hour wine prices are so low we'd better not mention them. \$-\$\$\$

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 Japanese veteran) may initially seem akin to those airport Oriental steam tables. Wrong. Custom-cooked by Chinese chefs, starters (like soy/garlic-coated edamame), salads, and have-it-your-way stir-fries, fried rice, or noodle bowls burst with bold, fresh flavor. The proof: a startlingly savory miso beef salad, with sesame/ginger/scallion dressing. Bubble tea, too! \$\$

Zuma

270 Biscayne Blvd. Way, 305-577-0277

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

Midtown / Wynwood / Design District

3 Chefs Chinese Restaurant

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

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

Adelita's Café

2699 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-1262

From the street (which is actually NE 26th, not Biscayne) this Honduran restaurant seems unpromising, but inside it's bigger, better, and busier than it looks. Unlike many Latin

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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 ambience and Italian-American comfort food evoke the neighborhood red-sauce joints that were our favored hangouts growing up in NJ's Sopranos territory. And low prices make it possible to hang out here frequently. Pizzas with hand-tossed crusts, not wood-oven but resembling honest bread, for less than fast food pizzeria prices? It's an offer you don't refuse. Don't refuse garlic rolls, either, or sinful zeppole (fried dough) for dessert. There's more complex fare, like chicken à la Francese, too. And they deliver. \$\$

Bengal 2010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-403-1976

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

Best Friends

4770 Biscayne Blvd., 786-439-3999 On a restaurant-starved stretch of Biscayne Boulevard, this spot serves the same sort of simple but satisfying Italian fare (antipasti, soups, salads, pizzas) as its older sibling, South Miami's Blu Pizzeria, plus burgers. The thin-crust, pliable pizzas, though lacking burn blisters, are brick-oven cooked, as are "blues," unusual calzones (like the blu oceano, fatty filled with mozzarella, prosciutto crudo, arugula, and fresh tomatoes). Hefty half-pound burgers come similarly stuffed rather than topped. A sheltered patio and full bar make the place a pleasant neighborhood lounge, too. \$\$

Bin No. 18 1800 Biscayne Blvd., 786-235-7575

At this wine bar/café, the décor is a stylish mix of contemporary (high loft ceilings) and Old World (tables 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. \$-\$\$

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 Rubco, 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. \$\$\$

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 Gully Booth's 12-item menu of very tasty tapas. The signature item is a truly jumbo-lump crab cake with no discernable binder. At one South Beach Wine & Food Festival, Martha Stewart proclaimed it the best she'd ever had. Our own prime pick: melt-in-your-mouth ginger sea bass anticuchos, so buttery-rich we nearly passed out with pleasure. \$\$\$

Catch Grill & Bar 1633 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-536-6414

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

Cerviceria 100 Montaditos 3252 NE 1st Ave. #104, 305-921-4373

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

City Hall the Restaurant 2004 Biscayne Blvd., 305-764-3130

After 30+ years spent guiding other owners' restaurants to success, Miami Spice program creator Steve Haas has opened his own expansive, two-floor place, on a stretch of Biscayne Boulevard that's suddenly looking fashionable. The vibe is a mix of power-dining destination and comfie 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



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

(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., 305-381-8066
 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. \$\$

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

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 pillow-light roast pork-stuffed buns, and possibly the world's best BLT, featuring Asian bun "toast," thick pork belly slices rather than bacon, and housemade pickles. There's \$2 beer, too. \$-\$\$

The Grrrrlz of Sandwich

**555 NE 15th St., 2nd floor (Venetia condo)
305-374-4305**
 Riot Grrrr DIY spirit shines in the homemade soups, sweets, salads, and exceptionally tasty warm baguette sandwiches (like prosciutto and fresh mozzarella, dressed with a unique sumac vinaigrette) at this concealed café, hidden on the Venetia condo's mezzanine. Owners Ana Oliva and Fadia Sarkis scour local markets daily for the freshest of ingredients, and their breads (plus light-crusted empanadas and sinful Ghirardelli chocolate cake) are all baked in-house. On Saturdays the grrrrlz'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-crusted 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 zeppoles, and Florida craft beers. \$\$

Hurricane Grill & Wings Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Avenue, 305-576-7133
 This Florida fast/casual chain became an instant hit in Midtown Miami owing to a winning concept: more than 35 heat-coded sauces and dry rubs meant for custom-tossing with wings and other things (including white-meat "boneless wings," really wing-shaped chicken breast pieces), accompanied by ranch or classic blue-cheese dip and celery. It would be silly to not pair your main with garlic/herb-butter parmesan fries. There are many other items, too, including salads. But hey, celery is salad, right? \$\$

Jimmy's Kitchen

2700 N. Miami Ave. #5, 305-573-1505
 No need to trek to South Beach for what many consider Miami's best classic Puerto Rican mofongo (fried green plantains mashed with fresh garlic, olive oil, and pork cracklings, surrounded by chicken or shrimp in zesty criollo sauce). This new location is bigger and better than the original, plus the mofongo is served every day, not just on weekends. But don't ignore the meal-size salads or high-quality sandwiches, including a pressed tripeleta 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, crunchily-crusted 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 Latina

3509 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-9655
 At last, an authentic Venezuelan arepera (purveyor of homemade arepas, with a variety of meat, cheese, and veggie fillings) that isn't out in the boonies – and decidedly isn't a dive. With colorful décor concocted from recycled objects, this space, though small, has truly eclectic, Midtown style. The signature corn cakes, crisped outside and fluffy inside, put sodden supermarket specimens to shame. And cachapas (softer, sweeter corn pancakes folded around mozzarella-like fresh cheese) or bollarepitas (cheese-stuffed deep-fried corn cakes, with tangy nata dip) may be even tastier. \$-\$\$

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, yuccified/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-dripped endive stuffed with lump crab, or customizable tacos average \$5-\$8. Also available: big breakfasts and salads, hearty soups, housemade pastries like lemon-crusted wild berry pie, and a hip beer and wine list. \$

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Mandolin Aegean Bistro

4312 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-6066
Inside this converted 1940s home's blue-and-white dining room – or even more atmospherically, its tree-sheltered garden – diners feast on authentic rustic fare from both Greece and Turkey. Make a meal of multinational mezes: a Greek sampler of creamy tzatziki yogurt dip, smoky egg-plant purée, and airy tarama caviar spread; and a Turkish sampler of hummus, fava purée, and rich tomato-walnut dip. The meze of mussels in lemony wine broth is, with Mandolin's fresh-baked flatbread, almost a full meal in itself. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Mario the Baker

250 NE 25th St., 305-438-0228
(See North Miami listing)

Mercadito Midtown

3252 NE 1st Ave., 786-369-0423
Some people frequent this fashionable restorlounge, festooned with graffiti-style murals designed to evoke a bustling Mexican street market, just for the dangerously smooth margaritas. But the main must-haves here are tacos, encased in a rarity: genuinely made-from-scratch corn tortillas, small but fatty-stuffed. Of 11 varieties, our favorite is the carnitas (juicy braised pork, spicy chili de arbol slaw, toasted peanuts). A close second: the hongos, intensely flavorful huitlacoche and wild mushrooms, with manchego and salsa verde – a reminder that vegetarian food need not be bland. \$\$-\$\$\$

Michael's Genuine Food and Drink

130 NE 40th St., 305-573-5550
An instant smash hit, this truly neighborhood-oriented restaurant from chef Michael Schwartz offers down-to-earth fun food in a comfortable, casually stylish indoor/outdoor setting. Fresh, organic ingredients are emphasized, but dishes range from cutting-edge (crispy beef cheeks with whipped celeriac, celery salad, and chocolate reduction) to simple comfort food: deviled eggs, homemade potato chips with pan-fried onion dip, or a whole wood-roasted chicken. There's also a broad range of prices and portion sizes to encourage frequent visits. Michael's Genuine also features an eclectic, affordable wine list and a full bar. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Ming Yuan

3006 NW 2nd Ave., 305-576-6466
What this tiny (three booths plus counter seats) Wynwood place serves isn't authentic Chinese cuisine. It's Chinese immigrant cooking: America's original Cantonese-based chop sueys and egg foo youngs plus later, spicier but also Americanized Szechuan/Hunan-inspired 1970s inventions like Mongolian beef and General Tso's this-or-that. But all the above (ordered extra-spicy if you like heat), plus crab rangoons and treat-packed special fried rice, are truly tasty. And since almost everything on the menu comes in several sizes, with even "small" being substantial, prices are unbeatable. \$\$\$

Mike's at Venetia

555 NE 15th St., 9th floor, 305-374-5731
This family-owned Irish pub, on the pool deck of the Venetia condo, for more than 15 years has been a popular lunch and dinner hang-out for local journalists and others who appreciate honest cheap eats and drinks. Regulars know daily specials are the way to go. Depending on the day, fish, churrasco, or roast turkey with all the trimmings are all prepared fresh. Big burgers and steak dinners are always good. A limited late-night menu provides pizza, wings, ribs, and salad till 3:00 a.m. \$\$\$

Morgans Restaurant

28 NE 29th St., 305-573-9678
Housed in a beautifully refurbished 1930s private home, Morgans serves eclectic, sometimes internationally influenced contemporary American cuisine compelling enough to attract hordes. Dishes are basically comfort food, but ultimate comfort food: the most custardy, fluffy French toast imaginable; shoestring fries that rival Belgium's best; mouthwatering maple-basted bacon; miraculously terrific tofu (crisply panko-crust and apricot/soy-glazed); even a "voluptuous grilled cheese sandwich" – definitely a "don't ask, don't tell your cardiologist" item. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

NoVe Kitchen & Bar

1750 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-503-1000
At NoVe, the restorlounge at the Opera Tower condo in NoVe (new nickname for the bayfront neighborhood north of the Venetian Causeway), the food is East-West. Meaning you can get burgers, pasta, and so on, or try the inventive Asian small plates and sushi specialties Hiro Terada originated at his past posts, Doraku and Moshi Moshi: the Atlantis roll (tempura conch with asparagus, avocado, scallions, and curry sauce); spicy, crunchy fried tofu atop kimchi salad; much more. Open 6:00 a.m. for breakfast to 3:00 a.m., it is kid-friendly and dog-friendly, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Orange Café + Art

2 NE 40th St., 305-571-4070
The paintings hanging in this tiny, glass-enclosed café are for sale. And for those who don't have thousands of dollars to shell out for the local art on the walls, less than ten bucks will get you art on a plate, including a Picasso: chorizo, prosciutto, manchego cheese, baby spinach, and basil on a crusty baguette. Other artfully named and crafted edibles include salads, daily soups, several pastas (like the Matisse, 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 satisfying Brooklyn-style street slice? Fuhgedit. Thankfully that's the speciality of this indoor/outdoor pizzeria: big slices with chewy crusts (made from imported NY tap water) that aren't ultra-thin and crisp, but flexible enough to fold lengthwise, and medium-thick – sturdy enough to support toppings applied with generous all-American abandon. Take-out warning: Picking up a whole pie? Better bring the SUV, not the Morris Mini.

Salad Creations

2001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-5333
At this fast-casual restaurant, diners can enjoy a wide variety of chef-created salads and wraps, or go the DIY route, choosing from one of four greens options; four dozen add-ons (fresh, dried, or pickled veggies and fruits, plus cheeses and slightly sinful pleasures like candied pecans or wonton strips); a protein (seafood or poultry); and two dozen dressings, ranging from classic (Thousand Island, bleu cheese) to creative contemporary (spicy Asian peanut, cucumber wasabi, blueberry pomegranate). Additionally, the place creates lovely catering platters, plus individual lunchboxes – perfect picnic or plane food. \$\$\$

Salumeria 104

3451 NE 1st Ave. #104, 305-424-9588
In Italy, salumerias started, like American delicatessens, as shops selling salumi (cured meats), but evolved into the equivalent of eat-in deli/restaurants that also serve cold and hot prepared foods. At this modern Midtown salumeria, the soups-to-salads-to-sweets range of fare is the same. Custom-sliced imported cold cuts are a main focus, especially for those who enjoy taste-testing a plate pairing Italy's two most famous prosciuttos: Parma and San Daniele. But homemade pastas are also impressive, as are hard-to-find regional entrées like fegato alla Veneziana, which will turn liver-haters into lovers. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 restorlounge. 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. \$\$\$



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Sugarcane Raw Bar Grill 3250 NE 1st Ave., 786-369-0353

This chic indoor/outdoor space is an offspring of Lincoln Road's SushiSamba Dromo and a sibling of Sugarcane lounges in NYC and Las Vegas, but more informal than the former and more food-oriented than the latter, as three kitchens – normal, raw bar, and robata charcoal grill – make clear. Chef Timon Balloo's LatAsian small plates range from subtle orange/fennel-marinated salmon crudo to intensely smoky-rich short ribs. At the daily happy hour, select dishes (like steamed pork buns with apple kimchi) are discounted. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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

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

Tapas y Tintos 3535 NE 2nd Ave., 305-392-0506

With about 50 different generously sized traditional tapas plates, from simple (imported Spanish cheeses and cured meats; varied croquetas, including beautifully smooth spinach) to sophisticated (crisp-fried soft-shell crab with aioli dip; the witty Popeye y Olivia, garlicky wine-sauced chickpeas with spinach and olive oil) plus complex salads, paellas, and charbroiled meat and seafood entrées, all add up to entertaining eating even without this tapas/wine bar's live entertainment. This second T&T feels less nightclub and more neighborhood than the South Beach original. Great for dates, business lunches, or very happy hours. \$\$\$

Tony Chan's Water Club 1717 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-374-8888

The décor at this upscale place, located in the Grand, looks too glitzy to serve anything but politely Americanized Chinese food. But the American dumbing-down is minimal. Many dishes are far more authentic and skillfully prepared than those found elsewhere in Miami, like delicate but flavorful yu pan quail. Moist sea bass fillet has a beautifully balanced topping of scallion, ginger, cilantro, and subtly sweet/salty sauce. And Peking duck is served as three traditional courses: crêpe-wrapped crispy skin, meat sautéed with crisp veggies, savory soup to finish. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Vintage Liquor & Wine Bar 3301 NE 1st Ave. #105, 305-514-0307

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

Wynwood Kitchen & Bar 2550 NW 2nd Ave., 305-722-8959

The exterior is eye-popping enough, with murals from world-famous outdoor artists, but it's the interior that grabs you. Colorful and exotic work by Shepard Fairey, Christian Awe, and other acclaimed artists makes it one of the most striking restaurant spaces anywhere. As for food, the original menu has been replaced with Spanish/Latin/Mediterranean-inspired favorites from chef Miguel Aguilar (formerly of Alma de Cuba): gazpacho or black bean soups; shredded chicken ropa vieja empanadas with cilantro crema; grilled octopus skewers with tapenade; plus fingerling potato-chorizo hash and other seasonal farm-to-table veg dishes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Upper Eastside

Andiamo 5600 Biscayne Blvd. 305-762-5751

With brick-oven pizzerias popping up all over town the

past few years, it's difficult to remember the dark days when this part of Mark Soyka's 55th Street Station complex was mainland Miami's sole source of open-flame-cooked pies. But the pizzas still hold up against the newbie pack, especially since exec chef Frank Crupi has upped the ante with unique-to-Miami offerings like a white (tomato-free) New Haven clam pie. Also available: salads, panini, and a tasty meatball appetizer with ricotta. There's a respectable wine and beer list, too. \$\$\$

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 pot-stickers and, at breakfast, fluffy pecan/maple-garnished pancakes) and prepared as reliably well. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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. \$\$\$

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 pasties 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. \$\$\$



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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 cappicola, pepper jack cheese, red peppers, and Romano chicken dressing); an elaborate almond-garnished Chinese chicken salad; H&H bagels, the world's best, flown in from NYC. And the car cleanings are equally gentrified, especially on Wednesdays, when ladies are pampered with \$10 washes and glasses of sparkling wine while they wait. \$

Garden of Eatin' 136 NW 62nd St., 305-754-8050

Housed in a yellow building that's nearly invisible from the street, the Garden has the comfortable feel of a beach bar, and generous servings of inexpensive Afro-Caribbean vegan food. Large or small plates, with salad and fried sweet plantains (plus free soup for eat-in lunchers), are served for five or seven bucks. Also available are snacks like vegetarian blue corn tacos, desserts like sweet potato pie, and a breakfast menu featuring organic blueberry waffles with soy sausage patties. \$

Gourmet Station 7601 Biscayne Blvd., 305-762-7229

Home-meal replacement, geared to workaholics with no time to cook, has been popular for years. But the Gourmet Station has outlasted most of the competition. Main reason: deceptive healthiness. These are meals that are good for you, yet taste good enough to be bad for you. Favorite items include precision-grilled salmon with lemon-dill yogurt sauce, and lean turkey meatloaf with homemade BBQ sauce – sin-free comfort food. Food is available à la carte or grouped in multimeal plans customized for individual diner's nutritional needs. \$\$

Go To Sushi 5140 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-0914

This friendly, family-run Japanese fast-food eatery offers original surprises like the Caribbean roll (a festively green parsley-coated maki stuffed with crispy fried shrimp, avocado, sweet plantain, and spicy Mayo), or a wonderfully healthful sesame-seasoned chicken soup with spinach, rice noodles, and sizable slices of poultry. Health ensured, you can enjoy a guiltless pig-out on Fireballs: fried dumplings of chicken, cabbage, and egg, crusted with quills – really a delectable crunchy noodle mix. \$

Ni.Do. Caffè & Mozzarella Bar 7295 Biscayne Blvd., 305-960-7022

Don't let this little café's easily overlooked strip-mall location, or its informal interior, fool you. The warm welcome is authentically Italian, as are cleverly crafted antipasti, simple but full-flavored pastas, and homemade pastries (from rosemary breadsticks to fruit-topped dessert tortas) that will transport your taste buds to Tuscany. And the housemade mozzarella or burrata cheeses – truly milk elevated to royalty – will transport you to heaven. A small market area provides Italian staples, plus superb salumi and the magnificent mozz, to go. \$\$\$

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. \$\$\$



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Mi Vida Café

7244 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-6020

At this indoor/outdoor vegetarian and raw-food vegan café, culinary-school-trained chef/owner Daniela Lagamina produces purist produce-oriented dishes that are easy to understand, like sparkling-fresh salads and smoothies, plus more technique-intensive mock meat or cheese items, based on soy proteins, that satisfy even confirmed carnivores. Particularly impressive on the regular menu: a superior Sloppy Joe made with mushroom confit, braised homemade seitan, spinach, and rich almond romesco sauce; and cannelloni de verdura, homemade crepes stuffed with spinach and cashew "ricotta." Do check the daily specials, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Moonchine

7100 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-3999

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

Moshi Moshi

7232 Biscayne Blvd., 786-220-9404

This offspring of South Beach old-timer Moshi Moshi is a cross between a sushi bar and an izakaya (Japanese tapas bar). Even more striking than the hip décor is the food's unusually upscale quality. Sushi ranges from pristine individual nigiri to over-the-top maki rolls. Tapas are intriguing, like arabiki sausage, a sweet-savory pork fingerling frank; rarely found in restaurants even in Japan, they're popular Japanese home-cooking items. And rice-based plates like Japanese curry (richer/sweeter than Indian types) satisfy even the biggest appetites. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

News Lounge

5582 NE 4th Ct., 305-758-9932

Mark Soyka's new News is, as its name suggests, more a friendly neighborhood hangout and watering hole than a full-fledged eatery. Nevertheless the menu of light bites is — along with other lures like an inviting outdoor patio and rest rooms that resemble eclectic art galleries — part of the reason visitors stay for hours. Especially recommended are fat mini-burgers with chipotle ketchup; a brie, turkey, and mango chutney sandwich on crusty baguette; and what many feel is the original café's Greatest Hit: creamy hummus with warm pita. \$

Red Light

7700 Biscayne Blvd., 305-757-7773

From the rustic al fresco deck of chef Kris Wessel's intentionally downwardly mobile retro-cool riverfront restaurant, you can enjoy regional wildlife like manatees while enjoying eclectic regional dishes that range from cutting-edge (sour-orange-marinated, sous-vide-cooked Florida lobster with sweet corn sauce) to comfort (crispy-breaded Old South fried green tomatoes). Not surprisingly, the chef-driven menu is limited, but several signature specialties, if available, are not to be missed: BBQ shrimp in a tangy Worcestershire and cayenne-spiked butter/wine sauce, irresistible mini conch fritters, and homemade ice cream. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Revalas Italian Ristorante

8601 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-1010

Owned by two couples (including former Village Café chef Marlon Reyes), this eclectic eatery occupies the former space of Frankie's Big City Grill, and fulfills much the same purpose in the neighborhood as an all-day, family-friendly place with affordable prices. The menu includes wraps and elaborate salads of all nations. But simple yet sophisticated Italian specialties like spaghetti ai fume (with pancetta, tomato, garlic, basil, and a touch of cream) or yellowtail française (egg-battered, with lemon-caper-wine sauce) are the must-haves here. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus

1085 NE 79th St., 305-754-8002

With Christmas lights perpetually twinkling and party noises emanating from a new outdoor biergarten, this German restaurant is owner Alex Richter's one-man gentrification project, transforming a formerly uninviting stretch of 79th Street one pils at a time. The fare includes housemade sausages (mild veal bratwurst, hearty mixed beef/pork

bauernwurst, spicy garlicwurst) with homemade mustard and catsup; savory yet near-greaseless potato pancakes; and, naturally, schnitzels, a choice of delicate pounded pork, chicken, or veal patties served with a half-dozen different sauces. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Soyka

5556 NE 4th Court, 305-759-3117

Since opening in 1999, Soyka has often been credited with sparking the Upper Eastside's revival. But the 2010 arrival of three Joe Allen veterans as executive chef, pastry chef, and sommelier signaled a culinary revival for the restorlounge, always a neighborhood focal point, now more food-focused. The contemporary comfort food menu ranges from fun small plates (deviled eggs with smoked salmon and dill, crisp-fried flocchio 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 hangout. And menu strong points also remain, from fresh-baked pastries and breads to elegant cross-cultural sandwiches (particularly two Latin-inspired upgrades: a classic Cuban with French ham, cornichons, and a baguette; and la minuta, a beer-battered fish fillet on focaccia with cilantro aioli). Whether diners opt for full entrées or make a meal of small plates, the subtle global blending makes fusion make sense. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Yiva's Gourmet Cuban Bakery

646 NE 79th St., 305-754-3337

A true community jewel, this bakery is also a most welcoming café, serving lunch specials from chef Delsa Bernardo (who co-owns the place with attorney Abbie Cuellar) that are homemade right down to the herbs grown on the bakery's window sills. Bernardo's pan con lechon sandwiches and flaky-crust Cuban pastries are legend. But she also crafts treats not found at average Cuban bakeries, like pizzas using housemade Indian naan bread. Additionally Bernardo carries unique treats produced by a few friends: candies, cupcakes, and exotically flavored flans. \$

NORTH BAY VILLAGE

Bocados Ricos

1880 79th St. Causeway, 305-864-4889

Tucked into a mall best known for its Happy Stork Lounge, this little luncheonette services big appetites. Along with the usual grilled churrascos, there's bandeja paisa, Colombia's sampler platter of grilled steak, sausage, chicharron, fried egg, avocado, plantains, rice, and beans. Don't miss marginally daintier dishes like sopa de costilla, if this rich shortrib bowl is among the daily homemade soups. Arepas include our favorite corn cake: the hefty Aura, stuffed with chorizo, chicharron, carne desmechada (shredded flank steak), plantains, rice, beans, and cheese. \$\$\$

The Crab House

1551 79th St. Causeway, 305-868-7085

Established in 1975, this Miami fish house was acquired by Landry's in 1996 and is now part of a chain. But the classic décor (knotty pine walls, tile floors, booths, outdoor waterfront deck) still evokes the good old days. Though the all-you-can-eat seafood/salad buffet (\$20 lunch, \$30 dinner) is a signature, freshness fanatics will be happiest sticking to à la carte favorites like the All-American fisherman's platters, or global specials like Szechuan shrimp, that change seasonally. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Japanese Market and Sushi Deli

1412 79th St. Causeway, 305-861-0143

Inside a small market that is widely considered Miami's premier source of Japanese foodstuffs, the "Sushi Deli"

restaurant component is nothing more than a lunch counter. But chef Michio Kushi serves up some sushi found nowhere else in town. Example: traditional Osaka-style sushi — layers of rice, seasoned seaweed, and marinated fresh mackerel, pressed into a square box, then cut into lovely one-bite sandwich squares. While raw fish is always impeccable here, some unusual vegetarian sushi creations also tempt, as do daily entrées. \$

Mario the Baker

1700 79th St. Causeway, 305-867-7882

(See North Miami listing)

Oggi Caffè

1666 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1238

This cozy, romantic spot started back in 1989 as a pasta factory (supplying numerous high-profile restaurants) as well as a neighborhood eatery. And the wide range of budget-friendly, homemade pastas, made daily, remains the main draw for its large and loyal clientele. Choices range from homey, mighty lasagna to luxuriant crab ravioli with creamy lobster sauce, with occasional forays into creative exotica such as seaweed spaghetti, with sea scallops, shitakes, 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 Kovacs created the original menu, and among his dishes still available is the filet mignon atop surprisingly pistachio-studded béarnaise sauce. Now there is a range of Mediterranean offerings as well, from grilled calamari steaks to mahi piccata. \$\$\$

NORTH BEACH

Café Prima Pasta

414 71st St., 305-867-0106

Who says old dogs can't learn new tricks? Opened in 1993 (with 28 seats), the Cea family's now-sprawling trattoria has added inventive chef Carlos Belon and modern menu items, including flocchio rapera (pear/cheese-filled pasta purses with truffled prosciutto cream sauce), an unlikely (soy sauce and parmesan cheese?) but luscious Italian/Japanese fusion tuna carpaccio, and fresh-fruit sorbets. But traditionalists needn't worry. All the old favorites, from the café's famed beef carpaccio to eggplant parm and pastas sauced with Argentine-Italian indulgence, are still here and still satisfying. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

K'Chapas

1130 Normandy Dr., 305-864-8872

Formerly the Peruvian restaurant Pachamama, this space is now both Peruvian and Venezuelan — but not fusion. The Venezuelan sisters who run the place keep dishes true to country. Most Big Food comes from Peru: fresh ceviches, classic cooked entrées. But it's the Venezuelan breakfast/snack items that keep us coming, especially signature cachapas, somewhat similar to arepas but harder to find in restaurants. These moist pancakes, made from ground corn kernels instead of just corn meal, are folded over salty white cheese for a uniquely bold balance of sweetness and savor. \$\$\$

Lou's Beer Garden

7337 Harding Ave., 305-704-7879

"Beer garden" conjures up an image of Bavarian bratwurst, lederhosen, and oompah bands — none of which you'll find

here. It's actually a hip hideaway in the New Hotel's pool-patio area, a locals' hangout with interesting eclectic fare and a perennial party atmosphere. Especially recommended: delicately pan-fried mini-crab cakes served with several housemade sauces; hefty bleu cheese burgers with Belgian-style double-cooked fries; blackened "angry shrimp" with sweet/sour sauce; fried fresh sardines. And of course much beer, a changing list of craft brews. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Tamarind Thai

946 Normandy Dr., 305-861-6222

When an eatery's executive chef is best-selling Thai cookbook author Vatcharin Bhumichitr, you'd expect major media hype, fancy South Beach prices, and a fancy SoBe address. Instead Bhumichitr joined forces with Day Longsomboon (an old Thai school pal who'd moved to Miami) at this unpretentious, authentic (no sushi) neighborhood place. Some standout dishes here are featured in the chef's latest tome, but with Tamarind's very affordable prices, you might as well let the man's impeccably trained kitchen staff do the work for you. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

The Wine Market

908 71st St., 305-865-6465

This rustic-chic wine shop, tapas bar, and restaurant is the sort of place that every emerging neighborhood needs. The wine stock isn't huge but the selection is thoughtful, with many bottles priced from \$10 to \$20. Take it home or pay a small corkage fee and drink on-premises over a meal centered on typical Parisian bistro entrées like steak or moules frites (the latter regularly available all-you-can-eat). If you'd prefer going the tapas bar route, highlights include a silky cognac/truffle chicken liver mousse and battered shrimp with remoulade sauce to make your own po'boy crostinis. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

MIAMI SHORES

Côte Gourmet

9999 NE 2nd Ave., #112, 305-754-9012

If only every Miami neighborhood could have a neighborhood restaurant like this low-priced little French jewel. The menu is mostly simple stuff: breakfast croissants, crêpe, soups, sandwiches, salads, sweets, and a few more substantial specials like a Tunisian-style brik (buttery phyllo pastry stuffed with tuna, onions, potatoes, and tomatoes) with a mesclun side salad. But everything is homemade, including all breads, and prepared with impeccable ingredients, classic French technique, and meticulous attention to detail, down to the stylish plaid ribbons that hold together the café's baguette sandwiches. \$\$\$

Iron Sushi

9432 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-0311

With three Biscayne Corridor outlets (plus several branches elsewhere in town), this mostly take-out mini chain is fast becoming the Sushi Joint That Ate Miami. And why do Miamians eat here? Not ambience. There isn't any. But when friends from the Pacific Northwest, where foodies know their fish, tout the seafood's freshness, we listen. There are some surprisingly imaginative makis, like the Maharaja, featuring fried shrimp and drizzles of curry Mayo. And where else will you find a stacked sushi (five assorted makis) birthday cake? \$\$\$

Miami Shores Country Club

10000 Biscayne Blvd., 305-795-2363

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

PizzaFiore

9540 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-1924

Owned by Arcoub Abderrahim, who opened South Beach's original PizzaFiore way back in 1996, this café serves the kind of nostalgic, medium-thin crust, oozing-with-goey-cheese pizzas reminiscent of our childhood pies in northern NJ Sopranos' territory, except now there are options for today's toppings — sundried tomatoes, buffalo mozzarella, etc. But there's also a full menu of Italian-American

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

classics, including antipasto salads, subs, and particularly popular, pastas. Garlic rolls are a must, but we didn't have to tell you that. \$-\$\$

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. \$-\$\$

Bagel Bar East 1990 NE 123rd St., 305-895-7022

Crusty outside (even without toasting) and substantially chewy inside, the bagels here are the sort homesick ex-New Yorkers always moan are impossible to find in Miami. For those who prefer puffed-up, pillow bagels? Forget it. Have a nice onion pocket. There's also a full menu of authentic Jewish deli specialties, including especially delicious, custom-cut – not pre-sliced – nova or lox. Super-size sandwiches easily serve two, and they'll even improvise a real NJ Sloppy Joe (two meats, Swiss, coleslaw, and Russian dressing on rye) if you ask nice. \$\$

Los Antojos 11099 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-1411

If it's Sunday, it must be sancocho de gallina, Colombia's national dish. If it's Saturday, it must be ajiaco. Both are thick chicken soups, full meals in a bowl. For Colombian-cuisine novices, a bandeja paisa (sampler including rice, beans, carne asada, chicharron, eggs, sautéed sweet plantains, and an arepa corn cake) is available every day, as are antojitos – “little whims,” smaller snacks like chorizo con arepa (a corn cake with Colombian sausage). And for non-carnivores there are several hefty seafood platters, made to order. \$\$

Bagels & Co. 11064 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2435

While this place is often referred to as Guns & Bagels, one can't actually buy a gun here. The nickname refers to its location next to a firearms shop. But there's a lot of other stuff aside from bagels here, including a full range of sandwiches and wraps. Breakfast time is busy time, with banana-walnut pancakes especially popular. But what's most important is that this is one of the area's few sources of the real, New York-style water bagel: crunchy outside, challengingly chewy inside. \$

Bulldog Barbecue/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 BBO/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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Cane á 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. \$\$\$

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)

Flop 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 11221 NE 123rd St., 786-866-9007

Festooned with eye-poppingly colored panels and giraffes – subtler but everywhere – this first North American branch of a wildly popular, 30-year-old Brazilian fast/casual chain is the flagship of a planned 4000 U.S. Giraffas. Given that the steaks, especially the tender, flavorful picanha, rival those at the most upscale rodizio joints – and beat the sword-wielding grandstanders for custom cooking (because staff asks your preference) – we'd bet on giraffe domination. Overstuffed grilled sandwiches, salads, even tasty veggie options are all here, too. The cheese bread is a must. \$\$

Happy Sushi & Thai 2224 NE 123rd St., 305-895-0165

Grab a booth at this cozy eatery, which serves all the expected Thai and sushi bar standards, including week-day lunch specials. But there are also delightful surprises, like grilled kawahagi (triggerfish) with seasoned Japanese mayonnaise. This intensely savory/sweet “Japanese home cooking” treat satisfies the same yen as beef jerky, except without pulling out your teeth. Accompanied by a bowl of rice, it's a superb lunch. For raw-fish fans, spicy, creamy salmon tartare (accompanied by hiyashi wakame seaweed) is a winner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Here Comes the Sun 2188 NE 123rd St., 305-893-5711

At this friendly natural foods establishment, one of Miami's first, there's a full stock of vitamins and nutritional supplements. But the place's hearty soups, large variety of entrées (including fresh fish and chicken as well as vegetarian selections), lighter bites like miso burgers with secret “sun sauce” (which would probably make old sneakers taste good), and daily specials are a tastier way to get healthy. An

under-ten-buck early-bird dinner is popular with the former long-hair, now blue-hair, crowd. Frozen yogurt, fresh juices, and smoothies complete the menu. \$-\$\$

Le Griot de Madame John 975 NE 125th St., 305-892-9333

When Madame moved her base of operations from her Little Haiti home to a real restaurant (though a very informal one, and still mostly take-out), she began offering numerous traditional Haitian dishes, including jerked beef or goat tassot and an impressive poisson gros sel (a whole fish rubbed with salt before poaching with various veggies and spices). But the dish that still packs the place is the griot: marinated pork chunks simmered and then fried till they're moistly tender inside, crisp and intensely flavored outside. \$

Little Havana 12727 Biscayne Blvd. 305-899-9069

In addition to white-tablecloth ambiance, this place features live Latin entertainment and dancing, making it a good choice when diners want a night out, not just a meal. It's also a good choice for diners who don't speak Spanish, but don't worry about authenticity. Classic Cuban home-style dishes like mojo-marinated lechon asado, topped with onions, and juicy ropa vieja are translated on the menu, not the plate, and fancier creations like pork filet in tangy tamarrind sauce seem universal crowd-pleasers. \$\$\$

Mama Jennie's 11720 NE 2nd Ave. 305-757-3627

For more than 35 years this beloved red-sauce joint has been drawing students and other starvation-budget diners with prodigious portions of lasagna, spaghetti and meatballs (the latter savory yet light-textured), veal marsala topped with a mountain of mushrooms, and other Italian-American belly-busters. All pasta or meat entrées come with oil-drenched garlic rolls and either soup (hearty minestrone) or a salad (mixed greens, tomatoes, cukes, brined olives, and pickled peppers) that's a dinner in itself. Rustic roadhouse ambiance, notably the red leatherette booths, add to Mama's charm. \$-\$\$

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 warmer 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. \$\$

Smashburger 14730 Biscayne Blvd., 786-406-6614

Two things distinguish the griddled patties of this Denver-based chain, touted as “the nation's fastest-growing ‘better burger’ restaurant,” from other better burgers: a nod to local tastes (like toppings of fried

chorizo and potato fritas), and the smashing technique, producing an appealing thickly crusted exterior. Got burger overkill? Substitute chicken, or have a salad. An added draw: unusual veggie sides, which go beyond regular and sweet potato fries to crisp onion strings, “veggie frittes” (carrots, string beans), and an Old South fish-camp classic: fried pickles. \$-\$\$

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



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 rillas stuffed with chipotle-marinated steak or chicken chunks, bolder shredded beef barbacoa, or herb-scented pork carnitas. But these bites contain no evil ingredients (transfats, artificial color/flavor, antibiotics, growth hormones). And the food, while not the authentic Mex street stuff dreams are made of, is darned tasty, too. \$

Cholo's Ceviche & Grill 1127 NE 163rd St., 305-947-3338

Don't be misled by the mini-mall location, or the relatively minimal prices (especially during lunch, when specials are under \$6). Inside, the décor is charming, and the Peruvian plates elegant in both preparation and presentation. Topped among ceviches/tiraditos is the signature Cholo's, marinated octopus and fish in a refined rocoto chili sauce with overtones both fiery and fruity. And don't miss the molded causas, whipped potato rings stuffed with avocado-garnished crab salad – altogether lighter and lovelier than the tasty but oily mashed spud constructions more 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 Gouvêla, originally from British Guyana, the wrapper is a far more substantial and tasty roti, a Caribbean mega-crepe made from chickpea flour. Most popular filling for the flatbread is probably jerk chicken, bone-in pieces in a spiced stew of potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, and more chickpeas. But there are about a dozen other curries from which to choose. Take-out packages of plain roti are also available; they transform myriad leftovers into tasty, portable lunches. \$

Duffy's Sports Grill Intracoastal Mall 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 retiring 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, Bangladeshi'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 16315 NE Dixie Hwy., 305-945-2244 (See Miami Shores listing?)

Jerusalem Market and Deli
16275 Biscayne Blvd., 305-948-9080
Specialties like shawarma, spinach pies, kebabs, hummus, and kibbeh (a savory mix of ground lamb and bulgur) are native to many Middle East countries, but when a Lebanese chef/owner, like this eatery's Sam Elzoor, is at the helm, you can expect extraordinary refinement. There are elaborate daily specials here, like lemon chicken or stuffed cabbage with a variety of sides, but even a common falafel sandwich is special when the pita is also stuffed with housemade cabbage and onion salads, plus unusually rich and tart tahina. \$\$-\$\$

Kabobji 3055 NE 163rd St., 305-354-8484

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

Kebab Indian Restaurant 514 NE 167th St., 305-940-6309

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

King Palace 330 NE 167th St. 305-949-2339

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

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill 14831 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-8800 (See Midtown / Wynwood / Design District listing)

Laurenzo's Market Café 16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381

It's just a small area between the wines and the fridge counters – no potted palms, and next-to-no service in this cafeteria-style space. But when negotiating this international gourmet market's packed shelves and crowds has depleted your energies, it's a handy place to refuel with eggplant parmesan and similar Italian-American classics, housemade from old family recipes. Just a few spoonfuls of Wednesday's hearty pasta fagiolo, one of the daily soup specials, could keep a person shopping for hours. And now that pizza master Carlo is manning the wood-fired oven, you can sample the thinnest, crispiest pies outside Napoli. \$\$-\$\$

Little Saigon 16752 N. Miami Ave., 305-653-3377

This is Miami's oldest traditional Vietnamese restaurant, but it's still packed most weekend nights. So even the place's biggest negative – its hole-in-the-wall atmosphere, not encouraging of lingering visits – becomes a plus since it ensures fast turnover. Chef/owner Lily Tao is typically in the kitchen, crafting green papaya salad, flavorful beef noodle pho (served with greens, herbs, and condiments that make it not just a soup but a whole ceremony), and many other Vietnamese classics. The menu is humongous. \$\$-\$\$

Mario the Baker 13695 W. Dixie Highway, 305-891-7641

A Miami institution in its North Miami location since 1962, this original Mario's changed location in 2012. But no worries. The menu of Italian-American (not Italian-Italian) favorites is the same – spaghetti and meatballs, hot and cold subs, etc. No arugula, imported bufala, or other chichi stuff on the NYC street-style medium thin-crust pizzas, either; top topping here is savory homemade sausage. And no one leaves without garlic rolls, awash in warm parsley oil and smushed garlic. \$

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 albondigas – spicy, ultra-savory meatballs. \$\$-\$\$\$



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Racks Soprano Café & Italian Restaurant
3933 NE 163rd St. (Intracoastal Mall), 305-917-7225
Racks has a new owner and a new name. Italian chef Rocco Soprano is bringing his authentic Italian flavors and style to a lovely setting. We'll have more details next month, but we know the specialties include Italian steaks, seafood, and an oyster bar. One thing that won't change: the coal-fired pizza oven, which reliably turns out an astonishingly light yet chewy crust that makes the pies a revelation. Especially enjoyable is the waterfront deck. \$\$

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. \$\$

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. \$\$\$

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. \$\$

Sushi House
15911 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-6002

In terms of décor drama, this sushi spot seems to have taken its cue from Philippe Starck: sheer floor-to-ceiling drapes, for starters. The sushi list, too, is over the top, featuring monster makis like the Cubbie Comfort: spicy tuna, soft-shell crab, shrimp and eel tempura, plus avocado, jalapeños, and cilantro, topped with not one but three sauces: wasabi, teriyaki, and spicy Mayo. Hawaiian King Crab contains unprecedented ingredients like tomatoes, green peppers, and pineapple. Boutique wines, artisan sakes, and cocktails are as exotic as the cuisine. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Sushi Sake
13551 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-4242

Chic Asian-accented décor, video screens, 99-cent drink deals, and late-night hours make this hip hangout not just a sushi bar but sort of a neighborhood bar, too. That said, the sushi is impressive, mainly because seafood is delivered daily and all except the shrimp is fresh, not frozen (as is customary at most Miami sushi places). Also notable: All sauces are housemade. Cooked makis like a crunch-topped Miami Heat are most popular, but it's as sashimi that the fish's freshness truly shines. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 (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 obba (shiso), tobiko caviar, and a sauce almost like beurre blanc; rock shrimp/

shitake tempura with a delicate salad; elegant salmon tartare with a mix-in quail egg. And spicy, mayo-dressed tuna rock makis are universal crowd-pleasers. \$\$\$

Caffe Da Vinci
1009 Kane Concourse; 305-861-8166

After renovations in 2010, this old favorite (since 1989) reopened with a hip new lounge — but no fixes to what ain't broke, notably handmade artisanal pastas sauced with high quality ingredients. Choose luxe stuffed models (like crab-filled ravioli with rich lobster sauce) or relatively pristine preparations like linguini with garlic, wine, and fresh littlenecks. Eating light? Make a meal of lavish salads or starters like true beef carpaccio — dressed, like the original from Venice's Harry's Bar, with creamy mustard sauce rather than mere olive oil. \$\$\$

Open Kitchen
1071 95th St., 305-865-0090

If we were on Death Row, choosing a last meal, this very chef-centered luncheon/market's PBLT (a BLT sandwich with melt-in-your-mouth pork belly substituting for regular bacon) would be a strong contender. Co-owners Sandra Stefani (ex-Casa Toscana chef/owner) and Ines Chattas (ex-Icebox Café GM) have combined their backgrounds to create a global gourmet oasis with a menu ranging from light quiches and imaginative salads to hefty balsamic/tomato-glazed shortribs or daily pasta specials (like wild boar-stuffed ravioli). Also featured: artisan grocery products, and Stefani's famous interactive cooking class/wine dinners. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

The Palm
9650 E. Bay Harbor Dr., 305-868-7256

It was 1930s journalists, legend has it, who transformed NYC's original Palm from Italian restaurant to bastion of beef. Owners would run out to the butcher for huge steaks to satisfy the hard-boiled scribes. So our perennial pick here is nostalgic: steak à la stone — juicy, butter-doused slices on toast, topped with sautéed onions and 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 portobello, capers, parmesan slices, and lemon/tomato dressing) and linguine carbonara (in creamy sauce with pancetta and shallots) are a breath of fresh, albeit familiar, air. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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. \$\$\$

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



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Mattone, marinated in herbs and cooked under a brick. And even low-carb dieters happily go to hell in a hand basket when faced with a mound of potatoes alla Toscana, herb-sprinkled French fries. \$\$-\$\$\$

Fresko 19048 NE 29th Ave., 786-272-3737

Forget thick, dough-wrapped potato knishes and blintzes slathered with sour cream. As its name suggests, this kosher dairy eatery eschews the starch/sugar-laden traditional favorites for salads, smoothies, and similar healthy fare as casual, clean, and contemporary as the restaurant's décor. Asian-influenced items, like wakame-topped tuna tartare with pineapple chutney, are particularly appealing, while those craving classic combinations like smoked salmon and cream cheese can enjoy them on a light-crust designer pizza. To drink, smoothies are supplemented by refreshing herbal infusions like green lemonade (with mint and basil). \$\$

Fuji Hana 2775 NE 187th St., Suite #1, 305-932-8080

A people-pleasing menu of typical Thai and Japanese dishes, plus some appealing contemporary creations (like the Spicy Crunchy Tuna Roll, an inside-out tuna/avocado/tempura maki, topped with more tuna and served with a luscious creamy cilantro sauce) has made this eatery a longtime favorite. But vegetarians – for whom seafood-based condiments can make Asian foods a minefield – might want to add the place to their “worth a special drive” list, thanks to chefs’ winning ways with tofu and all-around accommodation to veg-only diets. \$\$-\$\$\$

Gourmet Carrot 3599 NE 207th St., 305-749-6393

Since the first Gourmet Carrot – a healthy and kosher but not at all preachy eatery – opened in South Beach, its menu expanded to include many red-meat items. The same is true of this new Waterways mall branch. When confirmed cholesterol-careless carnivores like ourselves opt voluntarily for an eatery's veggie burgers (a brown rice/lentil/veggie blend more satisfying than beef), or remarkably juicy ginger-mayo-dressed chicken burgers, over normal hamburgers, based solely on flavor – well, religion aside, that's a major miracle. \$\$\$

Heavy Burger 19004 NE 29th Ave., 305-932-7555

Sure, South Beach is our town's burger capital, if you're judging by high profile. But if creativity is what counts, no joint bangs a gong like homeboy Mark Panunzio's place, where the concept is: Nothing goes together better than heavyweight burgers and heavy-metal music. What rocks us: a fire-grilled, 10 oz. Motley Burger (with cheddar, applewood bacon, tomato, Bibb lettuce, and frizzled plus raw onions on a challah roll; upon request, chipotle aioli was cheerfully substituted for BBQ sauce). Get hand-cut cheese fries, too, and get wasted on craft beer. \$\$



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Kampai 3575 NE 207th St., 305-931-6410

At this longtime neighborhood favorite Japanese/Thai restaurant, many come just for the slightly pricey 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. \$\$-\$\$

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. \$\$\$

The Grill on the Alley 19501 Biscayne Blvd. (Aventura Mall), 305-466-7195

Ensnconed in a leather booth, with dark hardwood everywhere and a massive bar dispensing two-fisted drinks, you'd never know you were dining in a shopping mall – or in the new millennium. This upscale mini chain salutes America's great grill restaurants of yesteryear, with prodigious portions of char-broiled meats and seafood, plus classics like creamy chicken pot pie. New retro dishes are added quarterly, but our favorite remains Sunday night's prime rib special: a \$32 hunk of juicy beef that'll take care of Monday's meals too. \$\$\$\$

Mahogany Grille 2190 NW 183rd St., 305-626-8100

Mahogany Grille has drawn critical raves and an international clientele since retired major league outfielder Andre Dawson and his brother transformed this place in 2007. Today it's white tablecloths and, naturally, mahogany. The menu is a sort of trendy yet traditional soul fusion of food from several African diaspora regions: Carolina Low Country (buttery cheese grits with shrimp, sausage, and cream gravy), the Caribbean (conch-packed fritters or salad), and the Old South (lightly buttermilk-battered fried chicken). The chicken is perhaps Miami's best. \$\$-\$\$\$

Mo's Bagels & Deli 2780 NE 187th St., 305-936-8555

While the term “old school” is used a lot to describe this spacious (160-seat) establishment, it actually opened in 1995. It just so evokes the classic NY delis we left behind that it seems to have been here forever. Example: Lox and nova aren't pallid, prepackaged fish, but custom-sliced from whole slabs. And bagels are hand-rolled, chewy champions, not those machine-made puffy poseurs. As complimentary pastry bites suggest, and the massive size of the succulent, sufficiently fatty pastrami sandwiches confirm, generous Jewish Mo(m) spirit shines here. \$\$

Mr. Chef's Fine Chinese Cuisine & Bar 18800 NE 29th Ave. #10, 786-787-9030

Considering our county's dearth of authentic Chinese food, this stylish eatery is heaven-sent for Aventura residents. Owners Jin Xiang Chen and Shu Ming (a.k.a. Mr. Chef) come from China's southern seacoast province of Guangdong (Canton). But you'll find no glopplily 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 Millitello. 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 “buletts,” 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 crépes) 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 homeaway-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/rasperry 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 truffe 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. \$\$\$

Piazzetta 17875 Collins Ave., 305-918-6816

You can't help feeling optimistic about a tourist town's food scene when its resort restaurants, which generally walk the middle of the road, get creative. And it doesn't get much more creative than this stylish restaurant and Italian market, which bills itself as a trip to an Italian-inspired “little market square,” but which, along with artisanal salumi plus pizzas and pastas, serves sushi. Particularly tasty: the native Neapolitan pizza chef's truffled taleggio and mushroom pie; meltingly tender braised short ribs; an impeccable market-driven meat and cheese platter. \$\$\$

St. Petersburg Deli 17080 Collins Ave., 305-947-9696

Don't expect fancified stuff like menus, or the English language, at this informal market/café. If there's signage identifying the prepared foods behind the counters, it's in Russian, and daily dishes are pretty much what the cooks feel like making. So look and point. We'd suggest pointing at cold yogurt-based soups like tangy okroshka (with cukes, egg, scallions, potatoes, and dill) or holodnik (similar, with beets added); eggplant roulades, stuffed with spiced shredded carrots, are also a refreshing summer dish. Hot choices include meatballs in rich cream sauce and chicken Kiev. \$\$

Timo 17624 Collins Ave., 305-936-1008

Since opening in 2003, the inventive yet clean and unfussy Italian/Mediterranean-inspired seasonal food at this hot spot, created by chef/owner Tim Andriola (at the time best known for his stints at Chef Allen's and Mark's South Beach), has been garnering local and national raves. Don't bother reading them. Andriola's dishes speak for themselves: a salad of crisp oysters atop frisée, cannellini bean, and pancetta; foie gras crostini with a subtle caramelized orange sauce; a blue crab ravioli with toasted pignolias and brown butter; or a wood-oven three-cheese “white” pizza. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Werner Staub's Peppermill 350 Bayview Dr., 305-466-2016

It'll likely be years until diners stop instinctively heading for the tropic-alpine chalet that formerly housed the Peppermill at the Waterways in Aventura. But this new indoor/outdoor space's bay views are much more spectacular. And the food is the same unique old-school stuff. Seafood is featured, and while there are contemporary preparations, you can't resist hard-to-find retro dishes like imported Dover sole almondine, Swiss-style poached trout with champagne-shallot sauce, an elaborate steak tartar, and for dessert, peach Melba or strawberries Romanoff. \$\$\$

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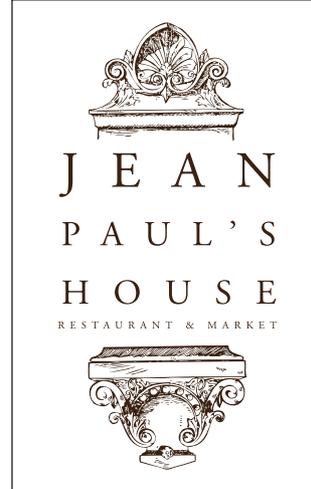
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